

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1999 - 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 29, 2000.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11:20 a.m.

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.) Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and Minister for the Civil Service) Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)(Leader of the House) Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition) Hon. Sir Harold ST. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B. Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon). Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc.(Econ.) 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) Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A.(Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources) 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, (Minister of Public Works and Transport) 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 Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. 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. Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P., B.Sc., M. Sc, M.Phil (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development) Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B. S.c. (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Prayers were taken by His Honour the Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, February 29, 2000.

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, February 22, 1999, which Minutes have been circulated be confirmed. I have found no errors or observations, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.Mr. SPEAKER If there are no corrections or observations, then let these Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following

(1)Duties, Taxes and other Payments (Exemption) (Stantec Consulting International Ltd.) Order, 2000.

Duties, Taxes and other Payments (Exemption) (FII Limited and Casualty Underwriters, Inc.) Order, 2000.

Report of the Auditor General on the Accounts of the Social Investment Fund for the Financial Year ended March 31, 1999.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: I am commanded to lay

Animals (Diseases and Importation Control) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 1999.

These regulations replace the Animals (Diseases and Importation Control) (Amendment) Regulations, 1999 laid on January 18, 2000.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS ORDER NO. 6

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: To move that this House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of Barbados.

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is now in Committee of Supply.

6 (a) Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: To move the passing of a Resolution to grant the sum of \$5 427 336 from the Consolidated Fund to supplement the Estimates 1999-2000 as set out in Supplementary Estimates No. 16.

HEAD 13 - PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, the main purpose of this Resolution is to provide rolling stock for the disciplined forces and I will rather if that could be the focus of the debate.

As regards Head 13, the provision that is being sought is to supplement the amount mainly to provide uniforms for Government security guards. Under the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) an amount is being requested for a twofold purpose. We are trying to bring to account the final payments for the retrofitting of the Trident.

As you are aware, Mr. Chairman, this financial year the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) participated in the Edinburgh Tattoo which was a great credit to the country. An amount of \$617 000 is required to meet the combine cost of the final payments for the Edinburgh Tattoo and the final cost for the Trident. Sir, the largest proportion of this \$5 million is intended to be the first installment of the payment for rolling stock for the disciplined forces and I would rather if we could deal with that.

Sir, Head 13 also makes provision for \$99 000 to supplement the supplies and material vote of the Printing Department and I would urge that these matters be approved but the burden of this Resolution is to deal with the provisioning of the disciplined forces.

I beg to move that Head 13 stand part.

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, under this matter I am going to stick to the rubric of the Resolution itself. However, I want to find out whether having undertaken the refit of the Trident if everything is now in order with it and if it is fully functional. Although I know that the Government may not for security purposes wish to say exactly what its complement of vessels and so on are, I still feel that the House should be given the opportunity of knowing what has been happening because we had a long history of investments in these areas which have not been maintained and it is a great concern, I think to all Barbadians.

Originally, when the Trident was purchased, it probably cost about \$20-25 million initially. We have had two refits of the Trident and it has broken down on several occasions. I think it is incumbent on the Government particularly from the point of view of drug trafficking, disasters at sea and disaster preparedness to make sure that we have satisfactory arrangements in relation to those vessels that are available to the Barbados Defence Force (BDF).

In relation to the other expenditures on the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) we have no problem with that. In fact, generally speaking we do not have any problem with this particular Head nor do we have a problem with making adequate provision for the soldiers in the Barbados Defence Force (BDF).

However, I think there is one principal concern that the Attorney General may need to address. Last week in his winding up, although I do not wish to reflect on that, he spoke about the role of the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) in relation to criminal activity and since that was not one of the original points that was made, I did not comment on it.

11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

Let me make the point very clear that I believe and I have always believed from the time the BDF was established that the resources that were used in establishing it could perhaps have better been used in relation to law enforcement. We are past that stage now and what we have to look at is the best deployment of the large corps of men and women in the Barbados Defence Force.

One of the pressing issues that faces the country is the problem of crime. The Government says, even though I am not sure they always believe it, that it is going to wrestle this problem to the ground and it will need all of the resources available to do it but the Government must also make it clear to Barbadians that there is a difference between the responsibilities and the rights and the extent of the rights of law enforcement officers such as special constables and policemen when on duty as distinct from soldiers who are assisting those officers when they are carrying out their duties. Therefore, I think it is important for that distinction to be made known.

One very useful suggestion that was made to me was that perhaps the Government could consider, as long as there has been adequate training, creating a hybrid situation where some members of the

Barbados Defence Force might be given the status of special constables from time to time so that you do not have a scenario where you are carrying soldiers out on duty. Everybody knows that if a soldier shoots somebody while out with a policeman that he does not attract - I do not want to say immunity, because that is the wrong word - but the penalties that can be applied to him are much different from those that can be applied to a police officer who is executing his lawful duties. Therefore, the idea that an armed soldier is standing next to a policeman does not mean that that soldier has all of the rights and powers which a policeman may have. In fact, other than carrying the gun, he may have no more powers than a civilian who is standing up next to that policeman with a gun and ammunition.

Therefore, apart from the need to upgrade the terms and conditions of police officers and to look very seriously at the issue of deployment and the numbers in the Police Force, the Government also needs to consider creative and innovative means of deploying the members of the Barbados Defence Force. Perhaps one valid suggestion could be to vest them with some powers in relation to law enforcement or, alternatively, let us be serious and refocus our attention on upgrading the salaries and resources of the Police Force and look at issues of deployment as soon as possible.

Those are some of the key questions that we wanted to raise particularly about the role of the Barbados Defence Force in assisting police officers.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I am obviously going to support this Resolution and in a brief introduction recall perhaps the history of the Barbados Defence Force and the different points of view that evolved in the use of the Force over the years.

It is a fact that at the inception the Barbados Labour Party at one stage took the view that there was no need for a standing military force. It is interesting that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has now said that that was always his view of the matter, that the resources for a defence force could be better used in relation to law enforcement.

To that extent, I think he is departing from the pristine view of the Democratic Labour Party who felt that on independence there was some need for standing army. I believe that issue has now been laid to rest and ought not to be revived because I believe that even with the disappearance of the bi-polarisation of the international relations we have entered into an even more challenging and sensitive stage of relationships between states and between states and multinational organisations which have within their power the resources to destabilise small countries such as those in the Caribbean and elsewhere. This destabilisation is taking place principally through the export and import of drugs and also in other forms - the almost uninhibited sale of firearms across national borders, because of this, small states have to rely more and more on their own resources for the maintenance, not only of their territorial sovereignty and jurisdiction but, even more importantly, for the maintenance of internal law and order within their borders. I believe, therefore, that both political parties will now recognise because of the factual situation the need to retain a defence force element in this community.

I was disappointed to see an editorial in one of the newspapers questioning the wisdom of spending money at this time on the Defence Force without any deep analysis of what has been happening in relation to security matters. The Caribbean countries have never been able since independence to rely on bilateral assistance in the way of defence of their borders or in the way of their protection from other multinational strategic military influences.

Whilst we have had some arrangements with the United States, The United Kingdom, France, Holland and Canada those arrangements have always been almost at an ad hoc stage and at a crisis stage. Hence the need for the Caribbean countries to recognise the initiative which was taken by the Barbados Labour Party ever since the seventies to strengthen the regional security system in such a way that we are able to defend our national waters, to defend our national territories, to defend the Caribbean area and what is more to withstand the attack that is facing our communities from the insidious infiltration of the drug trade.

Unless the media and the commentators are able to look more deeply than they have been doing on these issues we are liable to mislead our people into thinking that Governments are spending their money unwisely in this form and into believing that the crisis of crime within the whole world today and particularly in small states is a crisis created because of politicians and the lack of politicians themselves. Hence, I believe that we have to maintain the protective services. Unfortunately, it is a cost on the taxpayers but within the context of Barbados it has not been an escalating cost.

11:40 a.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

The Barbados Defence Force has not only performed well in their duties as far as the military duties are concerned but they have been used and deployed from time to time by both administrations in times of national emergencies and crises. For instance, we have used them when we have had the threat to the economy of Barbados by the burning of sugar canes. I am happy to see that in that event they have acted properly to defend Barbados' economy. We have used them, as we are using the Trident and the Coast Guard, in general against the infiltration of our borders by those people who are intent on getting rich quickly from selling drugs. I believe that is a proper use of the Defence Forces. We have used them in a sensitive manner at the time of some of our major festivals. I believe that that is a proper use of the Defence Force.

We have used them in the crisis of fire. I recall, in fact, being severely criticised once, when on the advice of the then Commissioner of Police we asked the Barbados Defence Force to act with a fire that was threatening at the top of James Street. If you go back and see what the media had to say then and what politicians had to say then, you will think that those of us who have given a long time to public life are people without any sense or any care for our country. That was the proper use of the Defence Force. I believe that there will be other occasions that we have to use the Defence Force to assist the police force but I believe that I have come to the view, a view that I did not always hold, that it is necessary to maintain some military presence.

I would hope, Mr. Chairman, that the initiative and foresight shown by the Barbados Labour Party in regionalising, wherever possible, the military forces of the Caribbean would be improved during the years. I would hope that the Government of Trinidad & Tobago in particular has now seen the light and

is prepared to become part of the regional security system.

We cannot police the Caribbean sea against the marauders from Japan and elsewhere who use our fishing resources to the disadvantage of the people of the Caribbean. We cannot police the Caribbean seas sufficiently within the ambit of international law to prevent nuclear material being transhipped through to the detriment of our environment and of our people. Those are some of the reasons which editorial writers should stress and not mislead the public into believing that that the Government's spending of resources in this respect is misplaced. I have to make this point because there are so many commentators all of a sudden in this country on areas without any proper and deep analysis of the implications of the different arms of state and what is good for countries such as ours. Some times we have to speak to them and draw their attention to them in a constructive way that they themselves may advert to the necessity for maintaining the Defence Force.

Mr. Chairman, there is another side to this argument. That side rests really on the controls which one has to put in place in order to ensure that the protective services function within the law and without an abuse of human rights. I do not believe that in the Caribbean we have given enough study yet to this problem. Within the Commonwealth, there are precedents that we could follow. I would hope that before our new Constitution is implemented that we would draw more deeply on these precedents to see what control we should put in place to ensure that the Defence Force, whether it is used in a local law and order situation or otherwise, comes under proper rules which would allow them, as the Honourable Member for St. John has said, to function alongside the ordinary civilian as protective forces but do so within the constraints of the normal law and order.

I do not believe, Mr. Chairman, that this is the occasion for me to give some of the precedents that have been followed elsewhere. I believe that when we get to the debate on the Constitution in a week or two that we will have a little bit more to talk about the relationship between the Defence Force, the Minister and the Head of State and the relationship between the police, the Minister and the Head of State and generally where we allow them the independence that is required so that they can carry out their function without political control in day to day operations but where within certain policy framework they must work in consultation with the Minister or the Government of the day. I would hope that I can develop that as time goes.

Mr. Chairman, again, in relation to the money spent on the Trident, this is money well spent. Once again I want to remind the people of Barbados that most of the Coast Guard vehicles originally came over because of the failure of International Seafood Limited. That we had to rescue the public's money by showing the foresight to take over some of these boats and convert them for use in the Defence Force.

Asides.

Hon. Sir. Henry FORDE: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy says he is not too young in politics. I am glad that he has a memory because sometimes when I hear issues being discussed now in Barbados, I recognise that there are not many people who write to the Press and write for the Press who seem to do their homework and have a memory of the history of these areas.

We have managed, as a Government before to take what would have been a disastrous financial

position for the Government and use the boats so that they became useful in maintaining security along our coastline.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to make just one point because I am running out my time.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Yes, you have only two minutes to wind up.

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE: Sir, in those two minutes I want to talk about the public and the public's role in defence. Sir, I live on a hill in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. John and I have a very good lookout there. I was once advised by the police to enclose my premises a bit more and to have a light on one of my trees by way of protection in certain circumstances. That light I have had to get rid of because it has proved a beacon, a marker on land for those people who have been bringing in drugs through Consett Bay, Skeets Bay and other areas so I have to turn off my light in the national interest. Indeed, it is difficult for us to completely patrol the north and the north east of Barbados where a lot of the drugs have been coming into Barbados.

I want to appeal to the public of Barbados to understand that they have a role to play in providing the necessary information to the police force and to the protective forces. No matter how strong or how weak is the enlistment in the police force whether you have 1 200 men or 2 500 men in the police force. No matter how many vehicles you give to them eventually we will only be able to maintain law and order if the people who call into the programmes and who talk so much and who are authorities on everything, do their duty, particular the middle class in this country, shoulder their responsibility and provide the necessary information in order to help law and order to function properly.

11:50 a.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation Hon. Sir Henry FORDE:

We are letting the public of Barbados run away from their responsibilities by the usual partisan way in which we approach these matters. That is one of the reasons why I am looking forward to the debate next week, because we have tried to build into the future constitution, the concepts that people in this country do not only have rights, even more important they have responsibilities and duties to other people and to the nation of Barbados. I have seen those responsibilities, on too many occasions, not being taken up.

I regret, Sir, that the debate in this country over the last 20 years in relation to the infiltration of the drug trade was debated in the context that they had to be politicians involved, and not one politician in Barbados has been exposed by the United States or any of the other countries of having anything to do

with drugs, not any of them, not in either side of the fence and I have heard both political parties at times attacking each other on this. What is true, is that there is a drug trade that is benefitting people in Barbados who are hiding behind it and they use the politicians as a scape goat and you have the impression in the minds of the public that politicians or somebody like that, is getting money out of it.

I want us to deal with people's responsibilities, Mr. Chairman, and responsibilities to help the protective services, whether it be the military, the police or the fire service so that they could perform their duties properly and we could have a Barbados that functions according to law and order where we give respect to human rights.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I will support these funds for the Defence Force but there is an impression in this country that we are anti the Defence Force and that is not true. The problem is that when you carry out a serious analysis in this country, the impression is given that you are for one and not the other. People must realise that there are certain organisations that must rank ahead of other organisations. For the simple reason, in a country like this when both political parties are trying to help solve the crime problem in this country, it is obvious that the police force must get priority and anybody who feels that when you put a case for the Police Force, you are anti the Defence Force that is a serious problem in this country.

I want to say to the Government that one must recognise that the Trident, the flagship of our country, is now an old ship and it is about time that this Parliament recognise that the Trident has been working for a long time and nearly every year, we are before this Parliament for substantial funds for the Trident. We must make sure that if we are saying that our coasts are threats to the country, we must have proper boats for the Defence Force, whether or not the Defence Force is attached to the Police. If we are serious about the drug trade around our shores, we must make sure that the resources of this country are used to the best of our abilities.

I also want to say that it is time the countries within the Caribbean, if we are to speak about CARICOM, if we are to speak about Protocols, we must recognise that we must come together on serious issues and the Regional Security System must be one of those issues that we have to put our heads together and make sure that we implement.

We cannot as small states, continue every year to budget large sums of money to make sure that each country has a standing army. It is foolishness and if we need to come together this is the first thing we need to come together on, to fight the drug trade within the Caribbean.

We also must recognise that if we are calling ourselves one people, we have to recognise the rights of the fishermen throughout the Caribbean. What is amazing within the Caribbean is that we do not recognise the rights of our own fishermen in the CARICOM even though we call ourselves one people, but we allow the Japanese to come into the CARICOM and rape our resources and nobody is prepared to stand up to the Japanese. Yet still, when a Barbadian fishing boat goes too near to the Trinidadian waters we expect our fishing boats to be arrested - foolishness. If CARICOM is to work, it must start with the fishermen and not the politicians because that is one sure test on whether we are serious about CARICOM and whether we are serious about the protocols that we talk about.

I have said previously that the only way that protocols can work within the Caribbean is that we must

first test them within our various countries. If they are not tested within our various countries then there is no need to carry them throughout the Caribbean, because if you cannot work at home, you cannot work any place else.

I am also saying, Sir, that the Defence Force must recognise that we...and I must congratulate the Attorney General for stating this fact last week that there is no need ...

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Do you mean I cannot give you credit in this House?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Carry on.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I congratulate the Attorney General for recognising that we are not in a Cold War and that the Defence Force complement might be too large and that the Police Force complement might be too small.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I know you have never said that but I have a right to detect and to extract from you speech whatever I feel like. I have that right and if you provide the logic, I can provide the conclusions. I am saying, Mr. Chairman, if we formed the army because of the Cold War, we are not in a Cold War any more and the Police Force has acknowledged that there is a need to use the Defence Force sometimes. I want the “sometimes” cut out. I want the Commissioner of Police to tell this Parliament how many people within the Defence Force he can use and what he wants to use them for so that we can remove some of the policemen from doing the duties they are doing now and we can get our 300 community policemen.

There is a need for the resident beat policemen who have been doing a wonderful job in this country and there are other policemen who have certain roles in this country who can easily be removed from those particular roles and allow the Defence Force to use that role. I can tell you why. In October, when the policemen were sick, I heard people within this country say that certain criminals were scared of the Defence Force. I am telling you, Mr. Chairman, that if you put those same Defence Force men in police uniforms, they are the same men so they would still have to be scared of those same men. If the criminals are scared of the Defence Force give them the legal right by transferring them from the Defence Force to the Police Force. We have a need for them. You cannot tell the public of Barbados why you will continue to have a standing army with so many people with nothing to do because you said it was formed for the Cold War.

I am also saying, Sir, that the coastal and naval sides need to be strengthened and nobody can fault me on that. For the simple reason, there is evidence that our sea shores are being used to bring drugs into this country, especially in the constituency of which I have the privilege to represent.

12:00 Noon

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am saying that I am not happy because I have called on this Parliament to have an airport that helicopters can use also. Since 1994, I have also called on this Parliament to work out an arrangement with the Cement Plant to have a Coast Guard vessel stationed there. The Cement Plant was willing to provide the facilities but nothing has been done about that suggestion, yet every day and every night you can hear about strange boats down to the North of Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: No, it is not a matter of parking a vessel. It is a matter of having a vessel stationed at the right location for the right time. You do not have to station it there all the time but that would be the port of call for it and there will be no need for it to go back to Fort Willoughby.

The point is this, once people know that the Coast Guard boat is in that particular area they will not use the shores there. We should have enough Coast Guard boats where one could be stationed on the East Coast and another one on the South Coast. If drugs are going to destroy the minds of the youngsters in Barbados, we must see that as a top priority because if we do not, we are going to destroy the minds of all of our young men and I am warning this country that we are not too far away from doing that.

There are people who have recognised that what they use to do in Trinidad and Tobago and in Guyana that they can no longer do it in those two countries. They have to find a new approach to deal with Barbados and that is why they are making sure that our young men spend most of their time down at the 'Mental' or 'on the block' with their minds mashed up, when that happens, they have a right to take over Barbados whenever they want and we must be serious about this. We have lost one generation already and we have to make sure that we do not allow this system to destroy another generation.

I am saying to this Parliament that we have to be serious about what we are doing. Barbados must be for Barbadians and anybody who comes to this country with a plan to make sure that Barbados is not for Barbadians, we must send a loud message out to them. This country that we are seeing as Barbados today is foreign to Barbados but not foreign to the world and it must be known.

I would like the Minister of Finance to guarantee me that this Supplementary relates to the year 1999-2000 and that it has nothing to do with the year 2000-2001. As you know, Sir, we are supposed to get figures in these Estimates based

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. All of these sums relate to this fiscal year. The sum in respect to the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) represents a 15 per cent down payment on the package of vehicles ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Under Head 13 dealing with National Defence and Security - \$1 694 058.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, this is the down payment. We have to pay down 15 per cent of the total package which is \$3.3 million. If you look at the Addendum, you will see that the Barbados Defence Force (BDF), the Fire Service, School Meals Service, the Prison Service and the Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF) are getting the vehicles.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am still sticking to my point that I want a guarantee from the Minister of Finance that all the sums quoted for 1999-2000 is actually what is in here. I do not want anything dealing with 2000-2001 in here because that is not the way we do things in this House. I do not want anybody to accuse us of getting into this House and approving expenditures for 2000-2001 to hide expenditures for 1999-2000.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. Those are very improper remarks that cast improper motives and have to be struck from the record.

Sir, expenditure is stretched across a number of financial years. A down payment is being made in this financial year. There is no attempt by the Government to shield any part of this expenditure because this is expenditure which is being financed by suppliers' credit. The full financing for this has already been secured and there is no reason to shield it. All that is happening is that the expenditure is being shown in the year in which it is being made with a down payment occurring in this financial year.

To accuse the Government, therefore, of improprieties on this matter is not only to mislead the House but it is to indulge in a level of behaviour that, I think, reduces Parliament and I would have to urge, Sir, that those remarks be struck from the record.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I think those remarks should be withdrawn.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: No. Mr. Chairman, I have to give a reason ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please, please, please, quiet, let me speak first. The money under review is for this financial year and it is not going to go over into the year 2000-2001.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I never said that. I said I hope it is not like that because last week ...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Peter has made it clear that the money is for this financial year.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am not accusing anybody of anything.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Carry on.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am saying that last week we passed a Supplementary in here in which an expenditure for the year 2000-2001 was included. That 2.5 per cent increase for the civil servants that runs from 2000-2001 should not have been in that Supplementary.

I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, let me put this thing in some perspective. Mr. Chairman, toward the end of last year I indicated to this House and to the public of Barbados that Government would be bringing a package to Parliament to provide necessary vehicles and equipments for the Royal Barbados Police Force (RBPF); the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) and the Fire Service Department. I explained that we were trying to re-equip and re-tool those forces as protective services over a period of years.

12:10 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

I have said recently, last week, for the first time in the history of Barbados a government has made a clear, conscious and strategic decision to give the protective services all the equipment they need as far as we can see over a four-year period to ensure that there are no problems with the mobility of those Forces.

This Resolution before the House refers to several Heads of Estimates of Expenditure. The Defence Force is under Head 13. Now, last year the Prime Minister established a committee to look at how we would re-equip these Forces. Up to August last year the Committee had met once. When I returned

from overseas the Prime Minister asked me to take over the Chairmanship of the Committee and bring this matter to closure so we could make adequate provision, subsequent to negotiations, for inclusion in the Estimates this year.

In November there was a meeting of all the Heads of these services. I chaired the meeting which included representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs. We had before us proposals from suppliers. Those proposals had been discussed with the various disciplined forces. The purpose of the meeting was to receive the recommendations of the Forces. In the meantime, for example, the Commissioner of Police had gone to England in September and himself had discussions with the Metropolitan Police about the type of vehicles. When we come to that aspect of this Resolution, I will deal with that.

The Brigadier at the time, Brigadier Lewis, had been to England and discussed with the military in England the kinds of vehicles. We had a shopping list, if you like, prepared with all the needs of the Forces and Colonel Maynard I remember was at the meeting in November.

There were two presentations made to the Government, one by a firm called Angloco, which I will deal with when we come to the Fire Service, and the other by a firm called NSG. Honourable Members will recall that last December we passed a resolution in here for the same firm NSG to supply the Transport Board with a large number of buses.

In December, 1998, the same firm started the process, I do not think it is completed yet, of supplying a large number of vehicles for the Sanitation Service authority. It is a firm with which the Government has had experience. So far as I know, the experience has been satisfactory.

The Defence Force requested vehicles totalling U.S.\$3 518 865. I will indicate generally the kinds of vehicles and equipment which the Defence Force is getting:

A large number of staff cars, (diesel);

Four-wheel drive vehicles;

All terrain motorcycles;

Command vehicles (those are land rover type);

Soft top patrol vehicles (4 x 4);

Hard top utility vehicles (4 x 4);

Ambulances;

Radio vehicles;

A vehicle (4 x 4) eight troop carrier;

Cargo trucks;

Cargo trailers;

A bus to carry 30 people;

A large padded van;

Radio equipment; and so on.

The Defence Force did their needs assessment as a result of that exercise, this is what they have asked for. I do not believe any of it was changed. The Government has acceded to the request.

Now, before you can have delivery of those vehicles, a down payment, a deposit, an advance, if you like, of 15 per cent of the total purchase price has to be paid. This money we are coming for today represents 15 per cent.

Honourable Members will get a chance again to see this because if Honourable Members recall the procedure, a different type of resolution, the resolution for the loan, or for the suppliers' credit in this case, has to come to the House. We need to pay down the money now since all the negotiations are complete to get the authority for the expenditure so they could start ordering the vehicles. The Resolution will come in another couple of weeks in the usual way.

I can give the House the details of the arrangements with NSG which will be repeated in that ordinary resolution. Five per cent of the contract value is payable on or within 30 days of the contract signature. Ten per cent of the contract value is to be paid within four months of signature of the contract or a means shipment date, whichever is sooner. This is where we thought that this package was worthwhile.

The other 85 per cent of the value of the contract is to be paid over five years in half-yearly instalments, the first of which is to be paid six months from the agreed, means shipment date.

The applicable rate of interest is about 6.98 per cent provided the contract is dated prior to February 14, 2000. Lloyds Bank of England is providing NSG Exports Limited with the financing facilities.

Those are the essential terms of the package. As I said, NSG is sourcing and supplying the equipment for the Police, the Defence Force, the School Meals and the Prison.

Angloco has made a similar proposal to Government in respect of the Fire Service. I am going to explain, when we come to the Fire Service, why we have allowed Angloco to continue because they have had a long and historical relationship with the Fire Service.

Now, Sir, I want it clearly understood. I have, within the last two days, and within the last hour, become acutely aware that advice that has been given to me from time to time, as recently as Thursday by the Prime Minister, is sound, and that is, that in politics you need to repeat, and repeat, and repeat.

Now, you would not believe - for me it does something to my intellect for me to say something one

day and have to come and repeat it the next day. If you do not do it in politics, you would suffer. Last Tuesday, only a week ago, I took my time in here in a three-hour speech, to explain that the Government had agreed to continue the use of the military with the Police in trying to ensure that we kept law and order at reasonable levels in this country and tried to, as the Prime Minister would say, wrestle down crime to the ground.

I explained then that power was being used under Section 3 of the Defence Act which allows the Government upon directions issued by the Governor-General from time to time to authorise the use of the Defence Force with the Police for the maintenance of public safety and the maintenance of public order.

12:20 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

For a long time this has been done, going back, I believe, to 1992 when it started under the then Government.

I remember, Sir, last Tuesday saying that this question of the use of the military in aid of the civil power is a current international agenda item and I remember saying and reading from a speech which I gave on May 24 or 25 last year when the Duke of Edinburgh Conference was here with the retired legionnaires at Acton. I read what I said then, that it was my view that now that the threat of communism has receded the world is being bombarded by another insidious threat described in the U.N. language as the New World Phenomenon, that is, trafficking in drugs. As one threat has receded for which there was legitimacy for the use of the military a new threat has arisen and we need to re-examine it. I think I used the word "revisit" the whole business to see to what extent there can be cooperation between the two forces aimed at one threat to security, namely, and particularly, drugs. I even quoted, Sir, and said that I am invited to a meeting in April put on by the U.S. Southern Command for Attorneys General and Security Chiefs. It is the 2000 Symposium on Defence and Security issues.

The third item on this agenda this year is this and I quote, Sir:

“To explore ways the military can legally support civilian leadership in fighting non-traditional security challenges such as drug trafficking.”

It is there. We have to deal with it. The countries are dealing with it. In Latin America the whole question of the use of the military is on the table again because of the change and the movement towards democracy in some of those Latin American countries.

I think the Leader of the Opposition is quite right to have put it on the agenda. He says that we need to examine it and that is all we are doing. We are using it just as the other side used to for certain special operations but at the same time we have to look towards the long term viability and utility of the arrangement. It is as well to know what is going on in other parts of the world to help inform our own decision making.

However, Sir, I take issue with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and umbrage at his suggestion that the members of the Defence Force constitute a standing army with nothing to do.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I wrote it down. So you do not mean that the BDF is doing nothing? Do you want to get up and apologise?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I would like the Honourable Member to know that he has two minutes.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, the BDF is integrated in the RSS arrangement which this House supported by enacting the RSS Treaty in 1997 or 1998. There are exercises done everyday. There are other exercises. I am not going into them because it would not be wise to discuss them publicly but the Honourable Member should read one of his newspapers today. I think it is in the Advocate that you will see that Colonel Maynard as recently as yesterday was explaining that one of the things the Defence Force is going to be doing shortly - this is its 21st anniversary - is repairing 14 old people's houses. You see the US warships come here and they go and do things at schools. They went to Challenor School in my constituency and painted all of it in a day. They do work. The military all over the world do different works for the general communities.

Right now, the BDF are engaged every day on cane fire patrols. That has gone on virtually since 1980 but at this time of the year they are involved in that. We have used them in special operations to guard the coast at night together with the police. There is a lot that they are doing.

Up to Friday - you do not publicise a lot of this but I can say it - the Coast Guard out to sea arrested a boat with a man whom the police had been looking for several weeks in connection with a major piece of crime in Barbados. They do very important work in this country.

As I said, I am glad that the debate has started and I started it last week. We have to examine how those linkages can be developed always recognising the superior role of the police in relation to the exercise of civil power. So far, the relationship between the two forces has been very good, and long

may it continue.

I will come back later.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Chairman, this Resolution allows for discussion on this general theme under various Heads and I propose to bring the discussion under Head 13 to a close on the understanding that the other matters will still engage the attention of the House particularly where it affects the fire services, the prisons and the police.

As I bring the discussion to a close, Sir, I would want to go back to the substance of the representation I made to the House and the country last week when I spoke to this issue. It is important that Barbados approaches the matter of preservation of law and order in a spirit of calm assurance with a determination to avoid panic and frantic solutions.

I am not going into discussion on the various aspects of the issue that would have been brought to my attention as Minister responsible for security but the reality is that at the core of the problem is activity by persons involved in illicit drugs who have branched now not only to other related activities but are using institutions of the civil society as instruments by which they operate.

Sir, when a criminal class is functioning as a separate and distinct class clearly one can have a direct response to dealing with it but when the criminal class is determined to use institutions of the civil society as the means by which they propagate their behaviour then one has to be very careful in the responses that one uses.

12:40 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR:

A lot of legit people going about their legitimate business can often be used in inappropriate ways to promote illegal activity. Young people on bicycles can be used and the only thing that we must not do in responding to this very serious matter is to convert Barbados into a virtual police state where merely because there is the appearance that certain groups are being used that we brand all others and we resort to what we call panic and frantic solutions. A part of the problem, Sir, is that crime and violence is random and irrational and there is the expectation on the part of the public and reasonably so too, that

you should have a police wherever somebody might get shot. This is entirely out of the realm of possibility because you cannot anticipate circumstances such as these.

Sir, what is before Parliament is part of what I call a calm but assured approach to trying to deal with these very difficult problems. It is going to take place and it will continue to work itself out in many different forms at many different levels. One of those forms where a calm assured approach has been made has been the use of the Defence Force, very quietly so, without any fanfare in a civilian context in collaboration with the police over an extended period of time under the provisions of the Defence Force Act at Section 3 where under a proclamation of the Governor General units of the Defence Force can be used for civilian purposes and that that use can be extended.

Sir, I do not want to make a fanfare out of it obviously but the truth is that for almost a year now a part of the fight against crime and drugs have been, in fact, the mobilisation of the Defence Force of Barbados precisely to work on this particular matter. Another aspect of it is to make sure that within the limits of our resources that the discipline forces of Barbados are provided with the equipment to get the job done. This is an important part of that initiative. Here, Sir, I include the Prisons as part of the disciplined forces of Barbados. There is no point our believing that the same sort of discipline system that applies in the Defence Force and the Police should not apply at the Prisons. We want to equip the Prisons as well.

Therefore, what is before Parliament is the first part, the down payment of a \$15 million package that is intended over the course of the next few years to provide the police, the Defence Force and the Prisons predominately with the rolling stock, the equipment and other facilities to greatly enhance their capacity to get the job done. The interest of the Government is to get the job done and we will do so within the limits of our resources.

The Leader of the Opposition raised issues about the Trident. Just to say that we have not only just repaired the Trident and changed engines but we have greatly enhanced its capacity in other important respects to be able to exercise greater surveillance. It is not just an old boat that has had a new engine but it is a boat that has a boost capacity and has been substantially upgraded. There are new facilities that are geared to allow the Trident to be more effective as a part of our surveillance activity.

The Trident will also be working in collaboration with the new aircraft that has been provided. Generally speaking, Sir, we recognise the need to substantially increase the surveillance. The upgrading of the Trident and the acquisition of an aircraft is part of that particular measure.

As regards the issue raised about the RSS. The RSS is restricted to the Eastern Caribbean. Members of the House, when you speak about it, must remember that. We have been trying to have mutual assistance agreements entered into between the RSS which is the Eastern Caribbean Barbados system and the other countries of the Caribbean. Whenever there is a perceived threat there is great enthusiasm in the other countries to want to enter mutual assistance agreements but when the threats subsides sometimes that interest subsides.

The RSS has for some time been interested in entering mutual assistance agreements with Trinidad, Jamaica and Belize so that the whole CARICOM region could come under the umbrella of well and clearly defined arrangements for the security of the region. It is a matter, Sir, that we should continue

to press on but the facts of the matter is that, as we saw in Haiti, and we saw the response to Grenada in 1983 and countries that have well established and long serving Defence Forces, are very disinclined to put those defence forces under a single command in the Caribbean. When the Caribbean functioned in Haiti it raised many interesting issues.

Sir, I could not leave this debate without saying, Sir, that the Government is greatly appreciative of the tremendous work that has been done by the men and women of the Barbados Defence Force sometimes under great trial and great difficulty. It would be very wrong to believe that the Defence Force has been allowed just to remain idle. It has now embraced a large number of functions all of which go to the new role of a Defence Force in a post war society. We cannot easily judge the tremendous contribution that the Defence Force has made in its sports programme where it has brought young men and young women off the streets and have been using the medium of sports to give them a new purpose in life and a new direction.

The Defence Force work in disaster preparedness and its responses to disaster has been enormous. Our Defence Force has, since its inception, successfully seen military operations in six different Caribbean and other societies - without loss of life, Sir.

I must say that where the Defence Force has been called upon to participate with the police in large civilian matters that they have done so in a way that has never yet evoked an issue. When the Defence Force under Section 3 of the Defence Act participate with the Police they do not have powers of arrest nor do they have powers of policing but they can assist the police. I say that to make the point in response to the issue made by the Leader of the Opposition I think we would begin to raise fundamental problems if you were to have the Defence Force designated as both special constables and members of the Defence Force at one and the same time. It is best, Sir....

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Let me clarify that point. I certainly do not think that would be possible or desirable at all. What I am saying is that since you may very well need to have additional persons to assist the police from time to time that you could so designate a core and transfer them under the control of the Commissioner for those purposes but they would not retain their role in the Barbados Defence Force and they would have the status commensurate with what they have to do on the streets. That is what I am speaking about.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the point I was making and I trust the Leader of the Opposition would take the point is that there is an arrangement in place under law, under proclamation of the Governor General for the Defence Force to be used under very clearly prescribed circumstances to carry out functions in collaboration with the police in the nature of civilian functions that may involve an element of policing. In those circumstances the Defence Force's role is not policing or to arrest anybody, they are there to assist the police. It has worked well. It has led to no incident, Sir. I believe that we will begin to blur the issue if any change is made that could even remotely have a Defence Force man out there as if he could arrest anybody or go into the province of policing. Sir, let us leave it that way. It is working reasonably well. If there is a problem that arises in the future perhaps we would want to revisit it but it is working well, there have been no incidents and I would think, let us leave the matter as it is.

Sir, I really have to make the point without having to derogate from the value of the police force that

there is a special consideration that must be made on behalf of the Defence Force that can no longer wait. Since its inception, the men and women of the Barbados Defence Force some of whom have six military operations, operate without gratuity or pension. There are the only section of the society in the public service who have to do that. Sir, the Defence Force Board has required that new regulations be devised to allow members of the Barbados Defence Force to be able to benefit by way of pensions ...

12:40 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

... and that matter, I am pleased to say, Sir, is at the stage where very shortly the Defence Force members will be in a position to enjoy a right to a pension or entitlement to a pension like all other persons who serve on behalf of the Crown.

I am saying that, Sir, if only because there will be a need for an enlarged provision to be made to the Defence Force. Many people feel that we have been extravagant before. The expenditure of the Defence Force in 1995 was \$19 million. In this year's Estimates only \$23.5 million were granted to the Defence Force so it has not been the beneficiary of any galloping allocation. From \$19 million to \$23 over five years is all it has received and it has been encouraged to be economical in the use of its resources and to be productive in its impact. But the time is upon us when, without prejudice to our commitment to the other disciplined forces that that long standing deficiency, Mr. Chairman, has to be resolved.

I want to end this contribution therefore, Sir, by raising an additional point. I made a statement earlier that what is becoming definitely difficult about the fight against crime, is that the criminal class is increasingly using institutions of the civil society to carry out their purposes. It is a difficult thing to respond to. It means that the members of the civil society will have to accept some sacrifices and will have sometimes to accept some unusual actions to help us to wrestle this down to the ground.

I will give you an example, Sir. There is no doubt that the fishing fleet of Barbados has been used and is being used and it is now being inadvertently woven into the network of the criminal class.

Sir, we cannot ignore it but at the same time we cannot operate in a way as to create a panic about the way in which legitimate fisherman, going about their legitimate business should be treated but it cannot be ignored. I cannot imagine that anybody could quarrel if at some time boats leaving, have to indicate that they are leaving and boats coming back to Barbados have to indicate when they have returned and I want to repeat that point. We have to come to the stage where boats leaving have to be registered and inform disciplined authorities when they are leaving and when they return. There has to be this process of notification because the reality is ...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR: I am saying that there has to be a formal process by vessels leaving this country. They have to inform some authority. Vessels coming into this country, Sir, have to inform some authority. In the case of other boats carrying cargo and aircrafts, we may have to contemplate a situation as a part of the response to this. It has to be considered and people will have to accept, Sir, that one is not trying to criminalize the fishermen but one is trying to put in place, a system to make sure that the institutions of the civil society do not become part of a corrosive network that undermines law and order in the country.

These are the kinds of things, Sir, which I feel become necessary, given the nature of what we have to deal with. I make the broader point that in every instance where institutions of the civil society in the course of their ordinary and lawful business are being used, not with their knowledge necessarily but often inadvertently and are being used nonetheless, by the criminal class to perpetuate criminal behaviour. We are going to have to conceive reasonable and judiciously applied regulations, to ensure that that dangerous alliance does not become a way of life in this country.

I sense, Sir, that the public is willing for the Government to take serious, progressive and enlightened measures, some of them new, to deal with this issue. I sense that the public will also be prepared to accept sacrifices and to support the new ways of doing things, if sometimes they involve a degree of inconvenience to which the public has not been accustomed.

I do not feel that any fishermen in Barbados should think that the Government is going to be trying to undermine their rights to a decent living, if we institute measures that would stop fishermen in the course of their ordinary business from being used as part of a criminal network. It is not only the fishermen, Sir, there are other sections of the Barbadian society where people are being drawn into a network and it has to be dealt with but at the end of the day I feel that this matter allows for an enlightened solution. It allows for a solution that avoids panic. It allows for a solution that does not convey a perception that Barbados does not know how to manage its affairs. It is in measures like this that we are before the House doing what we know we can do and that we must do. It is in measures like these, Sir, that we will find the solutions for our problems and it is in that context that I would like to move that Head 13 now stand part.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour, the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended for lunch until 200 o'clock today, Sir.

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

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12:50 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This sitting is resumed. When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and Mr. CHAIRMAN assumed the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Resumed)

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is in Committee of Supply.

HEAD 28 - MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, I will deal first with the Fire Service Department. As explained earlier, the Fire Service Department is also being re-equipped and outfitted. The sums sought under other expenditure relate to the down payment of 15 per cent in respect to the purchase of vehicles for the Fire Service Department. What we are planning to do is to purchase five additional water tenders; four landrover water tenders; three crash tenders; one hydraulic pump or platform ladder; one landrover station wagon and an official car. Of course, with this package all of these vehicles will be air-conditioned.

In January of this year, a large water tender, I believe, was delivered. The company known as Angloco is the company that is sourcing the requirements of the Fire Service Department. It is more than 10 years now that they have been supplying the Fire Service Department with vehicles and they have been doing an outstanding job for the department over the years. Every year we could look forward to the company sending a team here to help us maintain the vehicles, provide mechanical expertise and also provide overseas training for fire officers. Therefore, it was with no difficulty that it was agreed that Angloco should have the business to re-equip and re-tool the Fire Service Department.

Sir, just like the other package for the Barbados Defence Force (BDF), 15 per cent of the contract value is to be paid down and we have five years to pay off the remaining 85 per cent in 10 equal installments. The applicable rate of interest that Angloco has secured is 7.16 per cent. I do not know if Honourable Members would want any other information but really that is what I can say in respect of the purchase by the Fire Service Department.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is embarking on a strategic plan. Only yesterday we had a meeting of the various departments looking at the development of the sectoral strategic plans for the Ministry. It is a matter of considerable regret to me that the Government has not been able to secure that property at Six Cross Roads which was Plantations Limited. I had deeply wanted that to be a public centre for the St. Philip area where we could easily have housed a fire service department; a police station; a court; a library; a post office and a licensing facility. The private sector has apparently negotiated a purchase with the owners of that property. All of this is in the strategic plan and if my Heads are Sir, debated during the Estimates, I should have more to say.

Sir, it is clear that we need additional coverage for the Fire Service Department. Work is ongoing at Arch Hall, St. Thomas and that fire station should be completed before the end of this calendar year. We had one or two foundation problems not in terms of depth ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: That was part of the problem at Arch Hall. The rock was consistent for a part of the construction up front and then toward the back all of a sudden they hit a cave and we have put that to alternative use by using that space to create an area for water tanks and so on. It did delay the project by about some six weeks but we will soon be back on course.

I would like to hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy when he speaks on this. A couple years ago we had a plan that was developed by Richard Gill Associates and they recommended the placing of a station at Arch Hall; one at Nestfield in St. Lucy and one for the eastern side of the island.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The recommendation was that either Six Cross Roads or Newton should be used for the site. St. Philip is a fast developing housing area which is expected to grow. I read in the newspaper that some housing development is planned for that Plantation property at Six Roads by the private sector. The higher the density, the greater the need for the presence of a Fire Service Department close to the density. Of course, I think we should always have the presence of a fire station near oilfields and just west of Six Roads is the Woodbourne Oil facility.

Now that Six Roads have gone, perhaps we might be able to do it on lands on the other side of the road above what we use to call 'the Admiralty' in my days but I think it is the Admiralty facility which is east of Princess Margaret Secondary School and the library. There is land there.

I want to assure Honourable Members that in the long term planning for the Fire Service Department we are looking to expand right out to the north of the island. There is, I believe, some substantial investment and development being planned for the St. Lucy area. I am not saying any more on that at this stage. I know that there have been expressions of interest to the Government. I can foresee within the next eight years a station out at Nestfield or somewhere in that area and one in the eastern part of the island perhaps at Six Roads or in that vicinity and I think that will give the island adequate coverage.

Mr. Chairman, in anticipation of the Estimates debate, I am not going to go any further on that in relation to the Fire Service Department. I will turn now to the Prison.

As the Prime Minister indicated we are taking the opportunity in this package of suppliers credit to provide additional resources for ...

Asides.

2:15 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The package for the Prison is about US\$777 000. It includes a couple of cars. A pickup, a land rover for the dogs, an ambulance, tractor, boom sprayer, roller, disc harrow, plough, water tanker, clipper truck, two transport vehicles, a station wagon, an excavator, a loader.

I want to say that there is provision made also for spares and other contingencies in this package. That package will substantially improve the mobility of the Prison Service.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: There is only so much you can do. One of the problems of manpower at the Prison is associated with the demand on the Prison staff to ferry prisoners around the island to court during the day, so you find that you have to take the prisoners to District "E", Holetown, and perhaps District "F", in town, Oistins and all over the place. That puts pressure not only on the Police but also on the Prisons themselves because we have to send adequate personnel with those prisoners.

The kinds of vehicles they have for that operation at the moment are not the very best but this package will make them fully operational and capable of carrying out those functions of the movement of prisoners.

Generally, Sir, the Prison farm has worked well except for the last three months of last year. We got it back on track now. It saves Government in the vicinity of \$150 000 a year because, take, for example, the year 1998. We had done so well with the farms at Waterford and the Belle, opposite Lears, that we were able to feed the prisoners with a steady regular supply of vegetables, ground provisions and meat. We have a thriving animal husbandry business within the prison. It is my dream to get those animals out of the prison as fast as possible.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: We have to make sure that the prisoners have dietary arrangements which accord to the minimal stands set by the United nations otherwise we will have all kinds of constitutional cases.

Some of this equipment is to also help us with the better management and husbandry of the farms. I was saying that year before last we did so well that at Christmas time we even sold produce to the public such as green peas, cassava, yams and sorrel, I can recall to mind, Sir. I am very pleased with the effort being put in by the Farm Manager, Mr. Skeete and those officers who supervise the Prison Farm.

It is no secret, Sir, as I have spoken of this publicly but if I have not, certainly in negotiations with the Inter-American Development Bank which are ongoing, we are seeking funding and assistance from the IADB to help us develop a young offenders' institution.

Take Dodds - I saw some report in the Press, I am not sure it was accurate. They have about 18 actually committed boys and 10 remands, that is, 28 to a staff of 30 and a capacity at Dodds could hold 120 easily with the kinds of dormitory space you have along with the kitchen and dining facilities at Dodds. It seems to me that it would be a council of prudence to convert Dodds into a young offenders' institution dealing with first timers who require custodial treatment, non violent, low risk types, and then let us look for somewhere else to build a facility for the boys. It is true that the population of male juvenile offenders is dropping. I spoke about it Sunday in a programme that was done on Friday evening. It is something we have to study. We cannot account for it.

The girls are increasing a bit. The boys are dropping. Then, at a higher level, say between 17 and 24, that is the age group that you are getting problems. You see that 775 first offenders that I spoke of over the weekend, those are not of the age for Dodds. They are older. We are looking at a number of options.

The Inter-American Development Bank has responded very favourably when the Vice President came and met with me in December and went through the project. He responded very favourably to the concept we have for the development of the penal system on the custodial side.

As I said, from April the Penal System Reform Act with the non custodial punishments will take effect. We have permission at last from the Ministry of the Civil Service to create ten posts, five probation officers and five community service officers. That will be very much in hand. Now we have to turn our attention to the development of the custodial side. I wish the House to be assured that the Government has the vision, a plan, strategy and we are actively negotiating financial arrangements to help us make this plan happen.

I will not say anything about the Prison, Sir, in light of the enquiry. I do not think it is right. I will ask that this Head 28 stand part.

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, there were some matters that were left over from the previous debate. I think it would be wrong if the record of Parliament certainly was not corrected. I do so not only on behalf of the Democratic Labour Party but I thought somebody on the other side would have done so on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party when I heard the Attorney General say that this is the first time in the history of Barbados that Government would have made available to the protective forces all the equipment and so on they had requested.

In fact, if the Honourable Member for St. Thomas goes back to the 1984 debate on crime, one of the last and acrimonious debates in the recent era of politics in Barbados in which charges of drug trafficking, murder and a whole range of other things were thrown across the floor from side to side he would recall that the then Prime Minister indicated that the Barbados Labour Party had provided in one year the protective services with all the equipment they needed.

The only problem was that they did not have batteries to operate the equipment so they had walkie talkies with no batteries apparently, and the Honourable Member was Attorney General. I was waiting for that little reminder there.

There was a big debate in those days between Billy Wickham and the then Prime Minister over the fact that the Prime Minister, in explaining one of the problems the Police had with communication was that while they had the equipment there was a shortage of batteries.

2:25 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I am only jogging the Honourable Member's memory because I am certain the Honourable Member for St. George South would be very offended if the impression were given that this is the first time in the history of Barbados that any Attorney General has ever made available to the police all of the items that they legitimately required, because I am sure he was one to say that as Attorney General he did not starve the police of the things that they needed. I saw him squirming in his seat as the Honourable Member for St. Thomas was speaking and I thought I would speak up for him and let the record be clear.

There was a time since then in 1992 when we set up the foreign exchange committee. I will distinguish it from what the Attorney General is saying now by saying that what we did then was to identify all of the equipment that was needed and the Government together with the private sector went about getting this equipment and the private sector gave the police a number of vehicles and other assistance. We did not go to the market at that time because we were not able to do so with the economic crisis but because of the rising levels of crime an attempt was made and the private sector started what has now become its custom - I do not know if it still does it - of making vehicles available to assist the police.

We will give full support to any attempts to provide adequate resources to the Police Force, to the Fire Service and the Defence Force because we believe that they can all play an important role. At the same time, we want to make it clear, having myself reflected on that debate in 1984, I think it was a very counter productive exercise, a shameful exercise by the Parliament then, that was being engaged in and I do not think that on this side or on both sides we would ever wish to see the discussion of crime... In fact, the worst speech ever delivered by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was delivered then. The things that were said in the Chamber were pathetic and anybody wishing to reflect on what Parliament should not be all about should read that debate. But we have come a long way since that.

There is nothing on this side that should indicate to the Government that we will return to a situation where we will engage in the kind of posturing on these issues that were part of the record in the 1980s. What I would say though is that while drug use and the business of drugs is central to the problems that we face in relation to crime I still get the impression that we apply analysis to the problems of the use of marijuana for example, that do not square with the perception of marijuana of the majority of young people and some even from my age group.

Therefore the statistics which were recently revealed, whether confirmed or not, that 50 000 young Barbadians are actively using marijuana, is not surprising. As a Parliament, we need to be extremely clear and frank about our perception of the impact of this on our young people and also therefore need to use techniques other than the traditional techniques, because all of them have failed in explaining to young people what addiction to any substance, whether it is alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, cocaine or any of the other more dangerous drugs, is all about.

Part of the problem we have now is that we are not accepting that the majority of young people in Barbados do not think that marijuana is in any way dangerous. They do not consider it to be a drug. They do not consider it to have any impact negatively on their health. They believe it is part of their normal daily round. Therefore, I believe that to tackle a problem like that is going to require much more than the police turning up in a district and jumping out of a jeep and running into a crowd of

young people some of whom may have a small spliff smoking at the time.

There is nowhere in Barbados where young people are gathered that you will not find marijuana being openly smoked, whether it is on the street corners, football matches. Early Saturday mornings fellows get up to gather, smoke marijuana and meditate as a matter of - I cannot put it as high as religious celebration - but that is what they view it as. Therefore to tackle it or to deal with it or to start to focus on its impact is going to require more than a focus on giving the police vehicles.

The Police themselves have to recognise that it goes very much deeper and I believe that the first thing that the Attorney General should do ... First of all, I think that the Committee you have set up is too slow to meet. We need to meet and we need to discuss the respective roles of the Police Force and the Defence Force. Let us put that on the agenda. Let us look at the limits that will be extended in terms of the operation of each. Let us meet before the Estimates because I would like to be able to come to the Estimates and say that we have started the discussions on these critical issues. If you cannot do it then as soon thereafter as possible.

The second point that needs to be looked at is this question of the use of marijuana. We need to look at it in that committee but beyond that study that has been done by the Youth Affairs Department which, once it is confirmed, is very helpful, we need to carry out some further study. Only this morning as I was dropping my wife to school she was mentioning to me about the impact of marijuana on some of the athletes and how they perceive marijuana. Some believe it helps them. They honestly believe that it has a very positive therapeutic effect on them and that sometimes when you have to single out some of the better students and speak to them about the company - as we would say - they are keeping, they do not perceive that another student who may be suffering from addiction that it is in fact the use of marijuana that is at the root of the problem.

Therefore, as we would have felt as young people at 15 and 17 in terms of the prevalence of marijuana, there has become a softening of our views on the impact, both because of our experience as young people but, more than that, there has become even a greater softening by educators by even the Police as I have mentioned and there is a perception among young people that this is not a drug, just as there is a perception among people that there is nothing wrong with drunk driving.

We live in a country in which on any given Friday or Saturday night if you apply the rules that are applicable in the United States - the other day I was in New York and I met some fellows who grew up with me in Fitts's Village who had a designated driver - the designated driver in Barbados is probably likely to be the person who has consumed the most alcohol not the least because we do not have the same record and perception and sensitivity about it.

While we are softening our views in relation to marijuana, we are still at the same time requiring the police to carry out a herculean task in relation to trying to deal with the presence of illegal drugs on the streets. We have to decide which direction we are going in. Are we going to toughen our stance, take a strong zero tolerance approach to it, commit significant resources to the removal of marijuana, carry out a massive public education programme to demonstrate the effects of this particularly on the minds of young people and also show the extent that it also corrupts the rest of the society because of the informal nature of the activities and try also to determine how it is that such a culture or if you wish to call it a sub-culture has been able to develop so pervasively in Barbados?

Who is stockpiling it? Who is masterminding the distribution of it and all of the other range of scenarios? It is probably easier in some parts of Barbados to get marijuana than it is to get a newspaper on a Sunday or Saturday morning. So that must tell you something about the extent to which it has reached very deeply into the tentacles of almost every community in this country. We need to understand fully its impact and send a very clear unequivocal signal about where we stand on the issue because, as I said, sometimes I get the impression that there are ambivalent views and perspectives. I believe we need to have a common and very strong policy in relation to this.

Therefore I want to hear from the Attorney General, it does not have to be now it can be in the Estimates debate, if we get to this Head, what the Government's position is, particularly in relation to the question of marijuana. The debate has resurfaced again and, as I say, I think it needs a thorough and extensive analysis.

I return only for a minute to say that the reason why I think the Barbados Defence Force and the Royal Barbados Police Force could very well go before the Committee is because since the Attorney General has said that he is seeking creative solutions to deployment of the military in relation to issues of law and order perhaps coming out of a discussion in that Committee we may be able to work out how best this can be done in an acceptable way that Parliament as a whole agrees to. I think that is very important.

Getting to the third issue which is the one at Six Roads, I believe that by and large on both sides of the House we share the Attorney General's vision for Six Roads.

2:35 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON:

I am extremely disappointed to think of the fact that private sector needs it. There are many other areas around there that could be utilised. That building has been in disuse for certainly six or seven year. It is running to ruin and I believe that with a little investment, Government, as it did with the Post Office, could have had it operational.

More importantly, a lot of young people use that facility to play netball and basketball because other

than Princess Margaret I do not think they are any major sporting facilities in the area so it could have accommodated sporting facilities and cultural and other facilities quite easily. I am very disappointed to hear that Six Roads will not be used for that purpose. All I can do is express the disappointment and hope that the situation is not irreversible because Government still has the power if it wishes to acquire the property and put it to uses that we as Barbadians think are most appropriate.

Thank you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, my intervention is a very brief one. I am particularly moved to associate myself with the remarks of the last speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition as it relates to the issue of understanding the nature to which our society has evolved and how best we can treat within the criminal justice system, some of these issues that have gone ahead of us in terms of the development of attitudes and the development of mores in our society.

There is absolutely no doubt that thirty years ago to find someone in Barbados charged with possession of marijuana was indeed a rare thing. Indeed, when it started it was very clear that it was amongst those who had access to a lot of money and was seen as part of a privileged class and was certainly not something that was widely used. Equally, when the presence of cocaine was found in persons who went before the law courts, once again, they were persons who were perceived to be from a privileged class. What is interesting is that in both instances, in the usage of marijuana and in the usage of cocaine, there has been a trickle down effect to the point where once the prices started to fall they became common place in their usage. Indeed, one only now has to visit a magistrates court to know that a large part of a magistrate's work on a daily basis is now consumed with adjudicating on issues of innocence or guilt for possession and/or trafficking of illegal substances.

What is interesting is that I do not know that we as a society have come to grips with the extent to which it has permeated the society. We talk about it, maybe in polite conversations but I am not sure that we are yet in a position even now to evolve the kind of strategic and sensitive policies that may make the difference between saving a society and human beings within the society rather than just enforcing laws for the sake of enforcing them because the rule of law must be maintained.

If, therefore, I think there is to be recognition that this is not a problem that the Government alone confronts, this is not a problem that the Opposition confronts, this is a problem that faces all Barbadian families largely because there are very few families who can say that they are immune from the existence of someone within the family having had some form of addiction or another. I think, therefore, that what is required is a national response that seeks to articulate first what we feel and how we feel about, not just Government, but indeed all of the stakeholders within the society.

I believe that the Leader of the Opposition's call for us to address this in a Select Committee that is established on law and order is an appropriate first step. I think that there must be national consultation on the impact of illegal drugs but in particular marijuana as separate from the rest of illegal drugs because we live in a society where culturally within the Caribbean persons have, as the Leader of the Opposition said, softened their attitudes towards the usage of marijuana. We also live in a world where although the American Government requires of us to have strong anti-drug policies, they have, within their own jurisdiction, a state that has legalised the usage of marijuana. Therefore, when one tries to reason with persons who support the legalisation of marijuana in Barbados that this thing is illegal you

are immediately faced with retort that the very country that asked us to be most aggressive with them in the fight against marijuana has within the laws of their lands a situation where it is legal to use the very same substance.

I believe that we as Barbadians have to sit down and assess where we are and what we feel should be the situation. The Economist magazine, Mr. Chairman, twice in the last decade wrote feature articles on the need to legalise substances that were now currently illegal, typically marijuana and in fact, they went as far as cocaine. One article came out in the early 1990s and the other came out in the mid 1990s. I do not know how many Honourable Members would have seen it but I particularly remember it because it struck me that a magazine as conservative normally as the Economist, for them to be calling for the legalisation of illegal substances was so far from the stances that they would otherwise have taken, that it merited reading to see what their reasoning was. Their reasoning was simple. They felt that the criminalisation of illegal substances did a number of things. Not only did it make it expensive but it made it profitable for criminals to exploit the usage and trafficking of these substances. They also felt that by it remaining a criminal offence, that Government was unable to legalise the regulations that governed the quality of the substance.

They produced figures to show that the majority of persons who died from usage of illegal substances died as a result of the product containing impurities or of the product having excessive quantities of chemicals that it would not have were it legalised. They gave the example of alcohol and argued that were we to allow, for example, homemade alcoholic substances that very often the impurities in them or the failure to meet the specified regulations for content of the substance would also have a similar impact on people's health.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I am not a chemist, nor am I a doctor, nor am I a biochemist so I do not know the extent to which there is veracity of these things but what I do know, Mr. Chairman, is that we have a duty to do further investigation rather than simply listening to edicts from persons in the north Atlantic who speak one thing but legislate another thing. We have a duty to consult among ourselves because very often in my canvassing I meet older people who tell me that pear leaf ...

2:45 p.m.

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Continuation Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY:

... tea and sour sop leaf tea used to be hallucinogenic and that these leaves were very often boiled up and used regularly among the population and very often had some of the same impact on the human body as any other substance that may transform our sense of reasoning, as does alcohol.

Mr. Chairman, I am not calling for the legalisation of anything, I am simply saying that there must be a national consultation because I believe that as a Government we must respond to the greater good for the society, whatever that greater good is.

I also believe that it is important, Mr. Chairman, that we recognise whether we like it or not the majority of persons under the age of 40 years old in Barbados today see absolutely nothing wrong with the usage of marijuana in moderate quantities. I may not use it or I may not agree with it but the reality is that that is the pattern we are fighting and when a law moves so far from social acceptance then, we have to ask a question whether that law in fact can be maintained through enforcement or whether we are prepared to undermine the rule of law by allowing that law to be observed in the breach.

Now, I am one who believe that any time we undermine the rule of law we tinker with how society stays together as a functioning unit and I would want to see that decisions are taken before we undermine the rule of law by ensuring that we observe a law born in the breach that it is typical and complies.

I therefore simply want to say that I look forward to the Select Committee Meeting on this issue. It is a fascinating issue. It is one that is going to require the national consultation but it is one that will also require some more detailed expert studies than none of us are in a position to give at this point in time. I hope that recognition on the part of all of us, the church, the civil society, the Opposition, the Government, that what we are fighting for now is for the future of this society and the future of our children, recognizing that when so many of them have gone outside of the loop in terms of believing that something is acceptable when the law says it is not. In spite of the fact that many of them have benefitted from mature guidance and mature supervision from either their families, the church or the school and they still feel the way that they feel, then we have an obligation to sit down, talk to them, do the research, and come to a sober judgment as to what our policies should be with respect to it.

Believe you me, Mr. Chairman, anyone who doubts this, doubts that he or she is living, the impact of drugs in this society is so perverse that it is the biggest single constraint to our national development if we do not grapple with how we are going to deal with it at the level of the individual, at the level of the community and at the level of the country over all. You cannot divorce it also from the cultural aspects of it because we know that it has a very close linkage with certain aspects of our culture which continue to be legal and will continue therefore in a way to promote types of behaviour that we may feel counter productive to what we are trying to promote at this stage.

If we want to maintain the rule of law, if we want to maintain the future as we feel it should be, then we need to have this national consultation as a matter of urgency.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman I rise to speak on this Supplementary Head 28. I observed when the Honourable Member for St. Thomas was speaking, and he can correct me on this, I thought I heard, while not being in this room that the vehicles that were coming for Fire Service were going to be air-conditioned vehicles?

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I hope that there would be not be any additional cost to the Government, because I cannot understand why a Fireman will be going to a fire or coming from a fire and would want to be driving in an air-conditioned vehicle. I would also like to say that while we are on this particular Head that deals with the Fire Service, I would like to ask the Attorney General to make haste and make sure that those men who have to work very hard that they get a reduced number of hours. I think that it is regrettable now that we are in the year 2000 that Firemen are being asked to work sometimes...

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS: On a point of order, Sir, in 1985/1986 when I became Attorney General the hours for Firemen came down. Since this Government has been the Government the hours are down to 42, with the provision of the 50 posts. When they were taken on, the Civil Establishment Order which I agreed in here last year August, the week before we closed off, 50 new fire officers were to be recruited. This is what the Chief told me fortunately just Friday, last week. This would bring them down to 42 hours per week, very close to the 40 Hours.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am very grateful for that information, but I would still make the point. I look forward to the day, Sir, when the Firemen in this country are working a 40-hour week, just like anybody and when they are allowed to work an 8-hour shift instead of a 12-hour shift. I think it is sometimes a bit too taxing when you have to do a job like the job they do and are called upon to work for 12 hours

Regarding the Police Force, on the 17th February I was listening to my particular radio station - I am fortunate I listen to two - that particular day before I left for New York and I heard a news item stating that the Police Force was going to get \$5.3 million in the next Supplementary coming to the House of Assembly.

When I look through this particular Supplementary, I am seeing a Supplementary for \$5.4 million. I recall that one very well because before leaving the island, I issued a press release also, congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Thomas for praising himself, after starving the Police Force for six years and then giving them all in one lump sum and I congratulated him for the record amount. But what is amazing, Sir, that now I am looking at the Supplementary, I cannot find that \$5.3 million for the

Police Force. I cannot even find the \$9 million for the vehicles.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: You are not doing the whole thing? While we are on the prisons, I would like to tell the Attorney General that they must understand that the prison services must be treated the same way you treat the Defence Force and you treat the Police and the personnel at the Prisons must be recruited on the same standards.

2:55 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

It seems to me that in order to get a job as a prison warder in Barbados that you have to be a friend of somebody. It does not matter whether you are capable or not to perform the job you are sent to the Prison to work and some of them do not even know how to use a gun. I am saying that we need to recruit a better type of person to secure our prisoners because it is clear to me that we are not doing the right things at the Prison.

We also have a serious situation with the surveillance monitor at the Prison and I honestly thought that we would have seen a situation here today where the Attorney General will be coming for some money to put a proper surveillance monitor there. It is regrettable that we can have a Prison like the one we have, with the type of Prisoners like the ones we have, and we do not have proper surveillance monitors there.

I have said earlier in this House that we are taking the drug problem in this country too lightly. I am

convinced that we have external forces within Barbados who have an agenda to make sure that they take over Barbados unlike the way they take over Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana.

I was very happy to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East making a very significant point in which she said that in the early '70s' - she said the early '70s' but in truth and in fact it would have been the late '70s' - that there were only certain people in this country who were able to buy marijuana and those certain people use other people to peddle the marijuana for them. It has now got to a stage where every young man 'on the block' feels that he has a right to peddle marijuana in this country without even recognising that they are selling the substance to destroy their own. That is the problem we have in Barbados. We must let these people understand that if they continue at the rate they are going that they are going to destroy every single young man in this country. I feel for the young women in this country because when they finish destroying the young men it is quite obvious that those people will bring in men to marry our young women.

I am saying that we need to look at the particular problem and study it and understand what it is going on. I am saying that the same way Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana were treated in a particular way that we are not unique. The only thing different about us is that we have the numbers. This is a serious problem. This is an external problem. People feel that they could hide behind blinds and give the impression that they are so good and that they are helping the country but at the same time they are destroying the country and there are people who are prepared to walk with them and brag about how well they are doing for the country. This is foolishness. On one hand they are doing well for the country but on the other hand they are destroying the country in a way that is worst than what they are doing for the country.

I am saying that politicians must be prepared to stand up and talk about these people because if we do not do it, we are going to destroy Barbados and then people like us would be second class citizens within our own country. It is all about money in this country. These people understand how to fight wars and they bring their culture to our country where we do not understand how to fight wars. A gun is a tool for them because in their country a gun is a tool and they have brought that culture to Barbados and now I am seeing the young men in my country believing that guns are tools - foolishness.

We have to get to the root of the matter and we have to strengthen the hands of the police. That is I why I made the suggestion earlier that we need to bring over at least 300 men from the Barbados Defence Force (BDF) to work with the police because they need that type of power. We are fighting people who are very aggressive and we need to get those aggressive people to deal with that particular culture. There is a belief in this country that people could come in here and do whatever they like without understanding that the culture which they are bringing to this country is destroying the moral fabric of our young people.

We should go to the primary schools and ask the youngsters at the primary level who are their heroes. You will be shock to hear whom those children see as their heroes. They are not like us. A man smoking a marijuana cigarette next to another person now is a normal thing. It does not mean that the other person is smoking too but he feels that is nothing wrong. That is his friend.

For those of us who believe that the legalising marijuana is good, I need them tell me how many people are at 'Jenkins' and how many went down there because of marijuana and cocaine. The first day

that they can produce statistics that sound promising to me, I might be prepared to listen to them but they must first bring the hard facts to me. Let me tell you something, the day they get through with legalising marijuana, the next day they will be with cocaine and heroin. I am saying that the mere fact that we entertain that subject it means that they will be prepared to elevate it.

In this politics of inclusion, people feel that they have a right to say anything and just because they are on the hill they have a right to advocate anything in this country. I am saying that these people have got to understand that this country cannot continue to be a selfish country. The problem within this society is that we are developing a middle class who believes that everything must point in their direction and they just do not care about anybody else under them. That is bad because if we are serious about this country we must recognise that we must be prepared to carry along everybody with us in the right way.

We as politicians must understand that some of the messages we sent to people just to get a vote is not right and we must stop that foolishness. Sometimes we give a person the impression that they could do anything and we will protect them just to get a vote - foolishness.

Asides

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying to you that we must understand that we cannot continue to turn a blind eye to these things just to get a vote. I know exactly what I am talking about. Some people feel that once you are a politician they can approach you and you will give them anything. I am saying this today in this House and if it would cost me my seat, I just do not care. I am not encouraging anybody so when they come to me asking me for money to buy drugs, I am sorry, they have got the wrong man. I do not care how they want to deal with me let them deal with me because I am not encouraging that.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We need also to understand the fishing industry in this country. I am calling on the Attorney General to make sure that he provides adequate resources to protect the fishermen in this country. I will not get too deep in this debate because fishing is something I like too. I have made a conscious decision since the early '80s' that I am not even going on a pleasure boat because the sea as I see it now is not the same sea I saw in the '70s' when I use to go fishing with my step-grandfather boats. I had a dream in life that I wanted a cabin cruiser and every weekend I would have spent my time ...

Asides

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I had a dream in life where I wanted a cabin cruiser and I had to give up that dream because I am not prepared to go out to sea and let anybody bump me off. I want better protection for my fishermen because sometimes they are forced to do things that they are not willing to do.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am saying to the Attorney General that we need to provide the Coast

Guard and the police with enough ammunition to protect our fishermen because there are some people who feel that they have a right to harass the fishermen and do whatever they like with them. Our fishermen must not be used. A word to the wise is enough.

I thank you.

3:05 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, just to briefly lend my voice to this debate. I would want to begin, perhaps, by commending the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for clearly enunciating his position with reference to the use of marijuana, in particular.

In this context though I would also want to compliment the Honourable Member for St. John as well as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East for their analyses of the problem with reference to the extent to which it has permeated the social landscape and become part of the social dynamic of Barbados.

I believe the analyses were very well presented. However, I have to express some degree of disappointment in the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. John, as well as that of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, because at the end of both presentations I am left a bit uncertain as to what their position is with respect to the use of marijuana.

I understand the call for consultation. I understand the call for greater research into the problem and the extent to which the problem does exist but my disappointment is taken against the backdrop of the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, the Attorney General who at the last sitting was very unequivocal and clear in his position that there is absolutely no way, unless I am mistaken, I think this is what I heard, he would support in any fashion the legalisation of the use of marijuana in Barbados.

I think the Honourable Member for St. John cautioned his ambivalence for sending a signal which is ambivalent on this matter but yet, at the end of his presentation, I was left absolutely uncertain where he stood on this matter. I would have preferred to have heard a clearly defined position from himself, as was the case with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

My position is clear. I hope it is clear. I stand with the Attorney General on this. I cannot see myself supporting any legalisation of the use of marijuana in this country. Though consultation might serve a useful purpose, and though further research ...

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. I have had to wait with baited breath for those words to come from the Honourable Member who is dancing on a pinhead in this debate. I hope he will let me elucidate by saying that at no time in my presentation did I deal with the issue of legalisation of marijuana. I dealt with the ability of the police to fight a problem that is growing beyond the issue of law enforcement.

The law is clear. I do not have to have a position on the law. I have not moved a resolution to change the law. The use of marijuana in Barbados is illegal and I support the present law. What I am saying is that the way in which the Police are required to enforce this law with a softening of attitudes around it, makes it very difficult for the police, and that even people who say they support it, have ambivalent views about the use of marijuana, and that is the position.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, it seems to me that I am further confused because I am hearing the Honourable Member for St. John say that people who say that they support it, that is the law as it stands, have ambivalent views. I do not know if my understanding is somewhat clouded, but if in one breath I say I support it and then in the next breath I say even those who support it seem to have ambivalent views, it seems to me quite an easy step to reach the conclusion that one might be ambivalent in one's presentation on the subject and I am left still with that uncertain view.

My position is clear. Though consultation and research might serve some good purpose, when one considers the criminal deviant behaviour already clearly established as being associated with the use of this, when one observes the lack of purpose reflected in the lives of many of those who obviously give themselves to the use of such, when one observes that many of them are part of the drop-out culture, if you can call it that, that obviously exists around us, when one thinks in terms of the addictive potential and capacity of such drugs, when one sees the picture of almost "soulessness" that seems to exist in these moving bodies, one cannot repose one's stance upon the outcome of any future consultation with reference to whether or not one would support legalisation of such use.

I believe we need to be clear. If we are going to offer strong leadership in the area of tackling crime, as has been the loud and clear call, then we must be clear and not ambivalent in the signals we send with reference to the matter of the use of these drugs.

I would like to speak a little bit about increased resources for the Fire Service. I would want to commend them for the recent very quick and adequate response to a fire emergency at Prescod Bottom which is a very densely populated area in St. Michael West. It was a very quick response which prevented what could have been a major catastrophe in this densely populated area just a couple of weeks ago.

Again, we saw the very obvious community-mindedness in the sense of community spirit that obviously exists in places such as this where a band of youth made the first and ready response to the emergency and helped to salvage much of what might have been lost had the fire been left unattended until the official fire fighting party arrived, and perhaps, even saved lives because we are talking of a

situation where there was a handicapped person who was a part of the occupancy of one of the homes.

I point to this because I want to reiterate a position which I have advocated before. We see this time and time again where young fellows in an emergency such as this make the initial response, a very ready response, but they do this with willing hearts. They do this with untrained hands and so far the results have been commendable.

One of these days, because of this lack of training in dealing with these types of emergencies, somebody is going to be hurt. I am simply stressing again the view that I believe the Fire Service in some kind of a context which would not cost too much can, perhaps, devote some of this energy, time and focus toward providing some measure of limited training for these young people who in these situations, densely populated areas, where it takes the Fire Service time to respond, can make that initial response in a better trained fashion and perhaps can even do a better job than they have done up to now.

Of course, it raises the whole matter of insurance on these properties. The house which was destroyed at Prescod Bottom was uninsured. The house next door which was slightly damaged, but not destroyed, was also uninsured. It raises that issue again.

I believe something needs to be done to address this business of legislating for mandatory insurance on properties and Government provision, to some extent, in some form of insurance coverage for these homes in these working-class communities especially among people who are unemployed or pensioners et cetera.

3:15 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY:

Another issue which comes to the fore in this connection is the matter of shelter for those who were deprived of their homes in such situations. It is a real battle and I believe other Members of Parliament find it so. When a home is lost to a fire it seems a very difficult thing to be able to secure shelter for such persons who are suddenly deprived of their homes.

I want to speak briefly to the matter of resources for the prison, and the Minister of Home Affairs has already alluded to the farm programme as a very positive continuing development at the prison and where these resources are made more adequate for the prison the farm programme can perhaps be further developed to help in the rehabilitative work of the inmates of the prison but also to help with the economic cost of administering the prison.

The development of a canine section at the prison is also very critical to the security. Concerns relative to the prison and the ability to be mobile for this section is also of importance. A canine section when properly developed will help with the business of keeping track of possible illegal drugs coming into the prison, control of the prison population, especially in times of disturbances or potential disturbances and in the matter of potential or real escapes at Glendairy Prison.

Sir, I would want to support the measure led by the Minister of Home Affairs for increased resources to the prison as well, but I believe that Government needs perhaps to exert a great degree of firmness with reference to the use of vehicles given to public departments. We have heard of the misuse of these vehicles and the questionable use of these vehicles or the use of these vehicles in questionable activities or by persons perhaps not authorised for the use and of course the careful use to minimise the potential for damage is something about which we have to be concerned because there is a cost that attends that.

Just one more point before I sit, Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence, and that is we can give resources to facilitate the development of the systems that we have in place; we can give resources to facilitate the task which people are assigned but we must also bear in mind that we must never let go of that reference to resources which are necessary for the well-being and protection of those who serve within these systems and those who are assigned these tasks.

With reference to the prisons, for instance, I think a case may be made out perhaps for better or improved communication equipment for prison officers who are on duty inside the prison. I think that that is important and also safety equipment which helps in the face of threat perhaps from infections and other dangers such as that.

That would be my contribution, Mr. Chairman. I thank you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, in mentioning the possibility of new fire stations and so on I would like the Attorney General to acknowledge that we need to have a proper land use policy. The sugar industry as it stands now is not the sugar industry that we had before and we have to think about it in terms of the way houses are being built. We cannot look at a fire station anymore for controlling cane fires. It has to be now for the protection of houses and where we have located fire stations we also have to think about the possibility of shifting some to other locations.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, I wish quickly to respond. When I spoke about the plan that was developed by Richard Gill for additional fire stations, I was careful not to locate that development in cane fields or with reference to cane lands. I spoke about the propensity for housing development in St. Philip South and that was one of the considerations that influenced the recommendation to put a fire station either at Six Roads or in Newton as Mr. Gill said.

I mentioned that Government was aware of an interest in a very substantial development in the St.

Lucy area not so much for cane fires but if you have concentrations of housing you have to make sure that your fire coverage is there and takes that into account.

Sir, just one other point on the question of surveillance monitors. Two years ago the Government spent US \$134 000 to put in for the first time an electronic surveillance system in the prison. That system has worked well until last year. Why it had problems in the summer of last year on the very day that Hall escaped I am not going to go into now. I expect that the Commissioner who is conducting the enquiry will make certain findings.

I have a report from the people who installed them and I am not seeking to prejudice the enquiry so I am not going to say anything. Only this, that it was a very satisfactory system. However, we have been advised that we need an additional \$60 000 to fully upgrade it. It is being aimed for that to be done in the next financial year. When I invited the people from Trinidad up here on the second Wednesday in December they told me there was nothing wrong with the system and they explained to Mr. Belgrave what went wrong. I will speak to the Honourable Member behind the Speaker's Chair later on but what went wrong is a very serious matter. Do not let us get further into that because it is under adjudication.

Sir, I am grateful to the Honourable Members who explored the problems with marijuana. I made it clear last week what is my position and the Government's position. Personally, I am totally against the use of marijuana. I have not been convinced that it even has any medicinal properties that I hear about. Professionally, I am against the use of marijuana. As a member of the Government I am against the use of marijuana. The Government itself is against the use of marijuana.

In 1988, as I explained last week, the Government of Barbados then constituted, with the support of the Opposition, signed the Vienna Convention against illicit traffic in drugs. There was a special session last year. One of the three Americans are signatories to it because they force people to sign these things and they themselves do not. Check out the Law of the Sea! In June 1988, there was a special session on drugs. All 189 countries of the world reiterated their commitment to continued treating of marijuana and other psychotropic substances as illegal and the Government has an international obligation to stand up to.

Having said that, I believe on this Floor 18 months ago I pointed out and it was carried in the Press that the Government of the United States of America sends mixed signals to the world because, in California, apart from allowing it to grow, they grow it and now in the Economist magazine earlier this year you would have seen an article about Canada. It says, Canada Goes to Pot. The article was about the growth of marijuana in Canada.

These are the countries that put pressure on the small countries to take certain positions but we will have an opportunity I hope in another debate to discuss at some time this matter more fully. Let it be clearly understood the Government's position is that we have to be firm against the use and abuse of marijuana.

3:25 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS:

I think it was the Honourable Member who said it supported by the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs. We ourselves have seen the damage that use of marijuana does to the human person and personality. We see them walking the streets of this country like zombies, unable to carry on a coherent conversation, with no desire to do anything, no ambition and this thing is eating away at the human capital of our society. That is really why I set my face so firmly against marijuana.

I was the first lawyer in Barbados in the 1970s to do the marijuana cases. Pops, Holder and Hannah were the first three. Her father and I did them one after the other and did not lose. We exposed the weakness in the law because under the old 1936 Act all you had to do was to get the analyst who came to say that he could not tell whether the sample was the pistillate part of the plant or not. We used to put that to the analyst all the time, can you say that this, whatever it was, is the pistillate part or the other part. He would say, No, I can't. And the case was won. You will see that in 1975, Dr. Caddle came here and changed the law because we were winning these cases to say that cannabis, no matter what part of the plant, pistillate or otherwise, cannabis, however called, once you had cannabis, you were liable. We had to find new strategies to win the cases after that.

Sir, I like the debate on this to go on because we must always recall the experience of Holland. We should see what has happened in Holland where marijuana was legalised and see how it has affected social relations in that country. How it has destroyed young people and they are throwing their hands up now. They do not know what to do because they legalised it for certain purposes and destroyed a generation. Sir, we will come back to that another time. I give the Members of the Committee the assurance that as soon as we can get everybody together at a convenient time we will have that first meeting.

Sir, I beg to move that Head 28 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 30 - ATTORNEY GENERAL.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, the sum required here, for the sake of the Honourable

Member for St. Lucy, the money being spent for the police is \$5 247 037. That, Sir, is meant to buy staff cars; 46 patrol cars; 2 chase cars; 32 patrol vehicles - 4x4; two 32 seat buses; 2 prison transport vehicles; armour car; about twenty something motor cycles, 2 mobile police stations; ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: We can train people to ride them. If not we can hire you. Four all terrain motor cycles; 6 precinct motor cycles and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would be pleased to hear this we are buying for the police a 40 ft patrol boat.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Well, between them and the coast guard they have to work out how they will deal with those operation. I cannot tell them but I have confidence that the two forces will be able to operate, one will do the in-shore and one will do further out.

Sir, I want to say something about this package. It consists of a variety of vehicles. Some of the police cars are Opel Vectras, Opels, BMWs ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Those are for the heavy boys. There are Discovery Landrovers and Pajeros. For the Defence Force there are Rovers, Peugeotts, Pajeros, Kawasakee motor cycles, Landrovers ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I am trying to give you a fair view. The Prisons will have Peugeotts, Mitsubishi, Landrovers, Rovers and all kind of vehicles but in such quantities that we will be able to effect some economic cost.

Sir, this package for the police is another step in the fulfillment of the ten-point strategy that was outlined in October. We explain last week that that ten-point plant will form the basis of the Green Paper which is being worked on in the Task Force on crime prevention.

Just to run through it, Sir. I said on October 9th last year that we have an integrated holistic strategy using programmes which have worked. That we are dealing with the question of poverty through the Ministry of Social Transformation, the question of unemployment you will see that as evidence in the recent statistics where it has come down to 9.8%.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: A number of these strategies are working. Sir, I am just running through the ten points to show what is happening. The first one was continuing research through the Task Force on crime prevention to inform strategies against crime. That is happening - not at the pace that I am happy with and certain changes are going to be made to make the Task Force more responsive and do

more research that is evidence-based in order to inform future strategies. Sir, we are dealing with early interventions among children and families at risk. Diagnostic testing is on going in the Ministry of Education.

The third strategy was the development of informal social controls. I must say that that is one that the Cabinet Committee on social policy will be developing. Not much has happened there. In respect of point No. 4 of the ten-point plan, it says strengthening the resources of law enforcement agencies. Sir, this package of \$22 million ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The total package is \$22 million. We have come for the 15% today to pay down. That is a fulfillment of this strategy to strengthen the resources of law enforcement agencies.

Another one, Sir, is to increase direct intervention with drug users through the National Council of Substance Abuse. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked about what we are doing - he did not say it in these words but he wants to know what we are doing about demand reduction. The National Council of Substance Abuse started with a budget in 1996 of \$549 000. In the year 2000 to 2001, the next financial year, its budget will be \$1.3 million. We are expanding gradually the staff so that we can do the outreach in the various schools and it is working well. I said last week that the Penal System Reform Act to provide more sentencing options was one of the strategies, that will come on stream in April. Developing greater constituency in sentencing practice was the Bill last week. I am concerned for Honourable Members to appreciate that the elements in the ten point strategy are being dealt with by action.

3:35 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS:

Having outlined the broad strategies there are certain particular initiatives that we are taking in respect of each one of those strategies.

Sir, I therefore beg to move that Head 30 stand part.

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

HEAD 34 - MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AFFAIRS AND CULTURE

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 34 stand part.

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

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

HEAD 38 - MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND LANDS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I Chairman, I beg to move that Head 38 stand part.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one money Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Resolution was read a first and a second time and passed and the title agreed to.

ORDER NO. I - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF LAND AT BRERETON, ST. PHILIP, TO ASSIST THE CORPORATION IN ITS CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Resolution before the Honourable House seeks to vest lands, 197.3 square metres in Brereton Village, St. Philip in the National Housing Corporation. It was agreed some three years ago that all the lands former public baths, vacant lots along the ABC Highway disused properties and properties of a residual nature should be vested in the National Housing Corporation in order to carry out their capital works programme.

This property at Brereton in St. Philip is not being used now as a bath but we are hoping that the

National Housing Corporation could sell this property so that the proceeds could be used in their capital works programme. This Resolution has been examined by the Attorney General and has been certified for its introduction to Parliament.

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

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for seeing me and I know you are one for procedure.

Mr. Speaker, this is about the second time that we are before this House to deal with public baths and I think it is a waste of time because we in this House approved the sale of public baths to certain people a couple of years ago and if you were to visit these baths you would not believe the state that they are in since we agreed to sell those baths to the people who were willing to buy them.

I am calling on this House to direct the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation to reduce the cost of those properties to the people who agreed to buy the properties, because when they first bid on those properties, the values were much higher but if you are selling them because of the building, I will advise this House to reduce the cost.

I can give you an example of one. The building at Crab Hill was a good building and if you pass there today, Sir, it is dilapidated and it is not fair to the person who had good intentions of developing that particular bath of having to pay the same price. I am saying that the Government has to find a way in making sure that when they agree to sell someone a property that they do it in an efficient way so that that person can make the best usage of the sale. As it stands today, Sir, if you check, it is not in the same state as it was when the person first bid on that particular piece of land or property.

I am also saying, Sir, that the Government must understand that they use the Land Acquisition Act in the right way. I am convinced and I am making the second call that we, as a House, must change the Land Acquisition Act, because if we do not change it, we are going to continue to destroy too many people in this country who cannot afford to give up land.

It seems to me that when the land belongs to certain people, we are quite prepared to negotiate with them, we are quite prepared to exchange land for land but when it belongs to some people, we are quite prepared to put money in the treasury and tell them to take it or challenge it. Sir, land in this country is becoming a scarce resource. We must recognise that they are people who just cannot afford to give up land and if the Government has a land bank what is the problem with the Government taking a piece of land from somebody and giving them an alternative piece instead of giving them money. It is unfair for a small man in this country who cannot afford to give up his land, for the Government to come along and take their land and then give them money. That land sometimes goes at \$2.50 per square foot from that person and do you know what they do, Sir, let me tell you what they do. They come along and they take off what they regard as a house spot and they pay you the market value for that house spot and the rest of the land is treated as agricultural land. But, when you have to go on the market, you are then forced to pay the asking price by the person selling the land to you. You cannot dictate to the Government the price you want for your land, but the person that is selling you, they can tell you what

they want for their land.

3:45 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I am saying that there are too many people in this country who are caught in a situation where they just cannot afford to live off what they are paid by the Government.

In terms of vesting, we need to find a different entity other than the National Housing Corporation (NHC) to vest our lands in because it is clear to me that the National Housing Corporation (NHC) is an organisation that cannot take anything good and produce anything better. I want to know how come we have vested land in the National Housing Corporation (NHC) ever since to put up a building and it is still in the foundation although they are working on it day and night.

They are certain people at the National Housing Corporation (NHC) who it is clear to me cannot understand the policy of that Board. They found a policy that was there since 1991 and every day they are in the country bragging about how they have implemented a policy at Husbands. They do not even understand what happened at Husbands but they are bragging about how they implemented a policy and how they have two systems when the systems were there since 1991. People must understand that they just cannot come and throw everything at the public and try to fool them.

The problem with the directors at the National Housing Corporation (NHC) is that they are spending too many hours dealing with politics and they are not delivering the goods that they are paid to deliver.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the debate which really concerns the passing of a Resolution to approve the vesting in the National Housing Corporation (NHC) of land at Brereton, St. Philip to assist the corporation in its capital works programme.

First of all, let me begin by saying that all of us in here will no doubt agree that with the advent of running water in almost every home in Barbados that baths

in certain communities have really and truly outgrown their usefulness.

The old bath at Brereton has played its part. That bath came at a time when a lot of youngsters used to virtually line up one behind the other on mornings to get their bath to go on to school but really and truly this practice is now a thing of the past. I am very grateful that Government has seen it possible to vest this small parcel of 197.3 square metres of land in the National Housing Corporation (NHC) so that they can dispose of it as they see fit in order to assist the corporation in its capital works programme.

Mr. Speaker, that bath has been an eyesore in Brereton for many years. Indeed, I would even go as far to say that Brereton used to be - it is no longer - one of the neglected districts in St. Philip. The representative for St. Philip North actually used to live in that area. It had no community centre and that is one of the things that I was always concerned about. There was no community centre at all in Brereton. There was no meeting place for the young people of Brereton. I was involved in many youth groups in many districts in St. Philip but I never had the real pleasure of going into Brereton to a meeting with an exchange of youth groups or anything of the sort simply because they never had any community centre in Brereton. That bath was earmarked for the community centre.

When I took over the Ministry of Community Development, I found that Brereton was to be used as a community centre. We were going throughout the length and breadth of Barbados and wherever we could find a bath in a community that did not have a community centre we were transforming those old baths into community centres. When we transformed the bath at Kendal, the Honourable Member for St. John spoke very favourably on the way in which we were using the old baths.

The point I am making is that we had about three youth groups who indicated that they wanted to use the old bath at Brereton as their community centre. One of the shocking things I found was the fact that a relative of the then representative of the area had actually apply to have the bath for his personal use. Really and truly I thought that was in very poor taste because here you have the young people from the community saying that they wanted to use the old bath as their community centre and there is this tug-o-war going on saying that someone would like to use it for their personal use. In other words, in spite of the neglect of that particular district, we still had someone applying to use it for their personal use.

I am pleased to say now that the need to use that bath as a community centre has virtually disappeared. This has happened because Brereton now has what I consider to be the best pavilion in Barbados and that pavilion is now used as the community centre and I must say that the young people are having very structured meetings at that pavilion. The pavilion by the way is named after Wayne Daniel who actually came from the bowels of Brereton and who is the only test cricketer to have come out of that district. He has played a couple of matches I believe against you, Mr. Speaker, I remember seeing him bowling against you and he was too fast for you.

Mr. SPEAKER: In my good days.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Even in your good days he was too fast for you. It just shows what

wonders a community centre can do for you. I believe that the young people there are enjoying the best community days of their lives and I know that they are very grateful for that pavilion.

However, the structure of the bath is still there and I must admit that it is something of a health hazard. There is a lot of infestation with vermin and rodents. I know that the people who live next door to the bath have been suffering from this infestation for the longest while. In fact, I would suggest to the National Housing Corporation (NHC) that if indeed they are actually looking for a purchaser that the first person who should be approached is the lady who lives next door because she has had to put up with a lot of infestation with rats running from over by the bath straight to her house for many years and she did express a concern to me that she would like to buy it if Government ever wants to sell it. I do believe that would have to be the way. It is only fair after all those years that she be the first person approached. She does not want the building. It means nothing to her. There is just the wall there. She cannot demolish it, if she could, she would have done it a long time ago but she has had to put up with a lot.

3:55 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. R.N. GREENIDGE:

A lot of people have used these old baths. They have turned them into houses. They have turned them into small business places. I know that if she is ever allowed to purchase it that she will make very good use of it.

I would also urge, and I think the Honourable Member for St. Lucy when he started came very close to making the same point, National Housing that if there are anymore of these baths which we have to vest in National Housing that we should do it as soon as possible because they are not only eye sores, but they are a risk to our health. Since people do not live there, and since by nature it is a soggy place where the water used to be running and even sometimes you might still get drippings, the best thing to do is to get rid of them now.

I can think of another one not far away from the Brereton Bath in Church Village. I do believe that we need to do something about that. I am urging the Honourable Minister for National Housing to do this for us as quickly as possible.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, the Commissioner of Land Tax usually provides the valuations for all properties. Brereton, St. Philip, is one of those properties that the Commissioner of Land Tax will provide the valuation for. We have agreed for a number of years that all of these old properties would be vested in National Housing so that we could use the funds for capital works programme.

The Honourable Member made mention of the fact that there are a number of inefficiencies, according to him, at the National Housing Corporation. As far as I am aware, the new Board is really

putting in place a number of exciting programmes which will surely see the continued success of this Government on the National Housing as an entity.

I want to make the point and also want to allay any fears from Honourable Members, because I heard it, and I saw it in one of the newspaper clippings today, that National Housing is broke. I want to allay that fear. National Housing is not broke at all because since we became the Government, we have made sure that the National Housing Corporation continues as a viable entity.

I must say that rather than being broke, we have not laid off a single worker from the Corporation. We have continued to pay our way. We have continued to give loans. We have continued the Settlement 2000 Programme.

We have just opened the London Bourne Towers. We are about to open the 28 units at Deane Town and the Corporation is continuing its programme. I want Honourable Members to know that the Opposition is continuing to ...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member is giving the impression that Deanes Town only has 28 units. I want to remind him that there are actual 2 000 units so he needs to speak to the 1 000 units as were left by the Minister.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am just making a point that 28 units will be opened at Deane Town on Friday afternoon to show that we are not broke as the Opposition would want us to be. In fact, I believe the National Housing, if I daresay, have more assets than the Democratic Labour Party had as a country in 1991.

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

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

ORDER NO. 3 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF LAND AT WALKERS, ST. GEORGE FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND HARD COURT AND DAY CARE FACILITIES

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before this Honourable House seeks permission to vest 28 876.6 square metres of land at Walkers, St. George, in the National Housing Corporation. This facility was bought by Government, the property of Mr. Julian Odle. It was bought some time around 1998.

Cabinet agreed that the land at Walkers should be vested in the National Housing Corporation to provide a multi-purpose hard court facility, provision for childrens' play area, the inclusion of a day care for children as well as for the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that so far we have met with the Soroptomists of Jamestown. This is an organisation in the parish of St. James. This is the sister organisation for the Soroptomists that organised the senior citizens' facility at Eden Lodge. They have agreed to provide a similar facility at

Walkers, St. George. This will help all those persons who are retired and want a facility, either day care or a facility where they can have some form of recreation.

I am excited about this project. We will lease about one and a quarter acre of this site to the Soroptomist Club of Jamestown. The remaining lots, which should be about 40 service lots, will be for the people of Barbados to buy. They will be mainly of a middle income nature.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this is a very good development. It will indeed enhance the area of Walkers. I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit surprised that a project like this would not be for what we would call the small man in this country. It makes me wonder why this project would have to be for the middle class and the upper class and not the small man in this country.

4:05 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN:

I have also looked through my notes and I have been trying to find out when a land acquisition came before this House to buy this particular property, because I wanted to find out what was the cost per square foot paid for this land and at what date the land acquisition came before this House.

I think, Sir, that the problem in this country is not land for the middle class but land for what we regard as the normal poor people. I would like to know from the Minister of Housing how come this

land is being sold to the middle and upper class when there is a lot of land at Husbands already allocated for the middle class? I hope I get an answer for this particular question.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to add my voice in principle to the support of any form or method used to acquire land for the assistance of people in any community. I make this contribution without any form of prejudice but as a Backbencher I have found myself here in a very unorthodox position.

As the voice of the people of St. Michael East, I am totally dissatisfied with the manner in which things are going in relation to the concerns of the landless in my community. I have made all types of approaches to attract the attention of those who are responsible, including the representative for St. George North who spoke with me about this parcel of land which he intends to use for the purpose of development in the constituency of St. George North.

If there is a constituency that deserves to be prioritised in relation to land being available for people then that constituency ought to be St. Michael East. I have an encumbrance in the form of the zone 1 problem in my constituency and I have asked on more than one occasion in the confines of another place in order to get a positive response on behalf of the people who elected me to Parliament. I have a responsibility to them and while I respect what is happening in Walkers, the constituency which embodies Walkers, butts and bounds St. Michael East so there is a correlation between the example that is set in Walkers and what in contrast is happening in St. Michael East.

While one might set about to protect the interest of himself and his constituency I also have an interest to represent the people of St. Michael East and defend it with the amount of vigour that I believe it ought to be defended with.

For quite a long time there has been an urban drift, although in recent times there is a slight exodus from the urban communities into the suburban communities, and the first thing a Minister should understand in establishing the *raison d'être* for a national policy is the demographics of the society itself. If you see a heavy concentration in an area in the urban community you should pay some attention to the needs of that community and see how you can respond with a programme that is holistic.

I had no intentions, Sir, of being this way from this Back Bench because I came to Parliament with a clear understanding that there was a view of me in politics that I would exhibit certain radical tendencies and therefore I tried to readjust myself in order to give some satisfaction to those who have that view of me. But today, I feel compelled by what I continue to witness as though some people are not compassionate or concerned with other people outside the perimeters of certain locations.

In my constituency, over 15 years ago, there was an acquisition at Clarkes Land in My Lords Hill and the Government of the day, after acquiring that land, recognised that the land was in zone 1 and at that time the debate surrounding the density of the population of Licorish Village, the Ivy and Martinique was the reason for acquiring land at Clarkes Land in My Lords Hill.

The land remains open today because of the zone 1 problem. No attempt has been made since then to search for land anywhere within that community in order to meet the needs of the people of St. Michael

East.

Fifteen years ago they recognised there was a problem. While one can support the concept of acquiring land and vesting land, or the methodology to place land at the disposal of people, I have a situation where low income people who are landless and to some extent voiceless in relation to influencing politicians remain landless today when this matter was before this Parliament over 15 years ago.

I believe that the Minister has a responsibility not to any specific constituency or selected constituency but to all the constituencies in Barbados, including yours, Mr. Speaker, to respond to the needs of the people there.

These people are low income people who came from the plantations of the Belle, the Pine and Lower Estate. They lived on the plantation's rab land and they would now like to elevate themselves to a proper status in society where they can feel equally as proud as any land owner and live in a form of dignity. They cannot live in dignity when you have private land owners and some of them black too treating them in a cruel way. Therefore the State has a responsibility to rescue those people and intervene and give assistance in these circumstances.

I would like to take the Minister of Housing and I want to advocate this publicly from these Chambers because I have made the request privately for one year and he totally shows a sense of indifference or unwillingness to respond, so I am going to make the request here now - I would like to take the Minister through my constituency to make him aware of the concerns of the people there and that there is land available because if I can keep these people in one community I will be able to keep families together. You must understand how housing relates to social conditions and social behaviour.

The vesting of land, Sir, is a means of giving people a sense of dignity. You will recognise that if people live in a comfortable habitat then the community spirit will be well bonded. It also relates to the question of social deviance in the society itself. These are people who are struggling for years and would love the opportunity and no Government, especially a black Government, has a responsibility to the people who give them the opportunity to serve their interests.

If you know the history of this struggle from the 1930s and the history of 1951 with black self government you would understand your responsibility to black people everywhere, especially in this society. I am calling on the Minister of Housing and Lands to act in a nationalistic manner and not exclusively within the interest of any particular area or particular group and to give the opportunity to the people of St. Michael East to become owners of land in this country.

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Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

I want to make that brief and rather sober contribution to this debate. It is the first time I have been forced to respond in this particular way. I make this contribution without any prejudice. I hope that the Minister has taken the message in the same manner in which I have delivered it.

Thank you very much.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I did not plan to speak in this debate but I guess that I am forced to do so because of the comments which have been made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East. I would like to think that the comments which have been made, while they might have been useful comments in a general way they may be made in ignorance of the procedure for acquisitions. I say that, not to be offensive, Mr. Speaker, but for Members, especially new Members of the House, to have a better understanding of what is required when decisions are made to acquire land even though the land has been identified. It is a little unfair to speak to the Minister of Housing, to speak in the language and to draw the inference that Minister of Housing in some way has been very selective in his choice of matters for acquisition being brought to this House.

When land has been identified for acquisition there are a number of things that must happen. In our last term starting in September 1994 we realised the problem which many people in many constituencies including the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael East faced. He was quite naturally not the Honourable Member at the time but we asked Members both on this side and on that side to indicate where there were lands on the periphery of existing village to submit to this House the various parcels of lands that they felt would be ideal for acquisition. At that time, Mr. Speaker, all Honourable Members were asked to submit suitable sites. We had a problem with persons who could not buy land at the normal market value because of the escalating prices. We also had a problem with people who were displaced because of the amendments which were made to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. We had to make provision for a number of other people in other circumstances like natural disasters.

There were a number of parcels of lands that were identified. We had, of course, to deal with the surveys on these lands, we had to deal with the owners in terms of the valuation. We had to get the

valuation from the Land Valuation Department and even after the decision was taken to acquire the land there is a process whereby the Attorney General's Department still had to settle on the actual resolution to be brought to this House.

The decision to acquire this land was taken as early 1997. I say this because the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, not understanding the procedure might very well get back up here again in about two weeks time or in six months time when he realises that the land that he has identified has not yet come to Parliament. It is not the fault of any Minister, it is not the fault of any Government, it is just the procedure and there is a time process in these matters. In 1997 was when the decision was first taken to go with the acquisition of this land. It has taken up to the year 2000, almost three years in order for us to reach this stage. Which means that even if the Honourable Member for St. George North who is the Minister of Housing, decides tomorrow that he is going to acquire all the land for the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, the Honourable Member must understand that these matters will take some time. It is not fair to insinuate that the Minister of Housing, because of the procedure is unable to bring these matters to the House in a timely manner and to insinuate that he is selective in these matters. It is because of the procedure.

I know that Members of the back bench would have the constituents on their back but I would urge Honourable Members before they make these accusations in public to be fully aware of the procedure before they make these types of accusations and these types of announcements. When you look at this particular Resolution, this Resolution pertains to a matter which has already been debated in this House when the land was first acquired. All this Resolution seeks to do is to vest the land in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have checked all of my records and I have never seen where this land has been compulsory acquired by this House.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: This land was acquired by private treaty on December 11, 1997. All this Resolution seeks now is to vest this land in the National Housing Corporation. As I have indicated there are probably about 30 or so acquisitions that will come to this House like this particular one where all the formalities have already been completed. Any new parcel of land that has been identified and agreed upon would probably take us, even with fast-tracking the particular Resolution, it would probably take us another year unless we do it by private treaty and even then maybe it would take six months to one year before it reaches this stage for new acquisitions.

I am obliged to you.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would have made a similar recommendation to the Honourable Member for St. Michael East. I am one who knows what it is to wait seventeen years. I do not think in his case he would have to wait seventeen years but I know what it is to go on the land, identify it, carry the Minister, appeal to the....

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You have to use whatever persuasive skills you have. The Honourable

Member is a consultant, as I understand it, in the Ministry of Social Transformation and I have no doubt that the argument which he has presented here is an argument that he will enhanced and I am sure, in the course of his work, be able to put that forward. I am speaking here of part of his presentation which spoke of urban and suburban population dynamics. I would not speak about urban drift in a place like Barbados but certainly he has ample opportunity to make such a case.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew is perfectly right. It is a process.

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Continuation Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

I think that it is a torturous process myself, but that is the reality in Barbados. Whether you acquire it by private treaty or whether you do it by acquisition, then the land has to be vested in the National Housing and you go on and on. It does take time but you have to know how to go out there and to help the process. I am amazed that over a year in Parliament he has not walked the turf with the Minister.

I have walked the turf in the City with all the relevant Ministers within three months of January 20th last year. If you can persuade all the people in your constituency to vote for you, you must be able to persuade the Minister to walk with you. You have to do it but I have no doubt that the process is on the way as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew has said that the process will be brought to fruition. But the Honourable Member, as a new Member in here, must bestir himself and I can give him a tip or two privately as to how he can help to put his cause forward.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have risen from my seat to say just a few words of accommodation. The Soroptomists International of Jamestown is a service class known worldwide. There is more than one club in Barbados, but this particular club to my certain knowledge has been struggling for a long time to find land. I remember at one stage I was trying to help them to identify some land in St. James South, but I wanted to say and these things have to be said because there is a lot of NGO bashing that goes on. But there are numbers of NGOs in Barbados who are doing excellent work and many of them, I am happy to say, working now hand in hand with the Government of the day.

This club is proposing a very ambitious project for Walkers in St. George to provide a recreation day care centre for the elderly. This is important, Mr. Speaker, bearing in mind that Barbados now has what is referred to by the socialists, as an aging population. If you look at the population, period, in Barbados you will see that those in my generation and yours, Sir, I think, barely yours, Sir, are now moving to begin to think of what pension and other arrangements they will make for old age.

If we look we will see, Mr. Speaker, that quite early on in the 21st Century the over 60 or even the over 65 age cohorts ...

Aside.

Hon. Miss B.A. MILLER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we are likely to be among those ranks ... is a generation now, to be making plans for. In fact, that planning process has started a long time ago and it is pleasing that the Soroptomists International has long identified that age cohort as one for whom it will make special project arrangements.

Day care and other institutional accommodation and facilities for an elderly and an aging population is something that is very much going to have to be on the increase in these years that are immediately ahead of us. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East is quite right. We have to look to see where the population shifts. We have placed our populations now within parishes, within districts and within what were traditionally villages. There have been shifts and I think that Walkers, St. George is well identified as an area where this Club is not only proposing to service the elderly but to include accommodation as well for between 30 to 75 adolescence.

The Child Care Board has already, as I understand it, Mr. Speaker, Sir, identified a number of children who are graduating, so to speak, from their facilities, orphanages, foster care and so on, around this country, and who are already and are going to be, more and more in future, in need of accommodation and mentoring. These people need to go into that kind of accommodation, almost like a halfway house type arrangement where they can make the move from institutionalised to more independent life styles.

I believe that the Soroptomists are in consultation with other agencies as well, UNICEF and Partners of Americas, in an effort to bring this project to fruition. I know that they have raised over \$50 000. They have had many events. I am speaking with a certain amount of knowledge, not only because a brief has been provided to the Minister of Housing who has offered it to me, but the Soroptomists for reasons best known to themselves, has seen it fit to make me an Honourable Soropotomist sister so to speak ...

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: This was several years ago and I am very much aware of what is in their planning process. But this is worthwhile and I admire it ... The time comes from occasion to occasion, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when we have to say, thank You and speak words of encouragement and appreciation to the service clubs and other charitable organisations like NGOs, doing excellent work. If we are talking about a participatory democracy this Government, I have to say has shown, in a way that many Governments, not only in developing but also in developed countries have failed to do, an amazing capacity to be able to harness the grass roots interface, that clubs such as the Soroptomists have.

NGOs have shown over the years, Sirs, that they have the capability and the capacity to perhaps do what Governments are not in a position to do. They work and interface with the grass roots, as we like to describe them, in a way that Governments are not always able to do. They are able to complement

the work of Government. The Government cannot do everything that has to be done in the area of housing. This is established policy. I have heard the Honourable Minister of Housing make the point in this Chamber on more than one occasion. What is being done in the private sector and what is being done by, I suppose, you would have to describe this as the civil society, this is a magnificent civic gesture. I would like to use the opportunity, Sir, to say words of congratulation, words of appreciation and encouragement to the Soroptomists and to urge upon Honourable Members where there are fund-raising events and so on, that whatever they can do to assist in the bringing to completion of this project would be well done.

This is yet another occasion where the Government is giving real estate as its component contribution to an NGO which is doing sterling work on the ground in Barbados. I just wanted to use the opportunity to make this point, Mr. Speaker, Sir, because too often the effort goes unrecognised in a place such as this and the more often an entity such as the Siroporomist will work collaboratively with the Government, the more is the opportunity, I would like to think, and the example they would like to set, so that other service clubs, other charitable organisations would wish to follow suit.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am very much obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Mr. L.R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East may be excoriated for speaking up for his constituency after being in here for one year. I have been in here for a long, long time and I am going to talk about mine.

I did not initially intend to get into this debate because I get a little worried about the perceived rift between the front and the back bench. I have been moved on another occasion to say that I as a member of the back bench of another Parliament felt as if I was being treated as an outside child.

Aside.

Mr. L.R. TULL: Today, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must say that I am very disappointed with how things have gone.

Aside.

Mr. L.R. TULL: I always believe, Sir, that land in Barbados was the patrimony of all Barbadians and therefore it was not necessary to acquire land to build houses or even to buy house spots in every constituency that

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Continuation of Mr. L. R. TULL:

If houses are built in one area, all Barbadians should be entitled on the basis of priority and need to move into those houses. If house spots are made available anywhere in Barbados, any Barbadian on the basis of need and set priority should be able to get one of those spots but it has not been working that way.

When I see how things have been going, I too jump into the line and start to make noise and ask them to acquire some land in my constituency because it seems that the only way somebody in St. George South will get a house spot in Barbados is if the Government develop house spots in St. George South. I would prefer the St. George Valley in all its beauty to remain unsullied. I would not want to make any housing area to spoil the beauty of the St. George Valley but it seems to me that the only way that anybody from St. George South will get a house spot is if they go and develop land over in St. George South.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael East talked about the Minister of Housing and Lands. I am talking about the whole front bench. This is the eighth piece of land that has been acquired by the Government in St. George North and not one single piece has been acquired in St. George South. I have no problem with that if when the spots are available in St. George North that the people who live just down the road in the South could get them but every single time I ask for house spots for people from St. George South there are gone. Right where I live at Cottage, they develop over one hundred spots just behind me at Cottage and Groves and I have not been able to get any more than one single spot for someone from my constituency next door to where I live in the north.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew gets up in here talking about process and a lot of palaver. This Government, my Government has acquired land at Belair, Cottage, Groves, Flat Rock, Constant, Walkers and another area which I cannot remember, all in St. George North. This Government has built houses and over 20 beautiful terrace units at Flat Rock in St. George. I have asked, not only as representative of St. George South but as someone who I thought was senior in this Government, if I can have a few of the houses for my constituents. Mr. Speaker, would you believe it, all without the exception of the houses that were built at Flat Rock, St. George were allocated to persons other than persons in my constituency. We did not get a single one.

I would like, Sir, to resile from a position of asking for housing development by Government in my constituency because as I said I do not want to spoil the beauty of the St. George Valley but how else are the people of St. George South going to get the house spots and the houses that they come to me on a daily basis asking for because that is one of the most pressing needs in this country and I am going through this all the time.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City has a style of politics that is admirable and that has worked well for her. She walks the areas and she is very convincing as she does so. There are some of us who have different styles and when we try her style it does not work. I have been to parts of my constituency with the former Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and the present Minister, who is my parliamentary representative and from neither of those visits with them have anything been delivered. Not one square foot of land has been delivered. They say hope springs eternal in the human breast.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I would not normally interrupt a Member on the backbench but when the Honourable Member says that not a single square foot was delivered I think he has to be corrected.

I visited the Woodland area on the insistence of the Honourable Member for St. George South. The next week even before we did the acquisition I indicated to the Chief Technical Officer at the time, Mr. Cedric Archer, that we had to include Woodland in the road programme because the Honourable Member was interested in having that area properly developed. As a result of that we proceeded with the acquisition and it is fairly obvious that before that particular development could be finalised that we would have to have the road infrastructure in place. The road infrastructure I believe is now in place and we are now in a position to move with the acquisition.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I do not know why my good friend the Honourable Member for St. Andrew would like to cross swords with me. No land has been acquired for houses at Woodland and no land has been acquired anywhere in the constituency of St. George South by this Government for housing.

Asides

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, when I am dealing with roads, I am dealing with roads. This is a Resolution about land for housing and that is what I am dealing with. To tell me that a road was done in Woodland in St. George and therefore I should shut up - the people who cannot get house spots in St. George must go and sleep in the road at Woodland because that could be all that they are suggesting. I do want to be worked up about these things but if I do not talk as I am talking today the people of my constituency will have every reason to continue to say that there is unequal development between the north and south of the parish. They are saying that. They are also saying that if there were uneven development that they would expect that for my longevity that the imbalance would be the other way.

I have no quarrel with what happened on my side. I am very pleased with the great development that they are having on my side and I have to commend the Minister of Housing for the work that is happening in the north but it is time to bring the south into the fold.

On one occasion there was a walk up there as the Honourable Member for the City would say - 'walk the turf'. There was once a walking of the turf at Todds in St. George. I, as the representative of the constituency was not even told about it but a number of the Members of the Government in their enthusiasm and in their interest about doing something went and look and made certain promises to the people of Todds. Nearly four years later not a square foot of land has been acquired at Todds even though Members of the Government with all the power at their disposal went up there and look at it and made certain promises.

I am only moved to get into this debate. I really had no intention initially of being a part of it.

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Continuation of Mr. L.R. TULL:

I was going to remain long suffering for a while longer but when I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael East with his cri de coeur speaking with the pain he suffers because of perceived neglect of his constituents I feel it would be delinquent of me not to get up and put a word in. I want to say one thing in closing, Sir.

Part of my constituency in the Dash Valley Munroe area is in zone 1. The Barbados Water Authority refuses to put water systems into these houses. They say that they are in zone 1 and they are not giving them a water supply. People have substantial houses built in that area and the Government has built a road in the area the people live. So part of the Government is giving the people a beautiful Barber Green road and the other part is saying it is not giving them any water because they should not have a house there.

I reported this and have asked to get it resolved. I cannot get it resolved. You know as well as I do, Sir, that I can get it resolved but I want to get it resolved with as little dislocation as possible. I am talking about dislocation both on their part and dislocation on our part.

I was hoping, Sir, that when the Government was acquiring over 100 lots at Lower Burney in St. Michael which is on the other side of the road that I could have been giving the people in that area some assurance that their houses could be moved the 200 yards where they say there is a water zone and they cannot get the water supply. They could move over.

All I have tried, Sir, to get permission from those who have the authority in these things saying, can I get about 15 of the 100 plus spots for the relocation of these people, I cannot get a word from them. So my intervention, Sir, is not to warm up things because I understand nowadays when you get on the Back Bench and you talk too hot that you have to account for your sins. Well, they could hardly be talking to me but I do not want to be the author of that kind of thing and I am appealing to the Government not only the Minister because all of these matters go to the Cabinet.

If the Honourable Member for St. Michael East does not know that, I am telling him. All these matters go to the full Cabinet and therefore I am making an appeal not only to the Minister who is my

MP who has to canvass me for my vote but to all the members to remember that what I am trying to put into the debate is not to cause any confusion because there is a genuine need in my constituency for services that my constituents are not getting. We want at the end of this term to feel that we in St. George South are part of the family.

Grateful to you, Sir.

Hon. Sir HAROLD ST. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that this debate has taken the tone that it has taken because I have been around for a very long period of time in politics and I think that when you have debates like this it sends a message in the right quarters. There can be no doubt that there is profound dissatisfaction with the process that has to occur within the Ministry of Lands and within the Housing Authority and with Housing in general.

I think that we definitely have to have a comprehensive review of these processes. Sometime previously, between 1976 and 1986, the Government did a comprehensive review of land law, of land acquisition procedures of the Ministry of Housing and of the Housing Authority. We introduced land registration all within the context of trying to do what each and every member of Parliament on both sides would like to see done, that is, that its constituents receive just treatment in relation to housing which is regarded as a basic right and necessity in Barbados.

But, Sir, you would be surprised to know that despite all of that we still have a situation in Barbados where in St. Michael alone there have been identified over 1800 lots as having derelict buildings. Owners cannot be found and the Ministry of Housing and Lands to this day have not been able to get a procedure with any degree of swiftness to convert those derelict lots into house spots.

Do not tell me that it should be beyond the capacity of all the functionaries to get that done. Government policy is, and this is the message that should go forth to all the functionaries, that if you obstruct Government policy there is a mechanism that should be called into play to discipline all those who obstruct Government policy.

It is time that we understand as politicians that we have a limited time and we have accountability every five years or four years. There are some who are so enthused and confused by the fact that they have seemingly permanent tenure that it is necessary periodically to remind them of that. This is a fundamental point that must be understood, the frustrations that Honourable Members feel cannot go on because whatever will there is among the political directorate, unless the functionaries understand that their function is to carry out the will and the policy directives of the politicians, Honourable Members will be frustrated in the same way and they must get up and be men enough and women enough to speak about it every time there is an opportunity.

I have had in my constituency and next door to my constituency a situation in which four and a half years have gone by and the functionaries in the Ministry, despite several visits, are unable to move one house which is in a flood zone. I am going to hear about the processes? There is only one process to me. It is, remove all of those functionaries who are obstructing the will. That is what we must do. We cannot sit and say in the House of Assembly that the processes are difficult and therefore we must accept them. I say no. We are masters of the processes and we must change them.

Sir, I think that this is a fundamental matter and we should not regard it as anything other than one that should bring results because we need change. It is a cardinal sin in Barbados that after 20 years of land registration I doubt there are 10 000 titles of the 95 000 or 100 000 under land registration. The processes have not been allowed to function. The functionaries do not want it, so you do not get it.

Eighteen hundred lots out there. I do not care about the legal profession. I had to ram through the Company Law Bill in here because the leaders of the profession did not want it and we had it since 1994 but all of them are praising it now. The legal profession is probably one of the most conservative bunch of people you have to deal with. They object to change; but you must be men and women enough to change.

Therefore, I say that we must decide that we are benefitting from this debate. As far as Martinique and Licorish Village and all of those areas in zone 1 is concerned, I have been around politics for 30 odd years and I have heard the debate about the need to move the people from My Lords Hill, the need to move the people from Martinique, the need to move the people from Licorish Village.

Aside.

Hon. Sir HAROLD ST. JOHN: The position is very clear, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not in a position to talk on these matters with any degree of authority,...

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Continuation of Hon. Sir Harold ST. JOHN:

... because a lot of the difficulties that happen in those areas were created by the Honourable Member's Party when the then Member or previous Members of that particular constituency encouraged people to go and settle there. Therefore, the position is, Sir, I remember at Cabinet level when an investigation was carried out as to whether a sub-sewerage scheme could not be created at the top of My Lord's Hill to deal with the problem of the existing people who were there. I remember also that there was a question, I believe, not so long ago where land was acquired at Haggatt Hall and in that area and the primary purpose as told to this House was to help create a place where the people in Licorish Village and other areas would go to because of the Zone One problem. I do not know how long it takes to develop land but I know that Julie N and all up there, it looks to me like some development is taking place but I still do not see many people moving from Licorish Village or the other place yet.

Asides.

Hon. Sir Harold ST. JOHN: It is because of the processes. The people who have to carry out the policy do not want it to happen and it will not happen. This debate will teach people something, that the people who have to make the decisions, if they do not make the decisions, Honourable Members on the back bench will come in here and deal with them.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. M.Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, it is with great concern that it will be recorded in this debate that I also made my feeling be known in the interest of the constituency of St. Michael North West of which I represent. Even though I am prepared to support the Resolution before the House, I am also prepared to draw to the Minister's attention the problems that face the constituency of St. Michael North West and also to draw to the Representative of the City the statement made in relation to being first-timers and one year olds cannot be a fair statement in the sense that all of us face the electorate of Barbados with an understanding of representation and an understanding to deliver. It is not a fair statement to say to us back benchers who are first-timers that we are still in crib, we cannot walk and we only suppose to at least raise our heads above the crib but we are not suppose to at least ...

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. That is a gross mis-statement of what I am saying. It does not lie in the mouth of the Honourable Member - because he is doing exceptionally well in his constituency. I drive through it everyday.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, for a yearling he is doing exceptionally well.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I compliment the Honourable Member for the City for that comment but I think it is because of the work that you can see results in the constituency but there are still some things that I am concerned with which I would like to draw to the Minister's attention. Over the last twenty years or so under the other Government nothing was done in relation to the acquisition of land in the constituency of St. Michael North West.

I want to draw to the attention of the Minister the problems facing a lot of the constituency of St. Michael North West in relation to land ownership. If you look at tenancies in St. Michael North West there are several tenancies in St. Michael North that the tenants that live on these lands are in a predicament based on the fact that for years they have lived on these land where they may be family disputes, where the landlord cannot be found, where the conveyance has not been lodged and as a result of this, a lot of the tenants are living on lands in St. Michael North West. To name a few - only this week I have been doing my research on areas like Brandons and I am going to be approaching the Minister shortly to clarify and clear the problems facing the residents of Brandons in relation to land ownership. I am also going to approach the Minister in relation to land at Brathwaite's Gap, Black Rock. I am going to approach the Minister in relation to land in St. Stephens's Hill.

The reason why I am saying this, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that there are people who have been living

on these land for many many years and will not be able to own these lands and be able to improve their lifestyles and their living conditions unless this Government of which I belong, unless the Minister of Lands and Housing put in an appearance and makes sure that some acquisition will be done on behalf of these people. I am a bit concerned in the sense that if this Government of which I am party, if we are talking about making a better Barbados and giving our children's children a better standard of living, then I am saying that in areas, some of which I have just mentioned, that it is necessary that certain provisions be made in relation to the land acquisition.

I have a problem, Mr. Speaker, where during the separation of the Spring Garden Highway lands on one side, that if the last Government, Mr. Speaker, had acquired that land which is known as Danesbury, I would not be in the predicament that I am in now based on the situation with the residents of Danesbury. If that land was acquired some nineteen years ago under the other Government, the residents of Pile Bay and this Government would not be faced with the conditions that Pile Bay people are living under today. I am also appealing to the Minister that that land, in my opinion, though it was sold privately, I believe there has been an oversight. I believe that some where along the line that that land should not have been sold privately. It should have been lands acquired by this Government to develop the residents of Pile Bay.

I shortly will be drawing it to the Minister of Lands and Housing attention that I am concerned with what I am hearing about Pile Bay. I am concerned in the sense that as long as I have to be a Parliamentary Representative and Member of this Government that we have to show a complete interest in the small man of Barbados. We have to show a complete interest in the small man of Barbados and the people of Pile Bay are small people. I am going to appeal to the Minister that something be done to prevent the strangulation and the non-movement if some sort of development goes up on that area of land at Pile Bay.

When I take Pile Bay, when I take Brandons I feel as if I would cry in this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, you know why I feel I would cry because for political reason and strangulation by the Democratic Labour Party. Attorneys who are associated with the Democratic Labour Party have stagnated the people of Pile Bay and stagnated the people of Danesbury.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

5:05 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is behaving as if it is the Democratic Labour Party ...

Mr. SPEAKER: What is your point of order, Sir?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: The Honourable Member is misleading the House, Sir, by giving the House the impression that it was the Democratic Labour Party that passed the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act and it was not the Democratic Labour Party that made the land not available to poor people under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is no point of order, Sir.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: I am going a little bit further, Mr. Speaker, and I want it documented in this House because I have been sent to this Parliament to represent people and I will represent the people. I will do it because of certain attorneys in this country. There are certain people at Brandon's Beach who are associated with the Democratic Labour Party who can boast and say that they own spots and people who are not associated are left in sufferation and do not know where they stand. Because of the Democratic Labour Party and the connections of the Democratic Labour Party the people who live at Danesbury House, who have been associated with the Democratic Labour Party for many years, have made it difficult and if you want me to go further, I will tell you that this Party has suffered in St. Michael North West. I will not allow it to continue, that is why I am saying to the Honourable Minister of Lands, there have been some misjudgements and there have been situations of ill treatment as far the constituency of St. Michael North West is concerned because of political strangulation by the Democratic Labour Party. I am now appealing to the Honourable Minister of Lands. He has walked with me already ...

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Sir. That impression cannot go on like this. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because he is giving the impression that it is the Democratic Labour Party that is stopping the Government from compulsory acquiring that land. If the Barbados Labour Party compulsory acquires that land, everybody in Danesbury, Pile Bay and everywhere can get house lots, and stop blaming the Democratic Labour Party unfairly. Call on your Government to compulsory acquire the land.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: We will eventually, and that is why I am calling on the Honourable Minister because the Goodridges, the Springers and the various people who were owners and who had some sort of connection, deal with them.

Aside.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: If you want me to expose, I will expose. The Goodridges and the Springers who have been associated with your Party and who have had papers with your Party ...

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Well, if you want me to expose you, I will expose you. Do not fall in my trap. I am a ground worker, so I should know. Mr. Speaker, I will bypass and continue with my speech. Do not fall into it, The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, you do not know. If you do not know, keep quiet.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please, order please.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware that the Minister's hands are full in terms of the work of land acquisition. I am well aware that under his portfolio there are departments, for example, National Housing Corporation (NHC) where the Minister is one person. There are individuals behind him who have to work and they would be a delay at times and things cannot be seen as being done so I am not throwing all the weight on the Minister. I am saying that somewhere along the line in the process there will be some slow trails which will prevent certain things from happening.

As I appeal to the Minister in my wrap up, I am saying to him, yes, like all the other Back Benchers, I have been hearing of some nice things being done in certain areas, in terms of land acquisition. I am not complaining, you say as a yearling, I am happy, but I am saying I do not want to be a five year old, I do not want to be a five-year gelding and still look over the fence.

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: I want to be able to say that it has been...

Asides.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Yes, I want to sprint to the tape. So I am saying to the Minister to give me the chance to finish at the tape with my chest and my head up.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James South.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the unexpected turn which this debate has taken, has opened the door for me to make some observations, some of which are parochial and specific to the Constituency of St. James South and some of which are generic and I will start with the more generic point of land acquisition.

Sir, I have observed that we are continuing to acquire land for house spots and housing development generally and that is a good thing because the demand for housing in Barbados is considerable. I noted sometime this week, perhaps on Sunday, I do not recall exactly when, the newspaper was trying, to tell us that the statistics show that unemployment is down.

The reality is, once most Barbadians have cash in hand, apart from buying a car which is, a short term consumer good, the first substantial investment that the average person seeks to make is to own what they call a piece of the rock, to buy either a piece of land, to make sure that they have a house, something that they can live and be comfortable in, raise a family perhaps, or pass it on to children. It is very important that we recognise that the more disposable income available to individuals, the greater the demand for housing is going to become and it is therefore incumbent on us to create even more opportunities for persons to acquire housing.

I think that part of the way to do that, is to move beyond the present policy of having so many units done by National Housing Corporation and a few outside contractors and open the gates even wider to greater participation by other contractors and builders, otherwise we will not be able to build fast enough to satisfy the existing demand.

In my constituency, as I am sure wherever there are large housing areas - Haynesville is one of the largest housing areas in the country. I can take you to units in Haynesville, two bedroom and three bedroom units where 20 and 30 people live and that is not a joke, it is a reality. There are persons within those households who are able themselves to afford another house and want to rent, they may not be able to afford a house in the private sector, but they can afford a Government housing unit. They may want to buy a piece of the land and start with the help of the extended family and few friends to build something on weekends, as cash comes to hand or as they would say, as they catch their hands. Unless the opportunity can be created far more rapidly for them to do so, we are going to create a level of frustration amongst that class of persons, who may not be able to afford the \$125 000 houses that people now tell me is the price of an average chattel house with three bedrooms.

The reality is that that cannot be a low income house. It just cannot be. The point I wanted to make about land acquisitions generally, is that I am concerned that we are continuing to acquire land for houses and housing development and we are doing the barest legal minimal necessity, that is, leaving in the traditional open space that is required by the Town and Country Planning Department.

I believe that we need to go a step further. Right now, all across Barbados, whether you go to middle classed areas like West Terrace Garden, whether you go to low income areas like Haynesville, whether you go to traditional villages like Durants Village and Halls Village, you will see communities without any kind of recreational facilities at all and every MP in this House, I am sure on both sides, is bombarded constantly with requests from young persons in communities and from older persons as well, if they could just have some space so they can sit down on evenings, if they could just have somewhere for the young people to let out their creative talents, if they could just have some kind of facility that the young fellows and young girls can play sports, they would greatly appreciate it. So that rather than waiting, down the road, to build in recreational facilities into housing developments, we should start as a matter of course, to include recreational facilities at the planning stage.

5:15 p.m.

Tuesday, February 22, 2000

Continuation of Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

When West Terrace Heights, the land development that was just sold, the extension to West Terrace was being contemplated, I wrote to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation (NHC) as well indicating to them that they already have 70 houses in stage I and 530 houses in stage II at West Terrace with no recreational facilities at all.

When those houses were sold, they were sold specifically to people who were in the age group who would now be having families and therefore it was known that they were selling them either as first houses or second houses and that persons who were buying their first house were in the age group where they would then be having families so they knew that they were going to be having many young people living there and still no recreational facilities were being built in.

When West Terrace Heights was developed, I indicated to them that a recreational facility should be put in for use by the entire West Terrace community because the West Terrace Heights would add then further to the already 530 existing houses at West Terrace Stage II and the 70 up at West Terrace stage I. It has not been done.

Unless we change that we are going to be recreating the block scenario in communities all over Barbados whether it is the middle class block or the lower income block. If you go into the middle class communities the young people are out on the streets and on the corners as well because there is nowhere else for them to go.

When you live in the lower income communities like Haynesville where there are 20 persons living in a house who are literally on top of each other on the floor at nights and so on they have to get out of that house because they cannot exist in that space all day and the only place for them to go is on the block. It is so in the City where houses are right underneath one another and there is no adequate recreational provision.

We have as a matter of course to start looking across the country and make a determination as to where such facilities should go and at the planning stage for housing development putting in the recreational facilities up front. I have been saying that when I held the portfolio of Environment. I was also urging that green spaces, not just an open field but a proper green space be built into the communities because if you did it that way it would add as an incentive once people move into the area to maintain that standard and to beautify and keep their own gardens. Again, I go back to West Terrace. Anyone who goes into West Terrace will be driving north on that main road with 16 feeder avenues on their left and two exits unto the Husbands Main Road on their right. On either side of the road from the time you get in all you can see is a line of concrete. It would have made so much difference in these communities if those houses on either side - and there was adequate space to do it - had just been pushed back another 12 feet to accommodate just one tree line boulevard or one three-line avenue down the main driveway of that residential development. It would make such a difference to the way the community look; to the overall aesthetic; to the feel of the place; to the greenery and the life that ...

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, just one minute please. I have really given a lot of latitude in this whole debate and I think that you are going a bit far now away from the Resolution before the House. Obviously, there are many areas that could be talked about relating to housing and

the developments and so on. I have to insist on at this point that you get back to the Resolution which is before the House, please.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I wish to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the latitude you have given me so far and to urge them that when land acquisitions are being done for residential development that we make sure that we leave in recreational spaces.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that the Chair is still in an indulgent mood as it was for the other Honourable Members who spoke before me and has not changed.

I wish to turn now to the matter of parochial issues for land acquisitions in St. James South. Since I mention West Terrace just now, I would go there first.

Last year, during the Estimates, the then Minister of Labour, Community Development and Sports made the point that in that year's Estimates a provision was made for a sporting facility at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. That is the cricket ground at the bottom of Oxnards and at the point where Haynesville adjoins it. It is one of the older grounds in Barbados and the Melbourne Cricket Club is one of the oldest cricket club in the country. At that time a sporting facility was planned for that spot because there is a lot of land there. I believe that is in the middle of the largest polling district in the country. About 4 000 people live in that area and there really is no adequate provision for recreational spaces there. The Ministry of Housing and Lands was to acquire the small portion of land there that did not already belong to the Government. I have heard nothing more about this and rather than completing the acquisition to facilitate the project that is intended for that area it is my understanding that the National Housing Corporation (NHC) has sold off one of the lots right in the middle of where the facility was supposed to go. I do not know if it is too late for them to acquire it. I do not know if the plan has been changed and nobody has bothered to communicate it with me since August 9, 1999. At some point we need either to determine that the facility was intended for them or that somebody communicates with me and say very sorry we have a change of plan or a change of policy.

Another area in which an acquisition was planned was at Durants Village. The problem there has been highlighted by the media on several occasions. A private landowner has so barricaded and fenced his property that several householders some of whom have wall houses and motor vehicles have barely a pedestrian access to their homes and no vehicular access so that they have to park the cars some distance away from their homes. When they have to buy bottle gas - invariably, it is the women who have to go out to get the bottle gas - they have to get people to come in and help them to lift the gas the very long distance that they now have to walk through this narrow track that has been blocked off by a landowner.

I walked it, if walking is the thing to do, with the then Minister of Housing and Lands well over a year ago and nothing has yet happened. I also walked it with officials from the National Housing Corporation (NHC) who were supposed to see about the acquisition and officials from the Urban Development Commission (UDC). It was drawn to the attention of the Town and Country Planning Department by two letters and the residents there are still having exactly the same problem when all that is needed is an acquisition of a small parcel of land.

The people are so desperate, Sir, that they are not even asking for a road. All they are asking for is

sufficient access to allow them to be able to get their vehicles up alongside their homes and to adequately get in on their bicycles. Eventually, they may ask for the road and that would not be unreasonable. In fact, I do not think that will be an unreasonable request that the people could make after all this time.

Equally, sometime in 1998, the Urban Development Commission (UDC) has started road works at Chapel Gap Nos. I and II on Paynes Bay and at Durants Village. They said that they were having difficulties completing the road which they started late in 1998 after I have been asking for this road improvement for some considerable time. Sometime after January 1999 I was then told that they had to stop the work because they were having problems with certain landowners and they had to go to acquisitions. This is now February and we are nearly into March of 2000 and none of those three roads, not at lower Holders Hill, not at Chapel Gap No. 1 or 2 and not the two areas of Upper Durants Village, none has been completed.

5:25 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

People are bound to feel, because that is the perception now, that just before Elections we ran and started it to give them the impression that we were going to create facilities for them and that once Elections were out of the way we were done with it. Again, I have heard nothing about what is the status of these acquisitions. I have not seen them come to this Honourable Chamber and I do not know when they will come. People call my constituency office. They write. They are at the stage now where they are going to do a petition in order to see if they can get something done.

Perhaps it may be part of the processes of which the Honourable Member for Christ Church South spoke earlier, that the processes are delayed, or held up, but whatever the reason, we need to keep an open dialogue with the people whom we are supposed to be representing and with people who are looking to us to do certain things to ameliorate the conditions under which they live. If we are talking about the amelioration of conditions, I would have to draw attention to another area where land

acquisitions have been promised for some considerable time, Halls Village No. 1 and No. 2.

Every year since September 1994 I have written and raised it in every forum available to me urging that the road they were promised in September 1994 should be given to the persons of Hall's Village No. 1 and 2. It is unfair that at this stage of our development there are persons in that district who have wall houses and cannot get near them with their own motorcars, who are still walking with two and three pairs of shoes because their work shoes, their Church shoes, they cannot walk through the village in at all. They have to walk in something that will take the rough conditions. People are putting down nice houses and no roads at all.

You go and there is at Hall's Village, No. 1 a road in such terrible disrepair for about 100 yards and then it breaks into nothingness and at Hall's Village No. 2 it is the same thing. For five years I have written the Minister and the Prime Minister. I have raised it at every forum and the people cannot see any work being started.

I have been there. I have toured it with Ministers. I have toured it with the Chairman of the Urban Development Commission, and with the Director repeatedly. I call about it. I talk about it all the time. The residents are frustrated and upset. It is an area which is right for a crisis of some sort.

If there is a fire in that district, no kind of emergency vehicle, whether it is an ambulance, a fire tender, anything at all cannot get in to those residents. It is just impossible to do so. When people up there fall sick at night, neighbours have to be awoken to lift people down to the ambulance which parks out close to the main road and goes to the furthest point it can go. It is not fair. I am really urging now that after five years it is time enough that the residents at Hall's Village should at least see a start to the road that they have been repeatedly promised.

Similarly, another project that we spoke about, pre 1999 January, was the development of a recreational space at West Terrace Gardens. The land is lying idle. It is owned by Government. The residents have indicated that if Government drops some dirt and gives them the stuff they are willing to work in the development of the play park and the recreational facility. Designs were drawn and developed. Now at February 2000 not a single thing has happened. The land was cleared so that the project could start. Nothing has happened. The grass has grown back up to the point where it is now a threat to the community.

West Terrace is inhabited by many single women and a lot of young girls. It is at the stage now where men are jumping out of the bush and snatching handbags, assaulting, locking off people's necks, interfering with their boy children, where people are breaking into houses and you just see them dashing back through the bush. People are angry and upset about it because here was a project that was promised. It is not that there are not aware of it. They saw the designs themselves because the designs were discussed with them and shared with the community. If after all this time they cannot see it, they begin to lose faith that you really intended to do it in the first place. I am urging that whatever else needs to be done now to put that particular community project in place that it should be done.

There are a number of other parochial issues to which I would wish to draw attention but those are the ones I am giving priority to for this year. I am hoping, therefore, that the relevant Ministers will equally try and give some priorities to them.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that Honourable Members have spoken in this debate the way they have done. I would just want to make the following remarks that we have taken note of the requests of all Ministers and all back benchers. In fact, we have taken note of all requests from all Members of Parliament. From time to time we have visited MPs from both sides of the House in their constituencies. We have acquired land over the last four years in various communities and wherever possible we have tried to upgrade the facilities for the less fortunate.

It is very fortunate for us at this time to understand that the process of land acquisition takes a long time. In fact, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was very explicit that land acquisition takes a very long time, sometimes two or three years.

First of all, I must tell the Honourable Member for St. Michael East that even before he was elected he and I visited Tichbourne. I recognised the problem he had there where there were a number of tenants living on land and the landlord was charging a very high price, so that I am aware of the problems that exist at St. Michael East.

I also am aware, because the member for that constituency has spoken to me, of the problem with Zone 1. We have discussed this at length. We have acquired some land in Haggatt Hall to rehouse a number of people from the Belle. As soon as the land was acquired...

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The debate has taken a shift which was not my intention.

Mr. SPEAKER: What is your point of order, Sir?

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: This is just a little preamble to the point I am going to make.

Mr. SPEAKER: You want to make a speech.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: I am not making a request for land in Zone 1. Zone 1 is in St. Michael East. St. Michael East is not in Zone 1. You understand the point, Sir? I am pointing to lands in the area of Barker's Road, Rouen's Village, Hothersal Turning and areas outside the Zone 1 area, so I want to make that very clear.

Mr. SPEAKER: You have made your point, Sir.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I want to make the point that these lands have been drawn to our attention. I have visited with the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, even before he was a member of this House, and that is a fact. He is aware of this. I have visited at Tichbourne with the Honourable Member where a gentleman from St. George owned the spot.

5:35 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

We have already documented it. Secondly, we have requested all Honourable Members on both sides to submit the names of all the parcels of land that they want to be acquired. I have visited with the member for St. Lucy. I have visited with the member for St. John. I have visited with all Honourable Members of this House.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order. The Minister of Housing has requested more than once of all members on both sides to submit their housing requirements.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we are aware of all the requests and it is important to know that this Government intends to bring an amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act within the next month or so where persons that the Honourable Member is speaking of, low income earners, will get the land at \$2.50 a square foot and Government will then top up the balance of the market value. This is our intention.

We have gone to Pile Bay with the Honourable Member and we have gone with all Honourable Members. I am sure that there is no other member that can say this. The Prime Minister has also visited with the Honourable Member for St. George South and has given him an assurance that we will acquire land at Farm. We have given him the assurance that we will acquire land at Ellerton and I must remind the Honourable Member for St. George South whom I will have to go and beg for a vote, that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is right that we have acquired land at Woodlands in St. George. It is more than five acres of land on both sides of the road which have been approved by this Parliament which he asked for housing, so he has to be aware of what is happening in his constituency. Housing is on both sides of the road. The road has been paved.

Mr. L. R. TULL: On a point of order. Government has not acquired one single bit of land at Woodlands in St. George for housing. I wish my friend would not say that. No land has been acquired at Woodlands for housing.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I do not have the facts in front of me but we wanted to develop a road almost a mile long at Woodlands. The Minister of Housing at the time, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, said to the Ministry that it would be nonsensical to develop a long road without putting in houses on both sides.

I have asked the Minister of Agriculture to put this into his programme for land for the landless and

all the spots will be given to the Honourable Member. It is a fact that we have paid for it already. We have acquired land on both sides of the road. As soon as the canes are reaped this year the spots will be available to the member for persons.

Mr. Speaker, we have also tried and it is a fact that as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has pointed out that there is a number of delays. We agree that delays have come about in the registration process which we are now trying to iron out with a consultancy. We will study a report within the next month or so but very soon the land registration process will take a different turn.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy. I am convinced that this Government continues to look after the poor people of this country. In St. Michael we have acquired a large parcel of land for the poor. Lower Burney will be for low income earners. Gazettes has been acquired. We have acquired land at Jackmans for the poor so that we do not intend to leave out the poor people of St. Michael area that the member has spoken of.

It is not true to say that the Front Bench has tried to look after themselves. Since 1995 we have been trying to acquire some land at Todds for St. George but the problem with that acquisition is that the owner cannot find the documents so that we now have to come to Parliament to do a compulsory acquisition.

The land that we are speaking of has been done through private treaty. The Honourable Member is aware that since 1995 CLICO Holdings could not find the title deeds. The Government had already paid down even the deposit and then we had to reclaim the deposit because the owners could not find the title deeds. We now have to bring that to Parliament after we had gone through the entire process so, Mr. Speaker, we have tried.

The former Halls Village for St. James South is a landlocked village. There are a number of problems in that village which we are trying to get ironed out. As far as the member for St. James South is concerned I believe that the Ministry of Housing and Lands has spent more money in the St. James South constituency in terms of the development of housing solutions than in any other constituency.

Of course a lot of times we have commercial land but a lot of work has been done in St. James South and we continue to work in St. James South. Within the next two months a development at Hoytes Village will start and of course the member has asked about recreation facilities which we will facilitate within the next financial year.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware and I am convinced that we are trying our best. It is true that the process takes some time but I can give this Honourable House the assurance that we will walk with the member and try to bring a fast track to all those acquisitions that are taking a long time and I hope that we can bring them to conclusion. I thank you.

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

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

Mr. SPEAKER: We will now recommit to Obituaries.

OBITUARY SPEECHES

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago Dame Ermytrude Edna Bourne, former parliamentary representative for the constituency of St. Andrew suddenly passed away. The contribution which she has made to the history of this country is indeed a great one when one considers that in 1951 when adult suffrage was first introduced notwithstanding the fact that women for the first time had the right to vote, yet at that time women were very much marginalised in this society.

5:45 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G.W. PAYNE:

To have even considered contesting a seat, a woman had to be very courageous in that decision. Not only did Ermie Bourne contest a seat but she contested against a team of men and she came out victorious and not just victorious, but she came out as the senior Member for the constituency because in those days, as you will recall, we had the double Member constituency and she was elected the senior Member and was also re-elected in the subsequent election of 1956.

One could say that she laid the foundation for the successes which we have seen certainly in this Parliament in that we now have three women. Three women who in their own right have made an outstanding contribution to the political development of this country. Dame Ermie like most of those women also belong to a very rare breed of Parliamentary Representative in that she was, to my recollection, the first parliamentarian who had a parent who was also a Member of Parliament. She came to Parliament at a time of great social change a few years after the 1937 riots. In a sense the transformation which took place between 1951 to 1961 in some way resembles the type of transformation that we are going through as we move into a new technological age. That was time during a Barbados Labour Party administration when we saw the introduction of free secondary education, free health clinics, free water pipes in every village, community centres, baths, the development of the tourist industry, housing rental units in places like Belleplaine, the introduction of substantial labour legislation, the construction of the Deep Water Harbour and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at a time even when you looked at infant mortality, that became a thing of the past.

Indeed, it is to Ermie's credit that we are now reaping the fruits of the labour which she and the parliamentarians of her day put in in that period. Mr. Speaker, I did not know Ermie at that time. I

certainly was an infant when she first came to Parliament but I was fortunate when I decided to contest the seat in St. Andrew to be introduced to her and to be given the type of advice which has redounded to the benefit of the good representation which St. Andrew has received during my tenure.

I recall that first meeting because I had heard a lot about her. I had heard about her exploits on the political platform and even though she spoke very rarely in Parliament since backbenchers in those day hardly spoke.

Asides.

Hon. G.W. PAYNE: They were seen but not heard. She was known as a very good speaker and I recall that at our first meeting I was somewhat in awe of the occasion and I recall certain bits and pieces of advice which she gave on that occasion. Bits and pieces of advice which one finds a little useful in campaigning be careful of what you say in the rum shops; make sure that no matter how long you stay out canvassing, make sure you go home to your wife. I recall that she did not like the way how I was dressed because she felt that I was dressed as though I was going to church and she felt that I should be dress in a manner which was consistent with the normal dress in St. Andrew. Bits and pieces of advice like that she gave at that time. What was supposed to be fifteen minutes conversation turned out to last some four hours and that was the tone of the type of communication between us over the years. If I did not communicate with her as often as I probably would have liked, it had something to do with the fact that she always kept you back for longer than one would expect.

She gave a lot of advice, as I have said, during that period. They were a number of concerns of hers in terms of her period of representation. If it is one thing that she always used to talk about was the terms and conditions of parliamentarians during her time. She always used to remind me to speak, in her words, to the powers that be and to ensure that what happen to her does not happen to anybody else. In her words, she did indicate that in those days a parliamentarian used to be paid \$100 a month. When she left Parliament in 1961, she had no income. She was a very young woman at the time and one may wonder how come she never ever contested an election again. She said to me one day that what one has to understand that when the people say that they do not want you anymore you should not overstay your welcome. She felt in 1961 that the people had spoken and despite all the urging she never ever sought to contest a seat again. Those of the Labour Party who might not have seen her around like some of the old stalwarts might be somewhat concerned about her absence from many functions. I do not want to say she was unhealthy but she had a very serious arthritic problem. A problem which plagued her throughout the latter part of her life. She used to tell me that you are only a Payne in name but I am a pain in body. As a result of that she withdrew herself from many social functions. This is the reason why the Labour Party family did not have the benefit of her company on many important occasions.

She remained committed to the Labour Party up the time of here death. When things were not going in the way that she thought they should be going she would always call to find out what the situation would be. I spoke to her regularly in the early days especially in Opposition sometimes on a weekly basis.

I recall one time the Honourable Member for St. George South speaking in this House about the state of the roads in his constituency when we had just come into Government and the reporting of this particular event made it seem as though there was some controversy or rift between myself and the

Honourable Member for St. George South. She was concerned that these things should not happen and that we have to be careful about what we say in public. She was that type of a person; a very private person, a very humble lady.

5:55 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. G. W. PAYNE:

I recall when the decision was taken to name the East Coast Road after her, while she felt honoured, she inquired as to whether there was not someone else who was more deserving of the Honour. She was that type of person. When she was Honoured by the Government and the title of Dame was conferred on her, she was somewhat concerned that the amount of attention that would have been paid to her because she thought that it would have involved her attending a number of functions and her arthritic illness being exposed.

I also recall when the constituency branch in St. Andrew decided to name a building after her, her only concern was there were people who from her political day might not have liked her and she wanted to be sure that it was adequately secured so that in her words, "nobody would burn down the place."

She was a very pleasant lady, a good sense of humour, always quick to tell you about her times in Parliament. In a way it is a pity that we in Parliament and people who have made a contribution to this country, do not write enough about our/their experiences and I regret that even though I had started to get someone to do some interviews with her, this did not come to fruition. I however managed one day while visiting, to make her believe that I was taking some still photos and was fortunate to have been able to record her on movie camera, talking and joking for about two hours. Every Christmas I said that as a Christmas present, I was going to give her a copy of the tape and I regret that I was unable to do that.

I remember when I took the still pictures back to her, and she had all the pictures, she said "I did not even realise that I had taken all of these." So she died not knowing that I was able to capture her on video tape talking about the good old days, talking about some of the wicked things that she probably

had done and her lifestyle and her living. In the video tape, she did mention the fact that she liked to have a gin and unlike some of the Members of Parliament who would still be satisfied with a gin and tonic, she spoke of a gin and beer.

I remember last Christmas I said that I am not going to allow this Christmas to pass, I must go and see Ermie and unfortunately, I did not find the time. Around Christmas she called my wife and she told my wife that this was the last time that she was going to call because if I do not come, she is finished with me and two days after, we got the very sad news that she had passed away in her sleep.

The people of St. Andrew must certainly miss her. I will certainly miss her. I regret that I did not find the time to spend a little bit more time with her and I would like to extend my sympathy to her friends and family, on my behalf and on behalf of my wife.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I must start by saying that I did not know the late Dame Ermie Bourne. The truth is, when you have a situation where a lady was able to come through at the time she was able to enter politics and to be re-elected more than once, it tells you that this is a lady that had something to offer to her constituents.

I hope, Sir, that the example that she had portrayed to the country will be followed and strengthened by all of those who want to emulate what she had done in this country. So to her family, I offer my deepest sympathy and everything that go with it.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I too would like to support a Resolution of condolence which would go to the family of the late Dame Ermie. I am barely old enough to have a memory of her. Very much the 1950's woman in the way she dressed and I think my first impression and lasting impression of her was a very sparkling kind of hearty laugh. Quite a laugh, but I want to say that Dame Ermie was truly a Dame. She is one who would have ground for the likes of myself and the other ladies who sit in this Chamber to run on. Not wishing to be overly self serving, I still feel that I must say that in the history of this Parliament, the Barbados Labour Party is that Party which is always in the forefront inviting women to be members of the team and Ermie Bourne was a member of a team in those days.

I do not recall, even as a young child, that it was thought uncommon or strange that she should run for Parliament and sit in Parliament. What I think I have learned from her in her time, was that it was not necessary for a woman in the fifties nor in the seventies when I ran, nor in the eighties or unto to this day, to be hanging about in rum shops or to imitate the behaviour of the men in politics.

I think it is fair to say that Ermie Bourne struck out a path for the way in which, as far as I am aware, all of the women who have come to the platform and now have come up the steps of this House as Members of Parliament, have been able to follow. She brought a certain dignity to the way in which women could conduct themselves in the political process and for that I think all women who are part of the political scene in Barbados and certainly the ones who sit in our Parliament, in both Chambers for that matter, have to be appreciative and grateful.

6:05 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER:

The Barbados Labour Party (BLP) was the first political party to invite a woman to its political platform; to have a woman seated in this Chamber and a woman seated in Cabinet and today for the first time in the history of this Parliament to have several women seated within the Chamber.

I think that Ermie Bourne was a great pioneer in that context and it would have been an act of supreme indifference if I did not get up in here today to say so. I cannot pretend that I knew her closely. The memory I have of her I have already spoken. She was a woman with a hearty laugh. She was a woman who was a member of a team. That is how she will always be imprinted on my memory and I would venture to suggest on the memory of the members of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP).

In this House, all of Barbados was able to share Ermie Bourne and her experience, for that too, I think that Barbados has to be grateful. We made her a Dame - much deserved. As the Honourable Member for St. Andrew has pointed out, she is immortalised in that the East Coast Road is now named after her and I deem that to be a fitting honour.

Mr. Speaker, political life is not an easy life. People tend to put us down but we work very hard. We work seven days a week and we work 15 and 16 hours a day. That is the kind of political life that Ermie Bourne led mostly in the parish of St. Andrew. That her family would have afforded us that opportunity is something for which we must be appreciative and thankful for as well.

Therefore, I would want to say to her relatives, thank you for lending her to us and to add my voice to this Resolution and offer to the Bourne and the associated families the condolence of the House of Assembly.

I am much obliged.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I feel a sense of duty to speak on this occasion. I did not know Dame Ermie Bourne well and other than meeting her on a few occasions I would not have had an opportunity to have extensive conversations with her.

I think what she did in this country in being the first woman to offer herself successfully for entry into this Parliament is so significant a record in our history books that she deserves the praise of us all. Many women today still remain reluctant when the issue of their entry into politics is raised. Indeed, political parties have all found it difficult to attract women to enter elective politics. When one considers that this is in spite of the fact that women are more regularly seen not only in the political arena but indeed in the private sector; in other leading areas of life in this country and in other parts of

the region. It must have been a monumental decision and an act of tremendous courage for her to have decided in the very same year that the vote was offered to all above the age of 21 that she should offer herself in a rural district as well where one might believe that the sense of enlightenment for women taking a leading position may not have been the same as in the vicinity of a capital town. I believe that her entry into politics was significant in that it allowed persons not just women but all other persons who may previously have been disadvantaged prior to the introduction of universal adult suffrage to believe that they could venture into areas that were hitherto not part of the normal realm of doing things. I do not only mean women but I speak of course of persons who may not have been propertied; who may not have had a franchise and persons who may have been excluded from other forms of social and economic activity apart from politics.

I think that in the context of our society which is still a relatively new society in terms of the practising of democracy that we will do well to be able to record properly the contributions of these persons. We have lost the opportunity with a number of them already. Indeed, we have perhaps lost the opportunity with the first two generations that have past the governance of this country since 1930 because it has essentially been two generations to date.

Those of us now who are within the third generation really must stop speaking about it and make every effort to ensure that what we now benefit from by reason of oral history can now be encapsulated in written form so that those who may come two and three generations from now may have the benefit of enjoying the richness of stories that attracted the lives of these persons who were pioneers in every sense of the word and who enrich the landscapes in this country by their contributions. The bold fact of their participation very often does not speak enough as to what they had to confront and how they confronted those challenges.

Today, we can feel proud about the fact that Barbados has consistently for the last decade been recognised among the top 25 countries in the world according the United Nations (UN's) human and development index and given the fact that only 50 to 60 years before there were riots in the country as a result of a large measure of inequity; lack of access to basic opportunities; basic health care and in many instances even food and shelter. That we should have made this journey is such a testimony to the ordinary people of this country in particular to those who were making the first step and to those who had to consider whether their actions would have brought them into disrepute or may have put on them undue hardship that they could not forecast simply because no one in similar circumstances had done it before.

I therefore want to strongly associate myself with the words of all who have spoken before. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew has done much to ensure that she remains in the memory of the residence of St. Andrew and generally in Barbados. I dare say that only today he commented on the fact that her fighting spirit may well have extended itself across the rest of her family, one of whom is now in this Chamber with us and that may be the genesis of that daredevil spirit that we sometimes find in our colleague.

I hope that the Ministry of Culture can in some way contribute to the adequate and appropriate recording of the lives of some of these people who have helped to make Barbados the kind of place that all of us are proud of and would wish to continue to fight in service for.

I thank you.

Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I would wish to thank all Honourable Members who spoke and in fact all Honourable Members who came to the funeral and have expressed their condolences in one way or another.

6:15 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Miss H.E. THOMPSON:

With Auntie Ermie's passing, the torch bearers of that political era and generation really are quickly going. There are now, I believe only two or three members of the 51-61 Parliament left alive. I cannot quite remember their names but Sleepy, Dowding and a third one, Williams or Vaughan who lives in St. Lucia. I think we do not rightly pay tribute to the kind of work that the people of that Parliament and that particular generation did and the extent to which they paved the way for the social transformation that came about in Barbados in the 51-61 period, then the 61 period and on, and the extent to which that generation really laid the foundations for the kind of social and economic development which we have seen come about in Barbados. You have to admire their courage. They were right out of the era and period of the Riots, the great social upheaval.

In 1951 Grantley Adams himself, one of the founding members and leader of this party, and a National Hero of Barbados, went to St. Andrew to ask Auntie Ermie to run. Now the traditions of that time are interesting. She had given public service before in the Vestry. She had been a school teacher and, in fact, when she got married to her husband Ivan, whom she predeceased, she had to give up her teaching career because at those times women who got into the civil service, whether it was teaching or nursing, the two professions primarily opened to them in that generation, had to give up their careers because it was felt that you could not be a wife and carry on a career as well because you would not care for or give adequate service to one or the other. So she had to leave her teaching career and go home.

In 1951 Grantley Adams journeyed to St. Andrew to ask Ermie Bourne to run. Auntie Ermie herself gave me the story of what transpired, consistent with the traditions of the time. Sir Grantley asked her husband Ivan if he would mind or allow her to run. Uncle Ivan, knowing well

how sharp Auntie Ermie's tongue was, told Sir Grantley: "That woman can speak for herself. You ask her." So he did. She was totally surprised and very flattered at the offer but she wanted to serve and had, in fact, been giving service as, indeed, her father before her, my grandfather, had also been a member of the Vestry and served at the parochial level in St. Andrew so she was very well known. The family was very well based in St. Andrew, a large family, very popular with a strong family base and parish base. Auntie Ermie agreed to run.

In 1951 there were not the sophisticated platforms that we have now, but on her first political speech she said to me that the meeting was so very well attended, because the notion of a woman speaking on the political platform at the level of a candidate was not only such an anomaly but something that

people really wanted to see, so people came out to see her and they had a massive meeting.

Now, Auntie Ermie was a very short woman, like me she was barely past five feet. I am five feet one inch. Auntie Ermie was like my height, very petite. She had to be lifted onto the platform that night. She could not climb up on her own but she was lifted onto the platform which was an old truck. She went to the microphone and proceeded to deliver her first public speech that was extremely well received.

She was, during the 1951 and subsequent campaigns, a popular speaker. She was an extremely intelligent and articulate woman who spoke her mind and really was not afraid of anybody. She stood always for a particular point of principle, stuck to her point, and was prepared to give her views and to say be damned the consequences. This is how I feel. This is the truth. This is the point of principle to which I am going to hold.

Though she was very small, she had a commanding presence because of the way she spoke. She had a very strong voice and as the Honourable Member for the City rightly said, a hearty laugh. She loved a good joke and could tell one herself.

The Honourable Member for St. Andrew was right. She liked a gin and beer, and she particularly liked beer. There was a point at which up to the 1970s when she was very active socially she would go out a lot. She would go out to parties and to fetes. She would go to hotels that had on various functions. One Old Year's night she broke her ankle going into Sandy Lane. After that she never went out feting again. Her fete days came to an end. After that, interestingly enough, and I am trying to give you something of the personality of the woman because for many years she was not a person in public life and people did not know her, after she injured her ankle she always wore sandals. She never wore shoes with high heels subsequent to that injury sustained to her ankle.

She was very self confident and had what has been described by another female parliamentarian as spunk. Of course, that is a quality that does not always win people's approval, but that was the nature of her personality. She would say things that sometimes people did not quite like but she always said it as she saw it. Because she was so self-confident she did not worry beyond that of what people said as long as she had, in fact, been fair and truthful. She was fearless.

She never said to people: "You look well, or you look good." She always said "You look nicely." She would say that all the time and I was always amused that she would never say "You look nice." Auntie Ermie always said "You look nicely" but she always said it repeatedly particularly to women when they were very well dressed. She always liked to see women well dressed and well turned out especially if they were going out for what she considered a special occasion.

She was very fond of her Member of Parliament. She had great regard for him and was deeply appreciative of him and the Cabinet when the highway was named after her and, in fact, when the honour of Dame of St. Andrew was conferred on her.

She was also a very simple person. For all her life she lived in the constituency of St. Andrew, even when she was the parliamentary representative there, so that perpetually every hour of the day and night she was accessible to her constituents. She lived in Belleplaine, not far away from the East Coast Road,

maybe 200 yards or so from the St. Andrew's Parish Church and certainly during my whole lifetime that is the only parish I have known Auntie Ermie to live in.

Even when Auntie Ermie was out of active politics people would come to her house at all times for advice, to ask for things, to seek guidance on how to access Government services, to ask her to be in contact with a minister or parliamentarian in respect of an issue to help them get access to one thing or another and always Auntie Ermie facilitated them as far as she could.

She had a deep and enduring love for St. Andrew. There was one particular summer that I spent with her. Young people did not then, and I do not think now, want to leave more excited areas to spend a whole summer vacation in a rural parish.

6:25 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Miss H.E. THOMPSON:

She rose very early and went to bed as soon as the news was finished. She kept a nice and simple home. She knew a lot about animal husbandry and farming in general. She and her husband were farmers and they had chickens, fowl, sheep and pigs. They raised chickens not just for the sale of the meat but for the egg production, and Uncle Ivan had prize winning animals in various shows which were much sought after for mating and breeding.

She knew a lot about the land, the seasons and weather and could talk about these things. It was a typical rural existence. She liked to cook fresh food and she grew many vegetables and fruits herself. You never went to see Auntie Ermie unless you left with a plastic bag or some bag full of fruit or vegetables, something that she had grown.

In that summer, in particular, as I would spend a day or two she persuaded me to stay for a long time. You know, in families we tend to take our members for granted. We do not quite appreciate, whether it is political families or families of actual blood relation, how much people have done and what they have contributed and developed; and this woman who lived so humbly and so simply, that summer, spent a great deal of time telling me what the 1951 period in Parliament was like, what the Barbados

Labour Party was doing in relation to poverty alleviation in the country at the time. She spoke about the abject level of poverty which was present in Barbados when they came to Government in 1951 and some of the initiatives which they had to take to effect immediate change.

That summer affected me profoundly at the political level. She had tremendous regard for Sir Grantley Adams and the vision and leadership that he brought to the Barbados Labour Party. It was Auntie Ermie who shared with me the fact that holidays were paid. That legislation was introduced at that time. The fact that there were large numbers of women who worked in shops and as domestics, as they were then called, in houses for hours on end without any kind of social welfare benefits, without access to holidays and that they brought in legislation to change all that and to ensure that holidays were paid.

They brought in legislation during that period to ensure that wages were protected. It was during that period, as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew said, that the free health service and health clinics were introduced with health clinics at Belleplaine, with health clinics at Gall Hill in St. John and health clinics at St. Peter.

It was then that cart-borne water was also introduced and water toilets actually being physically constructed in houses. The Honourable Member has already mentioned the development of the Bridgetown Harbour but it was also during that period that the studies were put in place for the development of the National Insurance Scheme and so we saw during that era not only the free secondary education but all the other things that I have mentioned but great social transformation, so much so that the historian, Sir Alexander Hoyos, was moved to write the work, Grantley Adams and the Social Revolution because truly that period came to be an era of social revolution.

Here was this simple country woman without formal secondary education but being naturally bright and articulate in the midst of all of it, a pioneering politician seeking to effect social transformation at the national level and seeking to ensure that people in the constituency where she lived and grew up and loved and lived all her life and died -She died at home in her bed in St. Andrew, in the parish that she lived in and loved.

She was staying by an uncle of mine because she had not been well over the Christmas holidays and she went home just two or so days before her death and I think that Aunt Ermie would have been pleased that she died in her own bed at home in the St. Andrew that was so near and dear to her.

She was an excellent cook and loved to have the family in and to cook and entertain. I remember the last time she had a family dinner how wonderful the food was and she was thrilled as people kept going back for seconds and thirds and she encouraged them to eat more and more. She was a typical Barbadian housewife in that respect who would not only keep a good house but loved to see people eating and enjoying her table, enjoying her pot.

In her latter years, her love for politics did not wane. She took great pride in the women of the Barbados Labour Party and was always saying to me to give her regards to Billie and her regards to Mia and was hoping even when she was unwell that we would all come and visit her at the same time so that she could talk to us about what it was like to be a woman in politics in the 1951-1961 era and hear what our own views of our experience was with us sitting together in her home.

She remained so keenly interested in politics that she followed the news and read the papers keenly. She kept her ears to the ground and could always tell you when the Government was going to change and could predict almost to the seat which would be won and lost because she spent a lot of time on the phone and talking to people. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew was right. She loved a good conversation and she would speak to people about what was happening and would pick up the telephone and call people all over Barbados and get a feel for what was happening in their community or in their district.

She could therefore tell you if a Government was losing popularity over what issues, what needed to be done to effect change, what it was that people were concerned about. She was very much in touch with what was happening even though she was not a person who was busy outside of the home and even though she was not seen out in public much outside of the family.

Her word was her bond. If Auntie Ernie told you she was going to do something for you, she would do her utmost to ensure that she did what she had promised. In fact, there was a particular promise that she made to her own father and she kept that promise up to the day she died well into her eighties. Even though it was something that caused her great personal pain but she felt that having given her word to her father before he died that she would do her duty, though he had long passed on, to keep that promise. That was the kind of person that she was and she was very much a person of that era and that generation, very high principled, with very strong values.

She had a strong sense of community and at one time, as I indicated, liked to party and ate a lot. Not only did she like to cook, but she ate a great deal. In her latter years she had, apart from the arthritis, ulcers in her stomach and was very restrained in what she ate. She ate very carefully and lost a lot of weight.

She was very loyal to persons who were her friends. She maintained a long friendship with Sir Ronald Mapp up to the time of his death. Senator Patricia Symmonds is another person to whom she was very close and she would call her friends and talk to them about various matters from time to time. She wanted to see the BLP win yet another election because she remained loyal to the Party up to the time of her death and was always, even as she sat at home, strategising what it was the Party needed to do. Not just what we need to do from the political level but certainly what we needed to do to satisfy the public that we were delivering to them in the way in which they would have wanted.

She was very close to several members of her family, her brothers in particular, including my own father, and spoke to them every day of her life and had long conversations about all kinds of issues.

At the time that she died she was preparing to entertain her family once again and as the Honourable Member for St. Andrew told you in his own remarks had summoned him to her house so that she could discuss political matters which was the other thing that was always on her mind.

6:35 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

In the months before she died though she had not been a church going person, Auntie Ermie accepted Christ through the admonition of Uncle Wesley's wife Elaine and spent many hours in prayer, reading her bible, calling friends and relative to share the bible with them and to share her new knowledge of and love of Christ. We in the family believe that Aunt Ermie has gone home to God a deeply happy woman comforted by the fact that her Party and the Government of the country recognised the contribution that she made, happy to be home and to live so long in the constituency and parish that she loved and happy that she was able to die under a Barbados Labour Party administration. She was deeply pleased when we won the last Elections and was very pleased at the results and hoping that we would continue to retain the goodwill and confidence of the public.

I would wish again, Sir, to thank not only this Chamber for paying tribute today and for all courtesies and kindness and recognition extended to her during here lifetime but to thank other Barbadians who have gone out of their way to extend condolences to the family in our time of grief.

Thank you very much, Sir.

Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I wish to associate the Government of Barbados and the entire family of the Barbados Labour Party with the sentiments of condolences which have been expressed in this debate and the Resolution which, in due course, the House will pass. The Government of Barbados has formally recognised the contribution of Dame Ermie Bourne to the social and economic development of our country. There is a very special sense in which Dame Ermie made a contribution and fought for herself recognition in the history of Barbados' politics that go beyond the formal recognition of Government. It has to be said that as long as there is a Barbados, it will have to be remembered that Dame Ermie was the first of her kind and that single achievement is so large that in many respects it will overwhelm the others who have come after her but for whom she was their standard bearer.

In a real sense her ascension to this Parliament was a very important symbolic aspect of the social revolution of which the Honourable Member for St. James South has spoken. We too easily forget that it was less than half a century ago when the women folk of this country were disenfranchised in a manner that has never been the lot of any other section of the Barbados society. Dame Ermie Bourne's contribution to the development of the Barbadians society was that she broke down one of the most important barriers that stood in the way in perhaps the most marginalised and disenfranchised group of Barbadians. Her role in the social revolution is larger than the building of clinics and the building of schools. It speaks to the beginning of the intrinsic integration of women in the main stream of Barbados society.

I believe that the country is the richer now that there is a process in which the integration of women in the main stream of our society has come to be accepted as common place. We would be gravely and greatly in error to believe that that was always the case. Those of us who were not formally part of the struggle may very well underestimate the barriers of discrimination and the savagery of those barriers that had to be confronted by persons like Dame Ermie who had to lead the struggle.

I also believe, Sir, that this House, in paying tribute to her, must recognise her as one of a kind of Barbadian politician who constitute the salt of the earth type and who represent the bedrock of political institutions. Their contribution is not measured in terms of the richness of their parliamentary discourse nor in terms of number of pieces of legislation that they would have piloted through Parliament but is represented in terms of the leavening spirit that they brought to the work of the political institutions; the common sense that they infused in the discussion of political parties and the way in which they have caused political parties to be responsive to the opinion of the ordinary man and the ordinary woman.

It is an important part of the genius of Barbados politics that our political system has been enriched by persons of no high and vaunting ambitions, no great achievements in letters nor the law but just in good old fashioned Barbadian common sense. I trust, Sir, that our political heritage will never be stripped of the contribution of this kind of person. The House knows of whom I speak, Sir, the Lloyd Smiths and persons of that calibre, persons whose contributions are rich and deep and is and must be greatly valued by political institutions because it is what keeps political institutions as the servants of the ordinary man and ordinary woman.

I think, Sir, that you will not find in the annals of the Hansard long rich speeches by Dame Ermie but I am absolutely sure that in the Chambers of the Barbados Labour Party she would have more than made her mark. That type of politician also happen to have been an excellent representative at the local level.

I think Ermie Bourne was part of a vanishing breed, a person who managed to combine an aptitude for representation at the national level with a great capacity to do good as a local Parliament representative. She would have been one the last who had a foot, both in the local Government system and in this Parliament. I suspect, Sir, that the last of that breed would be the Honourable Member for Christ Church South. There were those Barbadians politicians who were wonderful at both being part of this House of Assembly and serving in the local Government system. It is a part of our history that has properly to be told because those are the persons, Sir, who were on the front line of dealing with the

day to day needs of the Barbadian society and making the political system as it was evolving, continue to be responsive to the basic needs of people. Again, Sir, I trust that that is an attribute that this society will never lose.

Ermie Bourne also belong to a class of the Barbados Labour Party political people who were the first wave. I call them the pre-independence Labour Party people. They are distinctive by the fact that after they lost in 1961 their political careers in representative politics was effectively over. They never came back to Parliament although some might have run. There is a very clear cleavage in Labour Party affairs; there are some people whose political careers ended in 1961 at a very early age. What astonishes me, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Ronald Map ended his representative career at 41. I am older than that, Sir. Ermie Bourne ended hers at 43. Meneca Cox, once he lost never came back to this House. Those were persons who laid the foundation for the country to move towards Independence. They laid that foundation by establishing that once people got the vote in 1951, and were able to then constitute a Cabinet, persons of that political class could be responsible for the political destiny of this society.

Sir, she contributed to Barbados' political development but her place in Barbados' history is large and it is very secure. I do not think, Sir, that we need to enlarge her in death beyond what she was in life, Sir, but to remember her as a good woman who has made a fundamental and lasting contribution to this country's development.

6:45 p.m.

Tuesday, February 29, 2000

Continuation of Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR:

In that capacity therefore, I would say that on behalf of the Government but most especially so, on behalf of the family of the Barbados Labour Party to recognise and remember her fondness and to commend her, Sir, to the ages.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would like to associate this Honourable Chair with the sentiments expressed on the passing of the late Honourable Member. On behalf of my constituency, my family and myself, I express my sincere condolences.

This House with a claim accepts the Resolution of sympathy and so directs that the appropriate Resolution be sent to the grieving relatives.

As a mark of respect for the passing of the late Honourable Member, I invite all present to stand with me and observe one minute's silence.

One minute's silence was observed.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 7th March, 2000 at 1100 a.m.

Sir, on that day, the Estimates of Expenditure for the new fiscal year beginning 1st April, 2000 will be laid. The debate on the Estimates will commence on Wednesday, 15th March. Not the following Monday as usual, Wednesday, 15th, because the Heads are meeting in St. Kitts on 13th and 14th and we will start the Estimates on the 15th.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, next Tuesday, we want to start the debate on The Constitution Review Commission's Report and I am giving you notice now that I shall be writing to you, as I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition earlier today, for permission and in his case agreement, to televise that debate next Tuesday on the Forde Commission Report.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we now adjourn as proposed.

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

The question that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 7th March, 2000 at 11:00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

6:50 p.m.