
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, July 16, 2002

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, July 16, 2002.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Civil Service)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (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.

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

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, LL.B.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of Labour and Social Security)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

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

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Physical Development and Environment)

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

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. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

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

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of Economic Development, Industry and International Business)

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Prayers were led by Rev. Dale Brathwaite.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, July 9, 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, July 9, 2002, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Value Added Tax (Refund) (The Barbados Military Cemetery Association) Order, 2002.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay:

1. National Insurance and Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations, 2002;
2. The Severance Payments (Fund Contribution) (Amendment) Regulations, 2002.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Take-over Bid Regulations, 2002.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

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

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

ORDER NO. 8 – TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF THE FIREARMS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2002

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to move the Second Reading of the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, 2002. This Honourable Chamber in 1998 would have passed a new Firearms Bill, which subsequently became known as the Firearms Act, 1998. Essentially, it provided for a more rigid and comprehensive framework governing the use and possession of firearms in Barbados.

The experience over the last few years has shown us that there have been one or two difficulties which have surfaced in terms of loopholes and, therefore, the amendment that is before the Chamber today seeks to bring a more complete framework to bear in respect of the Government's strategies to deal with the management of firearms as well as the removal of illegal firearms from circulation in this country.

I believe, Sir, that it is perhaps useful to locate this debate in some historical context because almost some one hundred years ago when the Highways Act was passed by a Parliament the offence of shooting on or near a highway was subject only to a fine of \$10 but the offence of throwing stones on or near a highway was subject – I speak from memory now – to a fine of \$24, so that it was a more serious penalty for a person to throw stones on or near a highway than it was for them to fire or discharge a gun.

It did not stop there. In fact, it was a more serious penalty for a person to hang out clothes on or near a highway

than to discharge a gun on or near a highway. There is no doubt in my mind that those who occupied the Parliament at the time may have been among a class of people who were privileged enough to be able to afford weapons that were firearms or at least to have access to them while it was perceived that the problem of persons pelting rocks on or near a highway because of the abundance of rocks was one that would have brought a level of disorder to the community and the society.

Now I said that in these terms, Mr. Deputy Speaker because while I do not agree with the fact that there was clearly an attempt to quell the majority of the population on matters that may seem to us a little specious today I make the point to show that a Parliament responds to the times in which it lives. To that extent, we ourselves are clear that at this juncture of our development in the early part of the 21st century we have seen a phenomenon globally, not just in Barbados, not just in the Caribbean, nor in the hemisphere but globally, that has seen a proliferation of illegal arms, such that the notion that guns were things held only by armies or police has become a thing of the past and people in some countries speak about the right to bear arms but, as a corollary to that, we see an expanded use of illegal arms and also as a result an expanded traffic in illegal arms.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the truth is that this Government makes bold to say that illegal firearms is one of the largest problems facing not just Barbados but Caribbean countries in respect of their ability to maintain law and order and to preserve the security of the nations. I say so without fear of contradiction because when you examine what is happening in each Caribbean country, when you examine what is happening in countries like the United Kingdom where persons do not have a culture of bearing arms unlike the United States of America, you see that the proliferation of illegal weapons has, in fact, spawned a level of violence that has started to undermine the social fabric of the societies within which we live.

Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the CARICOM Heads of Government meeting in Nassau in February, 2001, determined that the problem was so severe as it related to crime and violence that there should be a regional task force established with the sole purpose of seeking to develop a range of strategies that would be of assistance to Caribbean governments in their efforts to maintain law and order.

This task force met with the Attorneys General of the region and the Ministers of national security in Montego Bay last month as a precursor to the report that would be submitted to the Heads of Government in Georgetown two weeks ago. I, therefore, had the opportunity to be involved in that meeting and to be given the chance to see the scale of the problem not just as I said in Barbados but throughout the

entire Commonwealth Caribbean and, indeed, in addition to the Commonwealth Caribbean, Surinam and Haiti.
11.30 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say clearly that Barbados is definitely not as bad as many of the other countries in the region, both in relation to the scale of crime as well as to the peculiar issue of the use of illegal firearms and its impact on the society. Sir, to say to ourselves that we are not as bad as the rest of the region is no comfort if we are worse off than we were ten to thirty years ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is for this reason that this Government is determined to forge alliances across the society to seek to wrestle with the problem of illegal firearms in this community because it is our judgement that the proliferation of those illegal firearms will do more to spawn violence, to inspire fear and to act as a disincentive to people doing their legitimate business on a daily basis. In those circumstances, while we have not yet reached that point – and I want to make it clear because our numbers are still not up there, that we do not ever want to reach the point – and what we want, therefore, to do is to arrest the rate of increase of the use of illegal firearms in this community in the range of crimes if it is a murder, robbery, aggravated burglary, rape, sexual offence, assault or whatever.

We also feel that the legislation which was passed in 1998 still stands good today in respect of those offences which it does, in fact, cover. We, as a Government, were very happy to hear the sentencing directions given by His Lordship the Chief Justice, some three or four months ago, to ensure that the sentences of the courts reflect a certain uniformity in respect to the handling of persons found guilty with various illegal firearms offences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that the Government clearly understands that there can be no single solution or action that will allow us to arrest the problem of the rate of increase in the use of illegal firearms in Barbados. Sir, what is required of us, as with the issue of arresting of crime generally, is a series of multi-sectoral strategies that seek to deal with all of the aspects of illegal firearms. Sir, what do I mean by that? I refer to His Lordship's sentencing directions in respect to those offences that are already on the Statute Book, in respect of the Firearms Act of 1998; but it does not stop there.

Last week, the Commissioner of Police held a Press Conference where he indicated that the Royal Barbados Police Force will be establishing an anti gun unit, as some people go to work every day to deal with the issue of the possession, supply and distribution of illegal firearms in Barbados. In the same way that we have a drug squad whose work, on a day-to-day basis, is to wrestle with the problem of illegal drugs in Barbados, in the same way that we have a

task force as an elite tactical unit, the Police Force, will be establishing a unit, headed by an Assistant Superintendent of Police, to deal with the issue of the supply, distribution, possession and use of illegal firearms in Barbados. I make this point because it is serious enough to demand of the resources of the police a full-time unit working around the clock in order to get on top of the problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is sad about it is that it would be bad enough if people sought to use illegal guns in their own internecine squabbles, because most of them, in fact, relate to situations where criminal acts have been committed in one type or other, whether it is a drug gang, a gang of thieves or whatever, and the weapon becomes the mechanism by which they seek to elevate their strength in order to commit the particular crime. When the weapons start to be used in public places, such that the lives and the safety of ordinary Barbadians and visitors are threatened because of the reckless and indiscriminate use in a public place, whether it is in the hospital, whether it is across a school ground, whether it is on a playing field where a football match is being played, or whether it is in the road or whether it is in the capital city here of Bridgetown, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the crime that is being committed is not simply a crime against the victim who is being shot at, but it is a crime against the entire society.

I say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in so committing that crime against the society, they have spawned a level of fear and panic among ordinary, law-abiding citizens, such that people feel that they cannot go about their legitimate business on a day-to-day basis without some level of fear or panic residing within them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we, as a society – I am not speaking about the Government now, I am speaking about the society – must have a problem with that and, as a society, we must send the strongest possible signal that this society will not tolerate the breach of peace that occurs as a result of the indiscriminate use of illegal firearms in public places, and that unless you are a member of the Police Force, or unless you are defending yourself against attack, there is really no reason for anyone to use a gun in a public place in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we feel strongly that all right-thinking Barbadians who have been saying – you hear them on the road, in their houses and in the call-in programmes – that they want this issue on the presence of illegal firearms that are spawning the robberies, assaults and other crimes dealt with in a way that rids the society of all crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of that, it is our judgement as a Government that there is one area which the Firearms Act of 1998 did not deal comprehensively with and

that is the use of illegal guns or an imitation firearm in a public place, such as to cause persons to feel that they are in danger of their life being lost or, indeed, of serious bodily harm being suffered by them.
11.40 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to that extent, this Bill as one of its major planks seeks to introduce in the Firearms Act at Clause 14 a new section 21 (a). I will read it for the purpose of the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so that there be no doubt as to what it is we are trying to achieve. May I say as well that there would be a slight amendment when we reach the committee stage. Therefore, I will now read what I am purporting to amend it to.

“A person who without lawful authority or excuse or recklessly (a) discharges a firearm or (b) otherwise uses a firearm in a public place and in a manner that places another person in danger of death or serious bodily harm is guilty of an offence and shall on conviction on indictment be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than 15 years and not more than 25 years.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is, therefore, a very, very serious offence. It is the judgement of the Government, after some level of consultations, that a minimum period of imprisonment of 15 years is required for anyone found guilty of using a firearm in a public place that places another person in danger of death or in danger of serious bodily harm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are not defending yourself in self-defence or if you are not a member of the Police Force or otherwise lawfully using a gun, there can be no excuse for using a gun in a public place. I want to make it clear, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this section does not cover people who are defending themselves as a result of an attack, in other words, the defence of self-defence is a complete defence to this section.

For those people who feel that it is a badge of honour to raise a gun in the air and let go shots or for those people as we saw earlier this year who feel that they can go in a hospital because they have a vendetta against somebody in that hospital and start to shoot wildly and recklessly or for those people, like the parents in St. Philip who met with me at the St. Philip Primary School before I left the Ministry of Education last August who complained about the gunshots that would be ringing out on the school premises both behind the school and on the front lawn of the school or for those people who feel that they have a right to go to a football match where people are enjoying themselves and because they have an altercation with somebody that they can pull a gun and start shooting wildly or aimlessly, Mr. Deputy

Speaker, I say without apology that this is not part of our culture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say without apology that this society, not this Government, must not and will not countenance the reckless behaviour of a few individuals who feel that they can destroy the social fabric of this country in spite of all that has been done to provide them access to education, to health care and to a whole range of social services that distinguish Barbados from many other developing countries in the world.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the numbers we are talking about who are prepared to deal with serious crimes and create a problem across Barbados cannot reach 500. In fact, the numbers who are actually outside of prison and creating the trouble are substantially less than 500. The Commissioner himself can speak on these issues outside of Parliament. I say that for the public to understand that the scale in proportion to the entire population is a negligible proportion but it is a negligible proportion of people carrying a disproportionate influence on the welfare of this society and on the social capital that we have managed to garner and build up from many years of hard trials and sacrifices in this society. Therefore, it is our judgment that what is required is a serious penalty.

This legislation already provides that where a person has been convicted of a single firearm offence before, they are subject to a minimum period of imprisonment. So the concept of a minimum period of imprisonment already resides under the 1998 Act and, therefore, we are not introducing anything new.

Those who may have a more peculiar knowledge of the law may argue why not use the common law offence of endangering life or the statutory offence of endangering life in the Offences Against the Person Act which is also available to the police. While that renders one liable to a maximum period of life imprisonment, the reality is that the court does not have to send you to prison first. We feel that the presence of firearms is so inimical to the maintenance of security in this island that we are prepared to require a minimum period of imprisonment where a person uses or discharges a firearm without lawful authority or excuse or recklessly in public so as to render a person in danger of his life or safety.

Equally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are cognisant that there are some people who would use imitation firearms in order to commit robberies and inspire and incite the same panic. In those circumstances where the weapon being used without lawful authority or excuse or recklessly is an imitation firearm, the sentence then is a minimum period of imprisonment of 10 years with a maximum period of

imprisonment for 15 years because the impact is still the same on persons who are the subject of feeling that they are in fear as well as the long-term sequela on the society remains the same.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not stop there. It is the judgement of the Government as well that any person who has been charged with an indictable offence for firearms must now apply to the High Court for bail. They would not be able to get bail in the Magistrate's Court and I want to repeat that. Any person who is charged with an indictable offence under the Firearms Act must now apply to the High Court for bail. As a consequence, the Schedule of this amendment seeks to amend the Bail Act, Cap. 122A, so we are treating firearm offences that are indictable in the same way that we treat murder, treason and high treason.
11.50 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must therefore understand the seriousness with which the Government is viewing the use of illegal firearms. In the same way the Bail Act says that a person charged with murder, treason or high treason shall not be granted bail except by the order of a Judge of the High Court, we add to that list "indictable offences" under the Firearms Act.

Sir, there were some offences under the Firearms Act that before bail could be granted from the Magistrate's Court. We are now saying that all indictable offences now require a person to obtain bail from the High Court.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we recognise we have to take a firm hand with the use of illegal firearms, it is also our judgment that where a person has a gun licence, where that licence has expired, where that person has failed to apply to the Commissioner of Police for a renewal of that licence, that person should not be treated in the same way as a person who has been using and possessing an illegal firearm for criminal purposes, so long as they seek not to let more than one year pass since the renewal is due. Sir, because we recognise that implicit in that person having a licence in the first place, that person would have had to have a good character. To that, we now ensure that under these Amendments, that person will only be the subject of a fine on summary conviction of a maximum of \$10 000 but will not be liable to any term of imprisonment. Therefore, this distinguishes between a person who has a firearm without a licence, or a person who owns a firearm but forgets to apply for the renewal of that licence within one year. Therefore, that person who has forgotten to renew that gun licence has no criminal intent in the same way but must still be fined because they have breached regulations which require them to renew that gun licence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while we are being firm and harsh with the use of illegal firearms, we are also being sensitive

to those law-abiding citizens who, through a lapse of memory or judgment, may have forgotten to apply for the renewal of that licence. They have as much as one year within which they will only be subjected to a fine. If, however, they forget to apply for the licence and have that gun for over one year, automatically that firearm becomes an illegal firearm because there was no intention of that person to treat to the law in the way in which the law requires them to do.

Sir, we also recognise the Firearms Act of 1998 needed to broaden the exceptions so that we could facilitate the proper use of sports and athletic meetings where the pistol is used so that by a quirk of the law persons using a gun at those sports or athletic meetings do not become liable to a criminal action. We have also ensured that persons who genuinely belong to a shooting or rifle club are not caught by the mischiefs that might have been created by the 1998 Act. We have also made sure that we restrict persons who are eligible to hold firearms. So, a person who has been convicted of an offence in Barbados or elsewhere, that involves the use, possession, sale or disposal of a firearm, or the offence of burglary within five years since the commission of that offence, will not be able to obtain a firearm. Therefore, the regulatory powers are being strengthened but, at the same time, we are making clear distinctions between persons who have a genuine criminal intent and persons who the law authorises to either own, use or have a firearm, with the intention that we be strategic in being able to target where the substance of the problem lies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the 1998 Act did not speak to creating an offence for the exporting of arms; it only speaks to an offence for importation. One now has to get a licence from the Commissioner of Police where that person is seeking to export a firearm. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not operate in isolation but, as far as possible, we are trying to work cooperatively with other countries, particularly with those in the region, therefore, we need to be able to track the movement of firearms. One of the things that one needs to be able to have at all times is a database that allows one to be able effectively to track the movement and use of firearms. Most people might not know, but each firearm has a unique mark in respect of how the bullet is marked so that one can tell whether or not that bullet has come from a particular firearm. Therefore, when people feel they can trick others by renting a gun, in truth and in fact, the police and the forensic people have the mechanism by which they can still trace whether or not a bullet has come from a particular gun.

Sir, therefore, the maintenance of a comprehensive database is absolutely critical to the successful management of the problem of illegal firearms as well as the regulation of legal firearms.

Sir, the CARICOM Heads of Government, in their recommendation, would have spoken specifically about the

creation of a dedicated part of law enforcement agencies in order to deal with illegal firearms. Barbados was therefore ahead of the curve when the Commissioner of Police had announced, just one week ahead of the Heads of Government meeting, the establishment of the Anti-gun Unit. That was because this matter was being discussed for some time, even prior to that Heads of Government Conference.

Sir, this Amendment would also be ahead of the curve because we have been looking at this, recognising the need to be able to clearly distinguish where we want to go after persons who are pursuing activities inimical to the State's welfare and those who are simply breaching regulations by reasons of memory lapses or judgment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the legislation also seeks to correct a very unfortunate incident. The legislation of 1998 did not provide a proper framework on which there was a basis to collect fees for gun licences. This, therefore, seeks to correct that loophole and to validate the collection of any fees that have been made in the interim. Sir, that was clearly regrettable but today we are putting it on proper legal footing.

Sir, this Government is not suggesting this is the only action necessary to deal with the issue of illegal firearms. Clearly, there is the recognition that even beyond the establishment of the Anti-gun Unit, the sentencing directions by His Lordship, the Chief Justice, and the Amendment before the House today, there are other strategies and policies that need to be put in place if we are to be successful in wrestling down the problem of illegal firearms in Barbados.

Sir, I have already said in a public place and when I was Minister of Youth Affairs, that the Ministry of Youth Affairs had sponsored a programme which dealt with the exchange of toy guns in place of other gifts for children. I do not believe Government should have to pass legislation to ban toy guns because when one seeks to censor or exclude a commodity, it only creates a black market in that commodity. Sir, what I do believe or hope we could do is to have commercial representatives of the private sector, so that we could reach a social compass that, as a matter of voluntary will, we do not want to import toy guns into this country because we do not want to inculcate a culture of gun violence in Barbados.

12.00 noon

It is okay to say that we had toy guns as children but the reality is that we lived in different times. As children we did not have access to pipe guns or normal guns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not need a law to do this because each parent can make a decision that his child will not have a toy gun and each businessman can make the

decision not to import toy guns. I believe that kind of voluntary commitment will go further than a law that seeks to outlaw the possession or importation of toy guns among children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to have to make a serious determination about whether we can afford the luxury of fishermen entering at any part of the island or whether they should not be required to enter at designated ports of entry except in the case of an emergency, given the fact that our intelligence suggests to us that Barbados' open coast-line makes us vulnerable in respect of the movement in and out of guns and illegal drugs.

This is for their own benefit and welfare because we hear horror stories of fishermen who are intimidated, antagonised, blackmailed and required to bring in drugs against their will or there will be reprisal against themselves or their families. Sir, to protect the fishermen and people working in the markets we believe there needs to be a greater level of regulation as to where fishermen can enter Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also feel there has to be a strengthening of measures at the airport and seaport both in relation to personal baggage, barrels and containerised cargo. We also feel that we will have to ask ourselves the question as to whether we can continue to afford the luxury of unstuffing containers any part of Barbados in backyards and business yards. I will recommend to the appropriate Ministry that the time has come for us to look at the feasibility of having an established containerised park that allows the police and Customs to be able to better monitor the unstuffing of containers and the security that is necessary to be deployed in respect of making sure that we can trap the importation of contraband, in particular illegal firearms and drugs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are some of the policies because no single policy will be able to do it. This will not change overnight because in 1991 when I was practising law at the Bar, a homemade pipe gun was the weapon of choice for those charged with drugs but in ten years the weapons of choice are now Glockes, 357 Magnums, sophisticated semi-automatic guns and fully automatic weapons. Sir, each of us hears about persons selling guns to a group of fellows and then stealing back and a reprisal occurs. When you check the situation, it is only three or four fellows in a community of 3 000 people but the reprisal causes these people not to sleep at night as gun fire breaks the stillness of the night.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we do not want this for our country. We cannot promise to solve the problem fully but we promise to do our best and to use the lawful mechanisms available to us without offending the individual's civil rights.

Sir, we will not do like the United Kingdom, as is being discussed there now, whether a person can be tried twice for the same offence if the Crown does not like the verdict returned by the jury. Developed countries are looking at this type of measure in order to deal with their own problems but we will not do that. We will simply, within the context of our Constitution, make the judgement as to where we believe we can tighten up, where we believe we need to be harder in respect of the message and the signal that we send to people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that crime is not an isolated act in and of itself but that it is born out of deviant behaviour, that deviant behaviour is born out of flawed attitudes and that flawed attitudes are born out of values that are warped. This society must be clear as to what constitutes the core of values that we want to continue to emulate and reinforce among our population and that can take us through to the future. We must also decide on those values which need to be eschewed, those values which need to be got rid of, and deal with the acute materialism that drives the acquisitive crimes and corruption both in the public and private sector.

Sir, there is a misconception that corruption exists only in the public sector but if the Enron scandal did anything it was to show that the private sector also has its own challenges as it relates to corruption. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we in this society have to talk to one another and we have to develop that shared national perspective that would allow us to settle on those values I call them "cultural values", because I believe that values are known by the culture in which the people live.

12.10 p.m.

I feel that the National Commission on Law and Order which we as a Government gave a commitment at the Heads of Government, which was established two weeks ago and which I will be announcing in a short time, inviting people to be represented on that Commission from levels of the society and all stakeholders, and that national commission should have at least five regional commissions where people can look at being involved, not only in national problems but from a community perspective as well in terms of the recognition that when we build communities and individuals, we reduce the number of persons who are likely to be involved in crime.

Sir, we will be looking at a renewed role for the Justices of the Peace and Island Constables, recognising that Justices of the Peace must do more than sign warrants or passports. The traditional notion that informs the creation of a Justice of the Peace must be given life in the community. Sir, no single strategy will work, but we hope that by a combination of seven platforms we can come to deal not only with illegal firearms alone but over the course of the next twenty years with the issue of crime.

I use that timetable because Barbados did not get like this overnight. In fact, I remember in 1970, there was no such thing as a drug crime. Now, drug crimes account for one out of every five crimes in the Magistrate's Court. We have seen a systematic decline in behaviour and we have seen an increase in street crime. Sir, people say that statistics do not matter but they are still relevant. Crime in Barbados in the year 2002, is still lower than it was in the years 1991 and 1992 and I am not blaming anyone. I am just recording a statistical fact, because when there is a serious economic downturn there is usually an elevated level of crime. In spite of the fact that we have lower crime levels in 2000 than we had in 1991, 1992 and 1993, the reality is, we have seen an increase in some of the violent crimes, namely crimes related to illegal firearms and in some instances, robberies.

Sir, I can say that in spite of that experience, we have also seen a reduction in crime. In 2001, robberies and burglaries were significantly reduced. This year while there is a slight increase in crime, they are still lower than they were in 2000 and definitely lower in 1993. The panic and fear in the society are inspired more by the sensational acts of a few rather than the majority.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make this document, to which I will refer, a document of the House. When I said that crimes were lower in 2001 than they were in 1993, in 1993 we had 235 crimes involving firearms. In the year 2001 we had 159 crimes with firearms. In the year 2000 there was a spike in crime resulting in 262 crimes. While we were able to reduce the level of crime last year, there can be no comfort as long as we have a single crime. Therefore, this Government is committed to this regime of action in dealing with crime.

Sir, between 1997 and 2001 the police seized 343 illegal firearms. I have also asked for a statistical breakdown by age because when I come to announcing what I think would form the basis of the seven platforms which will lead to the White Paper, which is the second policy from the Green Paper that was presented in 2001, you will understand why we are dealing with certain social phenomena.

In the year 2000, in respect of firearm offences, there were four murders which were committed with firearms. Sir, of those four murders, two of them were committed by persons under the age of 30. With respect of robbery, there were 30 robberies which were committed with firearms and out of those 30 robberies, 24 were committed by people under the age of 30 and six of those robberies were committed by persons under the age of 20.

Sir, there were 36 cases of robberies which were committed by the use of illegal firearms, 32 of these 36 cases were committed by persons between the ages of twenty and 30, and nine were committed by persons under the age of 20.

There were nine persons charged with serious bodily harm as a result of firearm offences and all nine cases were committed by persons under the age of 30. There were 39 instances of charges of persons endangering lives using a firearm and 19 out of the 39 cases were committed by persons under the age of 30 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the year 2001, there were nine murders which were committed by firearms; four were committed by persons under the age of 20 and the other five were committed by persons between the ages of 21 and 30.

There were 36 robberies which were committed with firearms. Thirty-two of the robberies were committed by persons under the age of 30 years. Nine of the 36 robberies were committed by persons under the age of 20 years.

There were 47 instances of persons charged with the possession of illegal firearms. Thirty-nine out of the 47 instances were committed by persons between the ages of 20 and 30 and 11 were committed by persons under the age of 20 years.

There were nine instances of serious bodily harm, seven out of the nine instances the crimes were committed by persons under the age of 30 years. There were 21 instances of endangering lives and fourteen of the instances were committed by persons under the age of 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the year 2002, six murders were committed with the use of firearms and in all six instances the murders were committed by persons under the age of 30. There have been 26 robberies to date and 24 of the 26 robberies were committed by persons under the age of 30. There were 33 instances of possession of illegal firearms to date. Twenty-three of the 33 instances persons under the age of 30 years have been charged with these offences. Sir, there were 15 instances of serious bodily harm and 13 of those 15 instances were committed by persons under the age of 30 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the trend is clear that the majority of persons who have access and who are using firearms for illegal means are persons under the age of 30 years. Sir, they are young people with whom we need to work and be able to convince that there is no resolution to a matter by resorting to the possession and use of illegal firearms.
12.20 p.m.

I want to say further that the problem is not just the fellows on the block. The truth is that in this society possession of a gun has become almost like a badge of honour so that whether it is a young professional who wants to wear it like how a cellular phone is carried or whether it is a fellow on the block there are too many people in this

country who feel that they have to carry guns in order to feel complete as human beings. Unfortunately, it is more so among men than women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I gave those statistics to show you where when we start to talk about strategic intervention among young people why our policies and programmes for young people and what we are doing in the social sectors are so absolutely critical to finding an effective solution for wrestling the issue of crime in this country. I want to read something for you because I think that it is instructive.

“There are significant challenges facing the police.

- Levels of crime are still too high, street robbery in particular is a matter for concern and there is a clear link between crime and drug use.
- Fears about crime remain high, despite overall crime levels. Anti-social behaviour can create insecurity and increase the fear of crime but the police cannot tackle this problem without the support of local partners.
- We must reverse the trend for the crime rates that are rising, and continue to drive down the rates of other crimes, in particular more serious and violent crimes. Significant improvements in both the performance of the police and the criminal system are required.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may be given to feel that this is somebody writing about Barbados but that is in fact the opening of the White Paper on Policing for a New Century: A Blueprint for Reform in the United Kingdom. I read that because we have to begin to understand that there are elements of a global phenomenon in terms of the rise in street crime, the use of illegal guns, the extent to which the illegal market in drugs fuels all of these activities. As I said before, in a way we are victims of our own success. The police for the year seized substantial amounts of marijuana and cocaine and the figures are for the five months to the end of May, the police have seized 1 556 kilogrammes of marijuana and 11.04 kilogrammes of cocaine. To date, 507 persons have been charged for the year, 414 for marijuana, 49 for cocaine, 44 for the possession of apparatus fit for the use of illegal drugs.

When you have a shipment seized on your part of the bargain, your end, your territory, you still have to pay for the shipment. In spite of the fact that the police have taken these drugs away, the liability, the debt, is still at the Barbados end when the Barbados police seize the drugs. If you are not getting the drugs to sell how are you going to pay off the debt and avoid being killed or maimed?

What happens is that street crime, particularly robberies, is then spawned very often as a result of the failure to be able to settle debts properly and effectively. I am not going to go into all the details but I feel the public has a right to know some of these things. When we had the robbery and I hope that the Commissioner does not think badly of me but when we had some of the robberies the other day, a large number of them were, in fact, to settle debts owed by drug dealers for shipments that were confiscated by police. I am not going to tell you which one it was when people knew where money was being sent out and how they arranged to rob, I am not going to go into the details, in some instances people have been charged already, but the point is that the intelligence that the police have clearly reflects that those robberies for the most part were inspired by the desire to pay for drugs owed.

Indeed, because of the success of the Royal Barbados Police Force generally as well as working with the BDF in the joint patrols and the Coast Guard, while we still have pressure on our coasts, the truth is that there is more pressure on other Caribbean islands, and what they are tending to do is to launch from other Caribbean islands into Barbados as opposed to coming from Latin America straight into Barbados and we, therefore, have to be adjusting all the time and shifting strategies to deal with the new movements of persons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel that the Royal Barbados Police Force in Barbados does basically a good job and that they try their best. I do say to them that sometimes they need to be a little more consistent and I stand by that. The consistency when they are really performing extremely well, is the consistency that I would like to see at all times. Given the challenges that they face, I feel that they do a good job. I also feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, that we need to meet the challenges of some of their resource deficiencies. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not one of those who feel that you can dismiss the question of more men for the Police Force. I am going out on a limb on this, but I must confess that policing in Barbados in the year 2002 is not what it was in 1982, is not what it was in 1962, and I have asked, therefore, for an audit to be done of all the demands on the police to do a comparative analysis and to see on a clear basis what is the need for manpower in respect of the Police Force in Barbados today to meet the nature of the challenges.

What do I mean by that? This Government has already put additional resources behind the police. We created another 66 posts when we established the Rapid Response Unit in November, year before last. That has only now come to full strength. We have also agreed in principle for the conversion of 200 special constable posts to police constable posts so that there is a net increase of 266 posts since we have been the Government. As to whether that is sufficient, I doubt, but the point is that you cannot simply ask for

numbers in a vacuum and, therefore, when you recognise that there are 16 police stations, then the Drug Squad, the Task Force and the new Anti-gun Unit, CID and other specialised units, by the time you give them 200 additional posts, recognise that there are three shifts in a day, the truth is that the numbers that a particular station will get are minimal because they have to be deployed over a large range of departments as well as on a shift basis in most instances.

I do believe that a fundamental problem was made when the police reduced their week to a 40-hour week without ensuring that they had the additional resources to meet the demand.

12.30 p.m.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I think it was done in the mid 1980s.

We have been paid for the last 15 years for that reduction in the work week without a corresponding increase in the numbers of police to reach the very same duties that existed before the work week was reduced.

These are some of the issues that we have to face and I look forward, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to bringing a comprehensive paper before this Honourable Chamber which, as I said, will be based on a partnership for all Barbadians to deal with the issues of crime. We recognise as well that the police need to work with the communities. The Commissioner of Police has been speaking at length about the utilisation of community policing, as a philosophy that will be driving the Police Force. We need to make sure that each police station becomes not only somewhere to go in the event of a law and order problem, but also an information hub for communities so that where a parent is having difficulties with a child, she does know who to turn to, when every night she tells the child to come in before 9.00 p.m., the child does not, and she does not know what to do, she must be able to speak to the Station Sargeant who should be able to direct her, specifically, to the community person in that particular agency that will help her, not the head of the agency or the receptionist but whoever is the community representative, if it is St. James, for St. James, if it is St. Lucy, for St. Lucy.

The Commissioner has also indicated that the policemen will be trained extensively to make sure that they can effectively carry out this role of community policing. It is about forging strong links with the community. It also means that the police have to understand that they may have to reflect and, in fact, most of them do, but there are one or two who do not, that they will have to reflect greater empathy when dealing with a victim because a victim is distressed. Even if you feel that he or she should not be

distressed, the point is that they feel they have a right to be distressed and therefore, you have to be empathetic and compassionate very often in dealing with persons who are victims. We need to ensure that this kind of standard is reflected throughout the Police Force, by exposing persons to training. We will not make them counsellors, but you can give them some initial exposure to counselling techniques which will make their jobs easier in helping to resolve conflict and to build partnerships at the local and the community level. We have also discussed with the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) the need for a half hour programme for the police in order to implement and to build on the strong policing programme that they need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that there has to be a partnership with the public, that through forensic investigative methods, yes, you can get information, but you can never get away from the need for human intelligence, for the tip from the fellow in the community, or that tip from whomever, who understands what is going on. Therefore, strong relations are necessary.

We also recognise that it may well require the building of credibility in certain communities and that because the drug culture has perpetuated this myth of Babylon and this myth of whom you cannot trust, we are going to have to systematically work differently in some communities, in order to allow persons to feel that this concept of police as Babylon, is something that needs to be exploded. The police also have to understand that each man and woman must be respected as the man and woman as they are, and that you cannot be appearing to be favouring one set of people more than another, because if you do that, you reinforce the myth of Babylon and people being on the fringes of society and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a lot more work that has to be done. It is a complex phenomenon and it requires our understanding the values and the subculture, in a more pragmatic way, rather than simply saying that you are going to lick down all of them with one shot and arrest all of them. It does not work so because Barbados is too small. Where are you going to run into exile, Tent Bay or Pile Bay? We have to live on 166 square miles and therefore it is in the interest of all of us to resolve conflict and understand the perspectives. You may not always agree, but we have to do it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to speak at length today about the fact that we have been doing work in the Magistrate's Court and that the Magistrate's Court is showing us, for example, that a system that was designed in 1956, with eight magisterial districts, at a time when crime was far different, cannot be appropriate for a Barbados in the year 2002. Therefore, given the fact that the preliminary research suggests to us that 56 per cent of the violent offences in one Magistrate's Court were discontinued or dismissed – 56 per cent of all serious offences that took

more than six months to be completed, were dismissed – so that if your case took longer than six months to be completed, you had an even-odd chance that it would either be dismissed or discontinued.

Sir, this is the preliminary research. The full research will be finished by the end of August which will allow us to determine how many additional magistrates we need, and to put them in place, because there has to be time tariffs and we want the legal year, from October 1, to start with a clear understanding that no violent or serious case should take longer than six months in any magistrate's court, and that no case should also take longer than six months to move from the Magistrates Court to the High Court. This preliminary research is disturbing, whereas 45 per cent of nonviolent cases lasting more than six months were dismissed, 65 per cent in relation to violent offences lasting more than six months were dismissed.

Now, there is a clear case for us, therefore, to deal with the time tariffs, in respect of cases being heard in both the Magistrate's Court and the High Court. We have spoken about the need for a continuous Criminal High Court, and we are assured that this should be in place from October 1, which is the new legal year, and we look forward to this. Persons who do not feel they are going to be brought to justice quickly, act with impunity in the commission of crime, but if they feel that they are going to be caught and brought before the courts, they tend to think twice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to speak about the issue of capital punishment today, but I can simply say to you that there is a constitutional amendment which will replace the one on the Order Paper, which will seek to reverse all of the difficulties experienced since Pratt and Morgan. It is our anticipation that during the early part of August, once that Bill is laid, we will be debating that Bill and I will have the opportunity on that occasion to speak fully to the matter, including dealing with some of the misinformation that has been put out by the Attorneys-at-Law who spoke so openly on the matter. Suffice it to say, the Government did not act illegally when the warrants were signed by His Excellency. He was in fact acting with the practice laid down by the requirements in Pratt and Morgan and, indeed, by what is required by our own procedures since Pratt and Morgan so there was no instance of persons intending to hang people, without having their appellate process exhausted.

Suffice it to say that they have three months – they have to the 26th July – but to this date, they still have not filed an appeal, knowing that the Privy Council has set the most rigid of time lines in respect of what is required by the State in the management of capital punishment. I am not going to deal with that fully today, but rest assured that will come within a few weeks time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want simply to say that there will be a comprehensive document prepared, not just to be laid in this House but to be circulated among all Barbadians. Our judgment is that this is a partnership which is required by all right-thinking and all law-abiding Barbadians, that our situation is not as bad as it was in 1992/1993, it is not as bad as it is in some other Caribbean countries and certainly other developed countries, but that it is bad enough to merit our wanting to stem the decline. It is bad enough to merit our wanting to do something about it and recognise that if left unchecked, it can be worse than it was in 1992/1993 and worse than it is in some Caribbean islands.

12.40 p.m.

It is our judgement that what is required is a total solution. There can be no partisan political approach to the issue of crime or law and order. There can be no sectoral approach that has Government alone dealing with it and the rest of civil society not being involved or that has the police alone dealing with it and the rest of the law enforcement agencies not involved but that what is required is a coalition of Barbadians.

When we establish the National Commission on Law and Order and when we have the four or five regional Commissions feeding into it we hope to be able to involve a wider range of Barbadians and hope to be able to utilise what I refer to as a seven-pronged platform. That seven-pronged platform is:

1. Aggressive and strong law enforcement;

This will reflect the Police, Immigration, Customs, joint patrols with the Barbados Defence Force and continuing and expanding where necessary but reform of the police as well. We are about to put the police on a secure platform in respect of upgrading its telecommunications platform and to give it access to resources in terms of the movement of voice and data that they have never had before, just as we have upgraded the vehicle package. We need to look at upgrading further the small equipment and small arms of the police. All of that hopefully would be done this year.

2. Effective administration of justice;

I have spoken briefly today about the need for time tariffs and the fact that we may have to expand the number of magistrates by the time the new legal year starts because we want to make sure that cases can move through the Magistrate's Courts within a certain time if we are to ensure that justice is speedy.

3. Strategic development of a strong legislative framework;

Having amendments such as to the Firearms Act, I have indicated that there will be amendments to the Constitution dealing with capital punishment to reverse those things since Pratt and Morgan. We will have a Wireless Interception Bill before this Chamber before the end of August. We will have amendments to the Juries Act. We are proclaiming section 72 of the Evidence Act that requires the police to video tape or audio tape all statements that they take because we want there to be greater transparency in the collection of evidence by the police so that this nonsense of accusing the police of beating people by every accused person would hopefully be a thing of the past. We will have also more effective accommodation within two to two and a half years for the courts. It is our hope that by October we can start construction on the halls of justice which we have now agreed on the award of the financing and the operation of the Bill, operate, lease and transfer contract, once it goes to selective tender. We have the new forensic lab starting by the end of this year and we hope the construction would finish by October as well. That will comprehensively increase the range of options available to the police in the detection as well as in the investigation of criminal activity not only in Barbados but in the eastern Caribbean.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been sidetracked a bit but the seven platforms are:

1. Strong and aggressive law enforcement;
2. Effective administration of justice;
3. Strong legislative framework to block loopholes and to empower the police and other law enforcement agencies;
4. Modernisation of the penal reform programme;

In the past, I have spoken of our working toward the establishment of a patrol system, the establishment of a Barbados correctional services and the building of a maximum security prison. I will expand on those things at length when I come to do the full debate for that document that would in effect set out what would be the Government's strategies over the next five years to deal with the redressing of criminal behaviour in the society.

5. Strategic intervention by social sector ministries among the population at risk;

I have given you enough information today to show you that the problem of young people being at risk to criminal activity is one that concerns us. Therefore, there must be a commitment to a strategic intervention on the part of the social sector ministries, namely the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Transformation and the Ministry of Home Affairs in order to

be able to build the partnerships that will allow us to be able to deal with those youngsters who are at risk and vulnerable to going off the straight and narrow path and ending up dealing with all types of criminal activity that they should not be dealing with.

6. Reducing the opportunities for criminal behaviour;

In other words, by individuals beefing up their own personal security and not making themselves vulnerable to criminal acts by doing things that are stupid or that they should not be doing like walking down a dark road at 2 o'clock in the morning by themselves unprotected or by leaving all their windows and doors open throughout the night, in other words, by reducing the opportunity for criminal activity by beefing up their own personal things.

7. Reordering of our cultural values.

I spoke about this earlier because if we do not start to deal with where our heads are and where we want to go as a nation, we would continue to drive the materialism, drive the inquisitive crime, drive the corruption and those things that act on the social fabric of this society like a slow cancerous tumour.

We have, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with that issue and I hope that when we produce this programme before September that these seven platforms would be platforms in which each right-thinking, law-abiding Barbadian citizen or resident of this country can recognise what their role is in helping to deal with the problem because I can assure you that the problem is not a problem for the Police Force alone, it is not a problem for the Government alone, nor it is not a problem for the Opposition alone, it is a problem that all Barbadians must confront in order to arrest the decay. We are not yet without hope so let us act before that hope vanishes and in so acting we would create a framework which people can see what their individual roles can be whether it is in building strong communities, whether it is justices of the peace, whether it is in cooperating with the police or whether it is in trying to get children to understand that money is not everything and that they do not have to go and look for \$500 a week by watching a drug hold in order to buy stuff because once they start to get fast money, they will get fast death. These are the kinds of roles that we can play and we have to work together in order to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I regret, therefore, that I have to bring this legislation to this Chamber at all but I do so cognisant that in times when there are difficult consequences and harsh consequences facing us that harsh decisions are also necessary.
12.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that a future Attorney General, a future Parliament or I, would at some time review this legislation. It should be reviewed but, at this juncture of our development, particularly as it relates to crime in public places, it is our judgment that we need to be able to strengthen the hand of the courts to deal in no uncertain way with those who feel they can launch an assault, not on an individual victim alone but on the social fabric of this society, which has been built, cared for and loved by people who have made sacrifices for a number of generations.

Sir, we feel strongly that anything which seeks to tear at that social fabric must be confronted with the strongest possible will: either political, law enforcement, or the society. We, therefore, ask members of the public to work with us in helping to develop the will to rid ourselves of a culture of gun violence which wants to creep into our society. That has not been the culture of this country and, therefore, I am suggesting that we must not allow it to become the culture of this country for, if we do, we would ensure that the rate of criminal activity and violence would increase at a level that would be frightening to our stability and security as individuals and as a country.

Sir, this is one of the strategies being used. Apart from the Anti-gun Unit and the sentencing directions from the Chief Justice, there are other strategies to be announced shortly to deal specifically with firearms but there would be a broad based, 7-pronged platform that would deal with the issue of crime as a whole and the building of law and order. We would be doing this in the context of the national and regional commissions which would be established.

Sir, I want to thank the members of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Office who have, in spite of the pressure that has been placed on them, worked over and over in trying to make sure we have the right balance in these amendments; being harsh where we need be but also recognising where there is no criminal intent, we need to be able to ease off and to allow people to be guilty, not of a criminal act but to more of a regulatory issue.

I want to thank the Commissioner of Police and the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force who, since the two major spates of criminal activities we have had this year... I think we all will agree that the police responded in splendid form to both of those spates. In most instances, they were able to find the perpetrators within one week. They have continued to ensure that even where it meant the loss of a day off, they were prepared to rise to the challenge to keep the citizens of this nation safe and free from fear of the type of illegal activity that we saw in those two spates.

Sir, I believe all Honourable Members of this House would want to join with me in congratulating the members

of the Police Force for continuing to do a good job in that regard and to say to them that we will do our part in terms of the provision of the resources which they need to do their part.

Sir, with those few words, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

The question that the Bill be now read a second time was put and agreed to.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Sitting be now suspended until 2.00 p.m.

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

The question that the Honourable House do now suspend until 2.00 p.m. was put and agreed to and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly. 1.00 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

MESSAGES (recommitted)

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

“The Private Secretary to the Governor-General of Barbados is directed to acknowledge receipt of the Message of congratulations addressed to Her Majesty the Queen by the President and Members of the Senate and the Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly of Barbados on the occasion of the Celebrations of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Queen’s accession to the Throne and to inform the Clerk of Parliament that the Message will be forwarded to the Private Secretary to the Queen to submit to Her Majesty.”

Dated: 28th June, 2002.

ORDER NO. 8 (Resumed)

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Sir, we would have been here in the latter half of 1998, making very significant amendments to the law which governed firearms by overhauling the legislation completely and replacing it with a new Act. Four years later we have had to revisit some of the sections of that legislation, not only to deal with what, on the face of it, would have been minor amendments but also to deal with the most important part of

the legislation which relates to the actual validity of licensing, *et cetera*. Sir, from time to time, these things happen where Parliament has had to either revisit or validate legislation that would have been defective for one reason or other.

Sir, perhaps in the context of this particular Debate, we need to be cognisant of the fact that we have had a welter of new legislation covering a wide gamut of offences under the criminal law in response to what is perceived not only as the global problem of crime but also significant levels of violent crimes that have been taking place in Barbados and throughout the rest of the Caribbean.

It is not to say those countries have not started to grapple with the problem of crime and might not have used other methods. Not every country has responded with the kind of law reform that we have had to undertake. Sir, let us face it, Barbados has already had modern criminal laws on the Statute Book, and during the past four or five years we have even brought more to deal with the problems of crime. By and large, it does seem that these changes have made no appreciable impact on the incidence of violent crime in our country and, therefore, the Government has had to move towards the very draconian – in some minds and for some people it is not even far enough – approach of imposing mandatory sentences on the offenders under particular sections of this legislation and also under sections of other legislation.

Sir, our position in this matter has always been consistent. The Opposition has always made it abundantly clear that, from time to time, the Government has announced various strategies to deal with the problem of crime and our position would not be to stand in the way of Government. I do not think we have ever divided or in any way resisted any new pieces of legislation which, when argued by the Government to be placed on the statute books we have felt not desirable. There have been no pieces of legislation coming onto the Statute Book that we have in any way opposed. Therefore, by and large, we have taken the position that Government should have the latitude to work effectively on the problem. That sometimes has led to hasty legislation being put in place that we have not been able to quickly proclaim or hasty legislation that, having been put in place, has not worked in the way we would have expected.

Sir, no one is against the need for dynamism in amending legislation and making important changes as we see problems arise but very often one gets the impression there was a lot of knee-jerk reaction to problems, the swift drafting of legislation where, very often, this legislation was being hailed as new progressive legislation but having gone onto the statute books, invariably those new pieces of legislation were seldom having the impact to which the

former Attorney General and now Chief Justice of Barbados had indicated they would have.
2.05 p.m.

Sir, we always cooperated and in relation to the legislation I see no fundamental reason why we would oppose it. I hope that the Attorney General does not find herself in a position where we have to return here to make fundamental adjustments to the legislation and that we give the court system time to settle down and work with the tools that are being made available to them.

We also support the legislation because we accept that the nature of violent crime in Barbados needs to be dealt with by a combination of approaches one of which should include a strong statement from this Parliament about how we feel about particular offences. In relation to firearm offences it is important to stamp them out because we had incidences in this country like drive-by shooting, violent acts with the use of firearms, robberies and threatening behaviour.

There are a large number of firearms found particularly in relation to the work of the Royal Barbados Police Force in dealing with drugs and the importation of drugs in Barbados. This has had an impact despite what the Attorney General said is the outstanding performance of the Royal Barbados Police Force. The type of firearms being imported and used by these drug importers have had the impact of scaring a large number of Barbadian policemen and many of them are reflecting on their careers in the Force because of the kind of firepower being used by persons involved in violent crime.

The use of firearms is a common offence among Barbadian males and small countries like Barbados, to my mind, are in a better position because of our size, because theocratically we are closely-knit, should be able to take on these challenges collectively and deal with them in a microcosm.

Government has relied too heavily on bringing new pieces of legislation but legislation alone will not solve the problems because at the end of the day those pieces of legislation which have been hailed as being the answer to many of the problems have failed. There is often a checklist of legislative changes, but when you look at it in relation to other initiatives to deal with the source of crime, we have not been successful.

Even with the existing legislation, a small country like Barbados should be able to do a lot more to reduce the use of firearms and prevent violence in our country from taking place but reliance on legislation is not going to make a significant difference because we are fighting against a very large business of illegal drugs which goes hand in hand with firearms. It is something that needs attention not simply by

legislation but by way of Government's community and social activities and programmes.

Sir, the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation which is funded by the taxpayers of Barbados facilitates violent material on television. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke about the sale of violent toys but more than that, I hope an important prong of the strategy would be a tough police street campaign against drug dealers.

We have allowed a lot of minor transgression to take place in Barbados and this has caused the situation to get out of hand to such an extent that in rural and urban Barbados it is easier to facilitate an illegal drug transaction than it is to buy a newspaper or bread at night. Sir, on that basis we give support to this piece of legislation and I hope those who have to work with it will register some success in dealing with the problem of violent crime in our country.

Sir, there are also a lot of law-abiding Barbadians to whom the Commissioner of Police has given gun licences who abuse that privilege and use that privilege very threateningly in a number of ways, not only in protecting their properties but in provoking other people and adopting the image of the powerful "bad man" in the community which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke about.

Where this happens, the police should do something because they often know about it.
2.15 p.m.

Sir, I know of individuals who have been permitted to hold gun licences and to keep licences in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, there are responsible people in Barbados who have gun licences and who use the fact that they have gun licences to settle simple domestic and other disputes. The police know about these things and they often end up charging the person for using a gun in a manner that is inconsistent with holding the licence. Sir, they know of the number of incidents that have been reported to the Police Force about those people and yet they did nothing about it. The police were reluctant to deal with one particular matter and even if they had dealt with it, nothing has been done to erase that threat.

Sir, we are talking about hot-headed individuals in the business community at the top level of the professional class. All that is being required of the Commissioner of Police in Barbados is to apply a very broad discretion relative to good character. There is nobody in this Honourable House who would be excluded by virtue of that,

but we have hot-headed people in here who, if they had a gun in their possession would probably display it and do things to aggravate and antagonise people. Fortunately, Sir, I do not fall into that category on any account.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I believe that, even though we have had a few jokes about the matter, it is a serious matter. Particularly, where you are dealing with a situation in Barbados where a gun licence granted to a person in circumstances where, by virtue of his holding it, you are saying something about his character and standing in the community.

We have to be extremely careful about that and there should be a procedure in place for people either to complain about or in somewhere register their concerns about persons who hold gun licences. It is not just the question of people who have licensed guns but there is also cause for concern about people who have guns under licence and who by their own conduct can cause questions to arise and also cause people to approach them in an antagonistic manner, because of the way in which they handled the firearm, which is sanctioned by the State. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is something that needs to be looked at and a transparent procedure needs to come to the fore.

There are many elements to the problem in seeking to regulate the use of firearms in a country in which you have firearm licences. I believe that firearms should be licensed in Barbados and that the procedure for granting firearm licences should be rigorous, the police should carefully monitor it but where an illegal firearm has been used, serious mandatory penalties should be applied to the person who is found guilty of an offence; and that is why I give my support to this legislation.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give my support to this amendment to the Firearms Bill which is before us. This legislation is just part of what the Government is doing to fight the issue of crime. I want to start by congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East on Government's clear position, policy, programme and achievements in the matter of the fight against crime. Also, to salute and congratulate the Royal Barbados Force for the success which it has been able to achieve in recent times as we fight this phenomenon.

Sir, this fight is a fight which has been made more difficult by the unfortunate reality that the internationalisation of crime is one of the unfortunate features of globalisation. Not only have globalisation and liberalisation been taken up by the international business community but also by the international criminal community.

While crime tended for the most part to be a national matter, where within a given society organised criminal groups would pursue their illegal activities, the international movement of drugs, money and related activities have impacted on the island of Barbados.

Sir, over the last decade, there was the identification of the potential which certain trends held for us. The Report of the West Indian Commission of 1992 indicated that nothing poses a greater threat to civil society than the danger posed by the Caribbean drug problems. It is my view that the job of those charged with the responsibility of ensuring our security and reducing the level of crime has been made more difficult by the fight which they are facing from those involved in drugs.

Sir, we have the challenge of drug production. Fortunately, Barbados is not a major player in that area. Certainly, drug abuse has increased over the last decades and Barbados has begun to feature in that scenario as well. We also face the challenge of money laundering but, thankfully, we are not a major centre.

It is my view that the entire profile of the crime situation in Barbados changed fundamentally as a result of the spin-off syndrome. It is against that background that I have again, to salute the Attorney General and the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force for the great effort that they have made in that regard. They have recognised that their responsibility rests not only in fighting crime as it occurs but also in having a very strong programme of prevention, a programme which is multidimensional and multifaceted, one which recognises that crime not only has economic dimensions in terms of being fuelled by greed and the like, but people's views on crime are also fuelled strongly by certain cultural perspectives.

In fact, one of the unfortunate aspects of globalisation, which I mentioned earlier, has been the change in people's perspectives on crime and material possessions. We, in this country, need to take a deep examination of ourselves. I was very disturbed at a report which I received concerning some choices which were made by a young fourteen-year old student. This is a student who was being raised by his grandparents. The grandparents were doing their best, as hard working law-abiding grandparents will do, to provide school uniforms, shoes and books for this child. Like any grandparent, the grandmother went out of her way and bought regular school shoes for the child. The child insisted that he wanted Timberlands. Timberlands is a brand name gear and most of the shoes come in a tan colour with high cuts. The child refused to go school because he did not have the Timberlands. These types of boots are not permitted by the school rules or within the financial reach of the grandparents.

2.25 p.m.

Eventually, because he did not attend school, the truant officer was brought into the matter and her efforts to get him to go to school failed. The matter eventually reached the Magistrate's Court in an attempt to see if a presence there and some urging from the magistrate would help him to go to school. He insisted that he was not going to wear the shoes his grandmother purchased because they were unacceptable. The shoes were brought to the court, the magistrate looked at them and they were standard, every day school shoes that you, I and everyone else would wear, and the magistrate said, "If you do not wear these and you insist on your Timberlands you have to go the Government Industrial School for a session." He chose at the age of 14 to spend two weeks incarcerated in a correctional programme because he believed that his ultimate achievement is being able to wear Timberlands to school.

Sir, there is nothing that this Parliament, that the Royal Barbados Police Force can do about that by way of the normal every day responsibility with which it is charged. We can, as members of the society, make an attempt to influence the values which our people are adopting. These values are, of course, in part driven by the culture of materialism which has become a regular part of the diet of acculturation which passes for entertainment that we are fed on TV. It is part of the United States society's interpretation of itself as it puts on our networks and which inadvertently translates in the minds of our young people in their perception of what achievement is all about. It is unfortunate but it is one of those realities which cultural globalisation has left us with.

Yes, we need to move the amendment to this Firearms Act. Yes, we need to ensure that our Police Force is given the tools, equipment and manpower. Unless each and every citizen recognises his responsibility to operate within his sphere of influence, whether that be just with his brother and sister, with his two children, with his youth group, with his church group, with the wider community, in the classroom, to ensure that appropriate values, values rooted not only in high moral and spiritual values but values rooted in practical realities of what people are able to afford and what is appropriate, what constitutes real and lasting achievements from just temporary shows of wealth. Sir, when we are able to make that change that is when we will feel some fundamental benefits. The reality is that notwithstanding those other instruments we have to face the challenge every day from international organised criminal elements which have again foisted on us elements which were foreign to us.

The prevalence of drugs in Barbados is foreign to Barbados. We do not produce any. Yet, Sir, they are made available but thanks to the good work of the Royal Barbados Police Force we are stopping an increasing quantity from reaching our shores. Indeed, Sir, so far for the year statistics up to May would have indicated police

seizures of 1 556 kilogrammes of marijuana and some 11.04 kilogrammes of cocaine. Thankfully, Sir, that quantity of death has not polluted the minds and bodies of our young people.

Because of the tremendous economic benefits which have sucked many of our people, aided and abetted by the incorrect values as transmitted by this cultural globalisation, some 507 persons were also charged because this again is one of the more lucrative industries out there: 414 for marijuana, 49 for cocaine and 44 for apparatus fit for the use of those substances.

Sir, unfortunately, the rise in the drug culture in Barbados and the rise of drugs as part of an international economic activity also saw the introduction of firearms and you know, Sir, that in our days growing up firearms were not readily available or even sought after. Unfortunately, Sir, all around the world the trade in illegal weapons, some of illegal manufacture and some of legal manufacture, is not only a lucrative business but has also been used by persons in the drug business as a form of currency. Payments for drugs can be made in guns and *vice versa*. In addition, we would face the challenge that where international criminals are using Barbados as a transshipment point they also send guns to Barbados to protect the drugs that they are sending. For example, Sir, a situation in Jamaica, our neighbour to the North, some ten years ago, where it found itself the victim of a large set of arms. A ten-tonne shipment of arms passed through Jamaica on the way to Columbia financed by the FARC, they paid for those weapons by a shipment of cocaine sent to Europe some time earlier. What was in it, Sir? 1000 automatic assault rifles; 250 machine guns; 10 60-millimetre commando mortars, 600 mortar shells passing through a small Caribbean country. That was one that was detected but what about those that have not been. These are the challenges and the stresses and strains that are placed on our limited security forces and security budgets. This is all the more reason why the Force has to be commended on the one hand and why the public at large has to be urged to give their fullest support and cooperation as we seek to fight a force which is not only local.

The criminal enemy out there is not just a young boy in Chapman Lane or Silver Sands. It is not just a young mother trying to feed her children. That is a challenge and we have to fight that. The bigger challenge, the perennial enemy, is of large organised groups of international criminals who will seek to prey on the fact that as a small country we do not have the resources at our disposal to seal effectively and completely our coastline. We do not have the resources available to us as yet to provide for full electronic surveillance and inspection and any other weaknesses which are to be identified in our society.

The increase in the level of firearm activity in our country has to be linked to international drug and criminal

activity. The Royal Barbados Police Force, therefore, has had that uphill struggle and they have done well. I am pleased to note, Sir, that the police in response to criminal activity in Barbados have been able to achieve results where although crime is higher than we would like where any one crime of any kind must be a matter of concern to people in our society, we would be unfair to them and we would be criticising them unfairly if we did not admit that they have been able to effect a reduction in the incidence and the use of firearms in our society.

2.35 p.m.

This legislation is therefore very commendable because it is well recognised that strong law enforcement, backed by tough legislation, is important in fighting major areas of crime such as the use of firearms in our society. Indeed, one of the greatest destabilising forces in any civil society is that of fear. Sir, what we face today, is the fear by law-abiding citizens and the destructive force which is contained in firearms which can be discharged in public places, such as football games, social and cultural events or in households where not only the target of the assault but unintended victims also find themselves injured, lamed or even killed.

Therefore, Sir, for those persons who will want to suggest that legislation alone will not do the trick, we know that and there has been no claim by this Government that they are only going towards legislation such as this tough legislation on firearms to do the trick. This Government has also given the police new vehicles. It has provided the police with increased gear for their protection, bullet proof vests for example. It has provided them with increased equipment which is of a security nature and I therefore cannot disclose, but we have provided increased resources for the police to fight crime.

The establishment of the Anti-gun Unit to specifically address the presence and prevalence of firearms in the society, is one such example. There are other examples of operations which quietly go on without fanfare and have been able to reap success, operations in which during a number of road blocks and searches, they have been able to apprehend suspects who have been wanted for various crimes, including murder. They have been able to arrest illegal immigrants. Sir, you know this. It is all there and public, that we do have a problem where persons come into the island illegally, commit crimes and leave again. These operations of the police have been able to seize firearms and therefore, the legislation though essential, has not been the only strategy which the Government has employed.

Sir, for those persons who will express concern about the severity of the measures in terms of the mandatory sentence for certain types of firearm offences, the punishment must reflect the severity of the crime and anything which disrupts the good order of civil society.

Anything which drives fear in the hearts of law-abiding citizens, anything which serves to undermine peace and stability and even the very democratic nature of our society, deserves nothing but firm punishment.

Sir, I stand solidly in the camp of those who would want to dispense fear, firm punishment and full justice for these crimes. I fully support these amendments which are before us, Sir, because of the very serious nature of the threat which we face. This is a threat which is not only driven by the instincts of persons within, but by the international threat which we face.

I want to say, Sir, that this matter of the threat of firearms is one which faces not only Barbados but several other countries around the world. In fact, under the aegis of the United Nations, several conventions and treaties have been signed, for example, the Palermo Convention, which has a protocol on the illegal manufacturing and illicit trafficking of firearms. Within the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), there are conventions as well on the illicit trafficking of firearms in the Americas. There are also efforts underway within the Caribbean community. In fact, the Attorney General of Barbados, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, is the Chairman of the group on security matters in the CARICOM region, within the single market and economy and there is great cooperation at the level of businesses responsible for national security in fighting this menace.

Sir, I want to applaud them and to remind those persons who would take the opportunity of a debate which is focussed on firearms and which, according to the rules of this Parliament, cannot go into many and various matters, that part of the Government's strategy involves also campaigns on the reduction of drug usage, the rehabilitation of drug addicts and other offenders, education on the dangers of drug use, tougher law enforcement and interdiction, with increasing success, of drugs and firearms as they seek to be illegally imported into our country, whether by sea or by air and we are backing up all that, Sir, by tougher laws.

Therefore, I want to locate this debate within that context and to say, Sir, that I would hope that those measures taken so far by the Royal Barbados Police Force and others involved in security matters, will reap the kind of success which we need. It is certainly this Government's resolve to see a reduction and, indeed, an elimination, Sir, of the crime menace from our society.

Sir, I want to lend my support to this debate. I am particularly pleased with the amendment which is proposed by the Honourable Attorney General to be introduced, to add some clarity to the position of those law-abiding citizens, who have no criminal intent but who, on the basis of a technical violation – that is, Sir, a person with a licensed

weapon who may have omitted, inadvertently, to pay the licence fee and, therefore, is technically not in possession of the licence but clearly not a person with criminal intent, by way of the acquisition and use of an illegally obtained, hidden weapon for criminal purposes – and therefore to ensure that as we mete out deservedly tough treatment for persons of criminal intent, we also ensure that there is commonsense and rationality to the application of the law and that we do advertently track our law-abiding citizens.

Therefore, I close, Sir, on the note on which I started in congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East for her very clear and firm leadership in formulating the national strategy in the fight against crime, and to congratulate the Royal Barbados Police Force for their relative success, given the fact that the foe with which they battle is not a home-grown foe. It is a foe which is international in character, which has access to resources way above and beyond that which the Royal Barbados Police Force can ever dream of attaining but which foe, we hope to definitely lose, because what the Royal Barbados Police Force has behind them, is the support of a willing Government and the support of the law-abiding citizens of this good country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too rise to support this amendment but it would be foolish of me to believe that just coming to Parliament and providing this Assembly with amendments, will cause the problems that we are being confronted with in the society to be solved.
2.45 p.m.

I want to repeat a call I have always made to this Parliament. If we are going to be serious about solving the crime problem in Barbados, we first need to redeploy the resources that we have within our Police Force, our Defence Force and what other forces to ensure that the demand on one is not too great and that the demand on another is lacking. Those forces that have the resources should be transferred to the force that needs the resources.

At one time, based on talk going around Barbados there might have been a need for a strong Defence Force but since we are no longer in a cold war and seeing that our biggest problem now happens to be drugs and drug related crimes, it would be very difficult for anyone to convince me that we must continue to have the large number of men and women in the Defence Force when our Police Force is sadly lacking in those numbers and they can easily be transferred to the Police Force. A Defence Force soldier can march and can use a gun. The only thing that a Defence Force soldier lacks is police training. I am saying that the Police Force is equipped with the regional training system in place and that you can easily transfer some of those personnel from the

Defence Force to the Training Unit to help solve the particular problem within the Police Force.

There is no doubt that what our Police Force needs right now are policemen with military training. We do not need Defence Force soldiers with police training because the problem that we are being confronted with is not a problem as the Minister spoke earlier about where previously the fine for using large stones was much higher than for using a gun. Our society has changed and we must recognise that and put our resources where they are needed most. That is why I am saying that if the Commissioner of Police is calling for 800 men or whatever the number that we need, to make sure that the call is examined and dealt with for the simple reason that some information was given to this Parliament today that we should not ignore, that is, that once the drugs are landed in Barbados and they are confiscated they have to be paid for. That is a very serious point which means that the economy of Barbados is being undermined by the drug trade.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We have to understand that this is not a situation now where we can easily say that this person is using drugs or that person is using drugs, it is a situation where the economy is now being affected by the habits of certain people and that there is a target not only internally but externally. Every time we came to Parliament in the last eight years we were told how well our economy is doing and people...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: ...outside of Barbados have used that information to work against us. We have to understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the undermining forces within the Caribbean can sometimes be worse than globalisation. We have to understand as well that petty jealousy would not only be found on our shores but would be found externally within our Caribbean region and that the citizens of countries within the Caribbean region who are supposed to be our brothers and sisters will find ways to undermine our economy. That is a very serious charge which we cannot ignore.

So I am calling on the Attorney General to put a proposal to this Parliament to make sure that the Police Force has a helicopter or two if we are serious about fighting the drug problem. We cannot ignore the importance of the Naval Base facility in St. Lucy. That is why I must point out that since 1994 I have suggested to past and present Attorneys General that I have entered into negotiations with the Arawak Cement Plant about the possibility of having a coast guard boat station at that jetty, which they have declined. This information is well

known to everyone in this Parliament because this is not the first time I have made this comment in this Parliament. I am saying that when one considers the terrain to the north of Barbados, I cannot understand why that particular proposal has not been accepted and implemented.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am also suggesting seeing that there is a particular problem now with District 'E' Police Station and the Crab Hill Police Station and seeing that the Atlantic Manufacturing Plant is of no use to the manufacturing sector anymore and seeing that we are aware of the number of drug drops to the north of the island that the District "E" Police Station and the Crab Hill Police Station should be amalgamated and relocated to Nestfield in St. Lucy without anyone challenging that proposal for the simple reason that the distance between District "E" and Nestfield is not too great and it is easier to get from Nestfield to anywhere in Speightstown before you can get from District "E" to Speightstown because of that particular junction and the Honourable Member for St. James North knows exactly what I speak of. I am saying that we have limited resources and we must maximise them.

I want to go back to the point made earlier about this nonsense about people in Barbados having to pay for drugs even though they have been confiscated. If that is so we can no longer fight the drug trade on our land, it must be fought at sea because we are not only protecting our people on shore but we also have to protect the economy of Barbados. I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael South would not understand that major point. I am saying that not only must we get the helicopter but the Police Force must be given the necessary vessel to make sure that those drugs do not get into our territorial waters so as to have an effect on our economy and to prevent the bigger problem as admitted in this Parliament that when the people to whom the drugs are assigned cannot get them, they then have to turn to another source to get the money. We might not be interested in what happens to them but we have to be interested in what will happen to our economy.

2.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like this particular point to be carefully studied.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lighthouses of Barbados can no longer be used for their original purposes; the locations are now being used for something else. I would like to have that point carefully studied and implemented, for we have to fight the drug problem head on. Sir, we have to understand that, as far as I can see, the financing of the drug trade is very expensive and we have to find the source of these funds. It cannot only be the persons we see appearing before the courts who are involved in the drug trade. It has to be

people with the resources who are prepared sometimes to put the resources or to lose it – and poor people do not have money to lose. Therefore we have to find out who are those persons who have the money.

Sir, there is now the trade-off between guns and drugs. My argument, is we do not need either the guns or the drugs. Therefore, an effective coast guard, under the control of the Police Force, is the necessary solution to the problem.

Sir, how can we talk about these things without recognising the Police Force will also need a personal boost. People would have to recognise that when the Police Force was first set up, it had to deal with people who used big rocks. Now it is being asked to tackle persons who are dealing with drugs and guns; yet we expect the police to behave as though they are dealing with civil people.

Sir, in the same way we came to Parliament last Tuesday and made certain recommendations, I am calling on the necessary authorities to bring the regrading package for the Police Force. It is clear when they first started working the demands were not as great as they are today. It has now become life-threatening to put on a uniform and to go on the beat. We must understand we have to compensate the Police Force for taking such risks in protecting our lives.

Sir, in the same way their comrades who are not called out to duty are well compensated, the ones called out should also be well compensated. We would appreciate the budget might be limited but we have to understand that compensation should be given to everybody. That is why there have been certain changes and demands in the Police Force and we, as Parliament, must match those demands.

We have to understand that, based on the statistics given by the Minister to this Parliament where most of those persons who are committing these offences are under 13 years old, it would mean that most of them would have been born around 1972 and after, which means by the year 1981, those persons would have been around nine years and by 1991 they would have been 19. I believe if I were to look at the statistics in 1991 which were supposed to be the problems years, it would reveal some very interesting statistics and very revealing facts because the Minister also admitted that we first started hearing about the drug problem in the 1980s, which meant that by 1991 those committing the offences would have been of age.

Sir, all those persons who want to point fingers at the DLP and want to turn the issue of crime into a political issue, please do not do that. The statistics and information show it was that period in which those persons grew that would have influenced the 1991 situation.

Sir, for all those persons who want to see this as a BLP or DLP problem, I am begging them, it is neither a BLP nor a DLP problem but a Barbados problem. If one wants to say that in 1991 because of the DLP there were so many crime problems in Barbados, then I am saying those children would have been your children and not ours. Those parents would have ruled and dictated their children's lives and would have influenced them. Sir, we must understand this is something that we must all put our hands on deck and solve.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, it is alright for us to come to Parliament and say send them to prison. I have been listening very carefully to what the police have been saying. I have also been watching the statistics. This is a point which I do not like making but to resolve the crime problem in Barbados, the first thing we have to do is to refocus our energies on what goes on at Her Majesty's Prisons, Station Hill. It is clear that most of those persons who go there come out better trained. Sir, if one follows the problems we had experienced a few months ago and looks at the statistics, it is clear those persons who went up there came out better trained and have met the wrong people.

Sir, we have to be very careful as to how we are taking our young men and women and sending them to that institution, which now seems to be an institution of higher learning that is now creating most of the problems for the Police Force.

Sir, if we feel by coming to Parliament and making amendment to the Firearms Act, 1998, section 32, that is going to solve all of the problems, then we are only fooling ourselves. Sir, the first thing we have to do is to reform the Prison to make sure we have the right mix. Secondly, we have to make sure we look after the Police Force. Thirdly, and most importantly, we need to reduce the numbers in the Defence Force and add them to the Police Force because we need to better utilise our resources because we are not in a cold war. Whether or not we are in a cold war, we could not have solved that but can solve the crime problem only if we reallocate our resources in the right way. If we do not want to do that, we can go the other way by putting the two forces together and let the Police Force be the chief.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, most of our energies must be concentrated on the coast lines of Barbados. We must do everything within our power to ensure those boats that feel they have a right to come into our territorial waters as they wish, that a strong message be sent to them. Also, that the men and women who are asked to fight those criminals must be properly compensated.

I thank you, Sir.
3.05 p.m.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to commend the Honourable Attorney General, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, for bringing the amendment to the Firearms Act to Parliament. It is very timely and I must commend her on a thorough presentation today. At the same time, I take the opportunity to commend the Royal Barbados Police Force for the work done in Barbados to keep crime and illegal firearms under control.

Sir, all right-thinking Barbadians will appreciate the work which is being done and I want to specially commend all those involved in the fight against crime in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a Government we sometimes have to be harsh in order to be helpful and this piece of legislation is about mandatory sentencing for certain firearms offences. The Leader of the Opposition referred to it as being draconian but we have to be draconian sometimes to save the citizens of this country.

The Attorney General also regretted having to bring this legislation to Parliament. If the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants a consolation on the point made towards the end of his speech, I want to say to him that when the Opposition spoke about crime during the last elections on their platform, it was an issue and we on this Side were as concerned about it then as we are concerned about it now. I was concerned about the way they broadcast it to persons overseas who could have used it to virtually destroy this country.

Sir, I sympathise with a former Attorney General in Barbados in the Democratic Labour Party when he made a strong statement to the effect that we did not have any gangs in Barbados. I understood what he was trying to do because those of us who hold public office must not amplify crime. Sir, I do not always agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but on this isolated occasion I agree with him when he said that crime does not defect from one party to another, that criminals do not revolt under one party and become obedient under another, that a person is not a criminal under one party and a law-abiding citizen under another and that crime has no party ticket or expiry date. As the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, it is not a Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party thing because crime concerns all of us in Barbados.

Sir, I believe that this piece of legislation brought by the Attorney General today is testimony to the fact that we are doing everything we can as a Government to cripple the illegal use of firearms in this country. By bringing this piece of legislation and giving it all the support necessary we

have, in an indirect way, created what can be considered a gun court. Some of our neighbours have done this and perhaps we have not done it in the same manner they did but we are letting the entire country know that firearms have become a significant concern in this country.

Sir, in the past an assault with what Barbadians called a "mock gun" was considered to be a minor assault but this legislation will now treat it as a major offence if a "mock gun" is used to create a major offence.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many Barbadians have not considered the effect which a 'mock gun' can have on a victim. History has shown that persons fainted because they thought it was real and they did not know it was a 'mock gun'. History has also recorded that persons trembled and workers handed over the bank's money because they did not know it was a 'mock gun'. Sir, the effect was such that persons considered their lives to be in danger.

In this legislation to use a firearm does not actually mean to discharge it. If a person panics because another person uses a 'mock gun', that person is guilty of a serious offence.

Sir, the reckless use of this 'mock gun' to commit a crime is considered as being irresponsible, careless behaviour deserving of the maximum penalty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would not shock me if I were to learn that some crimes in Barbados are committed by the use of licensed firearms. I am not saying that there is a proliferation of licensed guns involved in crime Barbados. Sir, if there are four or five guns, there are four or five guns too many.
3.15 p.m.

I believe that the time is right for Barbados to look towards modernising and updating the prerequisites for obtaining a gun licence in Barbados. The prerequisites and regulations for firearms must be tough. This is an age where such regulations must be tough.

I agree with the Honourable Attorney General when she said that there should be a detailed database on the movement and management of licensed firearms in Barbados. I believe that every year there should be sporadic checks to see whether the premises of those who hold these licensed firearms are still secured. Remember, initially the holders of licensed firearms had to convince the authorities that custody is such that firearms could not be easily accessed by persons other than the owners. I do not think that the safe custody of the firearm should be restricted only to the first visit, at the time of the application.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people have the right to defend themselves. I also think that they have a duty to defend their property and families. Sir, this is the hallmark of self-defence. In every country in the world that I can think of, self-defence is a right and Barbados is no different and no one can take the right of self-defence away from us.

Sir, putting a licensed gun in the wrong hands could be an indirect way of arming the criminal. Therefore, we have to make it crystal clear to the holders of licensed firearms that there is a responsibility attached to owning a licensed firearm. The owner of a licensed firearm is under a duty to keep that firearm in a safe place. Therefore, if you have not reported your weapon stolen, then there should be a strict liability attached to it whenever an offence is committed with that particular weapon.

We have to realise that thieves always assume that certain people living in certain types of houses have guns. Very often the thieves consciously look for these guns if they break into these houses. They look under the pillows and in drawers. If a thief breaks into a house and walks away with a licensed gun, something is wrong if that happens.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, safe custody of a licensed firearm goes beyond the home where you live. In this day and age a licensed gun cannot be left in a car. I have heard of an incident where someone broke into a car and stole a gun. I am saying that in this day and age that should not be happening. If under such circumstance a gun is stolen from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think that you should be allowed to get another licensed firearm.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of the points which I wanted to make were made by the Honourable Attorney General, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, and one point was by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in any firearm discussion it should not be forgotten that shooting is also a sport, it is an Olympic sport and, therefore, we do not want to have a situation where those who shoot on the range are deprived of what is, indeed, a very worthwhile pastime and one by which Barbados has gained a lot of international recognition.

The Rifle and Pistol Club of Barbados specialises in the use of the pistol, rifle and the shotgun. I have to begin by saying that the management of the Barbados Rifle and Pistol Club is very responsible. Sir, there is a situation where membership and where proficiency is the hallmark of obtaining a firearm for this particular purpose. It is usual for

a *bona fide* member of the club to have in his possession two different types of firearms. This would occur because of the types of competitions in which he may be participating.

I want to make the point that the club must now be very careful and selective of its membership. The club and its members should not allow their club to be used as a backdoor in order to obtain a licensed firearm. I think that the club is under duty to make it known to the police, cases where members do not show up after they have been granted licences for firearms. Sir, it was reported to me that there are cases where persons do not show up to practise after they have acquired a licence for a gun. I do not know what the rules of the club are, but I would hope that there is an annual certification that vouches that the person with a licensed gun still practises at the club while he is still a holder of a licence.

Sir, I do not think that a licence to shoot should be a one-off thing. I think that you should attend a minimum number of shooting sessions every year to make you eligible to get another gun.
3.25 p.m.

In my capacity as Minister of Sports, I am calling on the club members and on the marksmen to be very careful as to how they secure their firearms and how they put them away for their families' safety, their own safety and the safety of the public.

This Government, through the Ministry of Sports, has spearheaded a campaign of lighting our playing fields so that our young people can meet and play on evenings. We have done quite a few and we are doing more and today I think that our sporting environment in the evenings and at night is relatively safe, but I must say that we have a small group of reckless and irresponsible individuals who honestly do not deserve to be considered as citizens of Barbados. Their behaviour does not have Barbados at heart for some of the things that they do around the playing fields of this country. Some of them can be described as a menace to society and by their actions, Sir, they jeopardise the lives of our young people.

Right now, Sir, there are parents who do not want their children to be out on the pasture after six o'clock because of this group. Certain communities are being held to ransom. I do not want to call the communities. They are being prevented from having leisure time because they know that some of the youngsters have guns.

I believe that those who shoot recklessly at a cricket match or at a football match or those who chase another person through the school yard brandishing a gun should be locked away for a long time. I feel that when you commit

such an act in such a place like the playing field, like the school yard, you should really and truly feel the full weight of the law.

I will finish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I began, by commending the Honourable Attorney General for bringing this amendment to Parliament and I think it is very timely, also to say thanks to the Royal Barbados Police Force for their continued efforts in trying to protect the public of Barbados and I join with those who have called the Royal Barbados Police Force an excellent force and perhaps the best in the region. I also commend all the Defence Force, all those who are involved with the safety of the people of Barbados. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, too, would like to render my support to the Firearms (Amendment) Bill before this Chamber and, in doing so, I would like to establish that it is not only the passing of this Bill in Parliament but also the policing of this Bill for the benefit of Barbados in years to come and for the benefit of young people in this island. What we have heard today is that the problems facing Barbados as far as gun-related crimes are concerned, stem from the young people in this country and we must agree on the fact that the young people in Barbados are the ones on whom the blame would have to be cast.

There are certain questions that one must ask and there are certain observations that one must put in order to answer the question as far as the accusations levelled at the young people of this island. That is to say that the Act has to be policed not only by the police department which we must compliment but it has to be policed by every citizen of Barbados, every parent in Barbados, every law-abiding person in this country if we are to see the reduction in the gun-related crimes; but you must ask yourself several questions in relation to what has been done as far as the guns and the movement and arrival of guns in this country.

We have read and we have seen that the police and the Defence Force have done several drug busts along the coast of Barbados and in doing so, they have been able to capture in the drug bust a weapon here and a weapon there. If one analyses the amount of guns that are available in Barbados, one has to ask whether the two or three guns caught in the drug bust happen to be the guns that are on the streets of Barbados being used by the criminals of this country.

I am yet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to find out why at the seaport of Barbados and at the Grantley Adams Airport you could read occasionally that someone was held with drugs or someone was held with cannabis. I am yet to read that someone was held at the Grantley Adams Airport or the seaport trying to sneak a weapon into the country. That is an area of entry as well. You hear so much about the coastline

of Barbados has to be protected. We are putting all our energies along the coastline, our Defence Force, our policemen, but what are we doing to our two major ports, the Grantley Adams Airport and the Bridgetown Port? One has to ask whether we are policing the guns the way that they should be. Is the Grantley Adams Airport, the Bridgetown Port, the Customs or the people responsible there, fully equipped to search for weapons in such a way that we can find the weapons that come through those two ports?

Most likely, we might have to introduce the x-ray equipment that would enable both ports to look into the luggage of some of those arriving passengers and see exactly what they are carrying. Yes, if you exit the Grantley Adams Airport you go through the scrutiny of what you are taking on board the aircraft, your suitcase passes through the scanning machine, but when you arrive all you have is a dog on the ramp sniffing for cocaine or for cannabis. How are you going to find a simple 22 or a 38 that is folded in a sock and placed in a shoe in a suitcase? This is something that we have to consider that guns could easily get on the streets. 3.35 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, anyone with a criminal mind can take advantage of these areas. I am saying that we need to set up a checking system at the Grantley Adams International Airport and the Bridgetown Port for departures and arrivals. Apart from that, there are situations where several containers are shipped into this country which are delivered to the homes of some people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, again this is a matter of observation and I think you have to police the Act. If you police the Act, you cannot cast your accusations on the young people of this country, because if you build the house and leave the roof open, the rain will come in and wet the occupants of that house, so all angles must be protected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the other concerns, as far as this Act before us, is the matter of licensed firearms. We are saying that people who are the holders of licensed firearms, seek permission from the Commissioner of Police or from the authorities for a licence to own a firearm. Let us be honest with ourselves, how do some of these guns that create or cause crime, get on the street?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that a lot of guns have been stolen. They are unlicensed guns and they cannot be reported to the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force because, in truth and in fact, the gun probably did not enter this country the correct way or might not have been bought over the counter. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the gun might have been one of those guns left in a vehicle and could have been stolen by some person, who brought it on the street and is involved in one of the major crimes in this country. The only way we can be protected is to police this Act before

Parliament today so that people of Barbados in later years, including the young people, will not have access to weapons as they have at this present moment on the streets of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Minister of Sports addressing this Honourable Chamber today. I have done my homework during the last couple of months and I have asked the members of the Press in Barbados to follow up on the Act which has been changed from the Rifle and Shooting Pistol Club to the Shooting Club.

Aside.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: This is the amendment and it will now be known as the Shooting Club of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we should be concerned as to whether or not that direction is a way for certain people to become licensed gun holders in Barbados. The question before this Chamber today, is what is the position on the membership of the Shooting Club over the last year and if there has been a tremendous increase in membership.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this increase in membership is a direction where people realise within themselves that it is difficult for them to obtain a gun licence and going towards the membership of the Shooting Club, there was a chance for them to have the rights to become a licensed firearm holder.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we have to police the Act, we have to police the Act. It cannot be left to the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force alone but as I said before, every single person on the island of Barbados.

A gun is not an easy weapon and all of us know that and we talk about things happening on football fields. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that even places of entertainment in Barbados – it may be a little weird to say that, but I am becoming very conscious because years ago, an incident happened in St. Lawrence Gap at a night club which I will not name. To this day, that person has not been apprehended or placed before the court, no one has been charged for it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that decent people frequent places in Barbados and then they find themselves in situations with people who are not so controlled or not so decent. I also believe that licensed places of entertainment in Barbados should have a right to demand from a licensed holder of a gun, the right to leave that gun in a vault, safe or some such place, if they are going to frequent that club during the time of entertainment. I am hoping to see something like that done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same way you can tell persons that they cannot take a knife into a licensed place of entertainment and if they come to the door of a licensed place of entertainment with a knife, it will be taken away but, Sir, there is a situation, where a weapon or a firearm is allowed to enter that same place of entertainment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the main feature of my address this afternoon, is if you have to introduce the Act, you have to police the Act down to the end. I do not believe we need to turn this into a political partisan form of politics but I want to establish that crime in Barbados is not crime for the Barbados Labour Party or the Opposition but involves the entire community. I do not believe that one should be able to point fingers and say that the crime rate then was not ours but yours, because it would not be fair. We all need to come together: the churches, the citizens of Barbados, the politicians who have to make law in this country. We must all understand that we have to set examples for others to follow and for the young people in this country to fully understand the law.

Quite recently, I have been very impressed with the various sentences that came from the judges in relation to gun-related crimes. I think the message has started to go across Barbados that as long as you are caught with a gun, and you go before the law courts of Barbados, do not expect to ask for mercy because the law will take its course and take its limit, as far as that weapon is concerned. Sir, the message is going out but we need to enforce the amendment at this particular time. We need to come together at this time to make people who are holders of licensed guns fully understand the consequence; that they have a responsibility as well to the citizens of Barbados, even though they are holders of the licence for that gun. That is, they have to be extremely careful and make sure that as far as that weapon is concerned – I heard the Honourable Member for St. Philip South mention earlier about the responsibility of having a licensed gun and losing it and obtaining another licence. I personally believe they should not, if you had the right to a licence and you were given a licence, and you lose the gun, then you should have no right to another licence, regardless of whether or not you are a citizen of Barbados, regardless of what position you hold in Barbados, I do not believe you should be entitled to another licence under a certain amount of years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said I was going to be brief. I said that as far as the amendment to this Act is concerned, it is something not for the police or the coast guard, we are not supposed to sit in this Chamber and talk mainly about the drugs and weapons that are found on the coast. As far as we are concerned, we know that we have a problem along the coastline of Barbados, in terms of being policed, but the police and the Defence Force must be complimented for the work that they have been doing.

There is another area of concern, that some citizens of Barbados break the law, hide behind the things that they are doing and eventually they fall back into the community and the community suffers. This might be a person who has lived overseas and would have sneaked the gun into this country without obtaining a licence, whose house might be broken into and because the gun was visible, removed and taken onto the street where it was used in a crime. There is a responsibility to the people of Barbados for the person who is the owner of that gun, whether or not it is licensed. We have had cases in Barbados where children were said to have played with guns in their own homes.

Sir, I am saying that because the gun was not licensed that the chance could be taken. You can hide it because you do not think that anything will happen but if it does not happen today, it is likely that it will happen tomorrow and some person can suffer as a result of your breaking the law of the country by hiding a firearm within your home or car, or bringing a gun into this country hidden in a container or in a suitcase, which came through the same two ports that I have just talked about – not along the sea coast – but within the laws of Barbados and that is a matter of contention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of us have a responsibility to make Barbados a safe zone. We cannot stand in this Parliament and say that the gun-related crimes in this country are by young people, under the age of 30 years. Yes, we are right to say that, but how did these young people obtain these weapons?
3.45 p.m.

There is something known as a gun-for-hire in Barbados. The same way that one can go and rent a motorcar one can probably rent a gun, the intelligence tells us that. We know that the criminals out there are involved in that type of trade. When these guns are taken off the street, questions are being asked about what happened to them. As someone at the grass-roots level and someone who by right would hear certain things, the criminals feel within themselves that they have the right to know everything. They say that when the police get a drug bust they see the police lighting a big bonfire and burning the cannabis but when the police have a firearm raid and X amount of guns have been pulled in, they do not know what happens to the guns and they have been asking what happens to these guns and where do these guns go.

I must compliment the Attorney General and Leader of the House for telling us in this Parliament that 343 guns that can create problems and cause death to innocent persons have been seized by the police from the streets of this country. So the public of Barbados does not have to worry about where those guns have gone. Those fellows who have

been asking where the guns have gone have heard for themselves today or will read it tomorrow or will know days later that the police are doing a careful job of taking those guns off the street and out of the hands of people who do not seem to understand the seriousness of the weapon which they carry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some gunsmiths in this country, and again the intelligence tells us this, who can repair, manufacture and provide guns quite easily and the police are aware of this. Mr. Deputy Speaker, are we going to continue to provide those people with the protection that they have? I believe that the same way an attorney can be debarred for doing something that is not in keeping with their profession that anyone who is a gunsmith and is involved in aiding and abetting a criminal has a right to be punished and if he or she has a licence, that licence should be withdrawn. We have to be serious about this. Who is going to police the Act? Who is going to make sure that passing the Act in Parliament is going to solve our problem? We have to police it and we have to make sure that five years from today we can say that the Honourable Leader of the House in the year 2002 brought to Parliament an amendment to the Bail Act and Firearms Act and it has worked for the betterment of Barbados. On that I sit, hoping that I can see the results at a later date.

I thank you.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating the Honourable Attorney General for the set of amendments that she has brought to this Honourable Chamber today. I think she must be congratulated generally for doing such a good job. In fact, I think I also need to point out that in a relatively short time she has already emerged as the regional leader on matters relating to law and order and she is to be congratulated for that as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the measures outlined today clearly demonstrate the seriousness of this Government toward the issue of crime or the breakdown of law and order in this country. I think that there is clearly an intertwining of the roles that a number of agencies and institutions have to play. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy was perhaps for the first time right in his life on a matter when he said that this is not really a Barbados Labour Party matter or a Democratic Labour Party matter that it is a matter that concerns us all.

The Honourable Attorney General has pointed to a number of measures that have to be put in place to deal with the issue but generally speaking while there are others as well I think that there are really three major planks on which any serious attack on crime in this country must be based. Those three major planks are clearly legislation,

empowerment and education. Today we have brought a package that seeks to tighten the screw in relation to criminal activity by those who would wish to brandish guns in public places and put legitimate occupiers of the place in fear. The penalties for this are very stiff and have been outlined by the Honourable Attorney General. We have also brought legislation in relation to guns which sought to impose sentences as high as 25 years in jail for possession of a gun. We still have the death penalty on our statute books. Some may support it and some may not but there is legislation in place in this country to deal in a very serious manner with those who would seek to break the law.

The passing of legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has to go hand in hand with a number of other agencies. Therefore, we must have a judiciary that is willing to function within the clearly defined ambit and policy framework laid down by Government. It would be very frustrating and out of sync with what is being planned and enacted by Government to see magistrates and judges so willy-nilly granting bail to known criminals who have been brought to justice after much effort by competent police authority such as we have in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we pass legislation we must have police prosecutors who are competent and expeditious in dealing with matters before the law courts. We must have a level of police competence and speed to ensure that a man brought before a court does not have to have his matter dealt with in a tardy manner. Similarly, lawyers appearing for their clients before the courts must not be so anxious to seek adjournments, they must be ready in quick time to deal with a case. If not, that is one situation where a judicial officer may well find that he or she has no alternative but to grant bail when a matter is being prolonged unnecessarily before the court. So there is clearly an interface between passing legislation and the proper enforcement of it.

Prison officers as well must ensure that prisoners do not easily escape from prison. We have had in our country in recent years, in my view, far too many cases of prisoners escaping from prison. There is nothing more frustrating for a judicial officer or for a country as a whole to find that prisoners can escape from a secured institution as easily as has been happening in the past. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is one area and I will not say anything more on that since the Honourable Attorney General spoke quite competently at length today on what has been done so far. The empowerment is also very important in any war to be waged on criminal behaviour. Of course, we have our welfare agencies which must play a role for the dispossessed. In fact, there is a need to ensure that people who do not have can be assisted to lead a life with a comfortable standard of living. 3.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has gone further than just providing welfare assistance to individuals. This

Government has done a lot to empower persons wanting to get ahead and I happen to be in position where I can speak to that. We have had, in this country, a situation where we recognise it is ideal to ensure that persons have an opportunity to provide for themselves so that they could de-link themselves from the welfare system.

Government has sought to empower persons in a number of ways in recognition of the fact that, through the years, commercial banks have been failing miserably to assist persons at the lower echelons of this country. Therefore, recognising that the banks have not displayed any social conscience whatsoever, this Government sought to empower persons by ensuring these facilities were set up to assist in the development of those individuals, to be able to provide for themselves and their families.

We have had institutions such as Fund Access, the Urban Development Enterprise Fund and the Rural Development Enterprise Fund which were able to assist persons at the lower end of the scale to establish small businesses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Cabinet has recently agreed to the trustees of the Innovation Fund. This Fund now, to all intents and purposes, is up and running and is another major breakthrough in terms of empowerment. This Fund has as its focus those who could benefit, the boys on the block, who would sometimes want to say that nothing is being done to help them. The Innovation Fund is there and can be easily accessed by anyone. All that is needed is that the idea must be workable, creative and have the potential for returns. The Innovation Fund is going to provide that person with technical assistance throughout the whole process until that idea could be commercialised.

Sir, Government has gone further to set up a Small Venture Capital Fund where Government is now willing to inject equity into a business. Sir, again the problem is that there are some persons who have a mind-set where they do not want to have an injection of equity because with an injection of equity comes an element of control by directorship.

We are all aware of the Small Business Development Act where individuals have been able to benefit tremendously, where they are given a technical assistance package, once they reach certain requirements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to prevent persons from being tempted to turn to crime, this Government has embarked on a number of measures by way of a number of institutions and agencies to empower individuals at the lower end of the economic ladder to ensure they could establish themselves in small businesses of their choice and to function in society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to deal with the issue of education. I think this is the third major plank on which any assault on criminal activity must be based. I am not using education in its narrow sense but in the sense of instilling values into persons and the socialisation of people. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go on record as saying there is a need for us to try as best as we can in this society – this has nothing to do with any government or police – to look seriously at the “wuk-up” and ZR culture in this country. I hear many calypsonians and persons with public opinion saying that “wuk-up” is part of our culture.

Sir, some persons seek to talk about the influences that come from North America but here in Barbados there is this “wuk-up” and ZR culture that go hand in hand. Sir, I am not saying there is anything wrong in going out and having a good time because I do it too. In fact, every year the St. Michael North branch has a cruise on the Harbour Master, to which I attend and I am very liberal in my movements. In fact, every now and again, some of the young girls come to challenge me and I have to show them who is still boss.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having said that, I do not “wuk-up”. I can understand a person can enjoy oneself but there is a limit. There is a time when one transcends the boundaries of decency. I fear that on occasion this “wuk-up” culture crosses the border in terms of decency.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have seen this happen on one of my cruises, where a young girl about 8 or 9 years old and accompanied by her mother, was holding onto a pole and gyrating in the most mature manner – all the shots and strokes one could have ever wanted were being displayed on the dance floor, while her mother stood watching.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where would we be going when we seek to condone that kind of culture? I have had another instance where a daughter, who was accompanied by her mother asked me what I had for her. When I told her I did not have anything at the moment, she told me she was not talking about that, but was quite explicit in telling me what she had for me. Mr. Deputy Speaker, feeling quite embarrassed and turning to her mother to change the conversation, the mother said to me, “What are you looking at me for, I am too old for you now.”

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this tells us that the socialisation process has to start from early to ensure the lewdness of the “wuk-up” and ZR culture be defused. It is important that the message goes home to the youth, not only from teachers and police but also from the family.

Sir, when the legislation was passed in Parliament where a person found carrying a gun would be sentenced to 25 years imprisonment, not frightened from the fact that he

could be sentenced to 25 years, one young man looked at me and said "Mr. Toppin, if a person is going to get 25 years for carrying a gun, that person could as well kill another and spend the same 25 years."

Sir, that was the psyche. That was nothing caused by police or Parliament. That was how he was socialised and brought up to look at law and order.
4.05 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very important matter because there are two competing views about terrorism. Some of us see terrorism as a bad thing but some people see it as martyrdom. They see a boy getting into an aeroplane and killing 300 people not as murder but as martyrdom. Luckily that psyche only exists in people from a certain part of the world but what is to stop it from happening here in Barbados unless we instill in our children from early what is right and what is wrong.

Sir, if a man reaches the stage where he believes that it is martyrdom and an act of heroism to fly a plane into a building knowing that he will kill himself in the process, he could also take up a knife at anytime, cut a man's throat or take up a gun and shoot a man because he would have reached a stage where life means absolutely nothing to him because he sees everything as martyrdom.

Sir, we have to ensure that education begins at home and that the process of socialisation begins at an early age. Education, empowerment and legislation are the three major planks if we are to see any success in the area of crime and the breakdown in law and order in this or any country.

Sir, Barbados is not alone, it is a worldwide phenomenon and while we are concerned about it, the Government can only do its best because there are a number of other factors, players, agencies and institutions that all must play a role.

With those few words, I hope I have made a contribution to this debate.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to join in this debate because I believe that the amendment to this legislation is certainly more of passing interest to many members of the society particularly for those of us in this Chamber. This debate holds a lot of interest in terms of where we are going as a country and, therefore, it has a lot of relevance in terms of what will happen to our tourism in the future.

Sir, like most Honourable Members in this Chamber, I want to congratulate the Attorney General for the swift way in which she has reacted in terms of being able to table this

legislation and also to congratulate the Royal Barbados Police Force for the excellent job done in the face of much adversity and comments.

Sir, I think we still live in a society that is relatively law-abiding despite the negative comments you hear from time to time. I think there is a criminal element in our society which is in the minority and which is being dealt with but I do not think we are being overrun by criminals. I believe we still live in a relatively law-abiding place where people still have a lot of respect for law and order but there is an element emerging in our society which we need to pay attention to if we are to continue to move this country from being a small developing country to a developed country.

Sir, yesterday I was thinking about the many angles that one could debate the firearms legislation and as I exited the Barbados Labour Party's headquarters in Roebuck Street, I saw a young man with his shirt off, walking down the street and he made the comment, "You only live once, and you only die once." Sir, this young man was in his early twenties and I wondered what could create such despair as to make him not want to continue to live. In this society we boast of upward mobility and opportunities being created but despite giving all the resources people still have so much despair. Sir, I think we need to look at this element.

The Attorney General outlined seven planks this morning about where we need to go and many Honourable Members spoke about strong law enforcement, effective administration of justice and the like but I would like to focus on strategic intervention among the population at risk.

Sir, the crux of this debate is about a new valuation on human life and the new cultural values that will create that new valuation for human existence in this society. I think the new initiatives in terms of penalty are fair and necessary. The Attorney General spoke about people at risk in our society and I believe that this is more important and necessary than the issue of penalties. Sir, I am not talking about how you punish people but about giving back to the communities and taking back our communities. Sir, this is at the crux of what will happen. Every initiative taken to build stronger communities will help those who are most vulnerable to being involved in criminal activity in this society. Sir, a number of people have already repeated that in this Chamber.
4.15 p.m.

I do not believe that things are as bad in this society as some would want us to believe. I believe that we do have pockets of crime and strong criminal elements in some areas of our society but I believe that they are in the minority. I believe that they are concentrated in certain areas and among certain people because of the vulnerability of the individuals.

I believe that the most recent crime statistics show differently from what is being portrayed. Some people will say that perception is more important than reality. When you look at the crime statistics in Barbados, you will find that there has been an increase in violent crimes which were committed with firearms. Overall, the incidence of violent crime in our society has decreased. I think that is something of which Barbadians should be interested.

Sir, the probability of being involved in a violent crime in this society has decreased in the last decade and that is a statistical fact. There are some people who would say that crimes are being under-reported. I believe that if they are being under-reported now, they would have been under-reported then. The overall incidence of violent crime in this society has decreased and that is something that all Barbadians should be proud of. The increase of some types of crime and the way in which those crimes were committed by the use of firearms should attract our attention. I am most heartened by the fact that crimes against tourists in Barbados have declined.

During the months of the traditional tourist season, the winter season, the Royal Barbados Police Force and the Barbados Defence Force mounted joint patrols in the major tourism belt. I think that in the last two years we have seen a substantial decrease in crimes being committed against tourists. There are some issues related to crimes committed on hotel properties that we need to deal with. There are many instances where crimes are committed on hotel properties where these properties had inadequate security. Therefore, that cannot only be a concern for the Royal Barbados Police Force but the property owners must pay more attention to how they protect their properties.

I believe that the harassment of tourists continues to be a serious issue. I believe that violent crime is being dealt with adequately. I believe that those persons in our society who are committing these crimes should be dealt with in a very harsh manner.

Sir, every time I look in the newspaper I see people from the same social sector as the people who are involved in certain aspects of criminal activity. I do not know what it is but whenever I see a newspaper with people who go before the courts, I see the people with the same type of hair style and a lot of them come from similar communities. I am not a sociologist but I believe that if you took a serious look at those who are most vulnerable, you would find that they are the ones who are at the bottom of the social ladder and they are the ones who are still deprived of certain assets. I believe that we need to deal with those persons who are at the bottom of the social ladder and that is where our challenge is. We may be doing a lot for them but there are still pockets and certain elements that we have to pay more attention to.

In most instances I see, in my opinion, a non-Barbadian cultural expression that I believe must be eliminated by those responsible. I do not believe that a lot of what I see is home-grown Barbadian behaviour as we would have known it. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. John that it is about time that we take back our society in terms of what we portray to people, particularly from the idiot boxes that most of us have in our homes that are controlled by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation and the other place down River Road that produces Direct TV.

I cannot understand the kind of stuff on TV. There is something called Black Entertainment Television (BET). I do not where it has emerged from. It is the worst form of black behaviour that I have seen in my life.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, there is always a fellow with his head down peeking through something or somewhere and some half-naked woman. Every song, there is an expression of violence and that is the kind of nonsense that we are exposed to every night. This is the kind of thing that we watch and expose our children to. I believe that something needs to be done about that.

I also believe that something needs to be done about these video shops. I was at a house in my constituency and a movie was showing. There were children around and it was not my house, so I could not open my mouth in the people's house. This movie was on blacks in North America and every other word was an expletive. They were young children between the ages of 9 and 12 at this house and I am sure that if any of those children had spoken an expletive, the parents would have chastised him or her. Sir, these children were watching this movie and this movie was replete with bad words and all types of expletives coming out of North America.

I believe that we need a better concept of policing at the level of the video shops. I believe that there are a lot of movies coming into Barbados and being peddled over the country as legitimate videos that you might not be able to see in a movie house but I think that we need to have stricter control over the type of things that we see.

Sir, we have a radio station that just banned a calypso called "Suckabubby". I have heard worse lyrics coming out of the same radio station that seeks to ban that calypso. I am saying that those who are the moral makers in our society and who have direct influence over the behaviour of people in Barbados need to start taking up some of the responsibility and stop putting all the blame on Government and how Government must react.

Sir, there are many institutions in our society that need to start reacting to the good society of which we speak. The media likes to blame Government for everything that happens in our society but they have a role to play as well. I do not see a lot of edifying material coming from the media. The media is good at criticising and some of them believe that they are self-appointed policy makers. They were not voted for by the people of this country but they believe that they can tell you how to run this society better than those persons who were voted for by the people. When you hear them complaining on the airwaves or in the newspapers, you would think that the policy makers of this country do not have the same concept of what Barbados should be as a good society. The media has a responsibility and they need to start taking that responsibility. In a small developing society the media has just as much of an influence in terms of informing people as educating people and making them aware and they need to seize that responsibility and stop blaming Government for issues related to the development of this society.

4.25 p.m.

There is another issue, Sir. The Church needs to come back to the plate. We live in a society that we believe the Church still has serious influence over the people of this society but the Church is silent on too many moral issues in Barbados that we need to deal with, that we need to contribute to the development of our people. I am not talking about any particular denomination. I am talking about the Church as a collective institution within the society as a builder of the society. There are too many issues on which they are silent. For example I do not hear them commenting on casino gambling and the like. I do not hear their responses. We talk about what is happening in our society at the grassroots level and the building of community and we do not hear them but anytime you seek to put an initiative in place that seeks to create a new identity for us as a people I hear them knocking that from the pulpit.

I have heard people talking about blackness and going back to Africa when the whole concept of the symbolism of going back to Africa is really about creating for ourselves a new identity that we need in a new world of socio-economic development, a new world of globalisation, a world of new geo-political restructuring and refocusing. We need to be able to focus on the identity as black people. Whenever you hear them, they are not commenting on the moral issues but they comment on the one area that we can seek to create for ourselves a new identity to be able to forge forward socially and economically.

Institutions such as the media and the Church need to seize the opportunity to help us, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said, policing this legislation. It is not a job only for the Royal Barbados Police Force. It is not a job for the Government or the Attorney General's

Office. It is a job for each and every one of us in this society. It is not a BLP issue or a DLP issue. The first thing that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy ever said that made any sense in here is that it is a non-partisan issue on both Sides of this aisle even though there are very few on that Side. We need to focus in terms of being able to move this society forward.

There has to be zero tolerance to a number of issues related to drugs. I do not know why I should go to the stadium at night to see a football match and there should be marijuana all over the stadium and nobody does anything about it. As far as I am concerned, and I am making this plea, it is not the correct environment. It is something that needs to be policed and controlled. It is getting out of hand and I believe it is part of what has created a lot of the violence that we see in these football matches on different fields across Barbados. A lot of these boys that get themselves in these things are usually smoked out and smoked up and that is one of the problems.

We need to adopt the zero tolerance attitude to what goes on in these playing fields and in the National Stadium every Sunday evening. Anybody who goes there knows that is so and it needs to be dealt with. I believe there needs to be zero tolerance in dealing with it.

In addition to that, Sir, I believe the concepts related to education reform and identity realisation are fundamental to where we are going in this society. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North spoke about education, both formal and informal. I believe that when you start to deal with the people who are the most vulnerable in our society all the things are being addressed by the Ministry of Education in identifying those who are most at risk in our society and by diagnostic testing. People go to school every morning and some are blind, some are deaf, some do not get food on mornings, some are being abused at home, all those things are being addressed. I believe that what this Government is doing in terms of wider educational reform speaks to the issue of being able to create for Barbados that plank to deal with those at risk and the constant reform of our cultural development plank.

We focus a lot on issues of "wukking-up" and Crop Over. We spend a lot of time on expressions of culture rather than seeking to deal with culture as a total development within our society. I could not draw the correlation or the nexus between "wukking-up" and violence. As far as I am concerned, I think it is a matter of how we express ourselves at that level. What you need to be careful of is not to take it to a point where it constitutes lewdness and, therefore, it becomes offensive to people and then what it might incite is some level of violent or adverse behaviour in the society. I cannot see the correlation between being able to "wuk-up" in a society. That is part of our culture and our expression. I

believe it is only when you start to carry it to the level of vulgarity, real lewdness, that you start to create for yourself those issues of which I speak, violent activity and the like.

Sir, I believe that what is being done in this Government through the Ministry of Social Transformation such as being able to repair people's houses and giving people who have slipped through the cracks another opportunity to be part and parcel of our society... I will never in my lifetime be in sync with anybody or endorse comments about people fixing people's houses in the society or talk about giving a man a fish or teaching him to fish. There are people in our society, Sir, who have fallen through the cracks who with all that we have given them have not been able to have the things that we have and I believe that we need to correct the imbalance.

A lot of them have contributed to this society admirably and for one reason or another have found themselves in less circumstances that they should be found at this time. I believe that it is our responsibility and obligation as a Government and as a people to help them back up. I am not buying the foolish talk about not helping people who have gone through the cracks. You give a man a job, yes, but if he does not have a roof over his head and somewhere to go – old ladies that go out in the yard... I cannot see how any caring society could not understand that this is a fundamental plank of being able to move us up socially in this country.

Sir, there are two other areas: the concept of the restoration of family values in our society. I know that the Honourable Member for St. John – family first and all that. Family views constitute a significant plank of being able to deal with people at risk in our society. There are some areas that we have strayed away from. For example, when I was growing up, even though my father did not go to Sunday School he made all of us go and made us go to church. I still believe there is a moral basis for that. I believe the whole concept of the family unit is something that we can restore in this country. We have tried our best at the level of the Government through its institutions under that Ministry of Social Transformation and the other agencies that fall under it.

I believe, Sir, that there is a role for private enterprise to play, the NGO community to play, in the restoration of that. The Church, like any other entity in our society, needs to market itself again. I believe that part and parcel of this is the silence on issues. Once, in this society, playing sports on a Sunday was a crazy thing, non-existent. My father almost killed me and my brother for playing football on a Good Friday. People now will fly kites, run over you, go to the beach. You never went to the beach on Good Friday but people now find that as an outing and I am saying that I believe the Church as an institution again needs to join with the rest of the society in marketing itself just as all the other

activities are marketed in our society. The issue of Sunday School is not an issue of choice between some other relevant activity that people consider whether playing sports or going to "wuk-up" or a beach party. You are now in a mix in which it is not going to be naturally chosen as an activity and therefore you have to market yourself.

4.35 p.m.

Sir, again, I believe that the amendment for those law-abiding citizens will work beautifully. I believe that we need the amendment because there are some law abiding citizens that need to be protected. Sir, even now, my sister will telephone me and say that you cannot leave your house in Barbados at night and walk about. I say this is foolishness. I think there are people who may fall into situations they did not bargain for in legitimate places of commerce or legitimate places of entertainment. I understand that, but I believe those are few and far between. I also believe that many times when people are shot it is within a narrow band of certain activity. I believe that law abiding citizens still are relatively safe in this country and will not buy it that this country has become unsafe. I think that the police do a good job and I think if you walk the straight and narrow path, watch where you are, and protect yourself, you will seemingly do well.

Sir, however, I believe that there are some areas where zero tolerance needs to be brought into play, and if we are able to deal with them, you will see a difference in the way this society progresses in the next decade.

Sir, I want to close by saying that again, I want to compliment the Attorney General for the fantastic job that she has done in responding. I also want to compliment her for going beyond just the issue of enforcement and speaking to issues relating to the seven planks that she has outlined that will complement issues of the legislation. I want also to implore some of the other planks of our society who are also responsible for our development to come up to the plate, to put up or to shut up, and come up and tell us what is happening, what role they are playing in terms of making this the good society of which we can all be proud.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a contribution to this debate on this issue and perhaps a contribution which would not be as enlightened as the one to which we were just subject, certainly not as extended as that one. Perhaps it would be in place to begin by commending the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, not only for the substance of his contribution immediately as it concerns the issue, but his strident calls upon the Church to come up to the plate, to use his terms, and to perform a more credible and active role in addressing some of the problems in Barbadian society today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have spoken privately to the Honourable Member for St. Michael South and invited him to air such views from within the corridors of the Church itself, as a substantive member of the Church and I renew that call publicly today on the Honourable Member for St. Michael South to step within the body of the Church and officially and substantively, as a member of the Church, make such calls. I believe that it is very much in place and I agree with what he said with reference to the role of the Church and the deficient way in which the Church has gone about the pursuit of that role to date.

I would also want to join with Honourable Members who have spoken before in commending the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and the Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs for bringing this matter here and, in fact, in larger terms for her obvious vision with respect to national development as that relates to issues of law and order and other issues. I am quite convinced that in spite of her tender years, we witness very much in terms of not only expression of her thinking but her very actions, indeed, policies brought to this Chamber, someone of tender years, but with a full grasp of the issues which confront us and a clear vision as to how we can adequately respond to that. I say that in all sincerity.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke earlier of a time when civil penalties attracted themselves to the throwing of stones as opposed to offences which involve firearms. Clearly, that would be indicative of a time when the ownership of firearms as opposed to the ownership of the stones would have been an issue. Clearly that relates to the matter of whose interests were threatened and whose interests needed to be protected.

I think we are met here at a time today when the interest of all of us, the national interests are threatened and as such, I believe that this measure being introduced here to this House in terms of this amendment is needful and very much in place. The national interests are threatened. The interest of national development, the future and security, the well being of the State and those who visit us from time to time, our industry and commerce, these things are threatened and so I believe that this measure is quite in place and timely as brought to this House today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I advocate, as I have done publicly so very often, the doctrine of second chance. I firmly believe in that and I speak that as a sense of call, I advocate that out of personal experience and the experience of many people I have known and counselled. The doctrine of second chance is one worthy of an embrace in terms of official policy. My embrace of that view does not in any way put me in a position of where I feel any inclination towards suggesting that the measures being imposed by these amendments are out of place, out of sync with reality and are

too stiff and stringent to be suitably contemplated by this Parliament. I, therefore, fully support the amendments which are being proposed. I believe we need to be firm in our discipline, firm on issues of law and order, even though we hold to a view of second chance and the benefits of second chance.

I think if you look at the specifics of the measure before us, you will come to a conclusion that even in instances where stiff or stiffer penalties are imposed, those who are subjected to those stiffer penalties, based on the trend which now obtains when they leave institutions such as Glendairy, would still be relatively young people. So that in spite of stiffer penalties, they would in fact still continue to be in a position to be subjects of a second chance philosophy.

The stringency of these measures or any similar measure, I believe, can only be properly weighed in the fuller context of the opportunities which are made available to people in Barbados. It continues to distress me and certainly it will distress any right thinking person that as a State, and respective Governments over time, in good times and in bad times, under structural adjustment, in times where there was an economic downturn, successive Governments in this country have continued to place a high premium and high priority on the business of education. Hundreds of millions of dollars spent every year investing in education and investing in the lives of our young people and it continues to be a troubling thing. It continues to distress me that in spite of the best efforts and the cost to taxpayers in this country, in spite of the cost to State and heavy continued investment even in difficult times, there will still be those among us who would want to give themselves to the type of crime which serves to erode their own sense of dignity and threatens the well-being of persons close to them and those of us in the wider community.

Education in this country has been paid for by the taxpayers. There is free education at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. There are not many countries in the world where it could be said of the State that in good and bad times, education remains a top priority in which the Government and the State invest heavily. Yet, we are faced with a situation where some would choose, in spite of the opportunities under education to give themselves to a life of criminal activity.

There are opportunities for vocational and technical training for those who are not formally academically inclined. An abundance of opportunities exists through the technical and vocational institutes. These are mechanisms that we have established and more opportunities are being provided. There cannot be any reason as to why some who wantonly give themselves to this type of criminal activity would do so. I think those are the persons that are intended

to be dealt with by the stiffer penalties imposed through this legislation. Work opportunities have continued to be expanded in Barbados both for skilled and unskilled people.

We are troubled with a spectre of violence, violent crime, gun crime, gun-related crime, robberies and stuff like that at a time when employment levels in Barbados exist at the lowest levels that have ever existed in this country. If you talk about the stringency of this legislation, you cannot do so without reference to the abundant opportunities which continue to be given to young people in this country. Options for personal self-development, even outside of the arena of formal education, such as opportunities of small enterprise and small business development and self-employment enterprises, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North spoke at length of these things and I do not need to repeat that but they are there and those who want to take opportunities, with skills or without skills, can find opportunities of which they can avail themselves, if they mean to do so. The social security safety nets which have been provided in this country, over time, continue to be in place, in spite of difficulties we had in the early 1990s and they continue to be in place.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South just spoke with reference to that. All of this represents an abundance of opportunities in an environment created by the Government of the day for those who want to make it the legitimate activity, skilled or unskilled, to make it, if they seriously desire to do so. There cannot be any excuse on the economic front. There cannot be any excuse attributed to delinquency on the part of Government in terms of economic management which would suggest that persons who give themselves to this type of criminal activity had no choice and were forced to do so.

4.45 p.m.

I believe that what seriously concerns us today is the ugly spectre of the gun, not so much the crime because if we look at the figures, they constantly show that there is a reduction in terms of certain types of crime even though there is an increase in certain types of criminal activity. I believe, therefore, that this measure is intended to address that.

There is the presence of a foreign culture at work among us because we have grown up in a culture where the presence of the gun was not prominent not even for law enforcement officers or in terms of the resources given to the Barbados Defence Force. We have grown up in a country where traditionally there has not been easy access to a gun even by people seeking a gun licence for legitimate purposes so what we have now and what we are faced with now is the penetration of a foreign culture into our midst. I believe that is what is creating the fear factor among us today and we are

seeking to effectively address that by the introduction of these amendments here today.

We cannot escape the reality of copycatting. Someone once said that a person can watch as much television as they want that it is not going to force them to do what they do not want to do, so you cannot blame the television and you cannot blame the media. The truth of the matter is that those who are criminally bent learn some of their methods from what is exposed in the media. Whatever gives birth in the first place to the tendency towards criminal activity even if it is the use of the gun, the methods are learnt by looking on and copycatting others. Since we do not have a culture in which the presence of the gun has been prominent, it means that the copycatting is borrowed from the foreign culture which the media exposes.

The whole issue of desensitisation is very important. We repeatedly look at these things and repeatedly feed our minds on these things and we lose a high degree of sensitivity to things that previously we were highly sensitive towards and so human life loses its value and the business of seeing blood and injuring people does not affect us the way it used to. For minds which are not properly fed and, therefore, are not as soundly functioning as they ought to be, you would find that such people will resort to the use of such measures that injure people indiscriminately. That is one of the problems we face with gun violence. When a person sends off a gun in a public place there is no telling who can be injured and there is no telling as to the extent to which your target can be injured so there is potential for indiscriminate injury to persons. I believe that is also embraced in terms of the measures which are given here.

The matter of security is very important and I am one always to raise a voice on this issue. I believe that because Barbadians have been accustomed to a fairly stable social climate and orderly lives over the years, they have been lulled into a false sense of security by believing that certain things can happen elsewhere but they will not happen here. This matter of dealing with the presence of guns must be dealt with from a perspective that recognises the larger threat to national security. It has happened not far from here. Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana are all now reeling under the effects from a national security perspective, the threats to the system and the structures of law and order in the country. The forces of law and order is real and we must recognise that it can happen here and so we must do our best to curb this business of the prominent presence of guns in our midst.

I have said in this Chamber before that at this point in time in our history and in our national and social development that the police are only incidental targets of gun violence. People shoot at the police if the police come after them or if the police interrupt a crime in progress.

Unless this is checked, like our neighbours, we would come to the place where we witness the day where the police become deliberate targets of gun violence and not simply incidental targets of gun violence. Therefore, we cannot simply look at this measure with respect to sentences to be imposed and suggest that they are stiff without looking at the wider context. The challenges which appeared very innocent today will become more sinister tomorrow. We have got to cut it at the stem as early as we possibly can. Therefore, in that wider context I support this measure.

The lack of success in dealing with the presence of guns also concerns me. I have said that before and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West mentioned it here today. Ever so often we can hear of reports of drug busts and drugs being confiscated but the stories speak of less success when it comes to guns. One must not be easily led to believe that this is because there is not a substantial number of guns present. So why can we not find the same kind of success in dealing with the guns as we do in dealing with the drugs? Perhaps there is need for pause for thought on that.

This matter of the free movement of fishing vessels in and out of our coastlines which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East raised today is something that we have to address without offending the democratic process and without interfering with free enterprise and people's business in going about their industry in whatever sphere of endeavour they should choose. We need to understand that we are not the manufacturers, cultivators or growers of the drugs here. The drugs are largely imported and they come in across the sea. I am not charging the people involved in the fishing industry but I am saying that we have to think very seriously about this matter of the movement of fishing vessels.

Controls have already been alluded to with reference to the barrel trade and the movement of containers but we are fairly lax about these things where containers leave the Bridgetown Port to go to stipulated or recommended sites to be checked and I am not too sure that the eye is as watchful as it ought to be. All of these are legitimate channels through which illegitimate activity can take place. The guns will not only come across the waters and land on exposed areas of our coastlines but they will come through legitimate ports which have been mentioned here already today.

I do not support the view that we can divorce the matter of crime from any period of specific political administration. I have heard that said in here two or three times today. I believe that the problem of crime must be laid clearly at the doorstep of the political administration of the day where it is justified. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy giving an analysis in terms of developments between the 1970's and 1991 and so forth. He is suggesting that the criminals who

live today were born in an era when the Barbados Labour Party controlled the reins of Government and was responsible for public policy. That was his submission. They were born then, but my thesis here today is that I would support that view that we cannot label it "D" or "B". My thesis here today is that people who perhaps might have the inclination will take the opportunity to give expression to that inclination when the circumstances are right and if one checks the economic circumstances of the early 1990s that is what one is dealing with. The Barbados Labour Party was not responsible for public policy of administering the economy at that time. So the business of economic circumstances and the business of the resources given to the law enforcement agencies is an issue.

4.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know whether the DLP or the BLP could boast of having exceeded the resources which were given to the Royal Barbados Police Force. I do not think the Royal Barbados Police Force, if it were to have a voice on this, would suggest that the DLP is to be commended more highly than the BLP in terms of resourcing the Police Force. This Government can stand proud and take much credit for the resources given to the Police Force, especially in recent times, even though more is necessary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are certain structures created around the value system that we, as a people, have adopted. Sir, once a value system is being created that allows or facilitates structures which would create big divisions between other persons, one is then asking for trouble. What people saw in this country between the years 1990 to 1993 was a situation where the gap between the rich and the poor was becoming wider and wider.

Sir, I have looked at it analytically and do not easily come to the view that we attributed the presence of crime to any political party. That is not easily the case but one cannot easily come to the view where it is never the case. There were certain circumstances in this country in the early 1980's that bred some persons in our midst which led them to criminal activities and that is one of the reasons why the figures are rising.

Sir, in closing let me make reference to the 7-pronged platform to which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has introduced. Sir, the business of strong law enforcement is an obvious necessity. Again, whether with reference to communications; improvements; deployment; the increased mobility of the Police Force; stiffer sentences or support for the Barbados Defence Force, there has been a clear policy and programme in terms of strengthening the ability of the law enforcement agency in Barbados. Also, what I heard from the Honourable Minister, is that there is a tough policy in place to pursue that to an even greater extent. Sir, the manner of strategic intervention in social agencies

for the purpose of preventative crime management, curative response to crime, rehabilitative response to crime, is certainly extremely important. This Government has been saying that the response to crime is simply not a policing response but one that calls for a collective response from all ministries that make up this Government. I believe this to be a very important plank in that 7-pronged platform.

Sir, the issue of reordering cultural values. I have one problem with the entire submission of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. The Honourable Member has associated this manner of our cultural values with the head. I come from a perspective that associate that with the heart. That is the only difference of opinion. I believe we have to get it right in the head as much as we have to get it right in the heart.

Sir, we have to reorder our social and cultural values. In the traditional Barbadian context, these values were birthed in the home. Sir, the home in Barbados has been seriously challenged for some years and has been suffering under the stresses of that challenge. The home has changed its character. The demands of society from day-to-day have brought changes and pressures to the home. I do not confess this Government, in my view, has come yet to the position where it understands the need to make the home a deliberate target of Government and public policy.

Sir, we could talk about the Welfare Department and about the Child Care Board but I think we are addressing symptoms of problems that arise and not the family setting of the home, which is the most important unit at the base of society. Therefore, I would want to suggest to the Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports that, in my view, the school by its curriculum content, by its orientation and objectives, has become too much a part of the marketplace environment. The school is now a system simply set up to prepare people for the market. When one moves away from the primary level at schools, it becomes very obvious a de-emphasis on things such as traditionally Barbadian held values and virtues. The emphasis is so much on the marketplace and preparing one for the world of work that the emphasis on values is lost, even at the secondary level.

Sir, when I was at secondary school, there was a heavy emphasis being placed on values. Now, it is a question of commerce and competition as the school becomes a unit in the marketplace.

Sir, those values were birthed in the homes, reinforced in the schools and guarded by the Church. I have to admit of a view that suggests that the Church, as an institution even with its deficiencies, is still very vital to our national development. If we were to be honest we would have to

admit that because of the deficiencies in the Church as an institution, because of the deficiencies in the lives of some persons in leadership levels of the church that, as a nation, if we have not yet done so, we are on the verge of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Sir, in spite of its problems, the Church is a vital and needed unit in terms of giving realisation to the intention of public policy, especially when it comes to issues such as this.

Sir, that is my submission. I thank you.
5.05 p.m.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Deputy Speaker, traditional Barbadian society produced a Barbadian person who was law-abiding, God-fearing and generally would turn his face against crime and waywardness. Some Honourable Members have spoken today and I make bold to repeat that particular description of the true Barbadian.

I recall hearing the Honourable Member for St. Philip North suggest that those who follow the path of lawlessness and clearly lack anchors in their lives are not true Barbadians. The Honourable Member who just sat down also made reference to this and called for us to understand what the real Barbadian has been like who adhered to values.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Attorney General and Honourable Member for St. Michael North East suggested that Parliament must respond to the time we live in now. We do, in fact, live in times which differ significantly from the era of the 60s, 70s, and 1980s. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a true Barbadian patriot I never thought I would live in a community where there would be drive-by shootings nor did I think, as an innocent youth, that I would come to a culture where people would practise something called "Lease-a-Gun" or "Rent-a-Gun". Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this Barbados there is such a thing known as "Lease-a-Gun" or "Rent-a-Gun". Indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are able-bodied persons in Barbados usually, under age 40, who rather than seek gainful and productive employment, earn their keep in life from commissions earned off renting and selling guns. These itinerant persons go around the country advising people that they need security, that they can get the required type of gun for them and if these persons achieve the sale, they get a commission from their principals who hire them to do this work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to speak to an area which I have given some thought to but if I do not do justice to this area, you can blame it on insufficiency of time in preparing this contribution. I have encountered law-abiding Barbadians who said they wished the police would set up road blocks in communities and stop and apprehend vehicles carrying guns. Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the years at nights,

police officers would stop vehicles in certain areas and carry out searches for contraband or evidence. The constitutionality of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been debated time and time again among members of the legal profession and for those persons who want to hide and do not want their vehicles searched they feel there is no legal basis for police officers to stop their vehicles to search them.

Section 17, subsection 1 of the Constitution of Barbados addresses this issue and says that a person or his property should not be searched without his consent.

Section 17(2) clearly modifies the provision of Section 17(1) which is general but Section 17(2) clearly states that in the interest of the defence of public safety, public order, public morality and a whole host of other things, searches done in accordance with the law are authorised so long as the law enabling such searches are carried out consistent with the provisions of the Constitution of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is doubt that the question of searching vehicles at night after road blocks have been set up is a moot question and we must now look to see what legal enactment can be passed that would not affect the Constitution but which will still permit the police to be able to stop persons with vehicles which are under suspicion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that the police receive information and that the police have intelligence. Even those of us who are not police officers tend to be very suspicious of certain types of vehicles we see during the day and night. A lot of us who are not police officers are very suspicious of the proliferation of hired cars and Z cars in certain locations. There is no question that the police, with their superior intelligence and information, would have some idea that certain persons trading illegally in guns could be in charge of those vehicles.

I submit to this Honourable House for the avoidance of any doubt in the law that this Parliament considers some type of legislation which would put the question of road blocks, accompanied by searches, on a proper legal footing. Legislation, in my respectful submission, can be passed that will not offend the Barbadian Constitution where, for example, if the police have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a person within a certain radius has committed a serious arrestable offence, when a serious arrestable offence has definitely been committed, that should be grounds to allow for a search without a warrant, in case the law is unclear as it currently stands.

Secondly, for the avoidance of doubt, if the police have evidence that a serious arrestable offence is about to be committed in a certain location, they should be given all power, by statute, to be able to set up road blocks and search without a warrant.

A lot of Attorneys in this region are of the view that when a search is done in the absence of a warrant that the search is automatically illegal but that need not be so. To clarify doubt, in instances where any person is unlawfully at large, why should the police be prevented from stopping a vehicle to search for that person especially if that person has known links to the drug and gun culture?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a time-honoured law that if in searching for marijuana, the police come across guns and not marijuana, the search cannot be illegal. In the decisive case of the Queen vs. Sang which was followed by the Queen vs. Leatham proves that evidence, no matter how it is obtained, is admissible in court. However, the Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the American Constitution prevents this from happening.

Asides.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Yes, if you go to get one type and you end up with another type of evidence, although it might be said that you did not plan for that evidence originally and that the evidence was improperly obtained, it is still admissible but in America the Fourth and Fifth Amendments to their Constitution prevents this from happening. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point that I am making, and I would like to urge my learned and distinguished colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and Honourable Attorney General, that we can look at legislation that clearly is in conformity with the Constitution empowering the establishment of road blocks followed by searches, where someone can be unlawfully at large within a given area, let us say within 166 square miles, or an offence has been committed, I would give the police power to search without having warrants in those instances.
5.15 p.m.

One night I saw the police stop a vehicle and a lawyer was travelling not too far behind the car that the police stopped. He got out of his car, obviously he wanted to get some work, and started behaving badly saying that the police were doing an illegal search and he proceeded to ask them for a search warrant and tried to impress everyone. In any case, even if to dismiss that lawyer as ostentatious and doing some touting, it could very well be that lawyers who maintain that when 25 cars are travelling a road at 10.00 p.m. and the police try to stop all 25 cars, there is something unusual about reasonably suspecting all 25 cars in the absence of legal grounds to stand on.

The average reasonable person would think that it is highly unusual if the police stop 25 cars at 11.00 p.m. What could be wrong to arouse the suspicion of the police for them to stop all 25 cars? I am saying that if a serious arrestable offence has been committed, give the police power by

statute, if they know that an arrest is about to be made or if somebody is at large.

I believe that when persons challenge the legality of the search of vehicles and road blocks in England, England looked at their Road Traffic Act and their existing Evidence Act. I believe that if we search the British Road Traffic Act, 1988, we may find some help and guidance as to how the British responded to this clarion call to enable police searches and road blocks to be done on a firm legal basis.

I also believe that Section 4 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act of England, 1984, can help Honourable Members of this Parliament to see how law can be structured to enable, not only those who are interested in maintaining law and order but to enable a legislative regime to be pursued that ultimately will assist in maintaining public order.

Sir, any law passed that will empower road blocks and searches of persons along the lines that I am suggesting, will clearly have to be passed in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution. As I said, Section 17 (1) is only of general application which says that nobody should be searched without his consent but Section 17 (11) says that searches can be authorised when such searches are carried out in conformity of the existing law.

Sir, if you assume that lots of guns, bullets and ammunition, either directly in support of the drug trade or directly in support of the gun trade, are conveyed in vehicles in the dead of the night and if we can find law with teeth to permit these vehicles to be stopped and properly searched according to the law, then it could very well be that the police may be able to increase the number of illegal guns that they seize.

In addition to the seized firearms, they might be able to collect additional evidence. I am still for the Queen vs Sang and the Queen vs Leatham. I not agreeing with the Fourth and Fifth Amendments of the United States Constitution where the police are looking for evidence "A" and find evidence "B" and "C", they must not be told that it is only evidence "A" that they are looking for and to pick up evidence "B" and "C" is wrong, you must be able to pick up all the evidence.

Sir, as the Attorney General said, Parliament has to pass laws to reflect the times in which we are living. I agree with how the Attorney General put this matter. Too many of our youngsters believe being able to discharge a shot is a badge of honour. The Honourable Attorney General would obviously have hesitated to use terminology like this. Sir, what the Attorney General meant is, to them, having a gun is a badge of honour and it is ascertaining strength.

Sir, what worries me is, in the midst of all this is that some of those youngsters, if you isolate them from their peers and remove them off the block and talk to them gently in order to provide counsel to them, they are really scared young people. Some of them are very timid but in every case all of them have a secondary education.

Sir, fifty years ago, the typical Barbadian receiving a secondary education would have seen himself, even if not being a member of the elite, as having a particular advantage that would allow him to know the difference between good and bad and between evil and that which is righteous.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I, as an educator, have a problem where we give children between the ages of 10 and 12 an education. In the primary schools the teachers do their best to pass on values to these children. When these children enter secondary schools, most of them behave very well. Sir, they are not foolish and they are highly intelligent. Somehow, they disrespect learning and develop no appreciation for learning. Then they begin to relate to subcultures and values that are not traditionally Barbadian. Barbadians of the 1950's and 1960's would not have wanted to see a gun unless it was in a picture or a movie. Sir, guns exist primarily to kill.

Sir, even though you might see reference made in the legislation that people using guns at a sports day to discharge a shot to signal the beginning of a race, the primary reason is not to start a race at a sports day, the primary purpose of a gun is to kill. I shudder to think that there is a significant number of young people who feel that having a gun is a badge of honour. I also shudder to think that if communities feel sufficiently unsafe, unprotected and exposed when they see these youngsters walking around demonstrating these guns, some communities may get sufficiently panicky to want to respond.

Sir, I heard in this country that there are some people who support vigilantes. No responsible Parliament or Member of Parliament would support vigilantes. Instead, we would support community neighbourhood watches. The point that I am making is, if people feel so unsafe because of the unlicensed guns out there, then those persons who would normally be law-abiding citizens and who now are scared, might respond by wanting to arm themselves. I am saying that the never-ending army of people that are legally or otherwise, is not a desirable thing for our country Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is, because of how certain social values have been corrupted and because of this persistent, insistent spectre known as the drug trade along with firearms are in Barbados in numbers that we do not like and in the hands of many people who are not to have them at all.

5.25 p.m.

The primary purpose of this amendment is to forbid the use of illegal guns and imitation firearms in public places. None of us in here likes to hear when somebody goes into a heavily crowded post office or a bank in which there are many people to discharge a firearm. The discharging of a firearm or shooting of bullets in a public place, comes close to being acts of terrorism. No person who is other than *non compos mentis* would seriously think about going into a public place, whether a pasture, a cinema, whether outside the cinema or whether a highway to discharge a firearm. I am saying that in situations where we have had vendettas between competing gangs where Gang A in pursuit of Gang B must get some sort of revenge against Gang B, very often when they discharge shots against each other the innocent are caught.

My heart goes out to that old lady somewhere in the constituency of St. Michael East who is living alongside of Windsor Lodge who was one day lawfully in her house and reckless gangs in pursuit of a vendetta against each other descended on that innocent community and this old lady was literally caught in the crossfire as one of them barged into her house and apparently induced cardiac arrest in the old lady.

There has been other undesirable behaviour as well so that this Parliament must bear in mind that even those people who are licensed and have firearms have to be careful in their use even when they feel that they are out to defend themselves. Firearms in the hands of the wrong people constitute a menace and a danger to a society that wants to be tranquil but, worse still, even to discharge an imitation firearm is bad. The reason why is that the victim or victims will not easily know the difference between a general firearm and an imitation one and there is, therefore, fear and sometimes based on their health they may even end up suffering more than they should, especially when you bear in mind that these people are innocent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not like the idea of this culture seeing people go up to people saying, "Man want gun, man want protection." I do not like this idea of this thing called Rent-a-Gun. I do not like the idea of young men earning their way in life off commissions earned from a sale of guns and I do not like the subcultures that link closely with the widespread use of drugs. I, therefore, endorse wholeheartedly the comments made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West who clearly put a position that this Barbados does not deserve this type of thing. Even though it might be said that the numbers of persons involved in this are not very high, in my own personal view, there is too much of this in this country. It has to be stopped and any means necessary to stop it would be welcome. I, therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, without reservation support this Bill.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would wish to add words of commendation in endorsing many of the comments made by Honourable Members in this debate and to say very early that I support this amendment of the Firearms Act.

I would wish to refer to those seven planks that were identified by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East just to name them because I would want to elaborate on them afterwards, particularly to do with the strong and coordinated law enforcement that is recommended, effective administration of justice, strategic intervention among the population at risk, modernisation of the penal reform programme, re-ordering of cultural values, strong legislative framework and reducing opportunities for crime, *et cetera*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the privilege of visiting some other countries and I was extremely afraid at the very first sight going to the supermarket, to the hospital, into the bus station and seeing the military personnel and the police carrying large automatic weapons and I would name places like Israel where that is an ongoing thing and I am talking about the eighties when we knew that we did not have such difficulties as we experience today with guns in Barbados. I always said that I would never wish to be living in any country where that kind of measure has to be undertaken by law enforcement agencies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened to a programme on the radio stations some time in 1996 and it was on a very popular call-in programme on a Sunday. When I heard the stories of young men in Barbados who had gone into Christianity after having lived a life of crime perhaps for the 15 or 25 years that they had reached, I felt extremely concerned. I know of a number of instances where a lot of our young men and women are very deeply steeped in crime. The revelations of those young men on that Sunday afternoon brought me to a further realisation and a lot of it leads right back to a number of the comments expressed by other Honourable Members to do with home and family life.

They were called the bad boys and one young man said, "I never laughed in my life as far as I can remember. Every time I got an opportunity, I would sleep and dream about crime. I would sit and think about crime. I would organise how to go and rob somebody, how to sell a fellow a gun and get it back from him through fighting with him or beating him up or shooting at him."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the tape of that particular episode and it had me extremely disturbed but at the end of it all I felt very pleased because the six or eight of them who came on that programme were now actively involved in a church and praising God and spreading the message. I would wish that more of that would happen.

To hear a young man say that he never laughed at himself, that he would go in the mirror and try to put his face in all forms and fashions and would never be able to get a smile, that he was such a bitter, angry young man, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must tell you that we have thousands of them walking around and all of it is not to do with bad parenting. A lot of it is to do with the avarice and materialism that our young people and some of our older people have.

I heard Honourable Members speak today about the poverty line and I agree that we still do have many people below the poverty line and Government is making efforts to ensure that the resources trickle down to them. Hence we look at the National Assistance Board and we look at the rural and urban development projects and see how poor people are getting assistance.
5.35 p.m.

Sir, I agree that not all of them will get the benefits at the same time but efforts are being made and I would wish to commend the Government on that behalf and, of course, encourage that more resources be put into it to help our people who are below the poverty line.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot help but to go back to the past. It hurts me that the 1950's and 1960's generally had most poor people, but the core values that were taught to our people were sacrifice, thrift, honesty, hard work and dedication to what you do and that came through not only from the home, but it followed through in the Church, from the community and the entire society. Sir, that is what we worked towards to build ourselves and I can look into this Honourable Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and see many individuals in here, who would have come through that same period, experiencing similar problems of poverty and deprivation in a number of areas.

It calls for us to continue to remind our people that Rome was not made in a day, take advantage of what you have and work with it. You should show gratitude because you do not get rich suddenly. Sometimes people are rich and they do not know what to do with the money. They have avarice so they want to get more and even more and they are never happy with the level that they have reached. Therefore, I think it is important that we need to start looking at the home, as was said by other Honourable Members, the church and the school and the cohesiveness of that approach and bringing it right back on stream here. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael West make mention of the educational system and I agree with him, that the educational system has a bigger role to play in these times.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the new curriculum reform or I should say the curriculum reform that the Ministry of Education is implementing, is not only looking at the

educational value, the knowledge and skills that will come from it, but it also has enshrined in it, or a component of it is to do with the social, emotional and life skills, cultural values. We need all of those to come together to be coupled with the educational values in order for our people to continue to be holistic and rounded and fitting in all levels of the society with distinction. I am sure that as long as they have been able to develop the life skills, I am sure that they can transfer the knowledge and the skills to other environments to make them good, wholesome citizens.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I agree that at the primary level, we still have moral and religious education and it is working well for our primary school children whom we see every day walking religiously with big bags carrying their books, pencils, lunch and everything that is necessary. When you compare some of our primary school children at Class I and the bags they carry with those at secondary level, their bags are as flat as the sheet of paper I have in my hands. It bothers me. Something is wrong. Yes, some of our secondary schools have moral and religious education but I do not think that enough is being done by all of them to be able to reach our children to let them know that there is something called a conscience that all individuals must have, and then if your conscience puts you right and as long as you have that moral base and that foundation, I am sure that it will help more of our young people to understand that they have a responsibility as citizens to themselves as well as to others with whom they meet.

The conflict resolution is also enshrined in that new curriculum and that is important, because many of our young people do not know how to deal with conflict. Some of our adults do not even know and Mr. Deputy Speaker, you see a lot of road rage coming into Barbados now as well, and it is going to get worse unless people understand that there is something called patience. There is also something called conscience that if you are on the main road and people are on the side road, you can let out one or two, rather than having a long line backed up while everybody hold their heads straight as though they do not ever go on a side road. It calls for patience, training and a living conscience and common sense.

Therefore, those are things that appear to be small but they are helping to erode our society and the moral fabric that we have been able to develop through generations of parents, some who may have never been to a school, some of them did not have anybody to guide them, some of them became pregnant at ages 15 and 16 but there was the community base and the extended family that helped to lift families and everybody looked after everybody else's child. Everybody knows my pronouncement about taking a whole community to raise one child. A whole village has to raise our children again. It cannot be a single mother or father

alone, or just in a regular unit of a father and a mother. Everybody in the community has to play his or her role.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that much of the crime that is in existence in this country today is drug related. A lot of the gun toting is connected with drugs. That is my understanding of the situation as I tried to assess it. I also recognise, and the statistics indicate, that most of the offenders of gun-related incidents are males under thirty years of age.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is amazing that many of our males who go to fetes are searched with a fine tooth comb but some of the young women who go in with them are not searched. I have been made to understand that a lot of those young women are the ones who carry in the weapons for the boyfriends, fiances and partners or whatever you call them. This is something that has to be examined and we have to make sure that systems are put in place in our various places of entertainment to ensure that every individual is thoroughly checked on entering the facility.

We know that about three or four years ago a young man went to a popular nightclub somewhere in the South of this island and he was murdered in that nightclub, in the middle of people in merriment, because of stepping on somebody's shoe. Sir, something as simple as stepping on somebody's shoe when you can say, "I am sorry", caused a young man to lose his life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps that was a vendetta which was going on before, but I am saying that as simple as stepping on somebody's foot should not merit the loss of somebody's life. Therefore, again it all falls back on the conflict resolution. I also recognise that a lot of your male professionals are seeking to have gun licences for firearms in Barbados. I feel that a firearm can be associated with the expression that is used for fire. Where fire is a good slave but a bad master. I feel that easy access to guns would determine that those individuals would become bad masters because we have a lot of individuals, not only young people, who have become higher up and better off and believe that because they are running a business that they are the biggest authority. I consider that a gun in the hands of a fool, cannot do anything sensible.

Too many of our people act and then think, they say, only if I had known, they do not worry about the consequences. That is a part of training that happens from the home. When you move this, what will happen? You tell children that from the home: do not open the fridge door, it is going to cause my light bill to increase. The children just need to be told that the consequences have to be affixed to the actions and too many of our people seem not to understand that there are serious consequences or

repercussions that will come about when you do stupid things, so I do not support many of those individuals who do not think before they act, who are seeking gun licences.

I agree that there are people with businesses who are responsible and who need to have that form of protection because many of them are being targeted. The way that the Commissioner of Police or the Attorney General's Office deal with it, is their business and it has nothing to do with me, but I do not want to see widespread offering of licences for guns to "hitch up and tie up" if you want to call it that, because many of them do not reason it out.

Sir, I support the multi-sectoral approach to fighting crime 100 per cent and I like the idea of the Commissioner of Police talking about zero tolerance. It is about time it happens and the little infringements that we see in our society, day after day, primarily indicate that when something starts small and you do not nip it in the bud, it is going to start to spiral, or escalate and encompass the entire society. In the same way that we see those ZRs out there, doing as they like but when they see a police officer, they follow the right route.

Asides.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Most of the ZRs are doing foolishness. The motor cyclists are doing as they like. The bicyclists are riding without a simple light, brakes, causing them to lose their lives. One night along Waterford, I saw five bicyclists with not a single light. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not mean to be facetious when I say it, but a black man on a black night on a black bicycle, you understand what will happen. Somehow they continue to breach the rules and if we do not deal with it as adequately as we should, and as I said in this Honourable Chamber, if I were young, say about 25 years, I would join the Police Force because I feel that I could teach some of the police a lesson or two, in investigating certain crimes. I feel so and I am an ordinary citizen and I have a difficulty when these people ride up and down, do as they please and little seems to be done, according to what I see and the public sees as well. 5.45 p.m.

I would have a difficulty with a person not renewing his or her firearm licence. I know people tend to forget but we are having the same breaches every day with people who are driving all over Barbados not paying road taxes and not renewing their licences for the car, for the motorcycle or for the other things that they have. Even the vendors are refusing to renew their licences.

I understand what the legislation is saying, that is, that a person who is in possession of a firearm licence and that person does not renew the licence after a year passes that they are subject to a fine and I support that. I wholeheartedly

support the fact that anyone found with an unlicensed firearm must spend some time in prison. I have observed that within the last two weeks, after hearing that the death warrant was read to those on death row that most Barbadians who are involved in crime have gone as quiet as anything. So unless we do the enforcement of the law it does not seem as though the understanding in their heads can pick up that they are doing foolishness.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the coast guard being upgraded with the technical equipment necessary to help them to function as effectively as possible because we know that John Public and Jill Public are already aware that the drug boats that are out on the outskirts of the island are faster by far and therefore the equipment that the coast guard has, must match or surpass theirs. Therefore, the necessary technical equipment must be made available to them so as to effectively carry out their jobs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also support the call for designated ports of entry for our fishermen. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East speak to the fishermen being afraid and the serious challenges that they are faced with as they go on their daily honest chores to make a living for themselves and their families. I would want to support those designated ports of entry and exit for those fishermen to ensure that their lives are safe and secure and that proper monitoring systems are put on our coast-line to ensure that illicit drugs and illegal firearms are not entering this country. I support that call for the airport and the seaport to be properly policed since we recognise that Barbados seems to be a major transshipment point for drugs and other contraband.

I also want to support the request for regional cooperation because the other countries in the region are faced with this problem, I would like to think, in a bigger way than Barbados when it comes to these illegal forms of activity. Therefore, regional cooperation would pull Barbados and the other countries of the region together and since we have similar concerns we would be able to share and develop the research, the plans, the programmes and the strategies that are being put in place by the various agencies.

I support the call for equipping the Police Force with telecommunications to prepare them for the technological age to ensure that there is further effectiveness and efficiency as they carry out their tasks. I support the call too for the increase in police officers. One would appreciate that under the regime of the former Attorney General there were posts created within the last five to six years to expand the Police Force. I support that call because the police are expected to be on the scene where there is an accident. When somebody's cow falls into a well the first person they call is the police. When trivial things happen they call the police. It is trivial in my eyes but it might not be trivial in the eyes of

those who call but I am saying that because of the wide range of responsibilities that the police have to undertake it makes it extremely difficult for them to be spread here, there and everywhere. I laud that effort for them to get further equipment to assist them in their job but they do need bigger numbers.

I also support the call for them to be better remunerated because they work beyond the call of duty and they are dedicated and committed but that system will happen with the overall outlook that the Government has on the reclassification programme for public officers. There is only a small percentage of them who perhaps would go moonlighting or who would want to come out of the system because they think that life out there is better and they can carry on with a better job even though they get national insurance benefits. However, generally speaking, I would say that 98 per cent of them are doing an excellent job and I would wish at this point to commend them for their dedication and support in ensuring that the people of Barbados, our visitors who are integral to our existence as well as properties across the island, are properly secured.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to make mention of that early intervention among children and families at risk. I say this because just two years ago the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports undertook the responsibility of setting up a committee for the coordination of the social services. The Ministry of Education did that out of recognising that many of our children do not go to school adequately. Sometimes it is because of sickness which we will excuse but many of them play truant. Poverty affects some of them and their parents are not always aware as to the various agencies through which they can get assistance. As a result of that, we have to rely heavily on the police officers to work with the truant officers. I wish to make a call today for an expansion of the school truancy officers, the school attendance officers in the Ministry so that we can get more police officers working with them to ensure that our children are in school and that whatever intervention measures can take place with referrals to the social agencies can take impact from very early.

The social committee is working with the social agencies like the Probation Department, the National Assistance Board, the Youth Affairs Department, the Community Development Department and PAREDOS. We are trying to network with these agencies and rather than looking now to ensure that each school has a programme in place for welfare purposes by ensuring that children get lunch money, bus fare and things of that nature, we are now looking at what happens to the child in the eight or nine weeks summer holiday. Therefore, the agencies have to take responsibility and look at families to assist them and bring them along from the poverty line. Therefore, that committee is working.

That early intervention to have children psychologically and psychiatrically assessed would be very integral in testing them for their reading skills and their mathematical literacy and numeracy skills that will help to stave off some of the problems that we see existing when our children reach the early adolescent stage.
5.55 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the promotion of community cohesion is also integral to this exercise. A community that is aware it has a role to play in setting up neighbourhood watches, showing respect for the police and working with the resident beat officer, I am sure will help what is happening at the community level. Sir, that closeness will enable neighbours to identify their next door neighbours. There is a situation where people live next door to each other, one goes to work and returns home to find that the house burglarised or furniture missing, simply because the neighbour does not know who was living next to them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, everything boils down to public education. It is important the public gets adequate education. I know the Royal Barbados Police Force has been working on a number of strategies: moving into communities, planning with them, marking the various household instruments, *et cetera*. We need more of that but with such limited numbers, that cannot happen as effectively as we would wish. Therefore, the public education in that respect helps so that the public is aware that one cannot build a \$250 000 house and build a \$25 door or put a cheap lock on an expensive house which allows persons to break into them easily. Sir, I am embarrassed that women are into this situation as well.

As long as community education continues, I am sure it will strengthen the relationship between the police, the youths and the locals, which will help to enhance the whole approach at which we are looking.

Sir, I know the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) has been doing a lot of activities within schools and in neighbourhoods which is welcomed but even more of that is needed. It should also be coupled with the Drug Awareness Rehabilitation Education (DARE) programme that is happening in our primary and secondary schools.

Sir, regarding conflict resolution, there is a need for our churches, counsellors and leaders at those levels, to do certain intervention with members, not only of their churches, but also in the community as a whole. We need the priests, psychologists, counsellors, retired personnel, all persons to come on board if we are to make a difference in the approach to crime and violence if we are to have that decreased.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am angry at the way gun related incidents have escalated over the last few years. I am also angry at the way the media display the information. I am not saying the public should not be informed but the way it is being done it bothers me.

Yes, there is the need to sell newspapers but when the moral fabric of society is gone as a result of unreasonable advertisements in order to sell newspapers, I think that is uncalled for. We need to be more responsible if we are to send messages out. Why can we not have more positive messages on the front page and the incidents that are taking place hidden somewhere inside the newspaper? Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I see a body stretched out in Swan Street or lying in Eagle Hall, that bothers me. The shooting in Bridgetown on a busy Saturday morning frightens me; the shooting on Black Rock Main Road with those little and innocent bystanders; the shooting on playing fields; the shooting at gas stations when we are there on legitimate business; the shooting at the Hospital in broad daylight is also a concern to society; the shooting at fetes. All of these have society feeling fearful. Therefore, I further support the police in their efforts to combat crime.

Sir, I have tremendous respect for the Attorney General and staff for the hard work they have put into formalising this kind of legislation so that the people of Barbados can again feel and be comfortable knowing they are living in peace and tranquillity.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made mention of the project that Mr. Richard Carter and his staff had undertaken some time last year inviting children to hand in their toy guns in exchange for toys that were more educational and enhancing to their growth and development. I think that project should continue. I think too that rather than support what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said about business houses having freedom to buy whatever they see fit, I support a call for the banning of those toy guns coming into the country.

When we were children we all read comics and saw bad boys, *et cetera*. Nowadays, children have these guns and are shooting about. Sometimes these children gesticulate to another that person wants shooting. Sir, I support that effort by the Youth Affairs Department where a very powerful message was being sent to the young children that there are other wholesome toys to play with instead of toy guns.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government including successive Governments, have always been committed to tackling crime. This Government has been more committed than the last, hence the measures implemented over the past eight years and indeed, the former Attorney General has to be commended for her consistency. These efforts cannot only be perceived to be done by a government. Again, everybody has to come on board in helping us in the fight against crime

and violence. No longer can we stay in our glass houses and expect that a stone will not break the glass, nor can we assume putting up wrought iron bars will save us. We still have to go to church, our children still have to go to school, I still want to go to a Cavalcade in St. Lucy, I still want to be able to walk around with the freedom of not having to look over my shoulder or to run helter-skelter. That is not the Barbados we know nor want for our children or grandchildren to have to experience. Therefore, I support every effort made by the Attorney General and staff to have this legislation prepared.

I also support every call to have it properly implemented so that, not only will it be a legal document but the enforcement will follow to ensure people out there who are bent on crime will understand that they have a responsibility, not only to themselves but to the rest of Barbados and need to fall in line, or there are penalties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I make my final call for the home, the church, the school, the politicians, the political parties, the non-governmental organisations, to put aside their differences and come together in a cohesive way to see how best the community or the local commissions can work together in formulating ideas that, at the end of the day when being implemented, will be better accepted because the locals would have had a stake in the entire exercise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in closing I want to say thank you to the Attorney General and staff for the excellent approaches that are being made to help us to combat crime and to make Barbadians and visitors feel comfortable in the confines of their homes or wherever they go.

I would also like to extend sincere thanks to the Commissioner of Police and his staff for the excellent work they have been doing and, in the final call, ask that those Court Marshals who work hand-in-hand with the police, be given a fair and better opportunity because they work with the police, the Justices of the Peace, the island constables and the Defence Force, to ensure that all Barbados is safe. I wish to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.
6.05 p.m.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to congratulate the Attorney General on bringing this amendment to the Firearms Act to this Honourable House. It is good to see that there has not been any division on either side on this important piece of legislation.

Sir, over the years, our parents, fore parents and successive Governments have worked to build this country. We do not believe that a handful of renegades should terrorise and pull down this country which depends heavily on the tourism sector. These tourists seek out Barbados to enjoy themselves, to invest here and others make it their

homes and it is not fair that this handful of renegades should run roughshod over this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, many big countries like America, England, Canada and countries in the region have seen this insidious, cancerous drug culture spread its roots into the bowels of these countries and Barbados is no exception. Everybody in this country should be concerned about what is taking place. There should be no division, political or otherwise, as it relates to what is taking place.

Sir, the problem of drugs affects people at the bottom, middle and top of the socio-economic ladder. Mr. Deputy Speaker, children, young people, middle aged people, old people and retired people are using illicit drugs. Sir, drug users are often unemployed, have no income and so get involved in all sorts of illegal activities for their own support. Then there is another group who market these drugs, spend the money instead of paying the suppliers and then fear for their lives. They then become involved in gun-related crimes to pay the suppliers for these drugs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious situation. We have recently seen firearms entering the countries in all kinds of fashion. It is said that acquiring a firearm today is as easy as catching a ZR van. We have to be concerned about where these firearms come from because in Barbados we have many open areas along the sea coast, boats can come in during the night and drop off all kinds of contraband including illegal firearms.

The Attorney General mentioned in her presentation that there is concern about unstuffing containers because this is an area that allows illegal activity to take place. Another area of concern to me is when relatives and friends send barrels from overseas through the airport and seaport. We have to look at these barrels to see if any illegal firearms are entering the country this way.

Sir, I represent a community in the Black Rock area and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas mentioned an incident where two years ago a school girl was shot by a stray bullet. In today's newspaper, three young men from the Black Rock area have been charged but the judge had to issue a bench warrant for the arrest of these three young men.

Sir, in my own way I try to talk to these young people but a lot of them are out on a limb 'to take down' and destroy people. I told a young man in the community to come to my constituency office so that I could assist him with a job. He told me he does not want a job, just some bullets for his gun. Sir, this is the mentality of these young people and it behooves me to think how young people live in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have always supported and will continue to support the efforts of the police in this country. In relation to the police, I have said before that "I know good of many and harm of none." These good men and women are putting their lives on the line for Barbadians every day and we have to do more to make sure that they are compensated well for their work, are given adequate benefits by way of health insurance and that they have the necessary equipment to do the job.

Sir, police are fighting against the criminals who have guns. Sir, they are fighting criminals who have guns, not "guttaperks" or "rock stones". They are using high-powered artillery. I believe that the police should be given ammunition commensurate with what these criminals are using. Sir, I am also calling on the powers that be to ensure that the police are given bulletproof vests to use as they go about trying to combat crime.
6.15 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, police work is hard work. I have to compliment them as they continue to bring law and order back to this country. It is sad to say that you cannot leave home a Friday or Saturday night and go to watch a football game. Recently, a lady from Grajettes went into CIBC bank to pay her bills, there was a robbery at the bank and that lady was shot in her nose. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these things are not right.

We have to do everything as a society and we have to be our brothers' keepers. We have to give support to the police. We have to make sure as decent citizens and as legislators that we give, both sides of this House, the support to the police to combat this crime. Sir, one cannot go about his or her daily business without fear of something happening to him or her.

Recently, there was an article in the newspaper where a lady indicated where stray bullets went through her house, a young baby was lying in the bed and the mother was quick enough to save the baby and get away from the situation.

Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. James North mentioned, you hear things like Rent-a-Gun and Lease-a-Gun. I heard about Rent-a-Tent or Rent-a-Tool but not Rent-a-Gun. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am concerned about these things.

I want to say a little on the Bail Act. The police have to work long hours to apprehend these people and then these people can go before a magistrate and lawyers would say that everyone is entitled to representation in the court and that it is their constitutional right to have representation. Sir, you have a man on a charge and he appears before a magistrate, gets bail and a few weeks later is back in the court on a

similar charge and he gets bail again. It is not fair to this society to unleash these kinds of people on the society.

I will support this legislation which is before this Honourable House, especially as it relates to the Bail Act. We know that there is just a handful of people who are involved in this illegal activity. When they go before the court and are given bail, they are out there again committing more crimes. This piece of legislation states that in order to have bail for the crimes which they are accused, they will have to go before a Judge in order to have bail granted.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no hesitation in supporting this legislation brought here by the Honourable Attorney General.

I thank you.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on this occasion to lend my support to this Bill before this Honourable House.

Sir, I was extremely impressed with the level of debate as it relates to this Bill. Let me use this opportunity to compliment the Honourable Attorney General for bringing this important piece of legislation before this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, for a long time I have been an advocate of preventive mechanisms dealing with crime solving. Therefore, against this background I want to pay homage to the Royal Barbados Police Force's Public Relations Department, which, in my view, has instituted proper machinery to bring about stabilisation and harmonisation of communities. I always believe that preventive measures is the best solution to solving crime. I would want to use this occasion to compliment the Commissioner of Police for his recent initiative to embark on a full-scale community policing programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not join this debate at this juncture since most Honourable Members of this Chamber spoke of the social impact of crime in Barbados. There can be no doubt that there is a link between poverty, drugs and crime. Therefore, an attack on poverty and a greater distribution of wealth will certainly assist in a reduction of crime and drugs.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke about the lack of morality and unity in Barbados. We are living in a society where the "dog eat dog" attitude seems to exist more than at any time of our existence. We also talked about the general decay of ethics which, in my view, are the key factors of crime. These issues must be addressed at the community level.

I also want to agree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that the whole fight against crime must be a national intervention approach rather than a partisan approach. We as politicians in this Chamber seek this level of discussion on crime as a political tool. It is at this point and time that I believe that any community intervention approach will help with the reduction of crime in Barbados.

6.25 p.m.

Sir, the Ministry of Social Transformation promotes the adoption of a proactive approach that utilises various social development and enhancement techniques. Such an approach, Sir, will always focus on communities and community organisations to ensure that issues of participation and governance are certainly covered.

As part of this strategy, all sectors of the community should be encouraged to participate and contribute towards an integrated and cohesive plan of action, and I was very heartened at the comments I got. I got a very vigorous and exceptionally good speech from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South who really tackled the community approach intervention plan from a very serious social perspective.

It is against this background, Sir, that I would like to use this Chamber to pay homage to an organisation in Barbados that I think is doing excellent work and I believe that all other community groups across Barbados should use this community organisation as a model and replicate that model throughout Barbados and I say that because the community that I come from which is Pinelands was once termed in Barbados as a bastardised community, a community where most persons across Barbados were afraid to enter and they were stigmatised and sometimes termed as a bastardised community. Up to now, Sir, there are still elements of that stigma attached in the minds of some Barbadians, despite the excellent work that the Pinelands Creative Workshop is doing currently within the communities across Barbados.

Sir, I want to draw a reference to Parkinson Secondary School which was once vandalised. The partnership that developed between Parkinson School and the Pinelands Creative Workshop is certainly one that bore fruit. In fact, Sir, on Saturday, approximately 44 fifth form students of that school graduated through the Pinelands Creative Workshop training and employment programme. I am talking about an NGO that is instituting serious community programmes and has formed a relationship with a school in the community to continue the process of community stabilisation.

Sir, it is against this background, too, that another learning institution within the community, the School of Continuing Studies must also be given credit, particularly Dr. Bradley Niles who worked with the programme and

continues to support and give the necessary moral assistance to the group. Additionally, there are other private educational institutions around the area that have helped with this particular programme.

As I reflect now, Sir, I cannot but wonder why over the past ten to fifteen years the strategies that this organisation used to impact on the social landscape of the Barbadian society have not been utilised more. I am speaking about an organisation that is looked at as a catalyst for change among communities throughout the Caribbean. In fact, the relationship between the Pinelands Creative Workshop and the Parkinson Secondary School grew to such a level that the school invited the Workshop and other members of the community to a special session and seminar to come up with strategies that would help to stabilise the community. The point I am trying to reinforce is the importance of the school and communities working together. There must be this interaction between schools and communities.

We have a view in Barbados that everything begins in the schools and I can understand Honourable Members in this Chamber thinking along those lines but the fact is that your first introduction to life begins in the community. You advance after that through a process of learning in school. You cannot separate school from communities. The two must work together if at this point in our history we are to bring about the necessary stability. We are talking about education and community development. You cannot separate the two from each other.

Sir, I would want to put before this Honourable Chamber activities that can be undertaken and I would want to look at the short-term approach which seeks to increase community participation, mobilisation and awareness and, obviously, Sir, build community cohesiveness into an intra-community participation. Projects could include sports which is a natural vehicle for our youngsters and is an everyday part of the existence of most young members of communities across Barbados, increased training in all the particular areas, for instance, table tennis, soccer, cricket, basketball. You can look at culture which is a natural vehicle in the communities and we could look at increased classes across Barbados in dance and theatre which, in my view, there is a serious void and a serious need to develop community theatre again, poetry and music as well as the technical areas of culture such as stage management, lighting, sound and all the other technical areas of theatre, national competitions and programmes that should be decentralised and we adopt similar programmes to those in Trinidad like the Prime Minister's Community Best Village Programme.

We could also look at the increased training and awareness programmes in all areas that affect our society

such as HIV/AIDS and drug awareness programmes to be seriously dealt with at the community level. When you look at the environment, the community clean-up, household competitions, there must be this concentrated activity because once we get our youth involved and stimulated in such programmes, I am sure that the harmonisation and stabilisation, particularly in communities that have housing areas, will be one that you would see a total reduction in crime and criminality.

With the long-term approach, we should seek to strengthen community based and non-governmental organisations to play a far more significant and fundamental role in community mobilisation and management of human and other resources. Sir, when we examine training, it has to be a very important, key component of community leaders in various aspects of leadership and management, for instance, learning how to manage their own organisations, writing project proposals, fund raising of a different orientation since we are now in a new globalised era and far more competitive, capacity building and institutional strengthening of the communities across Barbados, providing the necessary legal framework and the necessary organisational assistance.

Sir, community organisations have a very serious and critical role to play in the long-term efforts to stabilise communities in Barbados. A lot of work must be done now to tackle these challenges that impede or put community involvement in local and national issues.

We cannot as a country ignore this critical gap within our own development agenda. Its success requires genuine networking, as was enunciated this afternoon, where all government departments, all of us as a nation and each and every single sector must be able to work together to solve these problems.
6.35 p.m.

Sir, I believe that every community practitioner in this country must tackle this whole problem of crime head on. Sir, you just cannot leave it to the Government or any one Government department but, certainly, there must be a concentrated and serious approach.

Sir, I want to look at another aspect of crime. I would want us at some point in time to examine the laws of Parliament, particularly the Parliamentary privileges that are afforded to the Honourable Members of these two Chambers. I think that it is a criminal offence that Honourable Members of Parliament could hide behind the Parliamentary privilege and accuse innocent citizens of this country, with false accusations and innuendoes because they know that they have the right of Parliamentary privilege and they hide behind it, in these humble and sacred walls of Parliament...

Aside.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: I know what I am talking about.

...to accuse innocent and honest civil servants. Sir, I feel that some day we are going to have to amend these privileges of Parliament which are afforded to members of these Honourable Chambers. If you tell a lie in these Chambers, you are therefore, misrepresenting or falsely representing those persons that you have been selected or elected to represent in these two Chambers. It is incumbent on each and every one of us as politicians, to tell and report the truth to Barbadians.

I call those types of politicians, cowards. I have nothing nice to say about them because they know and invoke the Parliamentary privileges to hide in this Honourable Chamber, but will not go into the public domain and repeat the statements. Yet, they accuse and impinge seriously on the fundamental right of the citizens of Barbados. Sir, this is bad and it is ably assisted by persons who want to enter these humble Chambers at any cost and that makes those persons as dangerous. Seriously, Sir, I feel it is very wrong for persons to get into these Chambers and cast aspersions on the good character of civil servants.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, I further say that it is not only cowardly but it is ghastly. At some point in time, we are going to have to deal with these so-called Parliamentary privileges. I believe that we in this Honourable Chamber should also be subjected to the same rights, and the kinds of scrutiny as any other citizen of this country, without having to hide in these walls and make false accusations and statements against persons.

Sir, I say that, because we, as politicians, must be setting the right examples. We cannot get into these hallowed Chambers and look, criticise and condemn other persons in the society. We stand in these grandiose Chambers and some of us violate the same principles and laws by which we are we expect others to abide.

Sir, I am very serious because we continue to practise the politics of hypocrisy and we sit and take it as a game. It has to stop. Once we have entered these Chambers, we have a right honestly and truthfully to defend the interests of the persons of whom we are put in charge.

Sir, this is a burning issue on my chest because it hurts innocent people, and most of the time, these are people who have a vendetta against a particular person or organisation. They do not have the courage to go into the public domain and repeat what they say in these Chambers, because they have the protection of Parliamentary privilege.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I close by saying that in supporting the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East and this legislation before Parliament, I would want each and every one of us to go back into the communities, to assist in helping to develop the right mentorship programmes. Let us adopt youth and persons who cannot help themselves, thus providing the necessary safety nets for the disadvantaged. Let us embrace those persons whom we call social outcasts. In the Holy Bible there is the story of the prodigal son who, when he went astray and came back, his father embraced him. Sir, we owe it to ourselves to lead by example and not just by talk. In so doing, I am sure that everyone else in this country will join us and we will be part of a great movement, a great orchestration and a great national social revolution that will be the hallmark of every single country in the Caribbean, when we talk about social intervention and social strategies.

Sir, as I said, we have to lead by example and I am hoping that all of us, collectively as politicians, could develop our own mentorship programmes and continue to make Barbados the proud country it is, where our citizens will continue to look on us for the necessary leadership, guidance and we should provide all the enabling support that is necessary.

I want to thank everyone who spoke for what I think was a very stimulating debate. I thought it was one of the best debates that I have ever heard in this Honourable Chamber. I also want to thank you, Sir, for allowing me this short time for this intervention.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I almost thought the last Honourable Member was doing me the privilege of closing the debate for me but, truthfully, to say that I would only want to echo his words.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that today's debate has been highly constructive, in which all Honourable Members who have spoken in this Honourable Chamber, Government and Opposition, have committed themselves to a unified approach to the fight against crime and to the effort to build law and order in this country.

I do believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this has been the secret for Barbados' development throughout the years where, on key national issues, there is usually no partisan divide and that each and every one of us recognises the critical importance of unity on issues that have the capacity to divide and undermine the social fabric of this country.

I therefore thank all Honourable Members, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who have spoken. As I indicated, this strategy alone

– the changing of this law – is not anticipated to be the panacea for all evils as it relates to either illegal firearms or to crime. We do recognise that this is one of the key strategies, along with others that we believe can have the impact of reducing the prevalence of illegal firearms within our midst and to allow us to better manage the legal firearms for which persons hold licences under this legislation.

I also believe that the sentencing guidelines, as I indicated earlier, from His Lordship the Chief Justice, the establishment of the Anti-gun Unit, along with other measures which we hope to pursue, namely, the shoring up of our coastline, the establishment of more stringent measures at our ports of entry, the social compact that we would like to see in respect of the culture of gun violence, recognising that toy guns are in fact inimical to our children in terms of their development, because it encourages them into believing that the culture of gun violence is acceptable. 6.45 p.m.

I also believe that the point made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to which I spoke last week that the programming of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is absolutely critical in being able to reflect the kinds of values and the kinds of persons that we would want to develop in Barbados. Their programming needs to be more developmental than just purely for the sake of entertainment and showing a diet of violence and cruelty.

I think Honourable Members have spoken frankly and honestly by pointing out where there are difficulties and pointing out that the effort of all Barbadians is required if we are to be successful in reducing the prevalence of illegal firearms and the crimes that are committed with them.

I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is but one of the measures. We have a commitment to the establishment of national commissions on law and order and a number of regional commissions that would flow into those national commissions. They would work with the consultative committees that each police station would establish. We would be finding and introducing new and creative ways to bring back in and press into active services, justices of peace, marshals, island constables and all other elements of the law enforcement agencies because that strong, aggressive approach to law enforcement and a zero-tolerance approach to law enforcement, looking at the anti-social behaviour from that and the social behaviour right up to the serious crimes of murder, robbery, aggravated burglary and sexual offences is what is required in order for us to send a clear message that this country would not tolerate breaches of the law. Law enforcement is only the first plank. I spoke of seven planks, the other six are:

2. Effective administration of justice;
3. Strong and effective legislative framework;
4. Modernisation of the penal reform programme;
5. Reducing opportunities for crime;
6. Strategic intervention by social sector ministries among the populations at risk – in particular those who are young people;
7. Developing and reordering our sense of cultural values.

By developing and reordering our cultural values after a clear comprehensive dialogue at the national level so that we can have a shared national perspective on those cultural values we believe to be worthy of emulation and those which we believe need to be jettisoned and to begin to understand that the reinforcement of things like materialism have done nothing but bring a level of acquisitiveness and allowed corruption to creep into our systems in a way that we have not been accustomed to in the past.

Having said all of that, we are not as bad as we were 10 years ago and we are not as bad as other Caribbean countries but we are a little worse off than we would like to be. With that in mind, we want to be able to remove the blot of crime from our landscape and the sense of panic that is faced by many of our citizens not because of an actual increase in crime but more because of a perception that they may be at risk in going about their legitimate business.

I believe that if we can work together over the next few months in producing a framework for cooperation at the national level and at the community level, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the same way that the Opposition and the Government have spoken today with one voice that all of Barbados who constitute the right-thinking and law-abiding citizens, the community groups, the churches, the young people, the older people, the private sector and the unions can also speak with one voice and that in so speaking we may all identify what is our individual positive role that is required to bring about the difference because it is not a case of simply sitting back and watching and being a member of the audience as we try to turn around the rate of increase in crime. Each of us is an active participant in this effort and I look forward to helping with other groups and entities in producing a framework in which each of us can easily identify what our role is.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, 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 in Committee of Supply.

Clauses 1 - 10 inclusive, were called and passed.

Clause 11 was called.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I wish to make an amendment by inserting a new subsection (3) to Clause 11 at Section 10 of the Act. I will read the amendment for the benefit of Honourable Members. This is the amendment that deals with making sure that where a person has had a licence but failed to apply for its renewal under less than a year that person can only now be guilty of a summary offence and be liable to a fine not imprisonment as the other offences in the legislation provides for. I will read how it should read, Sir.

Notwithstanding section 30 subsection (1) where a person to whom a licence has been granted under section 7, 9, or 9 A;

- (a) fails to renew the licence; and
- (b) continues to have the firearm in respect of which the licence was issued in his possession for a period of not more than one year after the expiry of the licence, he is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine of \$10 000.

6.55 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the clause but I want to say that the \$10 000, in my opinion, is too high. I would, therefore, wish to register my objection to that figure.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I note the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but I wish to say that the \$10 000 represents the maximum figure.

I, therefore, do not anticipate that a magistrate would charge someone the maximum fine for their first offence. If that person has a gun for approximately eleven months without renewing the licence, then the fine starts to go higher up the scale in terms of being considered closer to the maximum fine. Therefore, I can assure the Honourable Member not to worry too much about it.

Mr. Chairman, I beg that Clause No. 11 as amended stands part.

The question that Clause No. 11 as amended stands part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Clauses 12 - 13 inclusive were called and passed.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, there are two Amendments which I wish to move in respect of Clause 14.

First, in respect of section 21A, after the words “a person who”, insert the words “recklessly or”. Also insert the words “or excuse” after the words “lawful authority” and delete the words “or recklessly”.

The section will now read:

21A(l) A person who recklessly or without lawful authority or excuse

(a) discharges a firearm; or

(b) otherwise uses a firearm

in a public place and in a manner that places another person in danger of death or serious bodily harm is guilty of an offence and shall on conviction on indictment be sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than 15 years and not more than 25 years.

Mr. Chairman, at section 21A(2), I would also like that after the words “a person who”, delete the words “unlawfully and maliciously or”. After the word “recklessly”, insert the words “or without lawful authority or excuse”.

Mr. Chairman, we are trying to bring some tidiness to the drafting to make sure the two subsections match with each other in a tidy way and do not change the intent of what we are debating. With those Amendments, I beg to move that Clause 14 as amended stands part.

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

Clause 14 as amended was called and passed.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, Clauses 15 - 24 inclusive were called and passed.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. Eastmond, the First Schedule was called and passed.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee with Amendments and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER reported accordingly.

On the motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Firearms (Amendment) Act, 2002.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that brings us to the end of Government's Business for today. Before moving the adjournment, I would wish to thank you for the excellent manner in which you have comported yourself during today's Sitting and to say that in spite of the fact His Honour is not with us, we have not felt any loss in the quality of the management of the proceedings in this Chamber; you have equalled His Honour in his conduct of the Chamber. Sir, were it possible to have two of you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 23rd July, 2002, at 11.00 a.m.

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

The question that the Honourable House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 23rd July, 2002, at 11.00 a.m. was put to the Honourable House and agreed to and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 7.12 p.m.

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