
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 11, 2002

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, June 11, 2002.

PRESENT

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

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of
the Opposition)

Hon. Sir Harold St. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.

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

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

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed.,
LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., J.P. (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. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister
of Housing and Lands)

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL (Minister of Public Works
and Transport)

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

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

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

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P.
(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. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State,
Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Prayers were led by Rev. Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This Honourable House is now in
session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, May 31,
2002.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I beg to
move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Honourable
the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, May 31,
2002, which have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to report to this Honourable
House that I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements
from the Accountant General for the month of February
2002.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received communication from
His Excellency the Governor-General and I shall read it to
the House.

9th June 2002

Dear Mr. Speaker,

I shall be away from the island on 10th June 2002, on a visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines to attend the funeral of Sir Charles Antrobus, GCMG, OBE.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 30 (1) (a) of the Constitution it is proposed that His Honour Sir Fred W. Gollop, K.A., President of the Senate should be appointed to be my deputy during my absence.

As the Honourable The House of Assembly will not be meeting prior to my departure it will not be possible for the usual formal message to be sent down to your Chamber. Will you, therefore, please bring my absence formally to the attention of the Honourable The House of Assembly when next it meets?

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,
C. STRAUGH HUSBANDS
Governor-General.

PAPERS

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: I am commanded to lay the following documents:

1. Annual Reports of the Child Care Board for the financial years April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996; April 1, 1996 to March 31, 1997; April 1, 1997 to March 31, 1998 and April 1, 1998 to March 31, 1999.
2. Annual Report of the National Assistance Board for the financial year April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. G. A. CLARKE, seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the following Bill was read a first time:

Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2002.

CONGRATULATORY SPEECHES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, in respect of congratulatory speeches, on Sunday, June 2, 2002, the Government and people of Barbados who were hosting the General Assembly of the Organisation of American States (OAS) started its proceedings, as the Organisation of American States General Assembly always does, with a private dialogue with all of the Foreign Ministers. On this occasion, the private dialogue, with the permission of the

President of the Senate of Barbados, was held in what we refer to in this Chamber as the Other Place.

It was a very splendid occasion, Mr. Speaker. The Other Chamber was reordered beyond recognition. It sat very comfortably the 33 attending Foreign Ministers, the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States and the Assistant Secretary General. The private dialogue was a success. The visiting Foreign Ministers had the opportunity to view this Chamber and they spoke very highly of it.

The Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of American States of all of the states of this hemisphere, wish me to convey to Your Honour the Speaker and to the President of the Other Place its deep appreciation for the use of the premises and for all of the care and effort that were put into making it a fit place for the private dialogue.

I must speak of the exemplary work of the Marshal of the House and those who worked with him, the Clerks at the Table and the other members of the staff of the House of Assembly who went beyond the call of duty so that the private dialogue of the General Assembly could turn out as it did to be an occasion which made Barbadians proud, not only of their Parliament Building but all of the heritage which goes with our traditions.

The institution of Parliament in this island of Barbados, not this building, is some 363 years old. The City of Bridgetown is going to be 375 years old as a city next year. There is no other country in this hemisphere among the 34 countries of the Organisation of American States, including the United States of America and Canada, with an institution of Parliament as old as that of Barbados. The delegates were deeply impressed and wish me to let this Parliament know of their gratitude that the private dialogue would have been permitted to be held in such historic surroundings and in such a congenial environment for the occasion, it being a Sunday afternoon.

In this respect, Mr. Speaker, I have done my duty and I am much obliged to you.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the civil servants who were involved in arranging the affairs should also be congratulated for a wonderful job. I was fortunate, Sir, to attend the cocktail party which was held by an Embassy along with the Organisation of American States and I had the privilege of giving a minister for political affairs a lift from Turtle Beach Hotel down to Grand Barbados. He was full of praise for the civil servants whom he said did such a wonderful job that he could not find any flaws in it. So I would like that particular comment to be entered into the records of this Parliament.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 11 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN OF PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE IN THE PARISHES OF ST. ANDREW, ST. JAMES, ST. GEORGE AND ST. MICHAEL FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before this House seeks permission to acquire 24 756.1 square metres of land to improve the facilities at the following schools namely: St. Jude's Primary, St. Andrew's Primary, St. Matthew's Primary, St. Alban's Junior School and St. Paul's Primary School.
11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports is in the process of commencing Phase 2 of the EduTech programme. During this phase, work will be undertaken at the schools mentioned above and the construction of a new Erdiston Primary School will also commence. The work will include the development of a computer laboratory, electrical upgrading and wiring.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the nation's children should be housed in decent environments and we need constantly to upgrade schools not only for children but for persons who work at these schools.

Those of us who have taught at some of the secondary and primary schools in Barbados know that for many years schools were in a state of disrepair and that this Government took the initiative in 1994 to upgrade the schools through the EduTech programme and we will continue over time to upgrade conditions for teachers and pupils at every school. It is important that there is rehabilitation of the schools to facilitate the networking of the various technology and computers that are now being provided by the Ministry of Education.

We hope in time that most people in the society will see the work being done and will appreciate that schools are an integral part of the society where children go to study, play

and spend most of the day and that this is important to our survival.

Mr. Speaker, I think that more persons in society should lend a helping hand to the maintenance and upgrade of the schools because the acquisition programme will take a lot of money. This 24 756.1 square metres of land which is being acquired to upgrade these schools will cost \$2 million and Government is concerned about playing facilities for all of these schools as Government is aware that there is a need for providing better facilities at all schools throughout Barbados.

Sir, this Resolution is important for the Ministry of Education in their quest to continue to upgrade these schools. I hope when these lands are passed to the Ministry of Education they will be used to the benefit of the children in the nation's schools.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, my usual questions to the Minister are:

What provision has been made for the 11 parcels of land taken from people who did not want to give up that land? Was the option given to landowners to take money or land in return?

Sir, as you are aware, land is becoming a scarce resource in this country and Parliament cannot feel happy to come here every Tuesday, take land away from poor people who cannot afford to give up that land, give it to the State while at the same time the State has a land bank which is accumulating land and not using it in any way to reduce the cost of land in Barbados.

Sir, I have asked this question on numerous occasions and it is time the Minister of Housing takes my advice in the same way he took my advice relative to the land at Jackmans and the land at the Airport.

Sir, we cannot continue to have a piecemeal approach to land acquisition in this country at a time when the greatest demand in this country is the need for the masses to have a piece of this "Rock". Yet the Minister of Housing continues to take away the right and privilege from those who have been fortunate enough to obtain a piece of land.

Sir, I hope the Minister of Housing will tell us today that he has allowed his officials to go into the land bank which has been accumulated by another Minister, that there has been an exchange with those persons who wanted an exchange of land and that those persons who wanted money were paid that money. I hope that the highhanded approach

was not used in this particular case where the Minister went in, took up the land and paid money to those people without offering them the right of having a piece of land in exchange from the land bank.

Mr. Speaker, even foreigners want a piece of land in Barbados and if foreigners want land, locals must want too, because nobody wants a piece of land more than the people of Barbados. Sir, in some parishes you cannot touch a man's landmark because it would create a problem so what do you think would happen if you take away a man's land from him?

Mr. Speaker, I also want to believe that these parcels of land are close to the various schools, that they will be fully utilised and that the Minister did not take 12 parcels of land when he needed only 10 parcels. It is clear to me that prior to this acquisition coming to Parliament that the Minister took 14 parcels of land when he only wanted 12 parcels, so I hope that it is only 10 parcels he has taken this time and not 12 parcels because he would have deprived two poor people of their land.
11.40 a.m.

It is clear that he was previously taking more than he needed. Sir, I want to be convinced that the Honourable Minister now needs twelve parcels of land and not eight. I would also like to know if the Minister will be offering these landowners the right to an alternative piece of land from the Government's land bank.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, I am happy that this particular Resolution is being brought at this time. Under the Education Sector Enhancement Programme (ESEP), this Government continues to improve the school plant, by that I mean the buildings and classrooms at the respective schools, and the school environment. I am extremely happy that the Resolution is being brought at this time because it allows us to deal with some of the work which was lagging behind; because we needed to acquire parcels of land to continue to do the work under the Education Sector Enhancement Programme.

Mr. Speaker, when Phase 1 of the ESEP project commenced a few years ago, we were able to do such extensions to the school plants easily and quickly because we did not have to do any land acquisitions in Phase 1. Sir, I visited the schools in Phase 1 which were completed about four weeks ago. The head teachers of St. Matthew's, Eden Lodge, St. Paul's and the Ervin Wilson Schools, where work was completed, were very pleased and they expressed their profound gratitude to the Ministry of Education. The classroom teacher, pupils and the ancillary workers were also very pleased with the upgraded facilities. Originally, the learning environment at those schools left a lot to be desired.

Mr. Speaker, the improvement seemed to have awakened the schools. I am sure that when the pupils think of where they are going to school each morning, the urge is now there to want to go to school because they know that they are going into an environment that is conducive to learning and teaching.

Sir, we have now completed 18 schools under this programme and I think that is commendable since the work often proves to be more than we anticipated. Sir, in Phase 2 we needed land acquisitions and today in this Honourable Chamber we are dealing with five of those acquisitions.

Mr. Speaker, at St. Matthew's we are acquiring a piece of recreational facilities, this will include a hard court; at St. Paul's we are acquiring a piece of land for a car park; at St. Andrew's School we are acquiring land for a car park and the construction of a new block; at St. Alban's we are acquiring land for a new block and at St. Jude's we are acquiring land for recreational facilities and a new block.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, some schools in Barbados fit very neatly between properties owned by private landowners and the lands that we are acquiring are lands which are near or touching the schools under discussion. In order to carry out extensions to some of our schools, it is often necessary for us to acquire the adjoining land from one of the neighbouring landowners. In the case of St. Alban's, the surveyor missed two small parcels of land which are very critical. Therefore, we have to come back at a later date to acquire these two small pieces of land and we may not be able to complete St. Alban's until around August 2002.

I think that it is sensible to bring all five acquisitions together, rather than bringing them as five separate acquisitions because it is going to save us a lot of time and it also means that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy will not have to give his "set speech" on five different occasions.

Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that in most of these cases we are dealing with this morning, the landowners have been very cooperative with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Housing and Lands. I think that Barbadians seem to have tremendous respect for our education system and they are always ready to cooperate with any initiatives which are aimed at furthering the educational process in Barbados.

In answer to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the objections by the landowners to the acquisitions of these properties have been very few and far between. I can only think of one instance, the St. Paul's area, where there was any kind of objection.
11.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would also admit that when time is of the essence and when something like the erection of a school building is being pursued that the already drawn out acquisition procedure seems even longer. We know that it has to take time but when it comes to dealing with a school that needs it like yesterday then that delay seems twice the length that it is.

Assuming that there are no bottlenecks and that there are no problems the procedure can take a year because we have to follow certain legislative procedures very closely and there are virtually no short cuts to the acquisition process. Needless to say, Government must conduct itself in a manner which is not contrary to law and which is not offensive to the property owners either. Government must always be very cognisant of the fact and very sensitive to these issues. You as a Government have to set the example and you have to try not to offend the landowners from whom you are acquiring the land.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education has in every instance refrained from actually going on to the land to construct any building, any car park, any recreational facility before the acquisition process is completed.

We think, Sir, to do otherwise would give the impression that no matter how much the landowner objects that because you are a government you can do as you like and it will be acquired anyhow and Government is not answerable to anybody. We do not want to give this impression, as I said, we have not actually gone onto any of these properties as yet.

Mr. Speaker, we think that Government has a responsibility and a duty to be as humane as possible in all of its acquisitions. I must also make the point that the relationship between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Housing in this regard when it comes to the acquisition of land for the schools has been extremely good. We have had very wonderful relationships in this regard but the process has been a very lengthy one.

We have to accept the fact that the Ministry of Housing and Lands has acquisitions to do for Ministries other than the Ministry of Education and, therefore, we cannot be insisting that these are the ones that must be put on the front burner and you must not do any other acquisitions at the Ministry of Housing and Lands. So we have accepted the fact that we are not necessarily the only ones they are dealing with and we hope to continue that relationship with the Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, let me also make the point that when the Ministry of Education did its estimates this year before the Ministry of Finance we were told the cost of the schools' acquisitions, that is, the cost of acquiring the lands here for

the school to construct the buildings, that cost would have been borne by the Ministry of Housing and since it was an acquisition that we are dealing with, it would not be money given to the Ministry of Education for that purpose but would be given to the Ministry of Housing.

I would therefore hope, Mr. Speaker, that the cost would have been put into their estimates for this financial year because I would not want to have a situation where we are acquiring land for this very commendable purpose and the landowners remain unpaid for another 20 or 25 years.

I would think too, Mr. Speaker, that we have learnt our lesson and we have already given early notice of the need for further acquisitions in Phase 3. These are Phase 2 but we have given notice that we have to acquire other lands for Phase 3 and acquisition of properties such as those adjacent to places like St. Martin's School, St. Philip are currently being worked on. We do not want to have a year's delay as we have had with Phase 2 so that we are preparing the Phase 3 acquisitions virtually alongside of these Phases.

I must also take the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to make the point again that this shows once more that the Education Sector Enhancement Programme is more than learning how to operate a computer. Too many of us single out the technology side of the ESEP and treat it as though that is the sum total of the enhancement programme altogether. We completely overlook the fact that this particular programme promotes curriculum reform, teacher training and the improvement of our facilities as we are having now among other things. It is not just having the computer aspect of the ESEP.

What is happening here this morning should not be regarded as being separate and distinct from what we commonly refer to as EduTech. This is all part and parcel of the umbrella of ESEP. In some cases, the new facility is to allow for the possibility of the technological aspect of EduTech but that is not the sum total of the programme. We do not believe that you can have such an all-embracing policy except you find a way to accommodate all aspects of the policy. We are trying to accommodate the facility aspect of it this morning.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, as the school offers more in terms of its curriculum there must be a commensurate and a concomitant change with its school plan. You will recall that when you were teaching that there was a move at almost all of the newer secondary schools to go into things like woodwork and home economics and as a result almost every school had to construct a new room for Home Economics, or a new room for technical work. What is happening here is showing that when we are expanding the curriculum, including other things, we have to do the same thing with our school plans and this is what is happening today. We had to

get rooms with kitchen sinks which, when I was a school boy, nobody had kitchen sinks in the Home Economics Room.

We always anticipated that it would have been an expensive responsibility but it carries a whole set of other responsibilities as well. It is not just a matter of doing it and the expense is there. We must always allow our children to work under conditions which are safe and comfortable even when it comes to having the computer rooms, and the Ministry is looking at the whole question of ergonomics, having the correct seating and correct posture. All of those things must be taken on board now.

We also have to realise that we have to meet certain international criteria even at our schools. So we want to show parents that their children are safe and we have a social and legal responsibility to be compliant with international standards.

12.00 noon

Mr. Speaker, as I said at the very beginning, I am very happy that the acquisitions have come before this Honourable House at long last and we would expect that with these acquisitions would come as soon as possible, the additional classrooms, parking spaces and recreational areas for which they have been acquired.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I support this particular acquisition assuming that the purposes for which the land has been acquired will, in fact, come to fruition. In other words that the projects which the Minister identified as important, are already funded, or the funding is available and that what will not happen, as happened in many instances with this Government and previous Governments, is that the land will be acquired, and will remain acquired for many years with nothing being done actually to carry out the physical improvements and the provision of amenities about which the Minister spoke so loftily in his presentation just now.

I believe that we need to have balance and fairness. It appears on the surface that the Government is trying to spread these facilities across Barbados and I hope that the time will come that schools in rural Barbados in particular will benefit from these facilities, particularly playing facilities.

It is pointless to announce things – be it sports policy – and it is pointless seeking to talk about promoting healthy lifestyles and so on, when there are some schools in rural Barbados that are so far away from any playing facilities at all, that they cannot even have an active sports programme. There are some schools in rural Barbados which are perched precariously on cliffs. There are some which are locked by housing developments and so on, not near enough to playing

fields. For example, schools such as Society, Mount Tabor which is a new school and St. Catherine's do not have facilities and there are no playing facilities within the immediate vicinity, not even an open field anywhere where those children are able to benefit from an active physical education programme and a sports programme.

I have written to the Minister of Sports, the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Social Transformation about an area in Four Roads in St. John and within the vicinity of Mount Tabor School because I believe that these are areas that desperately require some kind of recreational facility. There is Wilson Hill which is in St. Joseph, Wakefield, Lemon Arbor, Knights Village, Four Roads, Spooners, Pool, Henley, Cherry Grove, Ashbury, where there are no playing facilities. There are no playing facilities east of Cuthbert Moore.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: There is a need for those kind of facilities. I am not saying that every primary school must have a playing facility attached, but I am saying that there are a number of primary schools in which there are no playing facilities within walking distance. One can pass through rural Barbados sometimes and see children walking to playing facilities. There are some schools where teachers go out of their way to have an active physical education programme. It is vital and important. The statistics coming out of the secondary school analysis tell us that far too many of our children are unhealthy, overweight and are candidates for early chronic diseases. Sir, I think the only way you are going to be able, in the absence of communities having extra-curricular programmes, people moving into new developments, not necessarily developing the kinds of community spirit that is desired, is to develop active sporting programmes at an early stage. Sir, I make a plea for all of those primary schools, but of course, in particular, I mention those in my constituency, with which I am familiar: Society, St. Margaret's and Mount Tabor which suffer from an absence of playing facilities.

I have also noticed, Sir, that the Government has embarked on a community technology programme. I am amazed to discover, based on the statistics that I have seen, that it can be so cost-effective to develop a community technology programme in a community centre and yet, there is much talk about the expenditure that the Government has incurred overall, or proposes to incur in respect of EduTech and equipping all the schools in Barbados over a long period of time with the computer technology that is required. I am only talking about the computer technology component, I am not talking about upgrading facilities. It appears to me as though the relative costs are out of alignment. If the Government is saying that the EduTech programme is going to take too long to get on stream, and therefore we need to implement the Community Technology Programme, because we have revised our EduTech deadlines, then it should say so.

In the last Budget, the Minister of Finance said that the Government now has a new timetable for EduTech. The original timetable meant that there would be some children in Barbados who would never benefit from EduTech. There would be some who would benefit in primary school but may very well go to a secondary school that does not have any EduTech programme. So it is possible that your child at Mount Tabor which might be a Phase 1 school, may end up going to a secondary school in Barbados which has not immediately benefited from EduTech, so you start primary school with one focus but then go into the secondary programme and have to revert to the focus that the Ministry said it is seeking to obliterate from our educational system, which is the absence of what they call, child-centred learning.

Sir, the phasing of EduTech is going to be extremely important. Therefore the Government needs to be very realistic and come clean with the public. They should explain if it is that the innovation of the Community Technology Project, while it might have been initially focussing on providing communities with the technology, is also going to be vital because there are going to be over the next twelve or fifteen years, which I suspect is going to be time for EduTech to reach its full potential, children who are not going to benefit from the presence of technology. If so, the Government needs to refocus its attention on either boosting the resources of the Community Technology Programme and speeding up the process, or doing something else, maybe finding some smaller facilities and modules in communities throughout Barbados that would advance the availability.

It would be a great tragedy, but it is going to happen, that a child benefits in primary school from this access to technology and this new approach to teaching but then finds after he or she has passed the Common Entrance Examination that he or she ends up in a school where those opportunities do not exist.
12.10 p.m.

It is a recipe for major frustration for young people many of whom are already frustrated with the secondary school process, and justifiably so. If you raise their expectations at the primary school level and then cannot meet them at the secondary level, because you have not been able to so phase the EduTech Programme that persons can benefit from it throughout their lifetime of free university schooling, you would find that more children will end up being frustrated in the educational process.

That is why it is important for the Minister at the earliest opportunity, I am not saying today is the day because I did not anticipate that this question would arise, to indicate the new phasing of the EduTech programme so that at the end of the day we do not end up frustrating thousands of young people in this country by raising their expectations

and then having two types of teaching format, if you want to call it that, one which the Ministry has identified as being developmental and the other which the Ministry has basically said is retrogressive operating at two different Phases in the life of a child. We have to be careful that we do not achieve that.

The Ministry of Education has promised the Opposition an update on the work in EduTech and I believe there are other Honourable Members who are interested in knowing what is happening, so I would like, at the earliest opportunity, to have a chance to see what progress is being made despite my feelings about some of the things I have heard about EduTech because it is important to the development of our society and I am interested in how the next generation of Barbadians will...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Let me also compliment the Parent/Teacher Associations in Barbados many of whom have seen the benefits of some aspects of the EduTech Programme and who want their children to benefit from computer technology, even though the school might have not yet been phased for EduTech and have gone out of their way to assist in acquiring facilities. I know of one school in St. John where friends of the school, teachers and so on, were able to acquire a number of computers. It is a modern school with a computer room and, therefore, it seems out of sync that you would have such modern facilities but then you do not have access to computer technology. At that time, the Parent/Teacher Association pulled their weight to assist both the administration and the students in having access to technology and I think the parents should be complimented for this.

I am not saying that every aspect of a child's education in a government school must be provided by Government. I have never felt that way. Parents and the people who live in the community should pull their weight and the private sector where appropriate should pull its weight. The children have an obligation every now and then to go out there to assist in raising funds to improve their own physical facility because there may be things that they want which do not fit into the traditional structure of the educational programme that they can fund themselves by going out and raising funds. As a student, I remember doing many of those things. The hard court at the Combermere School and other things which the then Minister of Education was very reluctant to provide for reasons best known to herself...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The school raised \$15 000 in a fair in the 1970's and then embarked on other fundraising programmes largely because the then physical education teacher felt that it was important. She is now retired

after being injured in a terrible bus accident overseas where she carried children at their own expense to participate in an athletic programme in Florida. She did a lot in terms of raising funds and setting new standards. We travelled to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and all over the Caribbean. Even people who were not athletes because in those days she took greater interest in ensuring that the facilitators not just the sports persons...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes, I am talking about Eleanor Dottin. She made great efforts to ensure that persons who facilitated the programmes at the school, whether it was coaching, carrying a bag, providing transportation or whatever, were fully integrated into the school's programme. As I said, there were things that the school wanted to do that were not traditionally part of the curriculum. There is nothing wrong with parents and teachers saying this is something we would like to do and seeking to find the resources to do it. So I compliment those Parent/Teacher Associations that have been proactive in supplementing the resources of Government or even through their own initiative undertaking programmes that are important for both primary and secondary school students.

There are two other matters I want to mention. The Minister did not speak to the abandonment in the Addendum. In the Addendum to this Resolution there was a comment about the abandonment of the land at McClean's Gap that Mr. Sample had publicly demonstrated against.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: It said here in the Addendum:

"By a subsequent decision of the Cabinet dated 6th March 2002, it was agreed that the acquisition of the properties of Clareen Lynch and Stanley Thompson both situate at Jackmans in the parish of Saint Michael and that of Courtland Sample situate at McClean's Gap, Brittons Cross Road, Saint Michael should be abandoned."

So that has come here and it is presumed that I will not get a chance to raise the matter that I wanted to raise.

The last point I want to speak about relates to the question of violence in schools by persons who have in recent times been infecting the school environment either by running through the schools bearing arms or going to the schools to challenge teachers or some of the other things that recently have attracted the attention of the Press. It is not unusual in small communities for disputes in the communities to find their way into schools. I am not saying that we would ever have a perfect situation in which that is

possible and I am not saying that you can pass laws to deal with the question of violence in schools but I believe that the Ministry of Education is going to come under increasing pressure from both parents and teachers to provide more secured facilities at the primary schools in Barbados. I would like to hear from the Ministry of Education what proposals, if any, the Ministry of Education has to deal with this menace. I am not calling for new legislation, I am talking about what kind of holistic approach the Ministry is going to be undertaking to put the minds of teachers, administrators, staff and even parents at ease in terms of dealing with these major threats. It is unconscionable and goes beyond criminal for young men to be running through schools with cutlasses and guns.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The point is it is more than criminal and it is something all members of the society expect that some kind of action will be taken on. There are a variety of ways in which the matter can be dealt with. It is becoming serious enough as to make children feel frightened. Recently in St. John, we heard about some gentleman who was walking around with some communicable disease and sticking children. I, thinking it was a joke, mention that years ago when I was a student in Trinidad and Tobago they said there was a man walking around with a syringe at Carnival fetes sticking you and a lot of people stayed home because they were frightened but it turned out to be something that one of the Trinidad and Tobago tabloids had published. I was actually alarmed to hear a senior journalist on the radio last week saying that it is in fact true that somebody has been going into and around primary schools in Barbados both threatening and actually assaulting children with some kind of weapon whether it is a syringe or whatever.
12.20 p.m.

These kinds of things are debilitating to the system. They make parents feel fearful of sending their children to school and it makes the teachers fearful because teachers feel helpless when they have 30 or 40 children running around in panic as a result of these disruptions, that one of those children will get injured in incidents like this.

Therefore, I believe that this is something we have to address because it is one of the phenomena that are increasing in our society and the authorities have the responsibility to find a solution to these problems. Sir, as long as I believe the proposals are acceptable they will have my full and unequivocal support. Mr. Speaker, as I said at the beginning, I have no objection to the acquisition as long as the proposals which the Minister spoke of ends up being implemented and the proposed beneficiaries see them implemented in the shortest possible time.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, I would like to lend my support to this acquisition before Parliament and take this opportunity to enquire from the Minister of Housing and Lands and the Minister of Education about a matter that relates to St. Michael North West that affects the Eagle Hall Primary School. Sir, over the last couple of years the children from that school have been forced to use the Belfield playing area for physical training and the development of sports.

Mr. Speaker, I have made several attempts to have the land at Ferniehurst prepared for the benefit of those children. I was told that the land is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, then I was told it was the responsibility of the National Sports Council and then I was referred back to the Ministry of Education. Mr. Speaker, I was then caught between these bodies only to find out that the matter has to be dealt with by the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, since this acquisition relates to acquiring land for schools, I would like to have this matter clarified as to whether the land at Ferniehurst is truly the Crown's property and whether it is vested in the National Sports Council, the Ministry of Education or the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I am asking this for the benefit of the children at the Eagle Hall Primary School who have to face heavy traffic as they cross the Black Rock Main Road every day to go over to the Belfield playing field for sporting activities.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation has responsibility for Crown lands and in St. Michael North West there are open lots and when you enquire who are the owners, you are told it is owned by the National Housing Corporation but when you check with them they do not know anything about these areas of lands.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have moved far away from the Minister's Resolution. Please stick closer to the Resolution.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Speaker, I realised that a while ago the Honourable Member for St. John stepped away from the border and dealt with crime in schools so I felt I could also take the liberty and step away as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: As far as the Chair was concerned, the matters related to what was said about the Resolution.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Sir, I will endeavour to stay in line. It is obvious that the acquisition of these lands will benefit schools in relation to the extension and playing facilities at those schools mentioned.

Sir, as I travel through St. James by the St. Albans School there seemed to a sidewalk built by the school and I am wondering whether this acquisition relates to that school because there is still a problem in that area as far as a

footpath is concerned for the benefit of the children at St. Alban's School. I hope that this acquisition relates to this footpath for those children, Sir.

Sir, I want to find out the position with the land at Ferniehurst and hope to get a better picture as to which Ministry is responsible for that land whether it is the National Sports Council, the National Housing Corporation or the Ministry of Education. Sir, I am doing this in the interest of the Parent/Teacher Association of the Eagle Hall Primary School since they asked me on more than one occasion to enquire about this matter for the benefit of their children.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to give my support to the Resolution before the House. Indeed, I believe that all of those people whose lands have to be acquired for this public purpose would also be pleased to give their support. We often take for granted what we have in Barbados. As you know, last week Barbados hosted, for the first time ever, the OAS 32nd General Assembly, and all week long I was hearing from people: "This island is blessed", "Barbadians are fortunate", "Barbadians are lucky", "This could not happen in my country" and "We do not have that in our country".
12.30 p.m.

Sir, my answer was always this, Mr. Speaker. "Yes, Barbados is blessed but the Lord helps those who help themselves". Sir, we make a great sacrifice here in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I heard that it was not broadcast on television and I deeply regret that, Sir. We had a Flag Raising Ceremony of a different kind at this General Assembly. Normally, when you have this kind of meeting, members of the Defence Force would enter, salute and place the flags in the flagpole in a slot. I decided that we would do it differently, Mr. Speaker.

Sir, as the Ministers disembarked the coach to walk up to the Opening Ceremony, we had 500 primary school children dressed in uniforms, waving flags representing the 34 countries at the General Assembly. Mr. Speaker, those flags were made on the computers and the children had been taught about the significance of all the flags and some of them spoke Spanish.

Honourable Members who attended the Opening Ceremony heard those children greeting the delegates by saying "Hola" in Spanish, meaning "hello" and "Cómo está" meaning "How are you". The Foreign Minister of Uruguay, Mr. Opartti, who is a personal friend of mine, came to me and he said, "I cannot get over it. A little girl asked me in Spanish where I was from and she even knew where my country was". I said, "Mr. Opartti, this is the fourth time you are telling me this."

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, about two weeks ago I attended the City of Bridgetown, Barbados Labour Party Branch Meeting at St. Mary's School. I alternate between uptown and downtown. The school was busy that evening, I am talking about 7.30 p.m. and the Headmaster was still on the premises, and the open hall area where we would normally have had our meetings was occupied and we were assigned the room where the EduTech students would have their tuition. Sir, it was a revelation to me because St. Mary's Primary School was part of Phase 1 of the EduTech project. We sat on comfortable chairs and the computers were in that room. We could see from what was written on the blackboard and other signage, step by step, what the students had to do. I have to say that we were all deeply impressed, and we take these things for granted. Sir, there are developed countries where this does not exist.

I think that these parcels of land in the parishes of St. Andrew, St. George, St. James and St. Michael which will now be used to enhance the programme in the schools referred to in the Resolution, at this stage of our development, there can be no higher public purpose to which these lands to be acquired can be put. We have to be lifting up our school children.

Mr. Speaker, last month, May, was Child Month and I could still see the banner across the road as I was passing this morning which says, "Children are the heartbeat of our nation, embrace them." Sir, this Resolution is part of embracing our generation. We are standing on the backs of the generations before us and every layer lifts Barbados higher and higher and we are doing our part with this, Sir.

Sir, a few weeks ago a traffic warden assigned to the area near a primary school in Barbados halted the traffic so that the children could cross the road to go to school. It was around 8.30 a.m. and Mr. Speaker, I have to say that goose pimples came over me. There was this little girl grasping her little laptop computer going to school. Sir, it gave me a very special feeling.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you said a special feeling?

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, a special feeling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: You did not have that in your time?

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: No, Mr. Speaker, Sir. We did not have laptop computers in our time.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, it came out of a large feeling of pride that the work to which I have dedicated my life and, indeed, all of us in this Honourable Chamber, is not in vain. Sir, that is why I was telling everyone last week that we in Barbados make the sacrifice. We see where our taxes go. We see our taxes being used to repair roads, the airport expansion and the new Hilton hotel. All of these things happened last week and people were aghast.

Sir, visitors to this country want to know how in a country of 14 x 21 square miles, could we be doing all of these things. Sir, worldwide, we are steadfastly doing these things and we do them at sacrifice. All of us who are taxpayers made our contribution to this. Mr. Speaker, there are some school children who wait for the bus on mornings in Prospect, St. James, when 9.30 a.m. they are loitering at the bus stop and letting all the buses pass. I suppose that these children would be going to Coleridge & Parry, Alexandra, St. James Secondary and St. Lucy Secondary schools but I do not see them with as much enthusiasm as what the little child had. This little girl had a look of purpose on her face. This was a child who could not wait to get to school because she was hustling and grasping this little laptop computer and I thought, "This is something to see in a little country like Barbados".

I do not see this happening anywhere else in the Caribbean, London, Brussels and the eastern countries where I go to do the Government's business. People tell me how beautiful Barbados is and I say to them that it does not fall like manna from heaven.

Sir, I was glad to hear the Honourable Leader of the Opposition make the point in this debate that Administration after Administration in Barbados, we have never faltered on this. When it comes to education, that subsector within the social sector, we do not stint, we make a contribution that is larger than any other country that I know of. I do not know of any other country that spends close to 25 per cent of its revenue on education. In most developed countries it is in the single digit figures. In a country like the United States of America it may be 6 per cent. I may be wrong but it never gets to 10 per cent and this is all part and parcel of it. 12.40 p.m.

The Honourable Minister of Education made a very powerful point. He pointed out that in the past when we brought Technical Vocation to schools we had to upgrade and enhance to do that, and we see the benefit of that today. We see artisans in Barbados today who can do work compared with any where on this planet.

Primary school children were in the balcony this morning, Sir, and I came in here early and had the opportunity to speak to them about this particular Chamber.

This is the work of Barbadians and visitors come here and they are overwhelmed at it. This is 100 per cent Bajan. This is Bajan coral stone. This is Bajan mahogany. This is not imported from Honduras. It is 100 per cent Bajan.

So, Mr. Speaker, as small and perhaps insignificant as this little Resolution is, these little parcels of land that I know that Barbadians will willingly agree to be acquired for this public purpose of the improvement of our educational facilities at the primary level is a good thing that we are doing and a right and a correct thing. I am pleased that other schools are now the recipients of the Phase 2 benefits that will come.

There will come a day, Sir, in our time when every primary school and every secondary school in Barbados will be the beneficiary of this education enhancement programme. It is not something that is going to happen overnight. We are talking about 10 and 15 years when successive governments – of course, in our case, Sir, it might not be successive right away – but over time Barbadians can only be the beneficiaries in this. This can only ever be a plus.

So the folks whose little parcels of land are making now an heroic contribution, they are going to be compensated we know but it is still an heroic contribution that they are making to the education of not only the children of this generation but the generations which are going to come immediately following this.

Mr. Speaker, I am as pleased as punch to give my support to this Resolution.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to participate in this debate not only because of the acquisition of land for St. Paul's School which is part of the Resolution, and not only does this lie in the bosom of the constituency which I represent but it helps in great measure to improve the standard and lifestyle of the students. Before I get into my contribution, I would like first of all to extend gratitude to the Anglican diocese which afforded us the opportunity to use the Bishop's Court residence, the old residence of the bishop. Sir, this only goes to show that in this 21st Century Church and State could still reciprocate.

Sir, this Resolution represents one of the final if not the final improvement to this school. It represents as it were the icing on the cake. Two years ago when the school had to vacate its premises and move down to Bishop's Court there was a lot of talk, an outcry and opposition, political and otherwise. People sought to use it as a political football and would use every opportunity to address the Press. They held negative views but, suffice it to say, they spent just over a year there and no child's life was endangered.

Initially, I must say that the residence was not the most ideal or fitting for lively children ages seven to eleven but

certain things were put in place and I must also congratulate the PTA of the day and in so doing I must acknowledge the work of our very own Clerk who assisted the PTA as he was a member at that time in forwarding letters to the various government departments to see that safety measures were put in place to keep the children out of harm's way.

Sir, during that time the Ministry of Education moved rapidly. They did not have very much time to get things in place for the second term. Old facades were strengthened, removed or replaced, the rough concrete yard was made a lot safer, the steep drops along Collymore Rock were made safe and proper fencing was installed. Quite a bit was done before those children were allowed in. There was general, industrial cleaning and all hands were on deck to make it a safe, secure and healthy environment in which the children would operate.

During that time, Sir, when they went over from McClean's Gap to the Pine area I would visit that school two and three times. There were a lot of negative people who wanted to see something untoward occur so that they could say I told you so and this Administration is not caring. Sir, there were would-be politicians, people looking for a little pick and some with a little grouse and some with an axe to grind, but their views were quickly put to rest. Previously, these children would have to work their way up to Valery for somewhere to play because they have to use a hard surface or a surface which would be congested with children during the break so that they could recreate.

Going to Valery is not easy because Collymore Rock, I am told, is the second most busy of the old highways and you just have to get on that road. There is not a time of the day that Collymore Rock is not congested when there are not 16-wheelers, tractors, trucks carrying inflammable LP. Sir, if the children were to make their way through the back, it is not safe for children to travel those back routes at certain times of the day so that St. Paul's School was disadvantaged with respect to room.

After those children settled in at the Bishop's Court residence there was a sort of freshness about them. I hear the Minister for the City speak about the expression on that child's face. There was a similar expression on all the faces of the children of St. Paul's when they went to a new school with trees, vegetation where they could play. No matter what time of the day you went there, you could see the children on the outside as teachers used the opportunity to conduct classes under the trees and in a very healthy environment. I remember the principal saying that she could see the physical improvement of those children having gone to their temporary residence.

There was a feeling that the shift from Britton's Cross Road to Bishop's Court Hill would have resulted in a fall-off

of the standard of the Common Entrance results. This was not so. As a matter of fact, the principal was at pains during the last graduation, to state that the children had done remarkably well, to such an extent that it was one of their best years in recent times.

12.50 p.m.

Sir, this school serves three large and dominant communities, the Brittons Hill Community, the Bay Land Community and the Wildey-Clapham Community. I was checking to see if I had some photographs of the restored building. I have those in my collection at the office, which shows, Sir, the great improvements to the Hall in itself.

Sir, it is not a new school, but there has been a vast refurbishment which is tantamount to a virtual new school. In previous times this school would have been used as a hall, having a surface of hard concrete which would be retaining a certain amount of dust all day long. I am sure it would have posed respiratory problems to children who are so prone. To date not only is it softened aesthetically, but health-wise the use of the vinyl tiles has helped, without doubt, to ease the dust and the harsh conditions which would affect some of the children and some of the teachers. Sir, the teachers themselves do have allergies.

Sir, there are now new spacious bathrooms, a sick bay and an area for school meal servers, but I would like to put a plug here, I am not sure if within the last month, or when the school was reopened after the holiday, if the Ministry of Education has actually done anything to improve the storage space in the area for the serving of meals. What has happened is, they have not utilised the above side area, where the large utensils could be stored. There is enough room, and I would suggest that in the future, always have a little more discussion with the people who use the area. Mr. Speaker, you know that you could not do any renovations in your kitchen without consulting the wife, who would spend quite a bit of time there. Therefore, you should speak to the people who use the rooms.

Sir, the principal's office also, in terms of storage of records and the ability to cool the room which she would be using as her office, when compared to the hundreds of thousands of dollars which were spent, we could say this is statistically negligible. Nonetheless, I would like it to be to the satisfaction of those who work and spend their working hours in those environments.

Sir, without the playing facilities which I referred to earlier on and notwithstanding the compromised surroundings, the children of the school have done well over the years in cricket, netball and football. In recent times, as a matter of fact, this last athletic term, they were able to get quite a significant number of their students through to the primary school finals. Sir, this only goes to show that the

basic material is there and I am looking forward to an enhanced performance of the children not only in academics but in sports.

Sir, the facilities for the computer studies form but part of the Government's strategy to update, modernise the curricula of school children both primary and secondary. As I speak, this facility should be improved for computer networking. Once the children would have been exposed to the skills there during the holidays, evenings and weekends, they can now go to another part of the community – and I do not like to look at it in terms of constituencies – and have access to other resources, like the Bonnetts Resource Centre. Sir, the latter is one which was scoffed at by some of our Opposition, who said that it was a waste of time and money. If they see now how the whole jigsaw comes together, it could only speak well and redound to the performance of the Government and its campaign to equip our young people and students with the tools and the wherewithal and knowledge to face a rapidly changing technological society.

Sir, note it says, "each child matters" and therefore no child coming from the areas to which I have just referred, they or their parents should have any reason to complain that their children are not, or are disadvantaged with respect to children who would have the ability to have these facilities within their homes.

I would not wish to go over what the earlier speaker said, but this brings these children in line with children from the more fully developed parts of the world. Sir, right now, we are looking at results from the 11-Plus and I am sure that once again, those children would have done just as well in the last 11-Plus. In subsequent years, as the course load adapts and fits to information technology, one would see just as good results, if not better.

In closing, Sir, I would like to impress upon the various ministries, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health the state of the precincts of some of our schools, whether primary or secondary, some of the unkempt tracks of land, some of the dust, the harbouring of rodents and mosquitoes. I remember, Sir, at that same school a few years ago, I took a peek over the fence and there was this huge container which was a breeding ground for larvae and you could see that container was not emptied in years.

I would wish that the Ministries to which I refer, could play a more serious role in keeping around the schools in a kempt and tidy order with respect to the overgrowth of vegetation as well as the security and safety of the students.

Sir, you know that children are very fickle, imaginative and once they see an old unkempt building, run-down

with shrubs, they will automatically see people in there and they will scamper and run across the street each time they come alongside such buildings.

Sir, all in all, I would say that this Resolution is not only an enhancement programme physically, but it will help to enhance the psyche, capacity, capability and well being of the students as we move into a new age of technology and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am most obliged.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2.00 p.m. this afternoon.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: I wish to give my support to this Resolution for the acquisition of properties to facilitate the works for the EduTech Programme namely for schools such as St. Jude's Primary, St. Andrew's Primary, St. Matthew's Primary, St. Alban's Primary and St. Paul's Primary.

Mr. Speaker, my association with this Barbados Labour Party is as a result of the dynamism that exists among the members of this Party, and it is as a result of that dynamism that I can support every recommendation that goes into the EduTech Programme but that is not the only major idea. I always like to refer to the Barbados Labour Party Manifestos, particularly the 1999 Manifesto which clearly spells out the role that the Barbados Labour Party wants to play in advancing the people of Barbados. Therefore, the EduTech Programme, curriculum reform, the building of the resource centres and the other ideas that have been put to the public are not fly-by-night issues or plans and certainly they are not like the St. John Development Plan. These recommendations and projects are rooted in research and in forms of education we know will benefit, as was said by the Honourable Member for the City, not only this coming generation but generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, we all know when it comes to the implementation of certain projects that you do not see immediate results over a two-year period as such, that there

are little steps that are made; but over a 10 to 15-year period we will see tremendous changes as long as there is consistency in the exercise. This EduTech Programme was envisaged to be a five-year programme reaching not only public primary and secondary schools but private primary and secondary schools in Barbados.

When I refer to this social contract of the Barbados Labour Party, I see that page 11 refers specifically to community centres and speaks to the reason or the purpose why we are developing community centres. We are developing community centres not only to hold meetings or for young people to gather together to do a little drama which is necessary but to facilitate and enhance the entire project for the reform which includes the EduTech Project and the curriculum reform among other things.

I am of the view, Mr. Speaker, that the EduTech Project would surely carry Barbados leaps and bounds ahead of other Caribbean countries. I particularly like the idea of us doing the research in the Phased projects and sharing the results with our people in the region because whatever little errors we make or whatever successes we make, we should not hold them in our bosom but should share them with them because globalisation said that we must all be on the cutting edge as a people. Therefore, I want to refer to a comment on page 11 which says that the Barbados Labour Party will ensure that:

“Community centres are seen and used as information centres for the social and educational development of Barbadian communities.”

Mr. Speaker, Government has to make every effort to have the EduTech Programme implemented in our schools across the length and breadth of Barbados and put programmes in place within the community centres that will help to enhance the learning not only of the children who leave the schools and do not have access to the technology in their homes but for the adults who must be able to use the technology to help them to develop skills for further living and further employment. So the community resource centres are being implemented to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to move forward in a progressive manner to help to develop Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to indicate that the Honourable Member for St. John expressed to the whole of Barbados his interest in the EduTech Project. At first, Mr. Speaker, when this project was envisaged and when the whole programme was put to the public of Barbados there were bitter criticisms all over Barbados from the Democratic Labour Party which indicated that it was a waste of time and all it would do is to teach young people to develop skills in keyboarding and things of that nature.

Mr. Speaker, as I look at the same 1999 Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party, it says, at page 12:

“EduTech 2000 is a radical new approach to the delivery of the education, structured so as to enhance the depth and range of learning experiences and to ensure that every child benefits from a sound and relevant education.”

With the curriculum reform that said even more because one dovetails into the other. The curriculum reform aspect of it at page 13 said:

“The challenge now is to equip children to function in a knowledge-based society and be sensitive to their responsibilities to self, family, community and country.”

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to dwell on those quotations all evening but I am happy that the Democratic Labour Party has come around. I appreciate as well the efforts that were made by the Ministry of Education about a year and a half to two years ago to facilitate the request of the Democratic Labour Party so that members can come from the various organisations within that party and be given first-hand experience. Sir, it took us an entire day visiting each of the EduTech schools to see what was actually taking place with the civil works and to get ideas from individuals about their feelings and their attitudes towards the whole exercise.

We know, Sir, that in our time there was a projector. We know of the evolution of the calculator, the language master and other forms of technologies that were used in the classroom. Mr. Speaker, as time goes by, we have to make changes and look for equipment and technology that will further advance not only our education but the skills that we have to offer in the workplace in this country and in the rest of the world. Therefore, the computer is now replacing a number of those pieces of equipment even though they are relevant still to the whole society.

Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly support this Resolution for the acquisition because I know that some of the schools, as was mentioned by another Honourable Member, were close to some communities with small, open spaces. So this effort that Government is pursuing in order to be able to give the schools more space is a good one. One of the reasons why the EduTech Programme has been extended from five years to seven years is because there were some schools which had to undergo repairs and when they were pulled down and the workers went across the roof, they found that the rafters were falling apart, hence the delay in the whole exercise when it came to the refurbishment aspect of it. In order to build the additional block as is the case at St. Andrew's Primary, it so happened that the acquisition would have been the keep-back in this exercise. So there are things of that nature that have impacted on the works that were

taking place in these schools.

The other aspect of the delay is as a result of the relocation of some schools. You would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that in order to relocate the students from St. Paul's Primary that the Honourable Member spoke of earlier, we spent some weeks looking all over in that general area to find a suitable facility that would not only be safe but would enhance the whole learning exercise for the children and eventually the Bishop Court's Complex was found. Mr. Speaker, those are some of the reasons why we have had the set-back.

The reason why these facilities need to be enhanced is to give the children more space for recreational activities, to make the classrooms and the school environment more conducive to learning and to put in facilities to help these children to be able to acquire new knowledge and new skills and to be able to use it not only within the schools but in the home and the communities where they live.

I, like the Honourable Member for the City, felt very proud when I saw the children of Sharon Primary School taking their little laptops home to help them with their homework. Community centres are going to be used in this project to help those parents who do not have access to computers in their homes so as to be able to assist their children to use the technology in enhancing their learning. I think it is important that we let our children be aware that they are responsible for their own learning as well. When the various forms of technology and the other teaching aids are used, these children will have to transfer their knowledge from the classroom into real living situations. That is what learning and education is about.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John made mention that some of the schools were disadvantaged as a result of the project and that some were disadvantaged over time. Mr. Speaker, when I was a teacher, I observed under the Democratic Labour Party that we seemed to have been developing two Barbadoses. This Barbados Labour Party will not stand for that, Mr. Speaker. The whole of Barbados must move forward together. There is no urban Barbados as opposed to rural Barbados. The two sets of communities must move forward. That is the thrust this Government is putting to ensure that across the length and breadth of Barbados both the private schools and the public schools will get the benefits of the taxpayers' funds. All of us pay taxes and, therefore, we must pay for it as a people. It must not be a “them” and an “us”. It is all of us in this exercise.

2.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 15 years all our schools have been fitted with computers and those schools which have not been fitted with computers, the boards of management

have been spending money from their savings to upgrade existing computers and also to buy new computers. Sir, Information Technology is pencilled in on the time tables of schools so that students get the opportunity to develop the various skills and access information to help them learn. Sir, students at all secondary schools write CXC examinations in Information Technology and we are willing to lend the necessary support so that when the other Phases get started no school will be disadvantaged.

Mr. Speaker, the resource centres are important because adults are to benefit at the same time as the children, and parents as the first teachers have to assist children in the home, so they need to be computer literate as well.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak to the excellent work being offered in Barbados by other agencies like the Parent/Teacher Association. There are also service organisations, community groups and the private sector that for years have been donating computers and other forms of equipment to schools to help them to enhance the entire project.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank all these organisations for the efforts made because this can be an expensive exercise and to encourage these organisations to continue to give and encourage others to join in the effort of ensuring that every Barbadian gets access to the use of the technology to help them to become multi-skilled, versatile and more productive in the various spheres of life.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I want to make mention of one particular school which has benefited tremendously from the EduTech programme and curriculum reform. I make specific mention of the School for the Deaf and Blind now renamed the Erwin Wilson School. Mr. Speaker, if we are talking about embracing all our children, the children at this school have specific needs and equipment and the school was run down. They had no access to the equipment for hearing to help them with the development of their speech and this Government saw it fit to ensure that the Erwin Wilson School was brought into Phase 1 of the project and the children are moving forward by leaps and bounds in their education as a result of the refurbishment of the school and the upgrade of the equipment.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Resolution which would allow for the schools in Phase 3 to get started and I compliment those individuals who consented when it came to the request for the acquisition of the land. I have been assured that the Minister of Housing and Lands will make every effort to make sure that the acquisitions are settled in an amicable fashion.

Mr. Speaker, I have to commend Barbadians because they are not thinking of themselves and holding onto the

land. They are interested in the advancement of our people and have given up the land to make sure the process goes forward speedily. I want to thank them sincerely for assisting in this project.

Mr. Speaker, once we get these acquisitions we will be able to move into the next phase to ensure that every parish reaps the benefit of the reforms of the EduTech programme and all the plans Government has for education and community development.

Mr. Speaker, we must network the various agencies to bring all the benefits that are necessary to Barbados for their growth and development.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, Sir.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I want to add my voice to those who have given support to the acquisition. It is relevant to me not only because it is the expansion of the physical facilities among the number of schools mentioned but more importantly because it relates to St. Matthew's Primary School which educates many young black children from my constituency. I am sure with the improvement of the physical facilities these students will be rewarded in the improvement of the quality of education.

My contribution is to echo the view of the families of the surrounding communities. They have asked me to express their gratitude to the Minister and the Government for paying attention to the long outstanding needs of the people of that community. Sir, I speak about the people because children are part of the entire family of the community and if the standards of education and the facilities are improved then, ultimately, the family and the community will benefit from the exercise.

In this list of schools, the Belmont Primary School which is in my constituency and means a lot to me, was recently involved in great controversy because of not having the required standards and quality in the physical structure and they expressed dissatisfaction with the response from the Ministry and I had to run to their rescue. Sir, they complained about the poor toilet and ground facilities and not having the required space that would be conducive for children to function within a friendly environment.
2.25 p.m.

I would hope that the Minister will understand the urgency and recognise how drab the surroundings are and bring ornamental features to this area and make the aesthetics more conducive to learning.

I must agree that the Honourable Member has recently taken over the portfolio of Minister of Education and these matters have been outstanding before his time. Sir, education

stands as a central feature in our national development. Anyone who is interested in the growth and development of a country must relate to education. Society has moved on in the post-emancipation period to what it is because education was the foundation of the growth of the society.

We must be concerned because most of us have been the beneficiaries of this special instrument which allowed black people after emancipation to move from where they were then to where they are now but we have to move more expeditiously. The physical facility is only one aspect of our advancement. The quality of education has to move in proportion to the new physical environment which we create. We have to respond to the needs of the modern world and we need to be in the forefront with this specific instrument of advanced education and not be responding to the changes in the international arena, adopting the educational system to suit the changes in the world. Sir, what is happening to Barbados, and has been happening since the emancipation period, is that we have not designed a comprehensive educational programme that liberates the mind and brings some pride to the society.

Mr. Speaker, most of us are very pro American, pro European and pro everybody except ourselves. Our system has not allowed us to use the word "black". We are still struggling everyday as to whether we are Africans, West Indians or Caribbean people. All types of strange classifications are being bandied about because we do not have a clear expressed identity within the school system. It is a necessity for us to put in place a quality education system that moves in proportion to the fundamental changes, Sir. Mr. Speaker, all types of strange names were used to describe human beings in this society, such as "red legs" and "mulatto".

Sir, the area of St. Matthew's and St. Matthew's Church is central to the development of the area. The people in the area, especially the traditional families, are who they are because of the values coming out of the school system and those values formed the stability in the environment of Friendship, Clarkes Gap, Hothersal Turning, Jackmans and Lears. I have to extend my interest in order to accommodate the Honourable Member for St. George South.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: We have been able to produce outstanding citizens who have reached a high standard of excellence in the form of the Honourable Member for St. George South. Sir, he has asked me to make that remark so that his name can be placed on the walls of excellence in the schools in that area. I want to make that proposal in my contribution later, Sir.

Sir, education enhances our civility. We need a school system and we need to have quality teachers and facilities that are conducive to the development and the cultivation of

an outstanding entity. The school and the church are two of the major institutions that make us what we are today. I am happy to know that central to these facilities would be the church and the school.

Sir, I would like to mention another entity which I believe assists in pulling together a collective body of institutions which can be helpful, because the community itself is an institution. We can develop a community if we have the correct facilities to facilitate them. Young men can use the grounds in the area if they are properly graded to have social activities, the opportunity to interact with each other and establish sound social bonds between young men in the community and build inter-generational relationships because people would not be discriminating as a consequence of age, while in the school system they might be between the ages of three to eleven. When you have the facilities open to the community, the children, parents and friends socialise in the community and you establish sound moral values in them.

Sir, if the people who are the outstanding mentors within the community give of their best, we can develop sound social relationships and as a consequence good values that can carry our society forward and establish bonds which can be helpful, not only to the community but to the nation.

Sir, we would have an interest coming out of education that goes beyond the vulgar interest of achieving a sound secondary or tertiary education simply because we want to be able to achieve massive remunerations. There are a lot of people who go to secondary schools and university whose major objectives are to achieve because they want things that they can flaunt before the general public and live in ostentation trying to make people believe that they are more important in this society than others.

Sir, that is why some men put a lot of emphasis on their clothes.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, they are exclusively concerned with fabric. There are a lot of people in our society who are like that. They are concerned whether my car is a Suzuki or a BMW. A lot of people are coming out of the system who are exclusively materialistic and they are very vulgar with it.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, some people do not even build a sound education. They only want to get a few steps

up in the stratification as a result of education or money and after that everything is material. They want you to respect them not because of their academic achievement which cannot be bought but because they think you can win a Lotto ticket and overnight change your life. Any idiot in this society can win a million dollars overnight and all of a sudden believe he is among the significant others in the system. We do not want to produce those types of persons. We want to produce people that reach a very high level of civility.

2.35 p.m.

I believe that this provides opportunity, if we improve the physical structure and allow that to be proportionate to the qualitative development of the society itself. It also adds to some of the problems which we have in this society when people conclude, using a form of deductive reasoning, that they are not respected by those who are responsible for governance in the system when the facilities are placed in certain districts whether by the private sector or the government sector and not in theirs. When they see a government responding to their needs, they have a different perception of the country in which they live and they feel themselves an integral part of the system.

If we continue to ignore certain types of social entities in the system itself, they will react in the manner in which they are reacting today, in a very aggressive and militant manner towards other persons whom they believe are judging them from material achievement and are more fortunate than they are. That is why you have the short-cut method: If I cannot achieve what you have because I am not as educated as you are, well, then, use underground techniques. Men will sell cocaine, crack and marijuana in order to achieve what is considered as the ultimate goal, having material satisfaction.

There are too many people in our society that the educational system sometimes does not respond to them in a favourable way, especially in the early years. All the social studies which we have witnessed coming out of the Attorney General's Office in relation to those who are incarcerated indicate that most of them are not involved in any community groups and one of the other fundamental variables is that they are not that well educated. What the survey seems to be suggesting is that at the core of the chain is the necessity to have education and that is why this in the physical sense of the acquisition of the land is of importance.

More important is that when we produce the physical facilities, the quality service and a clear curriculum, not only the school system but these facilities should allow community groups to design post-primary and post-secondary educational programmes in the form of adult education to help those who were not as fortunate as their brothers and sisters to have a second chance to keep improving themselves. They do not only have to use the facilities for formal education, they can use the facilities for

cultural activities, dance. There are other innate skills that people possess that are equally as creative and we can bring young people together in proper facilities in primary and secondary schools on evenings but some of the headmasters and Boards are not always that accommodating. We have to have a policy where the schools are used not only from nine to three on evenings but have teachers and other persons in the society who are willing to use the facilities to improve the lives of the younger persons in the communities and those who are not that young as well and those who are bordering the period of death. Those people should have the opportunity as well to participate in these activities so that we can cultivate more civil citizens in our environment.

If we do that, it would be a prescription, in my view, for the reduction of the escalation of criminal activity within the system. I am not saying it is the only method that can be used, but at least we would be responding to what the scientific surveys indicate to us are those variables of concern that lead to persons being incarcerated for many crimes, whether felonious or not. So that those persons can be changed and we will have a system which as a prerequisite will not cultivate the same type of criminal element within the society. I think we need to address that.

We need in the end not only to be concerned with a programme that responds, as I said, to the demand of labour. The new change in the world labour market that came as a consequence of science and technology and manifests itself in information technology in most cases, in my view, serves to alienate the demand for labour intensive market. Technology and science changed that.

I believe that the designers who are thinkers who come out of the school system, men who think and try to advance the interest of the metropolitan countries and the industrialists in the metropolitan countries, those men design programmes, as a consequence so that they would not have to be as dependent on labour and face what they perceive as social inhibitions in the form of paying a lot of national insurance, giving people vacation with pay. All those things they are attempting to address every day. They use the intellectuals in the metropolitan countries as the culprits to design programmes that force people in the Third World countries to become more and more dependent on them and to continue to go cap in hand for assistance for aid and sometimes AIDS as well to these countries because sometimes that comes along with tourism.

Recently, they have been promoting sex tourism in this country. Sir, I do not want the Minister of Tourism to believe that I am saying he is the advocate of sex tourism but I saw in one of our credible newspapers that an outstanding former Member of Parliament belonging to the Opposition Side is promoting sex tourism within our markets. It is not

indictment on this Government. We do not support such immoral activities in our society but we know that sex in the tourist industry is part of it but we will not design a programme to encourage that.

Sir, I am concerned that our educational system has not developed the kind of spirituality and the civility that is required in our country. I am concerned that we are not proud citizens. A proud citizen must be a person who can identify himself and know who he is and not be struggling with different descriptions and classifications of his personality.

Many Barbadians do not know who they are. They are brown-skinned people, black people, purple people and it is because there is no education.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, you have really gone far. I thought after you passed the sex tourism you were going to come back but you are still going further. If you could get back to the Resolution.

2.45 p.m.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: I am saying that the psyche of any entity develops as a consequence of the knowledge that is imparted to them. If we do not have a programme of citizenship, some people call it civics, or you do not have a programme that speaks to the great contribution of the people of our ancestry and our great heritage, then we start our history on the understanding of ourselves as people who have been liberated from slavery, not recognising that prior to slavery, we as a people made major contributions to the world's civilization.

I am saying that we need to design an educational programme that builds that sense of pride and consciousness in the development of our people and that the society itself cannot rise to the demands of modernisation unless we understand who we are and what it is we want to achieve, and that we have had the opportunity in life before slavery and will continue after slavery to make a great contribution to the development of mankind.

If we believe that we cannot make fabric, we cannot make a car, we cannot make a watch that everybody designs and conceptualises for us and that even conceptualising, which is an independence of every individual and we are incapable of even putting a good idea and combining ideas together, establishes a theory and a philosophy that is meaningful for our development.

We are not even conscious that we can do it while other countries throughout the world that went through great struggles designed programmes and responded to the people's needs. That is why Cuba can boast today of producing so many medical practitioners within the world system and distribute them all over the world, including the United States of America, Mozambique, South Africa and

Zimbabwe. Wherever you go, you see Cuban people, because of an intensive programme immediately after the revolution.

The Japanese did the same thing and wherever you go in the world, the Japanese are seen as creative people. Sir, just seeing a Japanese you believe that he is creative. He may not be a sizeable man but because he is Japanese, you believe he is creative. When you see Barbadian people, you should be seeing people that are coming from the Mecca of the region.

We have sent people all through the region already as teachers, head teachers, policemen and we want people in the world to see us as coming from a small country, but with great intellect and good qualities that could help make a meaningful contribution and not going to the United States of America. The system has forced us into feeling that we have to go to England and the United States to feed our children, and when the gaps are closed, everything bottlenecks back inside the society itself.

Nobody comes up with a theory like Sir Arthur Lewis who recognised that we had a population crisis here where the resources of this country could not respond. It was a consequence of Education and thinking. Sir, Arthur Lewis, himself, reached the level of being a university lecturer, produced a theory that was used by the Governments of the Caribbean.

Sir, I am talking about the importance of education. I also want to recognise that although in the early stage of what I was saying, you might not recognise how pertinent it was, that I was on the highway. I want you to know, Sir, that I have great pride in this nation to rise to the occasion, and every step that is made by this Government or by any private institution of this society to move the country forward, I am supportive of the effort.

We all have to make a contribution to the dialogue surrounding these issues. Ultimately when man has to face the day of reckoning when the car is not of any importance to him, because he cannot even drive it anymore, he is now suffering with the Alzheimer's disease, sometimes physically challenged with no legs and so on, that is when he begins to reflect on what contribution he has made to humanity. I would like all of us in our latter days in life, Sir, because of a philosophy which we adopt, to feel proud that we have made a major contribution to the development of mankind.

Sir, that is my contribution to this debate. I want to thank you very much for listening to me as patiently as you did.

Thank you.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I believe it is important that I make my own contribution to this debate, as it relates specifically to the Resolution before us. In my case, Sir, there is some measure of community interest and constituency interest involved in this particular Resolution, as it speaks to the St. Paul's Primary School, which even though it is not located directly in St. Michael South, actually sits on the border of the other side of the street in Brittons Hill.

Sir, I know the whole issue of whether or not a road can really separate a community has been much discussion of late and even in this Chamber. The issue is that obviously people from the other side of the street in the constituency of St. Michael South will obviously be involved in terms of the use of the facilities and also go to school at the St. Paul's Primary School.

Sir, the majority of the land acquisitions in this case speak to issues, such as the Educational Sector Enhancement Programme, the EduTech Programme and the upgrades and the creation of better facilities for this programme to flourish. In this case, Sir, I believe that it speaks to the vision of a forward thinking Administration in the first place to have conceived of the whole concept of the EduTech programme and its importance to the development of our country.

Sir, I know that some would want to argue that this was the way of the world anyway but the issue of the EduTech programme and its importance to our future development cannot be down-played. I know that somehow or the other, some members of our society seem always to go the route of basing the EduTech squarely in the domain of only the technological side and the learning about computers. I see, Sir, the EduTech programme as going way beyond that and the whole concept of putting into operation the Green Paper and the White Paper on Educational Reform that came to this Honourable Chamber must be at the centre of where the EduTech Programme is going. Sir, the EduTech Programme is more than just computers. It really is about being able to create a tool for the delivery of more efficient education to the masses of the people of Barbados; and that must be the issue.

The issue of being able to rope in all within our society and within the ranks in terms of education and being able to deal with people at different levels, where children and adults can work at different paces in terms of their own educational capacity, but also being able to build capacity for the future.

I think, Sir, that too many people get caught up with the issue of thinking that it is only about learning to operate a computer, when it is really how you integrate the technology for more efficient delivery of education in the future for the people of Barbados. I believe, Sir, that in that context as well, the issue of how you marry the Resource Centre

concept within the educational system is important. I think, Sir, it has been the concept of the Resource Centre as a tool, as well as education has also been misunderstood within the society.

I believe that one of the issues that is important is how you marry the effort between the community building concept as portrayed through the Resource Centre and the whole issue of the reform of education in Barbados for the 21st Century.

Sir, it is clear to me that a small society like Barbados, particularly in a new commodity trading environment, must create for itself, comparative and absolute advantages, if we need to take our place on the world stage. In that regard, the physical attributes that we have and we speak to our sand, sun and sea, makes tourism, for example, a natural fit but also, Sir, in terms of our citizens, the delivery of service that our citizens give in a new service economy is going to be important.

In that regard, Sir, the individual citizens themselves must have different competencies if we are going to create for ourselves those whole new comparative and absolute advantages in the spheres where other people cannot emulate or cannot easily copy what we are doing.

Therefore, Sir, in that regard, I would believe that technological competence furthers that concept of being able to create for yourself that level of absolute and comparative advantage that we need really to take our place in a new society.

In that regard, Sir, the Resource Centre, particularly for people who have already passed through the educational system and would have been left out, marries that concept of EduTech with this new concept of technological development for many of our people. Therefore, Sir, the Resource Centre becomes absolutely critical in a new age.

Sir, beyond that, the Resource Centre goes further because what I see them doing as well, and this Administration has clearly put its finger on the pulse of that, in that it creates a better basis for community building and for social development within our society. The issue is that we are building strong and good societies and better societies by building strong communities. I think that a lot of people seem to have strayed away from the overall concept of building the community back as the base on which you build new societies and good countries.

I believe, Sir, that we seem to have moved away from local Government and whatever and seem to think of a central government as something you can build from a central system outward. I see it, Sir, as building from the community in the other way because you must be able to build strong communities as the basis for being able to build

strong nations. I believe that we need to get back to the concept of more community building.
2.55 p.m.

These resource centres and the EduTech schools are going to be used by the communities as well as the individual schools. I believe that becomes critically important as we continue to create a basis for education as a tool for building this new society.

In the case of St. Paul's Primary, the issue did not only go towards the concept of EduTech but also being able to create a much more congenial environment for the students of the school and the people of the Brittons Hill area. I want to commend the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the concept of being able to acquire that particular space that is going to be utilised.

When I went to university in North America, everything that happened in that town literally revolved around the university and it literally became a university town. When there was no summer school, many of the businesses around the university had to close. I believe that the school and the church have always been at the centre of being able to create a better community building base for us. One of the reasons why we have fallen down in many of the social aspects of our development is because we have moved away from the school and the church as being the basis for building the society. Therefore, it is important to recognise that these particular acquisitions and the directions in which we are heading, centres around being able to restore to the community that central place that becomes a spiritual and physical home for community development within each community.

Therefore, I want to commend this Resolution to the House and to all the people of Barbados because this would create a better basis for the people of the Brittons Hill area whom I and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central have the privilege to represent, in order to continue in their community building. Again, Sir, I want to commend the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Ministry of Education for the way in which they are going as we continue to build a better and stronger nation for the people of Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to those Honourable Members who spoke in this debate today.

The Addendum to this Resolution speaks about the Cabinet of Barbados approving the acquisition of 15 parcels of land way back on July 5, 2000. However, subsequent to that decision, it was decided that only 12 parcels were needed. Therefore, the parcels of land owned by

Clareen Lynch and Stanley Thompson situated in Jackmans, St. Michael as well as the parcel of land belonging to Courtland Sample situated at McClean's Gap, Brittons Hill, St. Michael are no longer being acquired.

We are only acquiring 12 parcels of land at St. Jude's Primary, St. Andrew's Primary School, St. Matthew's Primary, St. Alban's Junior and St. Paul's Primary. As the Minister of Education, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, has pointed out, we will have to come back to Parliament to acquire two additional parcels at the St. Alban's Junior School. These parcels were left out of this acquisition.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Housing and Lands will continue to acquire parcels of land to upgrade the schools across Barbados. We have to acquire small properties around a number of schools to provide playing facility and to enhance security for the schools. So we will continue to upgrade all of the schools in Barbados. I also want to say that there are some resolutions for acquisitions that are now being done by private treaty, for example, the one at St. David's Primary School, and we will just bring a notification at the end of the year to Parliament.

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 13 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2002

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, from time to time, we have to come before this Honourable Chamber with the education regulations. We have done this about five to six times since I have been here. On this occasion, the amendment we are seeking to make today is an amendment to Part 17 of the Education Regulations. Section 77 of the Education Regulations is to be amended to insert the following subsection after subsection (4). That new subsection should read:

“For the purpose of this regulation, CAPE statistical analysis a one-unit course and CAPE applied mathematics a one-unit course will together be regarded as one two-unit course.”

Mr. Speaker, let me, by way of comparison, explain to you exactly what is happening here because I have my own views on these half courses and these one-unit courses as they are called.

Asides.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Speaker, when I did first- year law, I did two courses, one was called Constitutional Law and the other Legal Systems. They were considered to be two half courses which went together to make up a full course but in CAPE we call them one-unit courses and, Mr. Speaker, if you received 30 per cent in Constitutional Law but received 90 per cent in Legal Systems, you failed the entire course and you were required to do both courses again including the course in which you received 90 per cent.

3.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment is being made to ensure that CAPE Statistical Analysis which is a one-unit course and CAPE Applied Mathematics which is also a one-unit course will together be regarded as a full two-unit course. In other words, if they are done together, they will be considered a full course. Sir, these courses cannot be done in a vacuum because they are integral to each other.

Mr. Speaker, in recent times people have been very critical of the CAPE exams. The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Exams (CAPE) will eventually replace the "A" Level exams and the sixth form schools will do these exams in place of the traditional "A" Level exams. These exams are the higher equivalent of CXC and will be administered by the Caribbean Examination Council.

Mr. Speaker, we speak in Barbados with passion about independence, sovereignty and the pride of nationhood and yet some of us seem to be intent on allowing others to determine who we are. Sir, we are a Caribbean nation between 30 to 40 years old and we should not be doing somebody else's exams because this runs counter to the whole question of pride of nationhood and independence. I do not think we can talk with that passion about independence and not have badges of our own such as the Caribbean Court of Appeal or a Caribbean exam to show that we are true Caribbean people.

Sir, I do not think because I took the Oxford and Cambridge that they are better than CXC or CAPE exams and I believe that our CXC and CAPE are better than Oxford and Cambridge for us. Sir, the analysis required by CAPE is greater because it is not an exam that calls for learning and regurgitating as you remember it. CAPE gets away from regurgitation as much as possible.

Sir, I remember my "O" Level experience with Oxford & Cambridge. On the history paper we were asked to answer any five questions and I answered the first five questions. I remember in my days of teaching for Oxford & Cambridge exams students would ask why they had to go past learning about emancipation because they felt they could find enough questions on things like sugar, discovery and the Dutch and still pass the exam.

CAPE believes that the student must be rounded and that the syllabus must be properly structured. It also believes that sections of the exam paper must be properly demarcated to make the student rounded. The student must know post-emancipation history and this process is done in the other subjects as well.

Mr. Speaker, the CAPE syllabus is extremely demanding because it is a tremendous amount of work. I met with the principals of the four sixth form schools in Barbados and they all complained that it would be difficult to cover the extensive syllabus of CAPE in such short time.

Mr. Speaker, CAPE is ensuring that children will know the entire syllabus rather than pick out topics. Sir, imagine a situation where a student does history from 1492 to 1834 and gets a Barbados scholarship even though he did no study on post-emancipation history, the Federation or CARICOM. The student then goes to the University of the West Indies where he is asked to analyse situations and the student finds himself struggling in this regard because he did not have an early introduction to the subject. Therefore, all of these things we have seen and we are trying with the Caribbean Advance Proficiency Examination (CAPE) to prevent.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, CAPE carries an enquiry or a research component where the research skills and techniques of the students are tested throughout the year. There is this research where you have student-based papers to do and you have to use certain research skills and techniques.

The sixth form principals suggested, and I agree with them in this regard, that we need not test the same research skills on every subject because a lot of time is taken with the research papers. The principals are saying that the research skills that are needed for Geography and Sociology are the same research skills that are needed for History. Why do you have to have those research skills for every subject? Sir, I agree with them that you need not do it because that particular technique is like a key that would unlock or open doors to other "subject rooms" and that would cut down on time.

In terms of research, I am very happy with the use of our community centres as Resource Centres. Mr. Speaker, children who have access to the Internet at home are at a tremendous advantage in this regard, because they are able to download information from the Internet and do the research. Children who live in districts like Marley Vale, St. Philip, may not have the Internet facility. I am happy that with the use of these centres, students can go there in the evenings and access information and do their research properly and, perhaps, be on par with those children who would have had the head start.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education is listening to the suggestions that are being put forward by the principals and teachers in terms of what is right and what is wrong with CAPE. Another suggestion that is worthy of merit is that the sixth forms need not stand and sit to the ringing of the bell the same way as the remainder of the school. Sir, I have put it that way but, perhaps, that is not the way they said it. In other words, they are saying that there should be a sixth form regime at schools, where the start and finish of the sixth forms, the length and number of periods be different so as to accommodate the need for extra time to cover the CAPE syllabus.

Mr. Speaker, you have to realise that you are not expected to cover very much in thirty-five minutes when that bell rings for that period. As it stands now, you have a lot of double periods in the sixth forms to try to cover the syllabus. The principals and teachers are saying that the sixth form regime should be a different one, even if they have to go an extra half hour in the evening or start half hour earlier in order to lengthen the teaching time to cover the syllabus. Those are some of the ideas that the principals and teachers have come up with.

Sir, we have to realise that there are going to be teething problems. Once you are moving from one examination body to another, these things are going to happen.

Another criticism of CAPE is the use of the course subjects. Let me explain the course subjects to the Honourable Chamber. Two of your course "A" Level subjects, English and History are currently being done at Oxford and Cambridge Examination. In addition, you have to do the general paper. At CAPE you are now called upon to do six course subjects; you do not do the General Paper. In order to obtain that certification, you do six course subjects and these course subjects are Caribbean Studies, Communication Studies, functional French and Spanish, Statistical Analysis and Information Technology. Sir, in your two-year programme you have to do these course subjects because when you leave school you are a rounded student.

I do not believe that we should think that our quest for a well-rounded student is anything unusual. The Oxford and Cambridge "A" Level, the one that we are currently doing and the one that some of us would like to hold on to, is under pressure in England to change from the traditional "A" Level, as we know it, to do a type of analysis and the course subjects that we are now doing. The same change that we are doing – and I have articles which I have received that show the same thing is being done at Oxford and Cambridge. Sir, chances are, if we did not introduce this system at CAPE, we would have to do it anyway at Oxford and Cambridge.

Mr. Speaker, I would be the first to agree that CAPE is a more difficult examination and there is nothing wrong with

that. A difficult examination is nothing new to Barbados and a higher standard requirement is nothing to be ashamed of. Sir, when CXC "O" Levels first started, there were complaints about the workload. When we first started CXC "O" Levels, every single teacher complained about the workload, now today everybody does CXC. When the requirements for Barbados Scholarships were changed to three "A" Level subjects, a few years ago, there were complaints as well. Nowadays, some students get four "A" Level subjects with ease.

Mr. Speaker, experience has often shown that it is usually quite difficult to sell a shift or a change from one examining body to another and to sell that change to the students. Sir, teachers become quite comfortable with the syllabus and they do not want to extend themselves to another one. Some who have been teaching over the years know by heart what Cambridge wants. I know a particular teacher who teaches a subject and he could tell you what is coming this year on the paper. Having taught it for so many years, he knows when this particular question is due. They know it by heart. I can see why some of them would not want to change and, of course, there would be those who would want to continue with Cambridge because they genuinely think that it is a better exam.

3.25 p.m.

There are a variety of reasons why teachers would resist. Resistance to change, Mr. Speaker, is nothing new to us. We have seen it in things like public sector reform among other things. We saw it when CXC "O" Level was introduced. Many of the teachers wanted and still want to hold on to Cambridge because they were accustomed to that particular syllabus having taught it for years. As I said, that is quite understandable. Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, there is the guinea pig argument. That crops up from time to time, parents saying my child should not be among the first to take this CAPE exam. Mr. Speaker, any time that you propose to implement a new policy in education a set of students has to be the first. Even if you put it back next year or the next year there is some set of students waiting there whose parents will say why would mine have to be the first.

To me, Sir, it is more than obvious that if we continue to defer CAPE on the strength of such reasoning then we will never be able to get it off the ground. I have to say that an argument against CAPE would have had to be made 20 years ago but today we have untold Caribbean resources, we have untold Caribbean materials at our disposal. We have good books written by Caribbean people. We have excellent authors. We have superb teachers. There is a kind of belonging to us now mind-set where these things like books are concerned.

We have poets. I have always been making the point that my piece of poetry that I had to analyse was

“Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You hastening away so soon:”

I had never seen a daffodil. We did Chaucer’s old English and we did Shakespeare without having any cultural connections with the pictures that those persons were depicting and describing.

I am not suggesting that we should discard all of those things which would have made our literature so rich but we should not retain those things at the expense of ourselves and our own. CXC must be commended for being very proactive where CAPE is concerned. CXC went to England and other places and met with universities and examining bodies. There is an agency called the National Academic Recognition Information Centre in the UK and that evaluated all of the CXC syllabuses in CAPE and it gave CAPE the thumbs up. CAPE already has therefore international recognition. CAPE has credibility already. The universities in England have accepted two CAPE subjects as the equivalent for entry into those universities.

I remember listening to a programme with David Ellis some time ago when some teachers were speaking about their concerns for CAPE. I respect their views but there are very few things in the world that can boast of never having teething problems at the inception, including the birth of babies.

Mr. Speaker, rather than all of the criticism which we hear from time to time, I think that the schools should now try to maximise the benefits of CAPE. There are more subjects listed now for us to do at CAPE than for us to do at Cambridge. There are 27 subjects listed at this moment for CAPE and it is also allowing for scholarships in what can be called Technical Vocational subjects. There was a time when technical subjects fell within the province of City and Guilds not within any Caribbean Examination Body. Now at “A” Level CAPE is bringing Technical Vocational subjects under a single examination umbrella.

It is also going to mean that there will be people doing some of those subjects, especially those at crafts and community college who may very well be in line for Barbados Scholarships now by doing Technical Vocational subjects. We have a psyche that only academic subjects should prevail and you should only get Barbados Scholarships in academic subjects. I do not think that the concern should be whether someone else now has the opportunity to gain awards and scholarships, bursaries and exhibitions. I think the real concern should be the objective of the CAPE exam.

I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, part of the CAPE exam is Caribbean Studies as opposed to the General Paper. I would

not have to give the reason for that. You can think for a moment about why Caribbean Studies as opposed to the General Paper and I think the answer is crystal clear since it is the objective of the exam that we should be concerned with.

The point must also be made, Mr. Speaker, that nobody is springing a surprise on the sixth form schools where CAPE is concerned. I think that in the 1980’s, as far back as then, the Ministers of Education requested that we have in the region a regional exam to replace the traditional “A” Levels, and I see nothing wrong with that. We cannot go on promising and promising until we are in 2080 and nothing happens.

Let me give you, Sir, an example of something which happened to me as a marker of history. I was marking history for Cambridge when we were going to move from Cambridge to CXC, the Cambridge examiners took some of us under their wing to train us as markers. There was a question on the Paper that you were to choose an individual from your country who had made a significant contribution to the country and you must say why you consider this person to be of significance.

I was marking and my examiner – I will never forget her, the lady who trained me in how to mark was a lady by the name of Mrs. Morris. I remember coming across one written by someone from the Bahamas, Bermuda, the Cayman Islands or Turks and Caicos, I do not remember exactly but it is one of those places. I was marking and I said, “Ms. Morris, when you reach this one, how would you mark it because, as a Caribbean person, I do not know much about this person that is being written about here, and there is no history book that contains any material on this particular person?” She said, “Mark it according to how it sounds.”
3.35 p.m.

Sir, that is the way that they not only marked the ones that had come from places like the Bahamas, Anguilla, Turks and Caicos, but even the ones from Jamaica were marked according to how they sounded so I could have made up a fictional person and could have written a beautiful essay as to how much this person has done, whether it is for women’s affairs or whatever in Barbados or for children or for those with disabilities, and I would have got a good mark, just by doing a good composition.

I am saying that was Cambridge and a call was made further, Mr. Speaker, by the Heads of Government in Jamaica in 1997 for an “A” Level equivalent which, in its syllabuses, and this is what they said, would try to address and pay attention to the moral, ethical and social concerns of the region and cultivate the appropriate skills and attitudes

to enable our people to tackle the regional concerns as well as international matters.

Sir, there you have it and there is the whole philosophy as to why we should have the CAPE Examination, a regional examination for Caribbean people as the alternative to the traditional "A" Levels as it now stands.

I also want to say that Barbadian teachers were involved on the various subject panels of CAPE, so teachers knew what was required for every subject. It is nothing that is being sprung on them overnight. Mr. Speaker, let me finish by saying that the change of the regulations here is to ensure that two one-unit courses together become a two-unit course, but I merely took the opportunity to make certain remarks and express certain views on the CAPE Examination.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North ended by saying that there is nothing that is being sprung on the teachers. When you listen to what is going on in Barbados regarding the CAPE examinations, you get the impression that the programme is not well thought out and those involved in doing the syllabus did not consult with the players.

Sir, the teachers are complaining, the students are complaining and one wonders whether they will be able to complete the necessary syllabus in order to get their necessary qualification which used to be the Advanced qualification. Since I heard what the Minister and the general public say as it relates to the teachers and the students, I am confused and I wonder which one is correct.

Sir, one of the things that you do not want to have, is a situation where you have your educational system in turmoil. I would hope that there would be some type of dialogue between the Ministry of Education, the teaching body and also the most important ones, the students who would have to take these examinations.

If one listens to the radio programme on a daily basis, one will hear about the CAPE examination and the difficulties that are being encountered by the students and one wonders, Sir, what is going to be the outcome, and it is appreciated that in everything that you implement for the first time, you always have problems, but what is interesting, Sir, you are now hearing that there has been something dire wrong with the various bodies.

Sir, even though there have been these discussions, you are still getting the problem and the question is, what has occurred? Is it that the teachers and the students were not fully taken under the command of the various bodies? Because one will have to appreciate, Sir, that it is the various

educational bodies within the region, it is not a one body. Is it, Sir, that we were hoping to have something which we consider to be more generous, or is it that we thought it was generous and then it turned out to be otherwise?

Sir, at the end of the day it must be recognised that the future of the students is going to be affected. One would hope that every necessary measure is put in place to cushion the effect of the fall-out and I would hope that this fall-out would not have a negative effect on the students taking the examinations at this point in time.

As you know, Sir, a lot of people taking these examinations used that as the stepping stone to enter the various universities and what we can have, is a situation where, because of how the examination was set up, it has affected entrance to the various universities by the first set of students studying for this particular examination.

I would hope that the Honourable Minister would enter dialogue...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am hearing that there is ongoing dialogue and I have no reason to doubt the Minister. I hope that at least, Sir, some measure will be put in place to cushion the effect of the first examination and that those persons involved in the marking of this first examination, be given a particular guideline to suit the particular problems that have occurred with this examination and that they will not use the big hand to unfair students for something that they were not guilty of, because the least thing we would want, is for students to be judged based on something of which they are not guilty. I hope that as the Minister said, there is ongoing dialogue and that the markers understand the particular problems that occur this time around and that the students will not be the ones who will be punished for the errors created of which they are not guilty and that they will not be put in a position where they will not be able to advance their studies.

I thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I want first of all to commend the Minister of Education for a clear and lucid explanation of this new examination called CAPE.

This is the kind of debate I like where serious issues are dealt with in a dispassionate and easy manner, where information is available for those of us who do not have enough of it. I spoke to the Minister sometime ago and told him that I would share the concern about the number of members of the public who were not at all comfortable with this new exam.

I did not know enough about it but I heard parents and children complaining and I thought that perhaps it was time that the Ministry of Education does more public relations on the examination and tell people what it is all about and explain away some of the fears. The way in which the Minister has spoken about this exam today has certainly given me, a person who is not totally non-conversant with educational matters, a better perspective of what is involved. 3.45 p.m.

I know, Sir, that education is an interesting field and everybody is an expert on education, even those who are not well-schooled. You only have to tune in to the call-in programmes or discuss any issue relating to education and you will see that every single person is an expert. Therefore, it requires a great deal of levelheadedness, sanity and reason to come up with new educational policies to be able to resist all of the negatives one is bound to hear whenever there is a change.

The Minister refers to the introduction of CXC. I was in the Ministry of Education in 1980 when the Caribbean Examination Council examinations started. Many of the concerns being expressed about CAPE now are the same concerns that were expressed about CXC at that time, such as the children are being used as guinea pigs, that the exams have too much material in it, the syllabus is too extensive and the school-based assessment element of it was new and could not function.

At that time, a number of parents who were a little better off would enter their children for both the Cambridge and the CXC exams and would exert influence on the people in education – I do not want to identify persons because of the type of society we have – to get the examination dates for CXC to be different from those of Cambridge so that their children could do both examinations. When I discovered that, I gave instruction to the people in the Ministry that all the exams should be on the same dates so that they could do either the CXC or the Cambridge exams. All the players articulated to the Minister what would happen to their children who are trying to get into the various universities and what this strange new animal called CXC was.

In the fullness of time, the CXC examinations were accepted by everyone in Barbados just as they are accepted by the universities throughout the world and principally in the countries where Barbadian students tend to go, which are the United States of America, Canada and Britain.

At that time, as I am hearing with this scenario now, we used the educational testing facility at Princeton University in New Jersey to assist us in setting the standards and so on and now they are using other internationally recognised agencies to do that. I am satisfied that the Government and

the Caribbean countries in producing this new exam to replace the “A” Level exam are on the right track. I am not using that argument on the grounds of nationalism but on what is best for the children of this region.

There are one or two questions, however, that I have to raise about the exams. The Minister has been very clear in saying that a new element of analysis and critical thinking are more important now than the old, as I called it, “blotting paper skills” that were required in my time at the Ordinary Level and the General Certificate of Education, but not at the “A” Level stage because the “A” Level is entirely different. We had a good memory for CXC and for the GCE “O” level. We could pass any of those because all we had to do was to swallow all they threw at us and then throw it back out on examination day. So if we are going to get into a new type of examination that would require more critical thinking and analysis rather than learning a whole set of facts and regurgitating them, I am very pleased to hear that.

I do not know what the Minister is saying, but I sit in Parliament and I wish sometimes that some of the people who speak in here had the benefit of the CAPE exam where they would be trained in more analysis, more critical thinking and more logic and, therefore, would be able to express with greater clarity and develop an argument.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, who the shoe fit, I refer to no individual.

I have one or two other questions I would like to pose in relation to this. The Minister has said that the British people have been having problems with their “A” Level exams and they are taking a look at it. This is not recently, Sir, this was going on for at least 15 years. If persons were reading the British newspapers in the 20th century, they would have seen endless treaties in the last decade and a half showing everything that was wrong with their “A” Level examinations. The people of the Caribbean are travelling a bit more slowly because, in my view, they are only following the British in taking a really serious look at the “A” Level exams in disclosing its weaknesses and its flaws and doing something to correct it.

When the Caribbean Examinations Council started its basic and general proficiency exams at the beginning of the 1980's, there was talk at that time, 22 years ago, about having an exam to replace the “A” Level exam. So the gestation period has been a long one, over two decades. Although I am happy that it has arrived, those who would pat themselves on the back and say, “Look what a good boy am I”, really I do not know how good they are in that regard.

I also would like to raise a question in relation to the naming because we talked about symbols, “badges” is the word the Minister used, in trying to say that we as a Caribbean nation must blaze our own trails and have our own Caribbean Court of Appeal and all of this and all of that, which is fine. However, it seems remarkable to me that we have not had enough confidence with CXC after spending 20 years developing it where it is now accepted to call it CXC Advanced Level, that is why I ask the Minister to explain what CAPE means because I really do not understand what it means. The first time I know that it meant the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination is today. We have CXC Basic and CXC General, so what was wrong with CXC Advanced.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: If they say CXC Advanced, it will marry two concepts that are familiar to Barbadians. The Caribbean Examinations Council worked hard to get people to accept CXC as their own indigenous examination. So, I raise that question for what it is worth.

I also want to raise another question which was proposed by the Minister of Education, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. I believe in the universality of education and the universality of language. I do not believe that there is such a thing as a Caribbean education that is intrinsically good or bad. I do not believe that if we learn the works of Derek Walcott and Jan Carew as we should, that it should be a replacement for good literature in other ages and in other cultures because I believe in the universality of language and in the universality of standards.

Mr. Speaker, I was educated in the classics. I studied Latin, Greek, Ancient History and Philosophy at a level in the secondary school in Barbados that was the highest in the Commonwealth. Sir, we wrote the same exams as people in Britain and Hong Kong and individuals in this country produced better results in those exams than their counterparts all over the Commonwealth.

3.55 p.m.

Sir, I am making the point that if you train the intellect in critical thinking and analysis, you can adapt your mind to any situation. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say that we do not have to take into consideration that people must be prepared with specific skills for a specific job but the two should run on parallel streams.

I also want to say to the Honourable House that although in Barbados we are fortunate to have an excellent education system which even though we may run into problems here and there, overall is an excellent system and I give credit to the Minister and the Government for maintaining this standard.

I have also been of the view that teachers in the school are critical to maintenance and the delivery of education in this country. I was told many years ago when they had a rotary sickout where each morning a number of schools would have no teacher turn up over the entire island and teachers would not inform the Ministry. The Ministry then had to rush people all over the island to look after the safety of the children.

Sir, one Saturday night at a party in St. John an older woman teacher came to me and told me she was a teacher at one of the primary schools in the island and said to me that I did not have to worry about the rotary sickout when it came to her because she had learnt from long experience that you can be on the job but not at work.

Sir, I learnt by hard experience that it is critical to have teachers on board in every situation that the Ministry undertakes because no matter how grand and sound your plans are, unless you are working hand in hand with the teachers in the classroom much of what you plan and organise will be in vain.

Sir, I do not know to what extent teachers are on board with CAPE because I was driving home one night and I heard the teachers of secondary schools in Barbados discussing the CAPE. I heard persons for whom I have the highest regard taking absolutely different views on the CAPE. I could not understand why Mr. X, a highly respected teacher at Harrison College could be taking one view and Mrs. Y, a highly respected teacher for many years at Queen's College be taking a position that is diametrically opposed to that view. I concluded that it was very confusing for John Public and if I were the parent of a child who was doing that exam, just listening to the debate, would cause me some concern. Therefore, I believe that the Ministry should reconcile the differences, listen to all the partners and try to find a common ground where everybody including the stakeholders in education industry could be pulled together to solve this problem.

Sir, everybody agrees that CAPE is in the interest of Barbados and the Caribbean as a whole. Therefore, we have to make sure it works well.

Sir, when I was in university we were told that when we had exams, that we could carry all our textbooks, notes and research papers into the room because if you wanted to confuse yourself it was okay since you only had three hours anyhow. We were required in most of our exams to do three or four of the following 15 questions. Sir, in those days, it was not how much you knew but how you could apply it and think it out.

4.05 p.m.

It was not how much you knew, but how you could analyse it. They say that if you want to learn facts, you should go to the Polytechnic because you have your whole life to learn facts but you have to think.

Sir, when I heard about the standard and research that are involved, you are barking up my tree. I believe that we need more of that in Barbados. I am amazed when I get correspondence from graduates from the University of the West Indies. Sir, I have to try hard to understand what they are saying, not only is the spelling and grammar bad, the expressions often trigger one's imagination as to make you wonder what we are coming to. Sir, the point that I am making is, when you meet these people, they are intelligent, well adjusted and attractive but they have a difficulty in expressing themselves as persons who spent three or four years learning to be critical analysts.

Sir, recently, I opened the newspaper one day and I read something that some team won a game over another and at the end of reading this article I did not know what teams were playing or where the teams were located.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Sir, I do not know if any of the Honourable Members look at these articles as critically as I do. I open the papers and read articles that are an insult to my intelligence and it is offensive to those of us who went to school at St. Giles.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Sir, when I was eight years at St. Giles School and you wrote something like what I saw in the newspaper, you would have been caned. Sir, at St. Giles under the leadership of Wilkie Cumberbatch, that was a real school.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Sir, I do not like to get into debates, especially when I have a contrary point of view, because when I express a contrary point of view it is not taken as an honest expression of my feelings. In this case, I am genuinely pleased that the Minister has spent the time explaining this Resolution in some detail and the intent of this new examination; that he has seen and heard the difficulties expressed and what the Ministry is doing to correct them, and gives the assurance to the students and parents of Barbados that the Government is with them in this one and we know those involved in education planning are being brought to bear on this to ensure that present and future generations of Barbadian students would have the preparation and training for this examination that would do nothing more than make them able-thinking rounded citizens of this country.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

Mr. D. T. GILL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the amendment which is before the Chamber. The last speaker spoke from the standpoint and the experience of having himself been a Minister of Education, and having been around in the early days of the Caribbean Examination Council and even spoke about the gestation period.

Sir, the area which we are considering this afternoon is a very sensitive area, as can be seen from the amount of discussion on the airwaves and letters being written to the Editors of the two daily papers, some by well-respected educators, some by social commentators and in some instances by students. It is for some, in most part, objective and for others subjective.

Sir, it is because the academia involved is linked to a great bureaucracy and at some time could even appear rather esoteric. This debate has to do with the future and destiny of hundreds of young people. Therefore, we must be very clear in our thoughts of what we want to achieve lest these young students hopes be dashed.

The Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE) has as its precursors the CXC basic and proficiency which have been around for twenty-three years and as expected it has come to a state of maturation. Therefore, it is time for it to move onto another level. I would like to thank the Honourable Member for St. George South for informing most of us here this afternoon about the earlier concepts and ideas for this advanced level Caribbean examination.

Sir, CXC has rightfully reached a stage of maturity and it has moved onto "A" Level standard in order to maintain the level and quality, which people of our age group would have known in the Oxford and Cambridge Examination, and not to diminish in content any of the subject area. I particularly welcome the criteria for the technical and vocational studies and I think this is a plus and it must not be seen that those who have studied the sheer academic studies are worthy of receiving the highest commendation when one reaches 18 years or 18 plus and has written his or her exam.

4.15 p.m.

There is, however, Sir, a bit too much discussion and whenever there is discussion there is always the room or opportunity for the basic ideas to be missed or to be misconstrued and we should all listen to those who propose and those who oppose. We must be very careful that we do not come up with a programme which is too heavily laden in course work. It is a delicate changeover from the age of 15 and 16 when not many students are very serious. At that

changeover point, particularly the boys who tend to spend a lot of time in sport and extra-curricular activities, they are not given to long periods of reading and research.

Today, in the long holidays you see students when they finish their "O" Levels, General Proficiency or CXC's, take the entire holiday. It is time to swim, to play summer cricket, to travel and in more recent times it is time to go on the golf course and those who cannot afford it get involved in lots of other activities which go hand in hand with that age group. So it has also to do with the stage or that natural level of brain development as well as physical development.

Sir, too often, we hear the students speak about the SBAs, School Based Assessment as not having time to cover them and then to cover the other course load. I hope that these sorts of concerns or realities do not spill over from the lower level to the higher level. Sir, there is a feeling of anxiety and uncertainty always associated when going from one examination board to another.

I did the Cambridge Board but some of my older siblings did the Oxford & Cambridge and some even did Oxford & Cambridge as well as Cambridge. There are students who would have done Cambridge as well as CXC and they are at that changeover point. There is some degree of anxiety more real than apparent. It is like on a highway. There is no room, Sir, for ambiguity, uncertainty in syllabi when it comes to your academic achievement. In some subject areas for a student to understand the higher level it is incumbent upon him or her to have mastered the earlier level. I am not speaking about the student to the far right of the L curve. They will pick up and master anything. Those are the ones you call the bright ones. They will master anything in any time frame, particularly in sciences where there is that natural continuum that level one prepares for level two and level two for level three.

Therefore, to foist a heavily laden course, what would appear to that student as an abstract course load, could in some instances turn the student off. Hence as I said, there is this lever, a continuum in the academic course load.

If we are saying that the course load is that much greater at the advanced level – I prefer to use the broad term "advanced" as the Honourable Member for St. George South – is going to be that heavy or you are expected to know that much, then I think there is going to be a bit of a ripple effect working its way right down into the fifth and fourth form in some areas of studies so that the student could be prepared and ready for the advanced level.

Sir, there is always a tendency for developing countries to impress the mother country or the former colonial master that his or her level is that greater – I do not know if you have to do it to gain acceptance but it is a fact. I would wish

that we do not get too pure and I heard the Minister of Education speak and he spoke about the analytical and thinking skills that are necessary but I have experienced when I was at university working with students from places like Eritrea who had gone to study in the USSR and some African students that they were pastmasters in pure theory. They were way ahead in the first year but when it came to being analytical and to application more than pure or abstract theory and being able to deduce, they were abysmal failures.

Sir, we must heed some of the warnings and look at some of the experiences which other countries that have set up their examination bodies would have experienced. We must be very wary as to how we go about formulating our syllabuses in order to impress and attract the matriculation boards overseas.

Sir, I do not want to hear again about students not being able to complete the course load, that there was not enough time, the master or the mistress did not get through with the syllabus. The evidence is there about shifting from an old syllabus to a new syllabus. I think it was in the early seventies when the change was made from the Oxford & Cambridge to the Cambridge that our "A" Level results had taken a plunge so much so that one or two of the neighbouring islands were beginning to say that Barbados was not teaching the right thing, they were not mastering the syllabus.

I know that in the early seventies through to the mid-seventies in that first five years of Cambridge the "A" Level results were not in keeping with what they were previously and the scholarships were sparse yet there were a good number of students who were able to get the exhibitions and other scholarships like the Aubrey Collymore Scholarship.

However, they did not reach the requirement for the achievement of a Barbados Scholarship. So, that goes to show some of the problems that could be realised when moving from one Board to another. There is a settling down period. The teachers themselves are human beings. The teachers are not geniuses, they have to learn and go through the curve just as the students. What the teacher has on the student is that he or she may specialise in that area and hence a shorter period of time before he or she becomes fully acquainted and really equipped in tackling the syllabus. As I said, there was then the sparsity of scholarship winners in those days.

4.25 p.m.

Sir, when the CXC Examinations were first introduced, there were the shouts and howls of the students, you saw then that in time, children have mastered eight Grade 1s and parents knew which teacher to send their children to, in which discipline, so that they could get a Grade 1. In some

instances you have parents who send their children to six and seven types of private classes, you know only too well, Mr. Speaker, what I speak.

Then, Sir, I remembered in the earlier stage, I think it was the Environmental Science which really is a combination of many disciplines: you get the life science, you get the earth sciences, you get the human biology, there are four or five, maybe even more and then there is the agricultural side; students were complaining then that they were not doing enough of it, because the person who was assigned to teaching them was not able to master the various facets of the content. So, we always have these problems.

Sir, even in more recent times, we get students complaining about the workload and being able to interpret what is being asked of them in the information technology. Again, Sir, a lot of how a student interprets something, has also to do with how the examiner words the question and what the examiner sets out to extract from the student.

What I do find though, Sir, which could be a little uncomfortable therefore, is raising the fourth grade to the Grade A. It is going to take and I would hope what I say this evening to turn out not to be so, but something tells me, it is going to take a little time. Yes, they are very bright children and if at all they see that little crack where they could decipher how they are going to go about their course load, let me tell you, Sir, you are going to have four Grade A's, the parents are going to be sending them bright and early to persons so skilled to be able to get their children to a Grade A standard in the different subject areas.

Sir, getting back to what I am saying. I still have the sneaky suspicion that it is going to take a few years, maybe two, three or four, before we get back those three or four straight Grade A's, so I do not think it should appear as if you are out to rob a student who has made up in his or her mind over the past four or five years before doing the "A" Level where he or she says, "I must get a scholarship".

I heard that even some students in the fine arts are complaining that the materials which they are given with which to work are foreign to them and have been posing some problems in achieving the standard which they would hope to achieve. We have seen in the daily newspapers, where one writer in particular is saying that it would take some 30 teaching weeks to be able to achieve the desired goal, when in truth and in fact, this work has to be done in the first term of the Sixth Form.

Sir, children who go forward to get the Barbados scholarships, as I said, more often than not have their eyes on that goal for many years. They are those students who cannot afford to go to university to study certain disciplines without a scholarship. I remember speaking to one of my nephews telling him, "Boy, you have to get a scholarship because your father cannot afford to maintain your brother

and sister, send you to university and pay the mortgage on his house and for his car. Therefore, it behoves you, in no uncertain terms to get yourself a scholarship."

Sir, there is this feeling among students, their parents, relatives, within the school and the community when they get a scholarship, which I liken to a fellow who gets onto the Barbados cricket team. He feels proud, along with his parents and the whole district and then they go into the archives to tell you who, in previous years were able to get onto the Barbados cricket team and at what age; and it is sheer nostalgia. Every first eleven cricketer today would like to play for Barbados and every Barbadian cricketer would like to play for the West Indies, like every college basketballer would want to get onto the NBA but, in truth and in fact, Sir, the figures will show that it is less than one per cent who probably make that final achievement.

Sir, there is one area, nonetheless, which concerns many parents and that is the availability of tuition fees for the students when studying overseas. Quite often the fees reach the students somewhat late and I do not think it is always that the money is not there but there is a lot of bureaucratic bungling and I would wish that people would consider that these children could be very embarrassed and sometimes it makes life difficult, even in settling down to their academic work and socialising. There are those children who get the scholarship for the prestige and they really do not need the money because the money which their parents send up for them is more than enough to maintain them, so they could be somewhat flexible. They could take the money that comes up for them to pay their tuition, buy their books, *et cetera*, to go out and have a good time.

Sir, while speaking on this subject of scholarships, those schools which have the Sixth Forms some of them, particularly, Harrison College and Queen's College come in for some very unfair bashing. There is not a week which goes by that you do not have somebody coming on one of the call-in programmes to bash those schools and I think it is unfair.

The same way that you would want your son if he is a swimmer to be able to go to Florida and enroll in one of the top schools and thus prepare him for the Olympics, in the same way that you would want your son or daughter to be a top lawn tennis player to be able to rise to Wimbledon, in the same way you send your child there. More often than not, I think it is the student who really makes up in his or her mind where he or she wants to go. Then, to see these institutions as ones that are to be bashed because of their high level of achievement – all societies, Sir, have their institutions of great achievement, whether it is the Einstein Institute or the Max Planck Institute or the Louis Pasteur Institute, every jurisdiction has their....

Aside.

Mr. D. T. GILL: ... where everybody who is worth his or her political salt would have gone through that institution, so I think that people in an attempt to bash those institutions of great achievement are really and truly attempting to dilute the children's ability and academic success.
4.35 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only these 18 year olds and over 18 on whom we have been concentrating here today that my heart bleeds for.

Asides.

Mr. D. T. GILL: My heart, nonetheless, bleeds for those students who have reached 18 years of age who cannot show a piece of paper for the period in which they have gone to school. Only yesterday, I interviewed a youngster looking for a job and I asked him, because I did not have one of the forms with me, to give me some of the basic things about himself such as name and last school attended. My heart bled when that child at his age could only write his name disjointed not cursive. It is that child for whom my heart bleeds because there is nothing for him or her to do having no certification in any skill how basic.

Sir, although I know we are trying our best there are many more institutions which are targeted towards these children than previously but I do not think that we have grasped the problem and if we have grasped it, I do not know how because it is going to be a very expensive programme if we have the money to pursue the improvement and the enlightenment of these students about whom I just spoke.

Sir, I see a role and a place for retired teaching professionals to come back as it were to the village primary schools to do lots of remedial work with these people. Even our sportsmen cannot get away from this. One may be a good cricketer, a good footballer or a good tennis player but lacking in communication skills and unable to fill out the immigration form. Those forms, as the Bajan would tell you, give you "old Harry" to fill out. So this is the sort of remedial work which has to be done on a continuous basis. So when we are concentrating on the 18-year-old at the CAPE level and at a certain level of intelligence, at the same time simultaneously we have to look at those who are not of the same academic standing or achievement so that they can be able to say, "Tomorrow I am able to get a job".

I will say this without reservation, having spent all of that money on our young people, in this day and age they should not be coming and telling me, at the age of 18 or 19 – I do not mind when they reach age 30 or so and they have to pay the courts taxes for their children or what have they – "Anything will do Mr. Gill". I do not subscribe to an 18-year old telling me, and they are coming in their numbers,

that they will do anything if it is cutting down grass or even if it is working weeding. When that happens, I say to myself the system has failed us.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has one minute to conclude.

Mr. D. T. GILL: When we take up the newspapers, I do not read the court reports, court reports used to be up front in bold print but it has been shifted a little further down to the back now, you will see the pictures and invariably they are the same people who are going back to the law courts for wounding, murder and manslaughter. These are the people for whom my heart bleeds. I worked with some of them every weekend for the first three or four months of the year and those children lacked the ability to communicate, to listen, to deduce and to be objective.

Sir, I want to wind up by saying that testing would always be a sore point in Barbados or in any part of the world but I find that Barbadians more so are very concerned about testing. They want to throw the Common Entrance Examination through the window. But what would they replace it with, the continuous assessment? I am saying to them that the Common Entrance Examination is the best system whereby the more unfortunate youngsters of Carrington's Village, Bush Hall, Black Rock, Jackmans and Drax Hall who are of basic intelligence will be able to get into schools of their choice. So I am saying to their parents that the best system for matriculation to ensure that their children can get to the schools which they did not had the opportunity to enter for various reasons is the system of the Common Entrance Examination.

Sir, with those words, I conclude my contribution to this debate.

I am most obliged, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I want to thank all Honourable Members who contributed to this debate especially the Honourable Members for St. Lucy, St. George South and St. Michael South Central.

Bearing in mind, Mr. Speaker, that the real purpose of the amendment was to ensure that the two one-unit courses be treated as a two-unit course it would appear as though no one really has any objection to that because basically all contributions coming from Honourable Members dealt with the wider issues, particularly with the whole issue of the CAPE exam.

I want to bring this debate to a close by saying that the attitude of the officers at the Ministry of Education is certainly not one of "You all can talk what you like we are pressing on with CAPE". We have not closed our ears to the

views of what the Honourable Member for St. George South called, the “stakeholders in education”. We continue to listen, we continue to have meetings and the discussions would be ongoing.

I also want to ask the Caribbean Examination Council why could they not simply refer to the exam as the CXC Advanced Level because whether we like it or not, in the long run people are going to call it CXC “A” Level and it might be a good thing too. I think there might be some reason why CXC has termed it CAPE. I do not think it was ever explained to me why they took that course to call it CAPE rather than CXC “A” Level but I do believe, whether it is called that or not officially, people are going to refer to it as CXC “A” Level.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I agree with the Honourable Member for St. George South about the whole universality point which he raised by stating that he is a believer in the universality of education.
4.45 p.m.

You will remember I finished my opening remarks by saying that we should not discard things like Chaucer and Shakespeare that made our literature so rich. I hope I did not give the impression that we should do away with Chaucer and Shakespeare. I was saying that we should not retain those at the expense of our own literary works.

Mr. Speaker, the same concerns being raised in here today by the teachers about the CAPE exam are being raised also in other Caribbean countries. Therefore, we see ourselves as being part of a Caribbean movement of ongoing discussion and we hope by using these methods to bring these issues to the fore so that the public can hear the truth about the exam. We hope that this will make Barbados and the Caribbean a more informed region where exams such as CAPE are concerned and allow the public to hear the view so that they can comment on them.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to all Honourable Members for participating in this particular debate. I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 12 – THE MORTGAGE INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2002

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this Bill before the House seeks to amend two sections of the Barbados Mortgage Insurance Act, Cap 233.

Mr. Speaker, because of the changing value of mortgage loans, the company’s loan portfolio limit as set by

the Act is soon being reached and unless action is taken to raise the limit, the company could find itself losing out on a major portion of business. Secondly, because of the increase in the sizes of individual loans due to inflation and increasing mortgage values, the limit set for such loans will soon be reached.

Mr. Speaker, the market for the company will not level off unless an attempt is made to attract more business to the company by matching the increased mortgage values. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company may operate within the purview of the Mortgage Insurance Act, Cap. 233. The Bill before this House seeks to amend two sections. Section 11 presently limits the maximum value of all the loans outstanding to companies to \$150 million. Section 4 limits the value of any individual loan to \$250 000.

The Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Bill today seeks to amend Section 11 to raise the maximum value of all loans by the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company to \$250 million and amend Section 4(b) to raise the limit of individual loans to \$300 000.

Mr. Speaker, this is necessary if the company is to maintain its market share. To demonstrate this, Mr. Speaker, in 1998 the company had outstanding mortgages of \$107.7 million. By the end of 2001 the total outstanding mortgages had risen to \$147 million. This increase was approximately 25 per cent increase on an annual basis and because the maximum loan the company can lend is \$150 million, and they have already reached \$147 million and if they are increasing by approximately 25 per cent annually, it can be assumed that the figure of \$150 million will soon be reached.

Therefore, we are asking to increase the figure of \$150 million to \$250 million and individuals will now be able to borrow up to \$300 000.

Mr. Speaker, in 1999 there were approximately 165 new loans and in 2000 there were 368 loans. It should also be noted that the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company, out of seven trust companies and commercial entities generated approximately 22 per cent of loans in the market at this time. In the year 2001 this figure increased to 42 per cent of the overall market. With this in mind, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company can accommodate the maximum of \$300 000 for individuals and I believe in three to four years we will have to come back to Parliament to increase the limit again.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to report that much of the activity of the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is in the category of the 6 per cent loans which we passed some time ago where persons earning \$3000 monthly, first time-homeowners can borrow up to \$100 000 at 6 per cent loans interest rate and the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company

in the last year lent more than \$13.8 million in that same category. Sir, this category represents about 46 per cent of the overall loans for the institutions.

Sir, the 6 per cent interest loans will continue and we envisage that there will be ongoing programmes this year as well as next year. We believe that more than 1 500 will be able to acquire homes based on the programme of the National Housing Corporation which is now lending for land and house.
4.55 p.m.

The programme is a joint venture programme where the Government and the private sector partnership would involve 1 500 homes. It is anticipated that most of these new mortgages will be undertaken by the Barbados Mortgage Finance, private companies and a number of insurance companies.

Mr. Speaker, there is excess liquidity in the banking system and we would want to encourage trust companies and insurance companies to get into the market and lend Barbadians more money. There are a number of prospective homeowners who report that it takes too long to acquire a mortgage. We understand that the legal process takes some time but I believe that the large fees which are being charged by the institutions in Barbados can be relaxed. Sir, we have introduced a 6 per cent mortgage and it is going very well and we will be encouraging other financial institutions to do likewise so as to provide the opportunity for a number of Barbadians who want to own homes to be able to do so.

The demand for home ownership is still very strong. There are hundreds of Barbadians who are now requesting homes and land and we believe that the joint venture programme which the Cabinet of Barbados recently approved would be in the public domain very soon. We will be advertising for contractors who have the capacity to build homes and to develop land so that we can fast track the programmes. Honourable Members have been asking what we are doing with the lands that we have acquired. We will be putting a lot of this land into the joint venture programme and we are hoping that more than 1 500 homes would be completed by the year 2003.

Mr. Speaker, with those remarks, I beg that this Bill do now pass.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I was very glad to have heard the Honourable Minister make the point that high charges are incurred when prospective homeowners are applying for mortgages and that he would like to see those charges reduced. Sir, on Tuesday, March 2, 1999, I made that same point to the Minister and I am glad that he was able to repeat it here today, not realising that I said it before.

During the debate, I warned the Minister that the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company was supposed to be financing mortgages for persons in the middle and lower income groups. However, he is now accommodating those persons who want to borrow \$250 000 mortgages from the banks in Bridgetown at the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company. As a result of this, less mortgages are being approved for persons in the middle and lower income groups.

Sir, there is now a situation where the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is now looking at the maximum loan to be granted to borrowers. If prospective borrowers cannot get loans when there is so much liquidity in the banking system, then the banking system is not serving the purpose that it used to serve and it is more interested in charges than in lending money. Sir, if that is what the Minister wants me to deduce from what he said, then he should say it to this House.

We have several banks in Barbados and the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company which is there to help the middle and lower class people in Barbados, is now accommodating the lower, middle and the upper classes in Barbados. It seems to me that we have a situation in Barbados that Barbados Mortgage Finance Company has to carry the burden of loans in Barbados and the private sector, which has collected large sums of money over the years, is holding onto its money and seems not too willing to lend it to Barbadians.

Sir, am I to believe that we have a situation where you can go to the private sector for cars and the Government institutions are being used to finance mortgages? I would like the Minister to carry out a survey in this particular matter. Previously we thought that banking was about lending money but it is clear it is about service charges.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the balance sheets of the bank, you would understand what I am talking about. The charges for services provided by the bank are higher than the interest charged on loans. Therefore, it means that if Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is carrying the full load of mortgages in Barbados, then we must understand the importance of the credit unions in Barbados. I am saying that we must relax the pressure that we have been putting on the credit unions in Barbados and understand the role that the credit unions will have to play in developing the people of Barbados. We need to give the credit unions more leverage to help develop Barbadians, because if we do not do that, we are going to find that the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is carrying the burden of mortgages in Barbados and they would not be able to deliver the product that they are supposed to deliver, and that is to help the middle class and the masses of Barbados.
5.05 p.m.

By the time they get around to look at those loans which will be great in number, the ones from the upper

end, because of the size the number of people you can lend will be reduced. When it goes to \$300 000 and you divide the total amount available to be lent you will see the number of people receiving loans will decrease. So I hope the Minister understands this particular point and that because of collateral purposes you are not getting a situation where because someone has all the collateral in the world that you are now squeezing out the man who has need and who needs you most while at the same time accommodating the person who can go elsewhere and put a case to get a mortgage.

I hope that the Minister, if he did not understand the point I made on March 2, 1999, understands the point now, Sir. I am watching this new programme, Sir, because I realise previously it was \$150 000 and it went to \$250 000 and now it is \$300 000.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Member is cleverly trying to mislead the House, because he is making an assumption that as the limit goes up less money will be made available to the public. The truth of the matter when you look at the facts is that when we raised the limit from \$150 000 to \$250 000 we were lending 100 people in 1998. By 2000, we were lending 368 and last year we lent 382. Even though the limit has increased, we are lending more money and the projections show that in this year 2002 we will be lending \$30 million, next year we will be lending \$35 million, 2004 – \$40 million, 2005 – \$45 million so that even though we are lending at a higher rate it is not true to say that the amount will be reduced.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I always welcome when the Honourable Member for St. George North enters a debate of which I am part because the point that I am going to make is that what the Honourable Member said about the National Housing Corporation having a joint programme in which they will be providing homes, is the whole key to this debate. What is happening and I have accused National Housing before in this Parliament of using land and a home to be the biggest speculators in Barbados. What the Honourable Member is now admitting is that previously in Barbados where a poor person was able to buy a piece of land from National Housing Corporation that facility is not there now and that if you want anything from National Housing you have to buy a home that has been completed.

If you check, the majority of sales lately by NHC have been house and land. That means that whereas the masses of people in Barbados who previously went to NHC and purchased a piece of land used community help, as I call it, to develop the house, that cannot occur anymore. Every time you go to National Housing and tell them about land they are telling you where to go to get a home.

In St. Peter – Mt. Brevitor, house and land, Bakers, the

same thing. Rock Hall, St. Thomas – house and land too.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Rock Hall, St. Thomas was a joint venture by NHC, house and land. The other one you are talking about to the west of the playing field if you have some available lots it is because I nailed the Minister to let him know that National Housing Corporation can achieve a lot more by selling lots but when they sell land and the people are allowed to do it themselves they can get not only house and land but house, land and a reconditioned car. You would have heard me with that already, Sir.

NHC cannot as a Government agency continue to behave as if it is one of the private sector grouping. Not Farmers, because Farmers started when the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was in here because the Honourable Member for St. Andrew had a policy about house lots and I remember well the Honourable Member talking about 2000 house lots. That is why you had Deane Town house lots and there were many other places in Barbados when the Honourable Member was in here because his programme was based on house lots. The Honourable Member for St. George North's programme is based on house and land.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I think the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should know better. We have a programme where we provide in most of our developments house and land as well as lots by themselves so that persons can buy a single lot from National Housing Corporation and put up their own house or a person can buy house and land because in many cases a number of women and men prefer a turn-key position, house and land, because it is easier for them to get mortgages that way. Where a person has to buy the land and then turn around and get plans and develop the land some people feel it is too hard and they prefer the house and land. We have all types of programmes going by which a person can buy a lot, a house and land or get a loan.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am very glad for the Honourable Member for St. George North getting up and making that particular point. What the Honourable Member is saying is that it is much easier to go to Barbados Mortgage Finance and negotiate a loan for house and land than to get money to buy land.

The Honourable Member is quite right because the system is now for someone to be encouraged to buy house and land instead of continuing to build communities. People do not understand that when someone buys a piece of land and starts to build a house that he or she develop a relationship within that community.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: We have to understand that there are many Barbadians who would like to buy a piece of

land and build their own homes because at least by buying that piece of land it allows them in the initial stage to know their neighbours, but when they buy the completed house there is no relationship between them and the neighbour next door. People must understand that there is a social side to a lot of this discussion because at least when you first start you do not have electricity and water and you might have to turn to your neighbour until those amenities are put in.

We have to understand that this debate is much deeper than just a home. In rural Barbados, it even goes further because once you are from the district you ask your neighbours to help you turn concrete and you keep the community spirit going. The Minister must understand that it is very important in this day and age that we continue to keep the community spirit going, not only keep the community spirit going, but when someone within the district buys a piece of land, it is obvious that the masons, carpenters and plumbers in that particular area, stand a chance of getting work. When the contractors come in and build everything, what you are doing is seeing development in an area, but it is directly affecting the artisans within the particular area. You must understand that there is a social side to this particular discussion, not just coming in here and raising a loan limit and the total amount of money to be disbursed. We also have to look at the social side of things and that is what is lacking in Barbados. The top end gets everything and we are not caring about what is happening at the bottom end which is very important.

5.15 p.m.

Sir, if Barbados is to be developed the right way, we are supposed to start from the bottom, build a good foundation – there is nothing wrong with that – and go up and with Town Planning permission...

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The lady is implying that I am building something without Town Planning permission but everything I built has Town Planning permission. This is all about the development of the masses of people in Barbados. My interest is to make sure that whenever there is pie that the masses get their fair share of the pie. The day that this cannot be my interest, I have no role in this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, it does not make sense for us to come in here and talk about all the money that we are lending in mortgages and when I walk the streets, Sir, I cannot see my brothers and sisters who are part of the masses of people in Barbados, if all the large contractors tell me how well they are doing, and the small contractors are not doing well.

Sir, I am saying that we have to understand that there must be a critical side to this thing and that we must be prepared to bring along our brothers and sisters. The

Honourable Member for St. Thomas, being a rural person should understand exactly what I am speaking about because surely, when the Honourable Member was growing up, she would have understood the importance of the neighbourhood coming together and building a home.

Sir, regarding the house in Welches Terrace, I want you to know that that particular house was built exactly the same way that I am talking, that is, by my comrades coming and helping to build it the way I am speaking of, that is why I can speak on this particular point. We had a relationship and it is not that they came and built for me and it ended there. There was a direct relationship between the builders, and we had something like a co-op programme, you help me and I help you.

I am saying, Sir, that I want to see more of these relationships continue in Barbados and nobody should believe that because you have a home, you have the last home and there should not be any contribution to other people out there who want to have a share in the cake, and that is the problem in Barbados.

Sir, as soon as we get on the ladder, we believe we should step off the ladder and push it down. I am saying, no, the ladder must be there to help others to climb up and if we as a society do not do that, we will destroy everything that we and our foreparents would have worked so hard to achieve in this country.

I am saying that the Minister of Housing must understand that the National Housing Corporation can do a lot better by taking the land and giving it out and allowing people to build homes, because as I said, Sir, you would create some social relationship within the communities. When you bring in a contractor, sometimes the people do not know the contractor, the houses are completed. Bram. Bram, everything is finished and they are gone. There is no relationship and people from all over come and live in the houses, they do not even know the neighbours and there is no social relationship. Then, Sir, you expect that somebody would see somebody going in but some of the people do not even want to speak to some of the others.

Sir, I am saying that we have to build that relationship and the faster we do it, the better it is for this country.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that we at the Ministry of Housing and Lands will continue to observe the trend for development in this country. We will continue to provide opportunities for Barbadians to own lots and houses and for them to have the mortgages within their reach.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. G. A. CLARKE, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1, 2 and 3 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. G. A. CLARKE, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motion of Hon. G. A. CLARKE, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2002.

ORDER NO. 10 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF LAND AT BULKELEY PLANTATION, ST. GEORGE FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution before this House seeks permission to vest 6.897 hectares of land at Ellerton, St. George in the National Housing Corporation. This is approximately 20 acres of land.

At the meeting on the 7th March, 2002, the Cabinet agreed that this land should be vested in the National Housing Corporation. This land acquisition was published in the *Official Gazette* No. 51, dated 15th October 2001, vesting this land in the Crown. It was acquired sometime also in the year 2001 and it was passed in this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this land is really needed to serve the areas of Ellerton, Drax Hall and a number of persons in the St. George, Christ Church, St. Michael areas. When the land is fully developed, we should have approximately 152 service lots.
5.25 p.m.

The National Housing Corporation intends to construct approximately 80 houses in this area and there will be approximately 70 house lots. We will also ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Seventy house lots...

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Seventy or 80 house lots...

Mr. SPEAKER: But for what, you mean for sale?

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: For sale to Barbadians.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: The land has been surveyed and has been approved by the Town and Country Planning Department and we believe that very soon we should see the development at Ellerton starting.

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

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Before you start Honourable Member, this Resolution speaks to the vesting of land at Bulkeley and I would hope that all those members who would speak would stick to the Resolution. An acquisition has already been discussed in this House and we are dealing today with the vesting of the land in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Thanks for the advice, Sir. I can assure you that I will do what you requested of me but I have always done that, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said that there would be 152 service lots, 80 will be for houses and 70 for regular lots. My tabulation tells me that is 150. I would like to know where the two that are missing have gone. That is just a little mathematics or arithmetic but there are two lots missing and I would like to know from the Minister where I could find the other two lots.

Sir, when we did the acquisition of this land, I pointed out that grasslands are regarded as agricultural land but that was disputed and then another member admitted that when you look at the development plan in Barbados you would recognise that agricultural land includes grassland. I also made the point then that this particular acquisition was very important to the whole agricultural development of Barbados.

Sir, one of the largest G7 countries has now recognised that the most important thing for them in this globalized world is to develop a relationship between their farmers and the government of the day. Here it is that we are having a situation where the United States of America understands

the importance of agricultural land but it is clear to me that we in Barbados seem not to understand that a country with food is a country that can survive and a country without food is a country that cannot survive. When one looks at the housing policy of the Ministry of Housing and Lands one wonders if there is a relationship between the housing policy of the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the agricultural policy of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development because it is clear to me that we are getting rid of our valuable land and that someday we will find ourselves having to import all of our food. So when we are truly in a crisis, we would understand the importance of agricultural land.

I also said in that debate that this is the beginning of the destruction of the land in the Bulkeley area and that it was a signal to me that we would have had a closure of Bulkeley Sugar Factory. I do not have to speculate anymore on whether this development has taken place with the common knowledge that the people would not have to worry about the ash coming from the Bulkeley Factory. I can now say that this development went ahead with the full knowledge that Bulkeley Sugar Factory would have been closed because of the location of this particular development.

I am also saying that this development in the Bulkeley area will serve as a cancer to the agricultural industry in that particular area because the land owners to the east of this particular land will use this now as an excuse to protect the housing to the west and will use this now as the reason why they should get further permission to develop their land so that they would not affect the 152 properties to the west of the lands. This is a well-calculated plan. In the same way that the plan was calculated to shift from agriculture to tourism this is now a plan to shift from agriculture to housing. Once this has started, you cannot stop it because when you move one field to the east then you have to give them permission to the other field to protect the other houses and it continues like a cancerous situation. So I am saying that we have to decide where in Barbados we are going to provide that agricultural land that will be able to feed our people because if we do not do that, the United States of America will continue to move their subsidies from \$30 billion to \$100 billion at the same time when we are saying that we cannot subsidise our agriculture.

I want to make one point in Barbados that the sugar industry is a net foreign exchange earner in Barbados and people must understand the significance of that point. In other words, we get more foreign exchange from the sugar industry than what we spend on it. Any country that has an industry that brings in more foreign exchange than it spends on the industry should keep that industry. Our problem in Barbados is a local problem not a foreign exchange problem and our losses are local losses not external losses and we must understand that. Mr. Speaker, when we buy goods and services overseas, we do not buy them in Barbados dollars, we buy them with foreign currency, that is a very vital point.

The same way that the United States of America can subsidise their industries and are prepared to pump lots of money in them and the World Trade Organisation do not want us to subsidise ours, we must ask ourselves where we are leading ourselves because clearly someone has been thinking and someone has recognised that if they could continue to feed the world that there is going to be a scarcity and a demand. I am saying to Barbados that we must be in on that scarcity and we must be there when there is a demand because if we do not, we will be the ones at the door begging to get in.

Sir, we must respect our agricultural lands. Anyone can tell you the price of a piece of land that is used for housing but no one can give you the opportunity cost of land that is used in agriculture because for one thing there is one cost for real estate but when you have a piece of agricultural land you do not know how much money you can make from that land especially at the right time and that is a point that must be taken into account.

Our losses are local losses but our gains are foreign gains and that is what matters because that is what we use to buy goods and services. We do not use Barbados dollars to buy goods and services. We must have the capacity to generate foreign exchange and we must keep those industries that can generate foreign exchange because right now our foreign reserves might be good but we have to remember that even though they are good, they might not be sustainable. So that is all I will say on this particular matter, Sir.
5.35 p.m.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I have a view which I have been expressing for the last 15 years that the most pressing social need in Barbados is housing. We have come a long way in all areas of social activities like health, education and transportation but we are slipping very badly in housing. Those of us who represent the people know that the vast majority of people in constituencies come asking for assistance in the area of housing and house spots.

Sir, we had a problem in years gone by where housing developments were all being done in the St. Michael and Christ Church area principally by the National Housing Corporation and, therefore, the rural constituencies were not getting the benefits of Government assistance in housing. Sir, two things ensued from that. First, there was a lot of migration from places like St. George into Christ Church and St. Michael in pursuit of housing and secondly, there was a deterioration in living standards in rural constituencies. It is of satisfaction to me that the Government has now seen the good sense in using the vast tracks of open land in rural Barbados to provide housing for people in the country.

Sir, people who live in villages in St. George are not anxious to go and live in Ferniehurst or Pinelands or these

areas. They want to live in St. George because they need an environment where they can plant fruit trees, grow vegetables and the children are free to play around the house.

This development was recommended by me after consultation with the people in Ellerton area and they said that Government should put houses on that land. Sir, Ellerton, for me is the capital of St. George. In recent times one got the feeling that the capital was moving in another direction but, Sir, a tradition cannot be destroyed and this is why I believe that Ellerton is the heart of St. George and nothing can change my view.

The provision of these 150 lots in the Ellerton area will provide housing for people of the Ellerton area and we look forward to this, Sir. We have been waiting a long time to see this development come to fruition and we know that Governments in Barbados are very good at acquiring land, vesting it in the National Housing Corporation, then it remains vested there and goes no further. I want to urge the Minister to let us get some action on this matter.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Sir, this land is not to go into the land bank because this belongs to the people of Ellerton and I am asking the Minister to “get cracking” and make the lots available because there are people all over St. George who have spoken to me and they want lots in this area so that they can improve the housing conditions that they are currently experiencing.

I hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy saying that we are taking the land out of agriculture but, Sir, taking land out of agriculture is an art that has been refined by the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, if I had the time I would rattle off all the plantations in Barbados that the Democratic Labour Party took out of agriculture and put into housing but I will not get into that now because I prefer not to travel backwards.

I want to make the point that the land being used for housing in the Ellerton area is rab land and not arable land.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Sir, in other words, it is not arable land that is under cultivation, it is a grass piece.

Sir, behind this area where these houses are to be built, the Wesleyan Holiness Church, Ellerton, has now constructed a new edifice and I am very proud of what they have done. They have taken the money of small people and created an edifice worthy of a cathedral. I am glad that the Minister of Housing and the Minister of Social Transformation are present because they want to acquire a further

piece of land behind the church to construct a day care and training centre so that they can look after young children and old people during the day. The old people would go there and do the things that I see the Ministry of Social Transformation doing so well with the elderly in Barbados.

I am urging the Government to give the maximum support in this very important venture. It is a densely populated area and it would do well to have that kind of facility for a multitude of reasons. One important reason is the disadvantage that the low-income, working mothers are experiencing because they cannot find anywhere for their children to stay when they are at work. Sir, there are young women who want to work but because they have young children and there is no provision for day care facilities, quite often they have to pass up on jobs and at times lose their jobs because there is nowhere to keep children so a facility such as this would ease the burden in that area. Sir, I am grateful to have this particular Resolution come before Parliament.

Sir, I also have to make a few comments although persons have by now got accustomed to me making these comments. One of my colleagues said to me that I am like the boy on the burning deck. But, Sir, I am not like the boy on the burning deck. I stand on the ocean, see the waves coming and I try to push back the waves but, Sir, I promise you that I will not let the waves rush over me and drown me.

5.55 p.m

Sir, everybody in Barbados, and all Honourable Members here in Parliament, know my position in respect of the Bulkeley Factory closure. I am not happy with it. I have no support on this issue. I have been left like the man on the shore with the water washing all over me and I feel no sympathy coming from any quarter. The people in St. George know from now until eternity the position that I have taken on it, the fight that I have put up and in the fullness of time the chickens will come home to roost.

I want to say with respect to the closure of the factory, I understand that it closed two days ago, my heart was so heavy I could not even pass by the factory.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Culture knowing that Crop Over is coming and the closure of Bulkeley Factory, something unique could have happened at that factory. Anyway, I am the boy on the burning deck and the chickens will come home to roost and the people of St. George know that I have done whatever I could under the circumstances and if things go another way, so be it. At this point I probably will be making my last statement on the Bulkeley Factory.

I hope that the Honourable Member for St. George North, whose constituents and some of his relatives also worked at Bulkeley Factory, understands that we in the southern part of St. George where Bulkeley Factory is located, deserve a *quid pro quo*. You cannot take away the factory from us and do not offer us anything in return.

Sir, the Minister of Housing has started it with this Resolution by this vesting of land in the National Housing Corporation. I will be contacting him at the earliest opportunity.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I can give the Honourable Member for St. George North the assurance that we will start on this development as soon as Parliament approves this Resolution. I must say to the Honourable Member that there are a number of persons from St. John, Christ Church and St. Philip who have applied for house spots at Ellerton, St. George. I know that there is a strong demand for land at Ellerton, St. George. However, we will be able to commence this development at Ellerton, St. George very shortly.

I also want to give the Honourable Member the assurance that I too like him feel the pain in the closing of Bulkeley Factory. I have also expressed my opinion elsewhere about the closure. I will make the point that the

Government will not stand idly and allow Bulkeley Factory to become another derelict property. We will have to do something with Bulkeley Factory, if it is not going to be a sugar factory then something worthwhile can come out of that cultural institution.

I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have come to the end of Government Business for today. I think that we had a relatively good day in Parliament, not a contentious day but important measures were passed in the House today.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 18th June, 2002, at 11.00 o'clock in the morning.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

5.55 p.m.

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