
THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2003 - 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10:10 a.m. on Tuesday, November 11, 2003.

PRESENT

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

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and the Civil Service)

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.)

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

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

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL, (Chairman of Committees)

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

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN

Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs),(Leader of the House)

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)

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M. Sc., M.Phil, J.P.,(Minister of Energy and Public Utilities)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B. Sc., J.P., (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

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

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S. (Edin.), F.R.C.S., J.P. (Minister of Health)

Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.), J.P.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., M.B., B.S.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.),
M.A. (Public Finance), (Leader of the
Opposition)

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B., (Hons.),
L.E.C., (Minister of Industry and International
Business)

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B., (Hons.)

Dr. W. F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S.,
FDRCS., J.P.

Mr. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan
Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday,
November 04, 2003.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I
beg to move that the Minutes so cited be
confirmed subject to any omissions, corrections
and/or observations.

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

PAPERS

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

1. Annual Report of the Barbados Agency for
Micro Enterprise Development Limited (Fund
Access) for the year ended December 31, 2001.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

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

House 11 Sequence 2

10:20 a.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO.2

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
CHANGE OF PURPOSE FOR WHICH THE
PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT
TWEEDSIDE ROAD IN THE PARISH OF
ST. MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND WAS
COMPULSORILY ACQUIRED BY THE
CROWN UNDER THE LAND
ACQUISITION ACT, CAP.228 FROM THE
PUBLIC PURPOSE OF THE
CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW
CARRINGTON(S PRIMARY SCHOOL, TO
THAT OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker,
the Resolution before this Honourable House
is seeking permission to vest 4009.6 square
metres or 50 000 square feet of land at
Tweedside Road, St. Michael, in the National
Housing Corporation.

Sir, some time in 1989, this property was
acquired by the Crown, specifically for the
purpose of the construction of the new

Carrington(s Primary School, at which I understand there are problems relative to the quality of the plant such as overcrowding and other related issues. At that time, it was felt that a new building should have been constructed for the occupation of staff and students and pursuant to that thinking, Cabinet has approved a decision to acquire this land for the construction of Carrington(s Primary School.

Subsequently, however, at the urgings of the Ministry of Education and the then Member of Parliament for St. Michael South Central, it was felt that this particular location was not the best site for the school. A decision was then taken to use a property at Flint Hall, which is better in terms of location to traffic, privacy and security than the Tweedside Road premises would have been. Hence, a decision was taken that this property at the Flint Hall, which was formerly the property of the Barbados Transport Board, and which was to be used for administrative offices, be converted into a school. It is a sufficiently spacious and well-constructed coral stone building which would be adapted and purpose-built for the school.

Sir, the question, therefore, arose as to what would have been the best use for that land at Tweedside Road which was to have been used as the school plant. A decision was taken that the land would have been used for public housing, consistent with Government(s policy of providing homes for all Barbadian.

Sir, it is intended that the National Housing Corporation would construct 24 units at the Tweedside Road site, for which Town and Country Planning Development(s permission for commercial enterprise has already been granted. Framed in that context, we are now aware of the intended purpose of this land and what are the future plans for the Carrington(s Primary School.

Sir, it is on this foundation that I would wish

to locate my broader comments in respect to this Resolution today, which speaks to the provision for housing for Barbadians and, in this instance, the provision of housing for low income Barbadians.

Sir, it has been recognised that while we are pursuing an active policy of the sale of terrace units, that there is a core of Barbadians who need the support system of rental units available to them at reasonable prices. Sir, as we sell units to increase our property-owning democracy in Barbados, it is equally critical that there is a pool of housing that is available to low income Barbadians and also for purchase at reasonable prices.

Sir, while I imagine that today(s comments would open up a large housing debate, I want to be very specific in my focus, because in a few weeks(time during the Estimates Debate, I want to debate housing in full. Therefore, I am not in any way seeking to restrain Honourable Members on either side. I am only seeking to say that the nature of my comments today would be in terms of a report to the Chamber and not in terms of future policies.

Sir, the issue of housing in Barbados is both emotional and emotive. Today housing is one of the most critical needs in Barbados and in a way, it almost threatens to make the Government a victim of its own success.

Sir, while unemployment figures have risen over what they were in the same period last year, the reality is that employment figures are much higher than they were five or ten years ago. As people work, their first demand is for housing and with a liquid capital market, with the banks being fluid, where they are now advertising and competing for low interest rates, for 100 per cent mortgages, for no negotiation and commitment fees, more and more persons, young people in particular, are taking these opportunities to purchase their

homes without having to make a down payment. The stores and banks are now enticing persons to come and to take credit without making a deposit. The competition is great.

Sir, having been given the portfolio of housing, I want to ensure that I deliver on the Barbados Labour Party's policy agenda of housing delivery at every level. I firmly believe that the provision of a house, whether for sale or for rent, today represents the delivery of the greatest demand at the social level in Barbados, across all income groups and ages.

Mr. Speaker, I want to ensure that the National Housing Corporation is not only defined as an institution with a social conscience but one that is able to deliver its mandate of housing a nation, irrespective of social class. Therefore, the National Housing Corporation must become one of the flagship statutory corporations in Barbados. If one considers its social role, one would then understand why it has to redefine its vision and its way of doing business, in order to implement the Government's agenda. Sir, I want to be part of leading that change process, to have the National Housing Corporation reidentified and rebranded in the minds of Barbadians as an institution that delivers on social policies and one that makes changes to the quality of lives of individuals.

Mr. Speaker, this would require the improvement of the quality of the management of the National Housing Corporation. It would require improving service delivery in the National Housing Corporation and I say that in two regards.

H:No.11(3)1030 a.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. H.E. THOMPSON:

We, in the corporation, have to be careful about the way we treat our clients, how we service the public, the type of things we tell them, the timeliness of our delivery, the way in which we react to their request and demands, the way we treat them with dignity or lack of dignity, whether tenants are in arrears or in good standing or whether they are people who want to buy a house for \$400 000 or a lot for \$30 000. Sir, everyone must be treated with dignity because all Barbadians deserve nothing less from the staff of the National Housing Corporation.

Secondly, we have to improve our project management because far too often the National Housing Corporation executes projects about which people complain. Sir, too many people complain about leaking roofs in houses, that interior doors are placed outside that rot in one week, that windows do not open, that doors do not shut and they have to get buckets because of the volume of water coming through the windows.

Sir, whether the service is done by the staff of the National Housing Corporation or private contractors the buck must stop at us with the quality of supervision and project management that we are prepared to deliver as a corporation. In my view, we have to improve our financial management as an institution.

Sir, I have been talking about where I want to see the corporation go and I wish also to put in place a standard of management and also processes which are transparent, fair to all and subject to objective standards that can stand scrutiny by the public. Sir, what the institution is doing cannot be a secret or clandestine. There should be no fumbling when people ask the rationale for doing things because there will be objectives, standards and criteria in place which apply to all individuals in Barbados in a fair way.

The National Housing Corporation will go into retreat in December to work at how we are going to redefine ourselves and work on the new face we are going to put to the public, the kind of sensitivity and the new level of management that we need to bring to the institution. Hopefully we would come out of that retreat ready to serve the public better and to deliver better on the Government(s) housing agenda.

Sir, there are challenges which the National Housing Corporation face and one of them is politicians but I will speak to that in one minute. The second challenge is money and at this time, even as I speak, there is \$2.5 million owed to the National Housing Corporation by tenants who packed up and left. Sir, they did not pay the rent, they moved out without any forwarding address and, believe me, the cheque was not in the mail. Of people in units, at this time, 45 per cent of them do not pay rent at all or do not pay well, hence, our rent arrears are \$5.2 million.

Sir, since 1994 we have given \$44 million in loans and some 2 600 people approximately owe \$4.1 million in arrears for loans which they received for house repairs, construction and refurbishment of some kind or other. In respect of persons who rent land from the National Housing Corporation, they owe \$1.1 million.

Sir, I do not hold the tenants fully responsible for these arrears, because if the National Housing Corporation were managing its business properly, arrears could not get to these substantial amounts. Therefore, it is my intention with the Board to implement a policy which says there is a maximum amount of arrears you can have after which National Housing Corporation will take firm action to address the problem.

Sir, this is a problem of longstanding that has spanned both administrations and this is one of the reasons why we must improve our financial management. We must also improve it for the sake of our tenants because people go on the call-in programmes or the television and complain that National Housing Corporation does not turn up to do maintenance. The reality is that if we are not getting revenues from the tenants because as many as 45 per cent are in arrears, then it compromises our capacity to maintain the units and to deliver quality service in a timely manner. Sir, if tenants do not pay, they are not doing the National Housing Corporation an injustice but, in essence, they are doing an injustice to themselves by compromising the institution(s) capacity to maintain, repair, upkeep, improve and enhance their units.

I want to appeal to those tenants who are in arrears to pay. I also wish to appeal to the Opposition for their support. I know in politics we like to take sharp divide on issues like these but I want to say to the Opposition today that, in my view, this is not an issue on which we must take a sharp divide. If I give the Opposition the kind of arrears that the National Housing Corporation has, they will realise that it is the kind of problem that has persisted over many years and over many administrations.

Mr. Speaker, I represent one of the largest housing areas in Barbados and it has been my experience that a lot of people who are in arrears, their STV, electricity and telephones are working. They also have the most beautiful hi-tech electronic equipment but they do not pay water and rent because these are paid to the Government and the Government will be lenient.

H11/10:40 a.m.Sequence 4

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON We are creating a level of indiscipline in the society from which both administrations will suffer. In fact, when the Opposition become the Government, though that will not be for a long time, if this sort of behaviour is allowed to take root, it is going to become so severe in the future that they are going to have hell managing the process.

Sir, politicians are sometimes part of the challenge that the National Housing Corporation has to deal with. I encourage clients who are not working or who recently started to work and are in arrears with their rent to go into the National Housing Corporation and make arrangements to pay their arrears. I also refer them to the Ministry of Social Transformation so that they can get assistance with their rent. We as politicians must seek to help those persons who cannot help themselves by employing the mechanisms available in the system which act as a safety net for such persons.

Mr. Speaker, instead of using the mechanisms in place, politicians would call the National Housing Corporation and give them all kinds of reasons why people should not be paying rent and request that persons be given back keys to their units even though they owe National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has not been published in the press is that we at the National Housing Corporation have been very sensitive in the application of the rules to lock tenants out of their units. Persons who have children have not been disadvantaged. We have tried to get these persons to make arrangement to pay their arrears. Sir, it is interesting that since we started locking people out of their units they have been coming to the National Housing Corporation and paying arrears in the amounts of \$8 000 and \$10 000. Some people who ignored letters and threats

from National Housing Corporation and who were saying that they do not have any money are now rushing to pay their arrears.

Sir, some of the tenants are using colourful language before they pay but the point is, revenues are coming in and it suggests that there are people in the system who can pay but are not paying. Therefore, I am appealing to both sides of this Honourable House not to encourage that kind of behaviour. Let us seek to help those persons who are genuinely poor and live under unfortunate circumstances and need the support of the social welfare system. However, there are persons who feel that they are entitled to freeness and who feel that because Government owns the units they do not have to pay their rent. Let us take a firm action to stop that kind indiscipline because it is not an indiscipline of Barbados Labour Party or Democratic Labour Party, it is an indiscipline in the Barbados society that successive administrations have to address or suffer from. I say suffer from because governments cannot function without revenues. Let us not fool ourselves about that. If it starts with housing, water and other things, then it is going to spread, so, let us try to address the problem.

I have spoken of some of the challenges that the National Housing Corporation faces. Let me make the point that since 1994, despite the challenges, the General Workers Loan Fund made loans to 3 891 persons in the amount of \$44 733 170.99. I have indicated the number of loans granted and the percentage of arrears on those loans. If our loans came to \$44 million and our loans arrears are \$4.1 million, we are running approximately 10 per cent of arrears on the loans.

We have also embarked on a joint venture programme where we would be building 992 middle income houses, 191 low income houses, 44 middle income lots and 112 low income lots in the first phase of this programme. Sir, we

are making more lots than houses available because while some people want a turned-key arrangement, it has always been part of our culture for people to acquire land and build their homes piece by piece as money becomes available. They would also get friends and relatives to assist them in building or beg a mason or carpenter to work a day or two for them, that is part of the culture.

Therefore, cognizant of that reality, we are making more lots than houses available so that people do not feel the stress of having to pay for a house and land upfront.

Sir, the Government has accumulated a land bank and it is in a position to ensure that the price of houses and lots remain at a certain ceiling level, particularly the lots, since we are controlling the land prices.

Sir, land is being sold on the market at between \$10 to \$15 a square foot, in many of the National Housing Corporation development the lots are as low \$6 a per square foot. Mr. Speaker, the cost of the largest lot in the middle income range would cost approximately \$36 000 but you can get lots for less than that.

We have also built 300 single unit starter homes and a number of town houses at London Bourne Towers, Grazettes and St. George. Despite the constraints we have changed 3 247 asbestos roofs to modern roofs on our 4 100 units. These repairs to the roofs and firewalls have cost us approximately \$8.8 million to date. There are approximately 700 units with asbestos roofs to be replaced and firewalls to be constructed.

Sir, despite the arrears and constraints, the National Housing Corporation has tried to deliver on its service agenda and policy agenda.

Since 1998, we have changed 4 307 windows in units across Barbados at a cost of \$1 million

and replaced

3 352 doors at a cost of \$1.21 million. I do not wish to constrain the right of a tenant to complain because he feels that his unit should be maintained. I agree that long as you are a tenant the National Housing Corporation has the responsibility to look after the units of tenants. Sir, National Housing Corporation has a responsibility to carry out its functions as landlord, which relates to the maintenance of property, but equally the tenant has a responsibility, whatever the state of the maintenance, to pay the rents that are demanded and that is a legal principle.

Asides

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It is the legal responsibility of the tenant to pay rent and for a landlord to carry out maintenance and ensure that the property is in fit and habitable condition so that the tenant could have enjoyment of the premises.

Asides

10.50 a.m.H 11/5:

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

10:50 a.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am trying not to stop you. I believe the information you are giving is very timely and pertinent but, surely, there is a Resolution before the House. Housing is a very wide topic and I would not want you to go on and cover every aspect of housing under this Resolution. You are free to go on but I am just reminding you that you carried the Resolution very broad and wide.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, I thought that the shelter of this House was, indeed,

broad and wide and I am actually seeking as the Member to enjoy that shelter.

Mr. SPEAKER: You proceed.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir.

In respect of the House, Sir, I have tried to frame some of what we are doing both in terms of sales, rentals and our management of the institution. I agree that we cannot speak about all, but another critical function which we have performed is that of the provision of loans for housing, which we have done through the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited.

In 1994, the Barbados Mortgage Finance was making \$1.2 million in profit. As at 2002, they made \$2.8 million in profit. In 1994, Sir, they were at the time loaning \$4 620 000 for houses and at the end of 2001, and I apologise for not having the 2002 figure here, Sir, but they were extending loans worth \$21 923 000. Therefore, you can see over seven years, the extent to which the finances of the Mortgage Finance Company, through the Government, has grown. They project that in 2003, they will lend \$30 million.

Sir, I am just going to conclude by making two brief points, and I am grateful to the Chair for such latitude as you have extended to me, but I think that we all agree that this is an important matter for both sides of the House. I have tried not to frame my comments in a controversial way. I attempted to speak about the issues and the broad policy agenda, and to ask for some cooperation in relation to things that I think could effect both administrations, the current one and a future one.

Therefore, the point on which I would wish to conclude my opening remarks, though I would come back to other issues as we close, is this.

I believe, Sir, that there is an aspect of the housing market that is not now being served. A low income house is today, selling in Barbados for between \$105 000 and \$125 000 to \$150 000. The reality is, Sir, that to buy a house and land for that price, the monthly income has to be approximately \$2 500 to \$3 000. It means, Sir, that maids, janitors, hucksters, gas station attendants - except they buy with the reasonable rates being offered under the sale of tenantry units - a plethora of Barbadians is being excluded from property ownership. They cannot afford what now passes for a low income house in Barbados because the price is so high.

I believe that the Government has a social responsibility to lower prices in the housing market at the low income level, so that a house and land for a low income person, can and must sell in Barbados for less than \$100 000.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: It has to be affordable and accessible and it is my intention to make it so, Sir.

Sir, we have received proposals from a number of business persons who have indicated that they can offer housing made from traditional materials, like wood and wall, but particularly wall, as well as new technologically engineered materials that I am informed are weather resistant and durable, at less than \$100 000.

I expect that when we negotiate with these persons, we will be able to deliver houses to that sector of the market, who want houses and land in the region of \$80 000. So that is the next thrust which I intend to embark on, to make sure that this section of the market which is not now being served by anybody, that the National Housing Corporation treats particularly to those persons.

In this regard, Sir, I would wish to ask those persons who have parcels of land in Barbados, particularly, black people in the former tenancies, that they are not necessarily using, in some instances some of it has already been willed to children who have migrated and not returned, where there are marginal plantation lands - and I am not talking about plantation owners raking off the top soil and seeking to classify them as marginal land in order to get housing developments for themselves, I mean genuine rab lands - to give the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation access to these lands so that we can develop it for low income housing. We cannot always get a ten acre or a five acre, but a one acre or, a half acre, can provide many houses.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, an acre is roughly 40 000 square feet. If you take out roughly 10 000 square feet or more for road or access, and you look at a land space for a low income house as approximately 3 500 square feet, an acre would give a couple of houses. Therefore, we must not scoff at the notion, and I understand that you can create economies of scale, where you have large tracks of land and can, therefore, put down hundreds of houses and can use some of the new commercial systems that build 100 houses at a time. At the same time, in a country where we are such a small land mass, and land is precious, we cannot scoff at or ignore small parcels of land for the building of just four or five single dwellings, or a couple of duplexes. This is particularly true in St. Michael and urban Barbados where housing has always been close and land space has always been limited.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply obliged to you for having given me some latitude and I hope that the House feels, collectively, that I have been full and frank in the delivery of my comments

today. I wish, Sir, that we could truly have useful discussion, in relation to how we take Barbados forward and how we deliver on the mandate to give housing to Barbadians.

Sir, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before us deals with a very well known parcel of land in Tweedside Road which, of course, is part of the constituency of St. Michael South Central that I have the honour of representing in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of housing is, as the Honourable Member for St. James South said, a very emotional one. Therefore, while at first blush, one may be tempted to get up here and just make a parochial cry as a new member of Parliament for houses for my people, I think that in light of how emotional it is, we must seriously and sincerely reflect on the national importance of the debate. I know that you would allow us a similar amount of latitude to deal with this matter.

Housing evokes all sorts of emotions. There is a very strong innate desire that all Barbadians have to own houses.

House 11, sequence 6, 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

Sir, to the extent that this development is an attempt by the Government to bring some measure of relief to the housing situation in Barbados, this Resolution, and more important this project, which I hope would not have to wait for many years after the passage of this Resolution to come to fruition, would get my full support as well as that of the other Honourable Members on this side. We are not going to stand in the way of Government

increasing the housing stock by giving Barbadians the opportunity to become homeowners even if at the first instance they will have to rent. We recognise that with the price of housing in Barbados today, the only real avenue one can seek to own a home is by renting temporarily so that one can accumulate the necessary resources and look to home ownership.

Mr. Speaker, the rents offered by the National Housing Corporation for their units are usually the most attractive which is why there is such a high demand for them. It is my hope that in spite of these many efforts at the joint-venture programme and the efforts at selling the units, that we would not forget that there are still a large number of Barbadians who would like to rent a unit until they are in a position to purchase a home.

Mr. Speaker, I empathise with the whole issue of the collection of rents, but that is not a new problem. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the problems the Democratic Labour Party had when in government and the significant amount of pressure we were put under to collect the rents. Therefore, I think the Government should be encouraged in this exercise but it should go about it in a humane fashion, so I hope the Honourable Member for St. James South, the Honourable Minister, would consider that fact.

Mr. Speaker, in moving specifically to the planned development for Tweedside Road, I want to assure the Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment that once they select the tenants wisely they will have tenants in Tweedside Road who are willing to pay the rents and in a timely fashion. I will explain why. Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation was established in the early 1970s some 30 years ago. In that 30 years, 20 of them have been under a Barbados Labour Party rule and the National Housing Corporation never did any development in the constituency of St.

Michael South Central. Those prefab houses at Valery were supposed to be temporary, but the demand for them was so high they became permanent.

Mr. Speaker, admittedly, the constituency of St. Michael South Central has not been the most friendly toward the Barbados Labour Party over the years in terms of the electoral process. This is not about Richard Sealy and it is not about any of the Honourable Members on this side or any of the Honourable Members who were in here either. All sorts of people were in the newspapers trying to get credit for this project. I think it is about time that the residents of St. Michael South Central get that opportunity to be part of a National Housing Corporation housing development for which they have waited a long time.

The residents of Carrington(s Village, Halls Road and Martindales Road have been very patient, so I am hoping that when those 24 units are built, priority would be given to them. Originally, there were to be 30 units but they have been reduced to 24, but I would not quibble about that, I will speak to that a little later. I think that all Honourable Members on that side, especially the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East who is very much into community development and has been for his entire adult life and probably even prior to that, would understand that rupturing communities by inserting these large scale developments and bringing people from all over the country into them is not necessarily the best option. It is better to give priority to the majority of the residents from within the area of the development. During the election campaign it was an 80 per cent policy.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I am happy to hear that because I heard stories about places in Grazettes in which 80 per cent of the cars that

were parked in front of the houses were registered in St. George.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, the fundamental point here is that the majority of the units should be given to the residents of St. Michael South Central. I do not expect to get all of them, but if I could get the majority of them, I would be happy.

Mr. Speaker, there is no point in calling names of aspirants or those who have been or even my own name because it is the taxpayers who are providing this housing development for persons who have been very patient and who are anxious to get an opportunity to have a set of keys in their hands, that is what this is all about. I do not need any credit for it. I am a law-abiding citizen, I pay my taxes and I expect them to be spent in a manner that would see the ones who are really deserving being the ones that would benefit. I have had people come into my office with correspondence they have had at the National Housing Corporation since the late 70s and the early 80s.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, it is time now that these individuals be given a chance. I can assure the Honourable Member for St. James South that these persons will pay their rent. These are persons who are deserving and we should see to it that they are given the opportunity.

I mention earlier about the reduction in the number of units which may not be a bad thing. That parcel of land is just over 4 000 square metres which is just over an acre, so if we reduce the number of units it would give us the opportunity to have some recreational space and landscaping which can help to improve the quality of life in the area.

Some of the residents of the Quaker(s Road area have had some concerns about the idea of a National Housing Corporation housing scheme coming into their neighbourhood because of some preconceived notion they have had about those types of areas. However, I dare say that the small intimate housing developments if appropriately designed with the landscaping and a play area and perhaps with the possibility of spaces for business persons to rent so that there is some economic activity going on... That has been done with some success at the London Bourne Towers.

House 11 Sequence 7

11:10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R. L. SEALY:

I believe there are a number of things to which the Honourable Member should address her mind. I understand the Honourable Member is going into retreat sometime in December and while the Honourable Member is doing that, I would like to give her something else on which to ponder. Certainly recognising the constraints the National Housing Corporation has, I want to urge the Honourable Member not to forget National Housing Corporation(s original mandate, which is to deal with the issue of low income housing.

It seems as though the National Housing Corporation has become a joint venture partner with the private sector. It has also become a speculator, a developer of office space, et cetera, and perhaps the mission is getting a little blurred. Therefore, it is a good idea that the Honourable Member is going on a retreat. Of course, I do not expect to be invited but I would encourage the Honourable Member to try to sharpen her focus more. It is not to say

the problems do not exist. We all know the seriousness of the situation. I know that Your Honour too becomes bombarded with persons seeking housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we would want to see the situation improved, specifically speaking about the Tweedside Road and urban Barbados in general.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of elucidation. Mr. Speaker, when I speak in terms of Government having a mandate in respect of low income housing, the Honourable Member must not believe that the role of the National Housing Corporation has one focus because part of the responsibility of the National Housing Corporation is to provide offices for Government. Certainly, in providing office building, that is part of our mandate.

What I believe we need to do is to ensure that we perform our multiple roles well and do not allow the performance of any one role to compromise the others. Yes, we must bear in mind the first-time homeowners but the entity of the National Housing Corporation has multiple roles to perform and it is a question of how well it could perform these individual roles.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I do not think the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment should be subordinating any function to the National Housing Corporation. The reason principal the National Housing Corporation was set up was to bring relief to low income housing. Therefore, I am only suggesting that the Honourable Member might consider the many problems that the National Housing Corporation are having and would adjust her focus more and look at these problems. It is not necessarily a contentious point.

Aside.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I do not think I need to prod the Honourable Member or the Government into observing what they have promised in their Manifesto, and

St. Michael South Central is part of that all. We have been extremely patient and I look forward to this Resolution not necessarily going into rigor mortis but that we would go right on to the next phrase.

Mr. Speaker, another reason why a certain level of priority should be given to this project is the measure of congestion throughout St. Michael South Central and urban Barbados. We have had a very grave experience on June 16, 2003, the day before our first business session, when there was a fire at Hall(s Road and five houses were razed to the ground and six others seriously damaged. It is approximated that 50 persons were affected. I understand that 30 persons are now seeking alternative housing and that the Town and Country Planning is the reason for the delay. It is, therefore, my wish that some measure of relief would be brought to the victims of the Hall(s Road fire as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, if the Barbados Fire Service had not responded so promptly, it could have been worse. The Minister, who is no stranger to that area, was at the scene and, therefore, knows what has happened. Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a congestion of housing in urban Barbados. It is not only uncomfortable but definitely dangerous.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, on a point of elucidation. Mr. Speaker, so that the Honourable Member would be informed and the House would not be misled and by extension the public, the application to Town and Country Planning in respect to the Hall(s Road Reconstruction Project was made only

about three weeks ago. It is being processed because I was contacted and asked to have it expedited as soon as possible. I know that serious consideration is being given to allow those persons to get housing as quickly as possible and, therefore, it is not pushed on the back burner.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that. I am glad to hear. I take it that I am free to call on the Honourable Member since she is now taking a personal interest in it.

Sir, I would also like to thank the many others who have helped us through that crisis; the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited, the Royal Barbados Police Force, the residents, et cetera, and to say that we should take a serious lesson from that fiasco and work towards improving the housing stock in urban Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to make it very clear at this point that the enthusiasm for the proposed housing complex at Tweedside is in no way to subtract from the need for a new school. Sir, it is interesting that the Chief Town Planner at the time had thought that it would have been a suitable place for a school but I accept that there has been a shift, and with the combination of Erdiston Primary School and Carrington(s Primary, clearly that piece of land could not have worked. I do not necessary think the residents, particularly the parents of student, would object unnecessarily going into Flint Hall to a new facility with adequate buildings, et cetera.

H:No.11(8)1120 a.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R.L. SEALY:

Sir, Erdiston Primary is overcrowded, sometimes you have four classes in a single

room and there are drainage problems as well. Sir, the school has done well in the eleven-plus examinations. In fact, Erdiston Primary has one of the most enviable records throughout Barbados but the plant is tired because the 700 students have been putting a lot of pressure on it. We need to see a new facility for the teaching staff and the student body of Erdiston Primary.

Mr. Speaker, Carrington(s Primary is a tale of woe. Over the weekend I addressed the PTA at that school and when I mentioned that there are plans to have a new school in Flint Hall one teacher audibly sucked her teeth. She told me that she taught there since 1984 and was promised by the Government, at that time, that a new school would come within 18 months. She is now about to retire but the school has not come as yet.

Sir, you could understand the frustrations felt by the teachers and students because the building is 100 years old with an open format and all classes are held in one big room which is also the staff and lunch room. It is also the playing field because there is none and during lunch time the boys run through the room.

Mr. Speaker, it is a relic. Sir, as far back as 20 years ago, Government recognised that something should be done about Carrington(s Primary and it is good that we are finally moving to build this new facility at Flint Hall.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East is new to his portfolio but he has already put his attention to the problem that our young men are having in the school system and Carrington(s Primary is a case in point because there is no playing field and these young men risk injury going through Olton Road, a narrow road, down to the gully hill pasture to do physical education. Sir, those pent-up energies tend to lead to restlessness and the decision to go to Flint Hall is a good one

and I urge the Minister to proceed speedily with this matter.

Sir, some measure of priority has been put on the new school in Flint Hall and I am sure that we will hear from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and the Honourable Member for St. Thomas on this matter during this debate but I am concerned that while we are waiting for the new school to be constructed that the resources allocated to the present school from the Ministry is lacking. I hope the Ministry does not hold the view that as a new school is in the works that it should not bother to do anything significant to the existing school because the comfort of the teachers and student must be held always in mind.

Mr. Speaker, all is not well with the Carrington(s Primary School because parents have to raise funds to purchase new floor boards and a fax machine. Sir, Cable & Wireless donated a computer to the school.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central is totally out of place. We expect from time to time to hear utterance of that type coming from that side but the Honourable Member has overstepped his boundary and he has to withdraw that remark.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central may I remind you of Rule 28(7) about imputing improper motives to a member. I am asking you to withdraw the words and also that they be struck from the record. I know that I have given the leader of the motion some latitude relating to housing but you are carrying it too far and going into too many areas. Please let us concentrate on the matter relating to this Resolution.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central were

ordered to be expunged from the record by MR. SPEAKER.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Sir, we were grateful for the computer from Cable & Wireless and it was greatly appreciated. Mr. Speaker, the school is no longer being built in Tweedside Road and there is not going to be a housing development but Government must not forget that the school is in dire need of attention. We sincerely hope that the Flint Hall project would move ahead at a pace but that, in the meantime, all would be done to ensure the comfort of the pupils and teachers.

Mr. Speaker, it has now been clarified that the Urban Development Commission which was once attached to Ministry of Housing is now under the Ministry of Social Transformation. When we look at the proposed development for Tweedside Road, we must consider the overall role of the Urban Development Commission. Sir, the Commission, in my humble estimation, has gone awry in terms of what it was set up to do.

H11/11:30 a.m.

Sequence 9

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Mr. R.L. SEALY
MR. SPEAKER Honourable House, please. I mentioned to you about getting back to the Resolution. This has nothing to do with housing.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please, order please. Honourable Member, if I could give you some guidance, we did give some latitude to the lead speaker but that latitude related to housing matters. It does not mean that you must take it for granted that you could have this latitude and

bring in all of these other matters, please.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Asides

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I am trying to make a point.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, please.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, Tweedside Road could be looked at in this context. The housing side of Dr. Stuart(s) Land is seen as a microcosm of one of the most vibrant suburban areas in Barbados. As you know, Tweedside Road, is a district that has offices, shops and housing. In my opinion, an agency like the Urban Development Commission could assist in terms of enhancing the quality of housing.

Mr. SPEAKER: I would not allow you say anything else relating to Urban Development Commission.

Asides

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Sir, we have to be very clear on the whole issue of housing, not only in the area of Tweedside but we must look at it within the context of communities. I mentioned that we should not rupture the community but that we should consolidating the community. Mr. Speaker, indeed, that relates to other activities in the community as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: Okay.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: There is a very real opportunity for this development of Dr. Stuart(s) Land, to enhance and enrich the community

beyond the scope of housing. I am suggesting that there are other government departments, for example, Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated because they seem to have a lot of money to spend...

Asides

Mr. R.L. SEALY: We need to look for avenues and opportunities so that the quality of life could be improved, recognising that it is not merely about housing but what we could do to enhance the overall community.

It is also my hope that the security of tenure for the persons be in the houses would be recognised and given a chance to own the units in which they live or other units. I am supporting the housing programme or any attempt at increasing the housing stock in Barbados.

I hope that the school which was previously planned for this area, and restoration works for the area would continue and that these projects will move ahead apace. I also hope that the contribution of many persons from the surrounding areas would be recognised.

Mr. Speaker, it is not about getting credit. I do not need any credit. I look forward to seeing the Minister of Housing in her hard hat with a shovel at the ground breaking ceremony. We want to see the grounds being broken, Sir.

Sir, I would also like to see the construction of the school at Flint Hall. I could not possibly stand here as the representative for St. Michael South Central in the process of speaking to the housing project and in any way give the impression that the plight of those school children should be in anyway forgotten. Mr. Speaker, I am fighting your battle as well because there are children from the Bank Hall area who attend the school. In fact, the last Head Boy who won all the prizes at the last

Speech Day is from your constituency, St. Michael Central. I am saying that their case must not be forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, with those remarks, I urge the Government to move ahead. Let us get pass this part of the Resolution. Let us see some soil being turned that these projects can happen in the interest of the residents of St. Michael South Central and all Barbadians.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to support the Resolution on the use of land at Tweedside Road. I do not think that anybody would want to suggest that there is any lack of appreciation on the part of Government with respect of the provision of educational facilities for our young children. This is not an issue that revolves around that. We have to admit that the current Barbados Labour Party administration and in previous times, has been able to boast of the provision of educational facilities in Barbados, especially at the primary level.

I think that more of our modern primary schools have been constructed under the administration of the Barbados Labour Party Governments than could be said to be the case when the other party held the reins of office in this country.

I would venture to suggest that it was under the administration of the Honourable Member for the City, then Minister of Education, that most of the construction took place or it might have been under the tenure of the Honourable Member for St. George South, when he was Minister of Education.

Mr. Speaker, what I know be to a fact is that it could not have been under the tenure of anyone who represented as Minister of Education, a Democratic Labour Party

Government because they have not been any Minister of Education of any significant repute, in recent history, coming from the Democratic Labour Party.

Asides

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Sir, the Barbados Labour Party has the record...

11.40a.mH11/ 10:

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

11:40 a.m.

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

...both in terms of the provision of primary level school plants and primary level educational programmes, the Barbados Labour Party Government has the record in this country, and I would want to speak to that.

As we understand it, Mr. Speaker, there is an alternate site to be found for the erection of a new primary school plant to serve the needs of the primary level children from this area. This is absolutely necessary because when one considers the area of Tweedside Road where the Carrington(s Primary School is located, and the site under question, which is now going to become the site for housing development, one recognises that one has to deal with the factor of noise.

Carrington Village is a very noisy area. A lot of that noise is caused by the movement of vehicular traffic - small vehicles, big vehicles, commercial vehicles, private used vehicles - heavily travelled, therefore, there is a lot of noise. There is the factor of emission of fumes as well. Tweedside Road area therefore does not lend itself to being the most conducive environment for a primary level education institution. There is the commercial hustle and

bustle of which the last speaker also made reference, so that an alternative site in a more conducive area and, perhaps, with better aesthetic dynamics attendant upon the situation, would be preferred. I therefore, from that perspective, would want to support this change of use for land.

Mr. Speaker, as you would know, because you have been very much involved in education, all your adult life, a number of primary level schools are already existing in that local area. The Hindsbury Primary School, Erdiston School and the Hill Top Primary School are not far from there. St. Giles School is just up the hill, my old primary school, Charles F. Broome is not far, and in the wider area, there are several other primary schools. This area is very well served by both private and public primary schools.

Sir, when one looks at the Carrington(s) Primary School and Erdiston School, one recognises that these schools are, perhaps, linked in the dark ages, compared to the Charles F. Broome and some of the other public primary schools, as well as even one or two of the private primary schools in the area. Therefore, from that perspective, I would like to support the Resolution for change of use.

Sir, I would want to echo the sentiments of the Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. James South, because I believe that the level of urgency with respect to the provision of housing in Barbados, especially at the lower and lower middle income levels, is such that this is a problem which has assumed a certain level of prominence, and which begs for speedy, serious and sensible addressed.

This Government has, again, a record in housing and land policy, as well as a primary level education of which it can be proud. The acquisition of certain acreage of land during the

tenure of the last administration was a wide and prudent policy. We need to move, perhaps, with some greater vigour to the point now where we can translate that policy, on the other side of the coin, into the provision of actual housing solutions for the general public of Barbados. This land policy is one of which there can be some measure of pride taken.

The current programme which is underway, regarding the sale of units to persons who have rented them for many years, is another, in my humble submission, practicable course to take as well, which would help to respond to the housing situation in Barbados.

The Urban Tenantry Land Ownership programme for St. Michael is also a programme of tremendous significance and one of which we can be truly proud. We know of the benefits of this, especially in St. Michael West, which is a constituency almost entirely made up of more than 30 urban tenancies.

The current ongoing public/private sector joint venture programme on housing is another programme associated with some practical prudence. I am just trying to suggest that the Government has been somewhat vigorous in responding to the level of need which exists, but that need is very pronounced and urgent. I cannot support any view which suggests that we have moved to the stage in Barbados where the provision of housing should not include the provision of units for rental, for people who will never perhaps in their lifetime be able to purchase or to own a house in this country, in spite of the best intentions of any Government.

In spite of the prevailing economic situation in Barbados at anytime of well-doing, there will always be those who will be below the margin, and fall through the cracks and for whose well-being, the Government will be principally and primarily charged. In terms of provision of shelter which is a basic need

existing for humanity, a Government abdicates its responsibility, if it moves away from the provision of shelter, in terms of rental housing for those who cannot afford to buy. Therefore, I support the sentiment and position of the Honourable Minister of Housing, in terms of the Government(s) persistence with a policy that provides rental units for that special category of persons.

However, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we must see a policy implemented in this country where the principle of graduation is used. Once one has been able to access a rental unit, because of one(s) level of income, when one(s) circumstances have changed, through upward mobility in one(s) job or through the relationship dynamic, where perhaps there is now an additional income in the house. This allows one to come to a level of income, where one can afford to go out of that situation. Then, one should be graduated from that situation where they occupy low income units provided by the Government, making way for the people who are still below the margin and whose economic situation has not changed to the extent that they could afford such housing.

The Government, therefore, must be vigorous in providing for the lower level needs but also implementing a policy of graduation, that would take one to a higher level of an economic situation, where one could meet a rental, maybe also provided by the Government.

I understand there will be 24 units at this site at Tweedside Road and that they will be similar to the ones already provided at Country Road. We are happy for the 26 units at Country Road, Mr. Speaker, although they were simply used for the purpose of relocating persons, not only from St. Michael West but from farther afield, because of the Government(s) programme of remedial road works and road modernisation.

Sir, there is a second phase at Country Road which appears to be stalled at the moment, and I know that the Honourable Minister of Housing is exercising some diligence to see this project go forward. We would want to know that when the second phase is completed, it is going to be a development which will offer units for sale. Whereas we agree that we should always rent, the Government is in the business of providing units by sale, I do not have a problem with that because there are some people who can buy.

Sir, if you are providing for some people in urban Barbados, and especially if you are providing for people in St. Michael West, you must provide Government housing for purchase at a price that they can afford. Currently, we are seeking to ensure that the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation understand that fully and I think the Minister is very much in sync with our thinking as far as that is concerned. We look forward therefore to the restart and the finish of the second phase of the Country Park Towers, located at the corner of Country Road and White Park Road.

Sir, there has been a little housing development at Valery, a bit decried by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. Again, I might be wrong but I think that this development took place under a Democratic Labour Party(s) administration. I might be quite incorrect on that suggestion.

Asides.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: He decried the housing development at Valery, as simply humble prefab units which were supposed to be temporary housing.

Asides.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: There has been a little housing development of 24 units at

Valery. This morning they were decried by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. My understanding of the history is that when they were constructed, under a Democratic Labour Party(s administration, persons were then brought from outside of the area and placed in those houses.

House 11, sequence 11, 11:5014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

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

That was a position taken by a Democratic Labour Party administration which the current sitting Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central does not agree.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I support his position that when these 24 units at Tweedside Road are constructed they should go principally to the people from Carrington(s Village, Tweedside Road and Halls Road in the constituency of St. Michael South Central. What obtained before at Valery under the Democratic Labour Party should not now obtain at Tweedside Road.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, you must warn the Honourable Member on the other side not to interfere with the honourable gentleman who is on his feet.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking about change of use and a land use policy development in this local area, therefore I would have thought that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would have spent some of his time putting a case for some consideration to be given to applying the concept of a special development treatment for Tweedside Road as

part of the special development treatment now being considered or being applied to the Roebuck Street area, because it is the same stretch in my opinion.

The former representative for St. Michael South Central, in these hallowed Chambers, expressed a vision for the development of the Carrington(s Village and the Tweedside Road area, that reflected itself under a Barbados Labour Party administration in the modernisation of the gully hill pasture and pavilion in Carrington(s Village at the top of Bridge Road. You are familiar with the area, Mr. Speaker, and I am very familiar with it because I had the opportunity to play around there as a boy.

The flow of traffic in a heavily traversed Carrington(s Village area poses frequent danger to persons especially those unfamiliar with the area. The redirecting of the traffic to roads like Alkins Road and those roads that cross each other has reduced the level of vehicular accidents and the risk of injury and death. The modernisation of the junction at the bottom of Government Hill and at the top of Tweedside Road is part and parcel of the work of this Government and the vision of the former representative for St. Michael South Central. Part of his vision as well was the installation of natural gas services to the residents off Fairfield Cross Road. Were he here today, he would still be pressing the case that urgent vigour needs to be reflected, ensuring that the vending sites proposed for the corner of Chadderton Road and Tweedside Road becomes a soon reality.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke nary a word about any of that here today. I would have thought that he would have spent his time making a case for a special development treatment for the Tweedside Road area. Tweedside Road is a heavy commercialised area with both small and

big businesses such as pharmacies, legal firms, mini-marts and tyre shops. Fit-It-Right Garage which has been there for many years has been beautifully refurbished and remodelled and is now a thriving business once again. Tweedside Road is being seen by many as a centre for viable commercial activity, and excellent pork chops.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: I have not heard a call in this Parliament for Tweedside Road to be made the subject of a special development area treatment, so I am making it now on the behalf of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central who refused to make it when he had the opportunity here today.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Freddie(s and (Clo(are institutions. I have seen Honourable Members going to Freddie(s, but I prefer (Clo(, Mr. Speaker.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please! Please! Honourable Member, please, I think we are taking this latitude a bit far now. I know we all appreciate a good meal at times and I take it this is why we go to Freddie(s, but surely, I would prefer if you use that latitude to speak about housing, please.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, I go to (Clo(to get pork chops and chicken and chips to take to my house.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Or to the houses of your constituents.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Many people from the houses all along Tweedside Road go to Freddie(s and (Clo(to get pork chops and chicken, but I will be subject to your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am seriously attempting to talk about the change of land use. I really believe that Tweedside Road, just like St. Lawrence Gap, Baxters Road and Roebuck Street, should be given serious consideration for this development. I am submitting that, Mr. Speaker, having not heard it submitted before.

Roebuck Street and Tweedside Road are rich with political traditions represented in the party of prominence and prudence in Barbados today. That stretch also has a history of strong institutional roots with reference to labour organisations in Barbados which Honourable Members on the other side would be aware of. In terms of religion, institutional history attaches itself to the Moravian Church. More humbly, I want to submit that my own church had its early roots in Roebuck Street. When it comes to sports there is the Weymouth-Wales football team. I am talking about that stretch of road from Roebuck Street into Tweedside Road which is rich in history, cultural, commercial and political and in terms of labour and educational institutions. People talked about Harrison(s College and Combermere School having their beginning and their existence in this area but there was also the Modern High School which played a pivotal role in terms of the development of education in this country in the 1960s and 1970s.

My humble position is that when contemplated the matter of erecting a school at Tweedside Road may have seemed to be the prudent course to take. In the circumstances, I would want therefore to support the Resolution for the change of use because I think housing represents a more urgent need in this particular

context as the location is not necessarily the best site for a school. Therefore, I support the Resolution.

I thank you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I too rise to speak on this Resolution and to say from the outset that I have some fundamental problems with it, bearing in mind that this land was once owned by a business person in Barbados who could not utilise it because it was acquired by the Government of Barbados to build a school. This cost the business person a substantial amount of money. Today we have found ourselves in a situation where that land that was compulsorily acquired for one purpose is now to be used for something else.

I have complained bitterly in this Parliament about the Land Acquisition Act of Barbados.

House 11 Sequence 12

12:00 noon

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I have reason to believe that this is only the first step with regards to the problems that we are about to see in relation to this particular Act.

Sir, until this Parliament becomes bold enough to change this Act, there would be many persons in Barbados who, under this Act, would become disenfranchised, where Government could come to this Parliament, acquire land for one purpose, then change the intended purpose of that land.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. If a parcel of land is acquired for a specific purpose, it has

to be used for that purpose. If it has to be changed, the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment would have to bring it back to Parliament for it to be changed for that other purpose. It cannot be used for any other purpose other than for what it was originally acquired. The Honourable Member knows that.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Land Acquisition Act was used to compulsorily acquire this land from a businessman in Barbados, who then had to pay substantial sums to the person from whom he was purchasing the land.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, that is a fact. You need to understand the facts.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, we have a situation in which the land was compulsorily acquired to build a school but now we are hearing about housing.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, Honourable Member, the Resolution before the House is about the change.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: That is what I am speaking about, Sir, because that is not the original intention for the land. The original intention was for a school to be built but today, Government is here changing that original purpose.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, exactly, and I am in agreement with that, only Parliament can do that. What I am saying is that as Parliamentarians who understand the workings

of certain Governments, we have to guard how this Act could be misused. If we do not look at it today, we are now faced with a problem which I wrote about a number of days ago.

Aside.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, we can have Government coming to this Parliament and acquiring land for one purpose because it sounds right in the eyes of the public and then do something else.

Mr. Speaker, as a Parliamentarian since 1994, I know exactly of what I speak and of what I am guarding against. I have pledged to this House that I would protect the rights of the masses of the people in this country. I am not saying the present Minister is aware of what is going on.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is framing his comments in such a manner as to suggest that this piece of legislation was used deliberately to disadvantage the previous landowner, and that it is being used like this as a matter of course. That is entirely false and does cast aspersions on the intentions of the Honourable Members who have been Ministers of Housing.

If the Honourable Member has evidence to prove what he is saying, that is another matter. The Honourable Member must bring facts. Mr. Speaker, the way in which the Honourable Member has framed his comments, does not make it clear to persons who are unfamiliar with the legislation that, implicit in the legislation, there is a provision that land is to be bought for a public purpose but the public purpose for which it was initially acquired, could be changed. Sir, before that change could be made, the Minister of Housing must come back to Parliament for approval for that change.

That does not constitute an impropriety because in the way that policies are implemented, one could intend to build a school at a site and then determined that the location might be better suited for something else, and change it to that purpose.

Sir, under the legislation where there is a compulsory acquisition of land, not only can the owner of the land get payment for the value of the property but where there is consequential loss, if the owner has a business or has Town and Country Planning(s permission to use the land in such a way to derive any revenues. Sir, for all of that, that land owner is compensated. Therefore, when the Honourable Member says that the owner then had to pay someone else a lot of money, all of that would have been covered by the legislation.

Therefore, for those persons who are not aware of the provisions of the legislation or the extent to which it protects a person whose property is compulsorily acquired, they could be misled or could be put in fear whenever Government intends to compulsorily acquire land from them.

Sir, in that context, I would wish to make it clear that the Honourable Member has misled the Honourable House. It also has the potential to mislead the public but I know that it is based more on innocence, since the Honourable Member first misleads himself, and that might be where the problem lies.

Mr. SPEAKER: If all Honourable Members would remember, at our last Sitting I did make a point that I do not think it is fair for Honourable Members to use the opportunity of privilege to come and to make statements where Honourable Members do not have proof.

I see a pattern developing and, therefore, would like all Honourable Members to desist from this. There are certain things, I believe,

where Honourable Members should have proof. This Honourable House would be willing to accept paper proof even. Please continue.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, since Your Honour has made the statement and has reflected on my speech, I would like to inform Your Honour that this case, the purchase of the land by the previous owner, went as far as the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

If we are going to reflect on character, I want to make this point to this Honourable House. Your Honour would have been in this Honourable House when this land acquisition was first brought and was fully debated and ventilated at that time.

Sir, Your Honour might not remember that but I have a very good memory. This land was owned by a substantial land owner who went into the business sector and who might not be so deeply involved like he once was but everybody, especially those Honourable Members on the Back Bench, know of whom I speak.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that the role of the Opposition is to protect and to uphold the rights of the underprivileged in Barbados. Sir, the Land Acquisition Act is now being touted in this Place as if it is so holy, when I have pointed out the number of flaws in it on many occasions. I am saying that the Act would be abused if we do not continue to point those flaws out.

Sir, that must be protected because Your Honour knows that on many occasions I have called, and will continue to call for this Act to be changed. I have looked at it and have seen how it could be worked against the interest of persons who cannot protect themselves.

Sir, I am not accusing the Honourable Member of any wrongdoing. That is not my

role. It is my role to make sure that where I see something could be abused at a later stage, to point it out to this Parliament, so that when it occurs, I could easily say to this Honourable House that I had already warned them. If I am stopped Sir, then I would have to write about it.

H:No.11(13)1210 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

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

Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful that we do not deprive someone with a piece of land of having the full commercial use of that land because only the Government can compulsorily acquired land through Parliament. We need to protect the interest of people and I have already warned Government about how it approaches this particular matter, that it should compulsorily acquire land for itself and not for another entity.

Hon. H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House to say that Government should acquire land for Government not for another entity. I am not clear as what the Honourable Member is getting at and I am afraid that of the implication here. The reality is that land is acquired for public purposes, that is what the legislation said. This can be for housing, playing field, to enhance Kensington Oval or a number of other things.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have made your point.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is batting well but I want to remind her that we debated the land at Apes Hill in this Honourable House. Sir, Government must tell this House if there is need for a primary school in the Tweedside area because if a change is to made from

building a school to building houses, then it tells you there is no need for the school in that area any more or that there is an alternative piece of land for the school elsewhere.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am now being told that the school will be built next door to the land. Mr. Speaker, I heard the Government said it was going to build 992 middle income houses, 191 low income houses, 112 low income lots and 44 middle income lots.

Mr. Speaker, National Housing Corporation had a particular policy some time ago which recognised that market forces allowed people who had money to buy land any place in Barbados and the people who had to be protected was the lower income people. This is why there was a deliberate policy by National Housing Corporation to put some of their land on the open market to fetch a high price and kept land for the low income people at the minimum cost.

Mr. Speaker, I have warned National Housing Corporation that it knows the type of land it sells to poor people but when houses built by third parties are sold to them, those houses cannot be guaranteed. Based on the record at Apes Hill and other places in Barbados, it would be better if this Minister acknowledges this point, continue the good practice left by the Democratic Labour Party and distribute land to the masses at a low cost instead of getting involved with third parties to build houses for the poor and as soon as they start to occupy the house, they have to repair them. Sir, there are examples of this sort of thing that cannot be disputed.

Mr. Speaker, it would suit the Minister well to follow that policy because no one can criticise a piece of land but anyone can criticise

a house built on land. Sir, if we use our resources wisely, we can satisfy more people by selling only land.

Mr. Speaker, National Housing Corporation should continue to sell land and not house and land especially when these houses are built by third parties and then this House is being told that National Housing Corporation has no interest in the houses, that the third parties are responsible for them and that National Housing Corporation is responsible only for the land. This tells me that the officers at National Housing Corporation have washed their hands clean of the houses by giving them to third parties to build.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful that we protect the rights of the masses of Barbados. Other people might have money to fight their causes but the rights of the masses must be protected.

Sir, I am going to hold National Housing Corporation totally responsible if the masses get a raw deal when they purchase land and house because they have been forewarned but I do not want the current Minister to be blamed.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I have been assured by the Minister that if the matter is handled badly that she will also hold them responsible so it will be the two of us and others will eventually join in.

Mr. Speaker, the cheapest way of delivering a house is by community effort and this was said by the Minister this morning. I agree with the Minister that it is better to build from the back and come forward and also allow neighbours to help in the building because this creates work for carpenters, masons, electricians and plumbers in the particular area. It is unfair for Government to decide who should get work

and who should not. This is exactly what is happening when Government decides to sell land, enters a contract and give all the work to a particular group.

Sir, if we are going into liberalisation, let us liberalise everything so that the carpenters and masons can get work too. Mr. Speaker, we are depriving the society of the social conscience that we brag about. In other words, you cannot give work to the carpenter or mason who is your friend anymore. It is for National Housing Corporation to give to their friends but you cannot give anything to yours.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. If I have to rise to correct all the excesses of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, I would be like a jack in the box, and I want to resist that appearance.

H11/12:20 p.m.

Sequence 14

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON However, the notion that National Housing Corporation is giving all its work to friends is false. Sir, certainly since I was there, the lots have been advertised under the joint venture programmes and the process has been transparent. Anybody who felt that they could build the houses could apply and they are being screened by way of an objective criteria and no preselection was made. It is not a matter of friends. It is a matter of who is offering us the best quality and price that we can deliver to the public. I started by saying that we are bringing transparency and objective criteria and I have difficulty with it being suggested that National Housing Corporation is into a friends and family kind of operation because we are not operating like that.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am saying that at the end of the day National Housing Corporation will decide who would build the houses and not the people who own the land. Sir, when I said that I did not mean friends in the true sense of friends. I was talking about a select group of people that will have an attachment to National Housing Corporation after the relationship has been entered into, that is what I was referring to.

Mr. SPEAKER: Surely, the Minister has explained the criteria.

Asides

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, all I am asking for is that the owner of the land has a choice in the building of the house. That is all I am asking for and I do not see what is difficult about that. The same things that we like for ourselves we should allow the masses to have those privileges too. Sir, we should also provide the facilities for them to borrow money and build their homes.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael East.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Sir, I hope that in my presentation I will make a distinction between an approach to Government(s policy in relation to profiteering, which is the comparison that is being used at times, and a social approach in providing this service to the poor in the society.

I want to begin by making reference to a former member because history has been very unkind to him. Unfortunately, by some fracture in the electoral process he is not here with us today. It is unfortunate that he is not here today to enjoy the glory of what has occurred.

The whole concept of having this particular location for housing is of great importance to me, in preference over a school. It is important to me because of my knowledge of the history of the struggle and antagonism within the environment in which this housing development will be placed. This housing development came as a consequence of the sugar duties in the middle of the 19th Century. The landowners of the day sold this land and I believe that some of the land in area is still considered agricultural land. There was a lot antagonism because certain types of people were not supposed to live within the environment of Carrington Village that is why housing in Carrington Village is so important to me.

Sir, in those days, Lady Carter and Sir Conrad Reeves were some of the strongest advocates opposed to housing development in that particular area because they felt that the working-class black man or woman ought be living in that area, sandwiched between those with ethnographic differences who live to the south, in Belleville and The Pine and the black merchants who live to the west and had businesses in Carrington Village. Those people were sandwiched in an atmosphere of hostility. Mr. Speaker, Government House and a member of the judiciary were strongly opposed and committed themselves to removing that housing development.

I just want to inform the Honourable Member for St. Lucy how important it is for us to witness our kind still having the opportunity to defy those persons who wanted to see that change occur in the Carrington Village area as far back as the second half of the 19th Century. History has been unkind to us. Although I can appreciate the electorate(s) choice, the reality is, I would be happier to see the man from the village or community stand up representing this particular cause this afternoon.

Asides

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Sir, the electorate felt that those from the heights have special values that ought to be imparted to the people in the village and the choice was made that the boy from the heights was chosen over the man from the village.

Asides

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: The village has produced great men. The Honourable Member who now lives in St. George is a product of the Carrington Village area and will obviously speak more with greater legitimacy on these issues. There is George Lamming who wrote the book (In The Castle of My Skin) and he spoke about the social and economic situation in Carrington Village. The Draytons Two also came from Carrington Village.

The argument is clear for those who do not quite understand that we have produced people in that community who possess the qualities that have gained them regional and international recognition. I am happy to see that those families can now preserve the community for the offspring of people like Louis Tull, George Lamming, The Draytons Two and others, so that when we talk about the splitting up of black families we refer to the social effects that occur as a consequence dividing families but the logic is not carried to a conclusion. It is applied to suit the specific occasion and the generalisation does not have any meaning in this particular debate. We are preserving a community and that is one of the most credible statements that was made on the other side.

Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Government on this Resolution. Some good ideas can come from a man who has not had the social experiences in the community to help develop it and I have no problem with that

because that has happened throughout history. However, I am happy that a housing development is being placed in Carrington Village. I want to urge the Honourable Minister to ensure that when that development is constructed, that there are complementary agencies that would be constructed around the community to help to modernise and enhance the general environment.

Mr. Speaker, you can only have a mental construct of the future if you have clear ideology of what you are trying to achieve.

12.30 p.mH 11/15:

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

12:30 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. T.A. PRESCOD:

Sir, there is a modern development in the heart of Carrington Village. Then there is a market at the top of Carrington Village for the vendors, who are the children of the people who are likely to be living in the housing area, which is not modern in features. I am hoping that we could develop a modern market at the top of Carrington Village, on the corner, which was once the old Quaker site for those particular persons.

There is a long history of commercial culture, stretching from the old Carrington Village area to Roebuck Street that includes the late James Tudor, who was one of the most successful and progressive black businessmen in the history of Barbados. The land that you spoke about, although you were not accurate on the ownership of the land, once belonged to one of the most outstanding and remarkable physicians in the history of Barbados. He too, was a victim of the same class and racial antagonisms that existed within that community. I was told by the old historians in

the area that he suffered embarrassment at that club in Bay Street which was exclusive, in relation to the white race, when he took Dr. Kerr there on a social visit, after meeting him on a boat here in Bridgetown.

Dr. Stewart was embarrassed taking him to a social function there, and could not go into the institution because of his pigmentation. This is why I said that it is of symbolic importance to me and I hope that other people would understand that this was a long struggle. People felt that the landlords of the day should not have sold the land to the ordinary black people, but they were in economic crises and sold off the land.

I have been told that some of the land is still perceived as agricultural land today. We have been struggling to own minuscule parcels of land in that area, sometimes less than 2 000 square feet for ordinary people to live on, and that is through the programme of the Ministry of Social Transformation.

Sir, where my position differs in the circumstances with the Government in this whole housing programme, is when we changed the land use, and found an alternative site for a school at the corner of Flint Hall. This is an area which I once had the privilege to represent. Sir, you are now the representative of the people there, so I would hope I will be speaking for both St. Michael East and St. Michael Central.

Sir, all the discussions in the last two years, in relation to the zone 1 problem, the engineers and experts at the Town Planning Department, included the whole area from the left side of Bridge Road to the Norman Niles roundabout as the zone 1 area. Ordinary working class people today are persecuted as a consequence of this attitude towards them. Now, all of a sudden, permission can be given for a school to be placed at the bottom of Flint Hall.

Aside.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: They have given permission already to the Close Brethren to put a school in Flint Hall. They did whatever responsible for contamination within the geography of the zone 1 area, and now tell me they have an alternative site for a school. What is the Town Planner doing? How come the service bay, less than 150 yards away from this location, had to shut down its commercial enterprise. Sir, to the west northwest of the location is Glendairy Prison. The two units I spoke about are in the zone 1 area. What rationale can he use to exclude this pocket at the bottom of Flint Hall for a school?

Sir, we have some serious problems to deal with and he has to explain it to me. Any Minister who brings it here has to explain it to me. It says something about our approach to governance. The men who worked at service place became unemployed, as a consequence of the closing of the service stations. Both service stations in My Lords Hill are closed.

Mr. SPEAKER: Do not get into that, please.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: Sir, the point I am making is that if this institution is free of all the charges that deny other institutions or units inside that particular pocket, the right to function, because it is a breach of those regulations, why this particular school or unit is not in breach.

I have compassionate concerns for the children of Carrington Village. One of the strange things that I have heard when this debate as first circulated, not here today, is about this fusion between Carrington(s Village and Erdiston. All of a sudden, I have not heard that point made because I know it is like saying that you are going to put Queen(s College, with all the elitist value, and merge it with Springer

Memorial. I know this is most unrealistic to any Government, to even risk the fallout in the circumstances.

Sir, all of a sudden nobody is talking about Erdiston and Carrington(s Village coming together, because the rigid divide of class stratification denies them the risk in doing such a thing.

If we are going to demonstrate to the Barbadian people that we are a Government that is worthy of support and self-respect, then we must have high levels of consistency. We do not use power for the sake of using power. No Town Planner, Minister or Government ought to use power for the sake of power. The electorate today is much wiser today than they were yesterday. They are not going to endure ad hoc and strange decisions of this kind.

Sir, lots of good words have been said about the Ministry of Housing. I wish I could share the same words as the Minister. I believe she is a competent Minister and wants to do her best, but I have reservations about those persons who are supposed to execute the policy. A Government can design any policy it wants and if the people who are supposed to execute it do not know what is it that the Government wants, or even know what they ought to do, then the result is zero.

I have been waiting on the National Housing Corporation for six units in St. Barnabas since Christmas last year. It is going to be Christmas again, this year, and I am still waiting for them.

Aside.

Mr. T.A. PRESCOD: The position is clear. The Government(s policy is 80 per cent. We will work out that 80 per cent when the time comes. If I see the change is less than 80 per cent, I will have to bring it to the jury which is the general public of Barbados.

I expect, Sir, a clear position. I am a little concern about one other aspect of inconsistency because when I asked about these units a few months ago, under a different Minister, I was told that the units were for rent. I am now hearing that the units are for sale. I am not aware of any change in the Government(s) policy, but I do not know if there is now a new approach to Governance where, as soon as you become a minister, the policy is at the whims and fancies of the individual.

House 11, sequence 16, 12:4014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. T. A. PRESCOD:

I am the representative. I identified the location with the former Minister. I asked that this location be inspected and that it should be determined by those who are in authority to see if it was suitable for housing. We agreed on occasions that these houses would be for rent. Every week, I have been asking the two managers, the de jure manager and the de facto manager, at the National Housing Corporation if the houses are for rent or for sale. The National Housing Corporation has two managers, one that talks loud and militant and one that ought to be speaking that does not speak.

Mr. Speaker, I want to see a clear policy that is the collective view of a party manifesting itself within the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Lands. For more than 20 years, the Ministry of Housing and Lands was dealing with a minor problem at Hothersal Turning, St. Michael. The old plantocracy manoeuvred in such a way at Hothersal Turning that it caused some of the tenants who live on the lands there to lose their rights under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. Ever since then minister after minister at

the Ministry of Housing and Lands was supposed to resolve the problem, but the Ministry is not doing anything about the situation. We have problems that must be resolved or not we will pay the price.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I rise to treat to the issue of the suspension.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I am not affecting the Honourable Member(s) right to complete. If he going to speak for a substantially longer period, then I am just merely suggesting that he can resume after lunch. If however, he is going to finish within two minutes, then he should be allowed to finish. We are 15 minutes beyond the lunch break already.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you concluding, Sir?

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, I will come home because I believe I have made the fundamental points I wanted to make already. Mr. Speaker, a man who has a social conscience perceives housing as a social necessity, and any Government that has an interest in the people who are the most vulnerable must recognise housing as a human right. As a consequence of the development of our history, housing was always a major problem we have had from 1834 during our liberation for that landless and houseless group. That must be taken into consideration, not the measuring of the square feet or the cost of an apartment and comparing those with the size of

a government unit to say that the price ought to be increased.

The orientation and the objective of a Government providing a service is completely different from a private man profiteering on his investments whose philosophy says maximum profit. If you can rob the man of a million dollars a week, you go for it. You do not search for a profit or you do not even try to break even when you put a social service in the place. Sometimes you have to subsidise it in order to ensure that those persons who are most vulnerable especially those people who earn less than \$300 per week...

The problem exists where the administration as a consequence of its inefficiency or deficiency refused to assert itself and carry out its responsibility early which allowed these people to let their debts escalate to a point where they cannot honour their indebtedness to the Government. Can we not put a policy in place where a government can decide that the rent can be deducted from their weekly wages? If these people cannot pay when they are two months in arrears and you allow these people to run up \$15 000 in arrears and then use austerity methods and brute force and treat the people in less than a humane manner when you go to their houses. That is where I feel a sense of complete divide on this particular issue. That is how some of the people behave when they go to some of the houses. They humiliate their brothers and sisters in the housing community as a consequence of their own deficiencies and inefficiencies at the National Housing Corporation.

We must have a more humane approach to those people who now lives in the Government housing estates. If at the time you are willing to sell them the units, you discover that 40 per cent of those people are in arrears, you have a social concern to make an evaluation of the situation and see what is the best approach in

order to deal with this particular problem. You have people who cannot pay, nevertheless, they went in and paid \$2 000, but you do not even know or is not concerned about what social evil you drove them to in order to get the \$2 000 to come in and pay.

There are people as a consequence of trying now to save themselves the embarrassment of having to live out in the cold who had to run around cap in hand begging all types of people for donations in order to pay the arrears as a result of the negligence of the officers of the National Housing Corporation who say all kinds of things about the reasons why these people are not paying their rents. Some of the major issues we want to deal with now men and women are doing them, yet we do not examine the causes why people move to homosexuality and prostitution. When you inflict hardship on them, you drive and motivate them toward that social evil.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think you will have to conclude now, Sir.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, I am going to wrap up.

Mr. SPEAKER: We heard that already, you know. I will give you just a minute to conclude, please.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Speaker, my conscience would haunt me and I would have indicted myself if I had remained gagged on this particular issue. I had to speak my mind and hopefully it has expressed clearly my philosophical direction. It might not be the Government(s or the minister(s direction but I have to differ on some issues in here. I am not going to be involved in any modern perspective. My view from time to time will remain within the comfort of my conscience. There are times when I will express myself overtly on these issues. I know on some

occasions everyone might not like the taste of the expression but the reality is that I have a strong commitment to those who have sent me here.

I came here because the people of the Ivy Housing Area and the working class people in the St. Barnabas pocket of the Housing Area supported me. I came here because of my socialisation with the people of Princess Royal Avenue, Lascelles Terrace, Golden Rock and Regency Hill. I have a very strong connection with the people of the Carrington(s Village area. I have made a meaningful contribution even in the future generation of Carrington(s Village. The Honourable Member of St. George South might be of the past but I have contributed to the future of Carrington(s Village and I have a special interest in preserving the interest of Carrington(s Village.

Sir, I do not agree with some of the reasons given for the site in Flint Hall. I do not support all the generalisations that influence the policy of the Government on this particular issue but I will give my support to this particular legislation.

Thank you very much.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 145 p.m. today.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting do now suspend until 1:45 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

House 11 Sequence 17 & 18

12:51 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to make my contribution to this Resolution.

Sir, I want to say that I do support this Resolution for the change of purpose of the land at Tweedside Road, St. Michael, for housing development. I, therefore, wish to endorse many of the comments that were made by other Honourable Members on this debate.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish to make reference to the aspect of education that is involved, since the acquisition was first made for the construction of a school at Carrington(s Primary. As the situation now stands the nearest school, with the exception of Erdiston Primary, is Hindsbury, which specifically caters to girls. Therefore, the little boys in that environment have tremendous difficulties every year in trying to get into schools. Some of them have to go as far as L.T. Gay Memorial, Spooner(s Hill, St. Michael because, more often than not, the role of Erdiston Primary is full.

Mr. Speaker, Carrington(s Primary School has a capacity of 210 but presently carries 175 students. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would have spoken to one building but there are three prefabricated buildings on the site. It is not possible for Government to make any extension to that school because of limited space. Another issue is that the structures are very old.

Sir, as far as 1999, there has been rehabilitation work done to these buildings by the Project Unit, to help improve conditions there. Mr. Speaker, one would appreciate that the electrical wirings need upgrading. The structure itself is challenging and, of course, being wood could lead to termite infestation.

Mr. Speaker, it is Government(s policy to look after the well-being of all children. Indeed, we always speak of quality education for all. I believe the children at Carrington(s Primary too, must have that opportunity for quality education, hence making the environment conducive to the students learning and for the workings of the members of staff. Mr. Speaker, there is tremendous concern about the plant and the general safety and well-being of all persons there.

Mr. Speaker, the Erdiston Primary School, which is in the general area of Erdiston College, is sandwiched between Erdiston Nursery School, which caters to the children between ages three and four, and to the east is the Erdiston Annex.

H:No.11(20)1350 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Miss. C. Y. FORDE:

We must take ourselves back in history when Erdiston College had teachers from all over the Caribbean and the training was provided for them here in Barbados. We have turned out outstanding teachers who now work in other locations serving persons well. I want to make the point that a model school was constructed on that site to facilitate teachers in training so that they too would get an opportunity to use children in a classroom environment to be able to transfer knowledge and interact with the children. Mr. Speaker, you would know of the

conditions at Erdiston because you served as a tutor in that noble institution.

One Government made the decision and I suspect that it might have been the Democratic Labour Party but be that as it may, Erdiston was then expanded to become a primary school. I personally want to say that I do not think there was any great plan put in place at that point in time for the expansion and you can see a little building here and a little one there and so on and it is very cramped. As I speak to you, Sir, there are approximately 750 children on the site that was constructed to accommodate three classrooms. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central would have been in Erdiston at some point in time and he knows of the conditions at the primary school.

Mr. Speaker, in our thrust for EduTech, we are of the belief that the students at Erdiston and Carrington(s Primary deserve better locations if we are to meet the demands. We cannot expand Erdiston at this time because of the limited space. There are 750 children, Mr. Speaker, and that makes it the largest school on the island and this makes it difficult for management to house the student.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege to be on the compound and I was disturbed at the large numbers of children in that small location and the threat of floods because every time there are heavy rains the schools flood. Sir, the electrical work and the plumbing needs to be done and there are a number of other things that are posing problems for student, staff, parents and guardians.

Mr. Speaker, I must tell you that Erdiston Primary is one of the first choices for Barbadian parents and it is a fact that many distinguished Honourable Members in this Chamber have asked that Erdiston be the school of choice for their children because of

its location. Many people think that the schools in Bridgetown get better teachers and everyone wants their child to attend those schools but, Mr. Speaker, I know that rural schools do excellent work in preparing children to be good productive citizens.

The children from Carrington(s Village, Tweedside Road and the adjoining communities always have difficulty on a yearly basis for access to Erdiston Primary even though they live in the area but, Mr. Speaker, many parents work in St. Michael and Christ Church and since Erdiston Primary is in their route of travel it is easy to pick up and drop off their children and this school is high on the list as the choice for individuals.

When the decision was made for the acquisition of the land at Tweedside Road for the building of a school many years ago, it was an ideal location then but we have since looked at the demographics of the two locations and find that Carrington Primary has limited space and does not meet the demand. Erdiston Primary is a small school with many students and it is wise for Government to amalgamate the two and build a new school to meet the needs of children rather than to keep two old structures opened and each year have to spend thousands of dollars to rehabilitate them. Therefore, Government decided to amalgamate Carrington(s Primary School and Erdiston Primary to make one school at the location in Flint Hall.

Mr. Speaker, there is no room for expansion at Erdiston Primary School or at Carrington(s Primary School and although Barbadians would have a strong connection with these schools because many of them would have gone to school at those schools, we have reached the stage where we can no longer keep these schools opened because of the cost to do so and the fact that the needs of the children will not be adequately met because of the structure and

condition of the environs at those schools.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on the other side would perhaps say that Erdiston Primary should be kept open for various reason but amalgamation is nothing new. We know that All Saints Boys and Girls Schools and Hillaby and Turner Hall Schools were amalgamated and that co-education is being offered at Queens College, Alexander School and St. Michael(s Schools.

Mr. Speaker, it would be more cost effective because the rationalisation of human resources would be important. There is no point in keeping these old schools opened if they cannot adequately meet the demands of the community when they could be amalgamated to allow children the opportunity for good recreation and enhancement of the entire area that would be aesthetically pleasing. Sir, it would also uplift the personality and attitude of those involved. As I have said before, the cost would be prohibitively high to keep the old schools opened.

Mr. Speaker, if we could make the school a reality, I would be the happiest person in Barbados to know that rural children would get an opportunity to remain at the school in the communities where they live rather than to be rushed to Bridgetown on a daily basis. Sir, as early as 6:30 a.m. each morning, you will see primary school children boarding the bus and in their parents(cars travelling towards the St. Michael and this is always to the detriment of the children living around the school who then have to travel out of the area to another school. Why should children who live in Tweedside Road and Carrington(s Village have to go over to Lawrence T. Gay Memorial which is in another area when there is a school on the hill that they can attend?

Mr. Speaker, it would be a useful effort for these children to go school in their area and

allow children from the rural communities to remain where they are.

H11/14:00 p.m.

Sequence 21

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE Government is looking at bringing to the fore a resolution to that issue. We believe that children should go to school in their communities and help to develop the culture and make a contribution to those communities.

Mr. Speaker, I did not do into detail about the distribution of children at Erdiston Primary School because you would be amazed to learn that only 390 children come from St. Michael. Sir, 58 children from St. James, 74 from St. Philip, 32 from St. George, 22 from St. Thomas and 19 from St. John. Sir, St. Andrew is the only parish that does not have a child at Erdiston Primary School at this time. Sir, is not the best situation for these small children.

I want to speak to the issue of housing. The Government will come with a plan that would help resolve the problem of children being schooled out of their catchment area. It has nothing to do with zoning but it is going to be a creative idea where parents, guardians and other persons would work with the project so that when our children are schooled in their communities, people would be there to ensure that the children are safe, they do their homework, get a beverage and the environment is safe for them in the mornings and evenings. However, I would discuss this at another time.

I believe that the location at Flint Hall is ideal. It has a wide expanse of land and the ambience there is going to be good. I also believe that for travelling purposes, that location is excellent.

We all know that Carrington(s Village is more or less a business centre. People live there and I support every effort for more people to be able to have access to housing in the Carrington(s Village area. The noise level is high and we know the problems that would pose for some of our children. However, I believe that the people in the St. Michael location deserve better housing.

Sir, we know that there are a lot of landlords who charge high rents and the money being paid for these properties is not justified. The people in the St. Michael area deserve to get opportunities through Government initiatives to be able to own their properties.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy said that Government should say why there is a need to move the school from the location at Tweedside Road. We believe that if under EduTech we are to offer these children proper facilities, we believe that if the children are to be on the cutting edge of the citizens of the future, then we must give an upgraded school just as we have with the Ann Hill School, Urvine Wilson School, All Saints School and St. Christopher(s School.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party joined the Hillaby and Turner Hall Primary Schools and relocated it at Farmers and that was a welcoming experience. Unfortunately, there were no people living around that area but this Barbados Labour Party was creative enough to put a housing development there and resite the people from Whitehall St. Andrew because you cannot have a school with only cane fields around it. We believe that people should be living around and within the environment of the school to be able to build a community. Mr. Speaker, that is why we are asking this Parliament to approve this exchange of the property to facilitate the children in a larger environment that would generally meet the

needs of all involved.

The Barbados Labour Party Government has a conscious understanding of the great demand for housing in Barbados and we will continue to facilitate the needs of the people. We believe that Barbadians deserve the best whether they are from St. John, St. Michael South Central or St. Philip West.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke highly of the former Barbados Labour Party representative for St. Michael South Central and the efforts made of him to be able to see the whole transformation of that general area. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke about the area for coconut vendors but that is still in the plan. The network of roads in that area has been changed and further efforts would be made to have a facility available for the coconut vendors or any other vendors at another location.

We have a track record when it comes to housing. The Democratic Labour Party cannot say much except that they built a few houses in St. Philip and they could not agree in principle what the cost of the houses would have been. The Barbados Labour Party plans strategically and I believe that people living within the St. Michael South Central area would take advantage of the opportunity for those twenty-four units.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to say that the Honourable Member for St. James South spoke about the challenges that the Ministry of Housing is experiencing at this time. I want to empathise with the comments that she made but I also want to say that I think that every Barbadian has a responsibility, if given an opportunity to be able to rent land, house or acquire a mortgage, has a responsibility to look after whatever property that has been allocated to him or her.

Therefore, I encourage all Barbadians to live up to the pledge that they made because at the end of the day, it is an unreasonable experience for those who are paying their rent not to have their facilities upgraded, while those who are not paying can benefit from whatever improvements are made to the units. I believe that we have a responsibility to the people and we are aware that money does not come from a bottomless pit.

Sir, in the early 1980s to mid 1980s the Democratic Labour Party went the length and breadth of Barbados advising people who live in the Government units not to pay any rents. Today we are saddled with a lot of people who are not paying their rent because they were advised not to pay.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKERS: Order, please.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we are being voted for as Members of Parliament, we should not mislead the public.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, the young people are watching and listening to us. I was a younger person in the 1980s and I can tell you of experiences where I attended meetings and I heard the Democratic Labour Party telling Barbadians not to pay for their houses.

Asides

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Mr. President, I remember a Deputy Prime Minister of this country, from the other side, telling Barbadians not to cut any canes and that if the white people

want the canes cut let them take their children to cut them. Sir, it has come to the demise of Barbadians who are always very proud people.

Aside

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE: Barbadians are very proud people who like to work, who do not look for freeness. H11/22 14.10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

2:10 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE:

Sir, when leaders go out in the eyes of the public and tell people not to pay house rent and not to pay all the other things that they are expected to do, it questions us as leaders. Mr. Speaker, I am not one at those, on This Side of the House or anywhere else in Barbados, who will tell people not to discharge of their responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that we should be pulling wool over Barbadians' eyes because when you tell me what I want to know, it is finished. This is the time when you tell me what I need to know, and not what I want to hear, and therefore, we have a track record on which we can stand up proudly.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to housing, the Democratic Labour Party cannot speak, because they do not have a plan in their Manifesto this time for housing. I do not think, according to what is being seen and said by the public that they have a proper plan, even for 2005.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am extremely proud to be a member of this Government where we can make the necessary

adjustments, and make plans so that Barbadians can be empowered. I am not talking masses now, Sir, because all Barbadians deserve a piece of this cake and if we can get a couple of houses in the St. Michael South Central area, I support it 100 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I support it, in the same way that I would support it, if I could get more sites and services in St. Thomas, where my people would be able to build a little house from the back and come forward, to start (working up) a few garden beds to supplement their incomes and all those other things.

Mr. Speaker, I am 100 per cent in favour of the housing project in Mount Poyer in St. Lucy where the Honourable Member for St. Lucy can get his constituents to build their houses, because there are house spots available.

I believe that the houses which are going to be constructed in St. John, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John can help his constituents and guide them along so that they know how to challenge themselves through the various agencies to be able to get home ownership. It is important that all of us speak about this issue with a conscience and not just split it down the divide of politics.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, persons living in St. Lucy have relatives in Christ Church. Persons living in St. Lucy have houses and relatives in Welches Terrace in St. Thomas. People living in St. John, have relatives in St. Philip and a few Honourable Members in here live in their constituencies, but they have family, friends and people whom they would like to see uplifted.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is the route that we should take in ensuring that, as the Resolution clearly outlines, the location at Tweedside Road is used for housing projects to facilitate the housing needs for the people in

that constituency. I strongly support the effort so that the teachers, parents, guardians, students and others within the Carrington(s Primary School area, get an opportunity, in another two years, to be able to attend a new spanking new facility that will be amalgamated at the Flint Hall location because we believe that each one matters.

The Barbados Labour Party lives up to that theme, a better life for our people. Whenever we deviate from that, Mr. Speaker, I will kiss the Barbados Labour Party goodbye. I will not go to the Democratic Labour Party because they have no quality or vision. I am saying that I will continue to lend my support to these particular Resolution because they are in the interest of people, good governance and will give people the empowerment that help to put them on their feet, and make them proud Barbadians.

This is the moment that I am sure the people of St. Michael South Central were waiting for, and the Honourable Member has spoken very wisely in support of this particular Resolution. I trust that all other Honourable Member on the Other Side and on This Side would lend their support, so that we can advance our plans in building a better life for Barbadians.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. L.R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with the Resolution. I will support it for a number of reasons, but I rise only to essay a few questions to the Minister of Housing or anybody on the Frontbench.

I am glad that Carrington(s Village is getting something. God knows that for a very long time, it has not been shown the respect it deserves. If they are going to build a few houses in Tweedside Road, I am glad for the people of that area.

I want, however, Mr. Speaker, not to use all the time I am allowed to raise a few questions. The constituency of St. George South has the greatest land mass of any constituency in Barbados. There is a lot of land lying around. In almost ten years of my party(s requests, not a single house spot or a Government house has been made available in St. George South, and it is not for a lack of trying by the Honourable Member of Parliament.

On one occasion, the Prime Minister visited the constituency with representatives from Clico, Mr. Dupree, and Mr. Parris and I believe, the former Attorney-General was there. They did not tell me about it so I was not there. They promised the people of Todds that an open area in the centre of the village would be made available for housing, and that the cane crop which was growing, would be the last one ever to grow there. They are probably correct. Sir, that was 1998, and not another crop was grown there since then. It has been grass and bush until now but not one house spot has been made available.

Sir, I was asked by the Ministry of House and the National Housing Corporation to identify land in St. George South for housing. A few years ago, I went with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Housing, my Parliament representative, the Honourable Member for St. George North, the Chief Town Planner and various other persons, and we identified some land both at Farm Road and at Old Works Hill, going up from Buckeley for housing.

I was told that house spots would be provided at both Farm Road and Ellerton. Sir, five years ago, the then Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew went with me into Woodland in St. George, and we identified some acreage which he said would be available for housing. Sir, five to six years have passed and there is still no housing. Land at Greens in St. George on the border between

Drax Hall, Hope and Greens, was identified for housing. Sir, it took a long time for the Chief Town Planner to approve the land for housing but he did eventually.

Mr. Speaker, I was told by the Ministry of Housing that the land would be developed for housing. I am in this business for too long to allow this to happen to me. In the last general elections, I (stuck my neck out) and told the people in Drax Hall Hope and Greens that this land will be used for housing and the Government was about to start the development. I mentioned the five areas identified. The correspondence was received indicating that the Government was about to start the work. Acquisitions, like the one at Woodland, were brought to Parliament three years ago. Sir, not a single house spot has been made available to anybody in St. George South in the last ten years, and not a house provided by Government for anybody in St. George South.

House 11, sequence 23, 14:1420

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. L. R. TULL:

Sir, I do not know whether it is intended to get at the representative or at the people. As far as the representative is concerned, if it is meant to get at him, just like the old people say, it would be like water off a duck's back.

It is not fair that people can get 12 houses in one of the most built-up areas of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, in your constituency where you do not have room to breathe, they found land to build a few houses and I am glad for you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I had to beg real hard too.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Speaker, I would love you to teach me the art of begging.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I love the fact that Tweedside Road is getting assistance, but the houses in that area are so close that if you yawn in one house you would deafen the persons in the house next door. There is very little land available anywhere in St. Michael for housing development. Month after month, I am hearing of houses being built in this place and the other place, but in the St. George Valley there are hundreds of acres of land lying around, you cannot get a single house spots to become available for anyone in St. George. I am now posing a few questions in the hope that someone on the Frontbench would advise me as to what is the problem and if there is ever going to be any hope.

I live in St. George, Sir, and when I lie in my bed I can see over 100 houses at the back of where I live which were built by the Government. If they are not a 100, Sir, you can put me right. The interesting thing about this is that when the Government contemplated building those houses the people who live up there came to me and asked me if I would get with them and raise objection to the Government building a slum below their houses which would cause their property value to fall. I told them to get out of my place. I grew up in Carrington(s Village and those things do not bother me. I chased them away and I encouraged the building of those houses below where I live because I thought that a number of people from my constituency who were running into the National Housing Corporation week after week desperate for somewhere to live would have been able to get a chance, but all of those houses were given out and not a single person from my constituency got any.

I want these things explained because on the night of the last general election I told my constituents and the people of Barbados that that was the last time I would be running in a general election. I also told the people of my constituency that this is going to be a vigorous five years for me and that I am going to give them a level of representation they did not had in all the many years I was there because they have been good to me and I need to bequeath something to them that is worthwhile.

I want the Government to tell me before I go on any of my polemics, because that is not what I am doing now, if it is in the contemplation of this Government that the people of St. George South would be able to feast at the table of the National Housing Corporation. Are the people of St. George South Barbadians or are they not Barbadians? I will reserve all my vitriol until I get some answers. Mr. Speaker, something is developing that confuses me. If it is Government policy, I am unalterably opposed to it. I am hearing these days that if you provide house spots or build houses in a constituency that 80 per cent of them must be for the people of that constituency. I live in St. George North, I pay taxes and I have as much right as anyone else to whatever is going across this country. It is as idiotic as saying that you build a market in Bridgetown so only the people of Bridgetown could use it. There has to be more equity in the system. I am not asking for anything more than I have asked for the whole of my public life, that is, that people be treated fairly, that there is justice in the system and that those in the greatest need should be the ones who should be looked after first. That would only matter if they were building housing developments or providing house lots in every constituency in which case you could say those who live in each constituency would benefit from the ones in their constituency.

In a constituency such as mine which have

not been the beneficiary of a single house lot or a government house in over ten years, what am I supposed to tell all of those people who come to me on a weekly basis yearning for somewhere to live or for a little piece of land on which they can put up their own houses. I really want some answers. I do not want to be difficult. My contribution is not meant to be pernicky. It is just that I have people who have voted for me for six general elections and they expect to hear my voice in the defence of their cause.

These things are in a file for the contemplation of the Government. They have their plan and they must know. Are they going to do anything for us?

Mr. Speaker, I was asked by the Ministry of Housing and Lands to identify some land in the Ellerton area for housing because a number of people wanted house spots and they were coming to me as well as going to the National Housing Corporation. I identified an area which was taken up by the National Housing Corporation to provide those house spots for the people of the area. Forty-three people gave their names for these house spots and most of them went into the National Housing Corporation and were given a form with three locations from which to choose a house spot. One of the locations that was written down was Ellerton, so they chose Ellerton for a house spot. After a while, I kept hearing that no house spots were going to be available at Ellerton anymore and that they were going to build middle income houses instead. I told the people in my group in St. George that cannot be true because I was asked to go and identify the land for the house spots and I have correspondence from the department referring to the land for house spots. My people said, (Mr. Tull, you do not know what is going on.(Sir, when I did found out what was going on, the Government was building houses for \$350 000 on those lots. The only connection the

people who asked me for house spots could have in those houses is if they were going there to work as maids.

They did not come with any alternative that is short term. The people want somewhere to live. I was not asked to provide an alternative site for the house spots. There is no alternative site because every single site I put up, they look at it and say yes they will accept it, but then absolutely nothing happens. I do not like to say these things but I am burning.

House 11 Sequence 24

2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. L. R. TULL:

Mr. Speaker, I see my constituents constantly, who always remind me of the promises that I have made them. I have persons who, while waiting for permission to erect houses, have lumber stored under their parents' cellars, which is now rotting.

Sir, the mandate of the National Housing Corporation was initially to provide housing for the poor but

\$200 000 and \$300 000 houses are not for the poor, and that now seems to be the priority of the National Housing Corporation. I will not tire in letting my voice be heard on these matters, both inside or outside of Parliament.

Sir, I can say that this Government has an incomparable record of public housing in Barbados. At the macro level, this Government has done well by providing a large number of units, a large number of house spots, loans, et cetera. The micro level is in St. George South and it cannot be heartening hearing of all the great things that are happening across the land,

while nothing is happening in this area, and so I hope I could get answers to these questions.

Sir, whenever I rise and make a muscular speech about things that affect my constituency, I am branded. It is a brand that I love, for I really do not care. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, speaking to this Debate today and it has gladdened my heart. I do not know if everybody liked it but too bad for them. Sir, I like what he said and I do associate myself with it, and have adopted much of what the Honourable Member has said. I wish that I had used those words myself, therefore, the Honourable Member has my support.

Sir, Carrington(s Village has always been given a bad rap but those of us who grew up there have been taught how to rally, how to fight back and how to get on. Sir, Carrington(s Village people have been beaten and bullied about from time immemorial. Sir, I am speaking of what I know. In those days, on every road in Belleville, Pine Hill and its surrounding environs, there were gas lamps used for street lighting but in Carrington(s Village, there were no paved roads, no street lights, no electricity nor running water. In addition, there were black people who robbed them by overcharging them for land.

Mr. Speaker, overtime Carrington(s Village has survived. Two years ago, I gave land - not sold - which is situated at Carrington(s Village, to the Urban Development Commission, for them to build access roads for a number of persons. That land was given to me by my mother. I would not have done that in St. Philip, no matter how close I am to it. The people in Carrington(s Village are from humble means. Sir, I gave this land to the Urban Development Commission at the request of the former Honourable Member for that area, Mr. David Gill, who is responsible for this Resolution which is before this House today. I

gave the land because these people need a kind of mentorship that most people in this country would not want.

Sir, when one talks about the development of housing for persons in the Carrington(s) Village/Tweedside environs, I agree with it, if it is going to benefit those people. I want the Government to step out of the overpopulated areas of St. Michael, and to come to where the land is, to where the air is salubrious, to where the conditions are better for living in every sense of the word, and that is at St. George South, where persons could look across the St. George Valley and savour that environment. Sir, is it now in the interest of the Government to do something for persons in that area.

Finally, I would like to make the point concerning the schools. I do not know who draws the lines for water zones, et cetera. When I was more involved, it used to be personnel at the Barbados Water Authority but I have always heard that the piece of land where the school is to be sited is a Zone One area. All I am asking that Government looks at it and informs me. If I am told that hydrological changes have taken place that have shifted the boundaries in the zone.

It is not the first time that I have seen a school built in an area where persons said was a water zone area. When I was Minister of Education, we built a school at Holetown, the St. James Secondary School. I sat on that side and heard persons on this side raising the same question because it was said to be a water zone area. I said that if it were in a water zone area, then as Minister, I would not have built a school on it. The experts told me it was not a water zone area, and I accept it.

Sir, in respect to the Erdiston Primary School, it has been a remarkable success as a primary school in this country for more than 50 years. H:NO.11(25)1440 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. L. R. TULL:

Some Honourable Members mentioned in the debate earlier that it has attracted students from all eleven parishes in Barbados and that is testimony to the quality of education it delivered.

Sir, I did not hear the debate from the beginning but it is my understanding that the Government is closing Erdiston Primary School and Carrington Primary School and building a school for both in Flint Hall. If that is the intention there are other considerations that haunt the area. Sir, we on the backbench do not make the decision but we want to pass on our perspectives as we see things. I have been given the assurance of the Honourable Minister of Education that the Erdiston School is being closed to expand the Erdiston Teachers(Training College as a campus for the proposed new University of Barbados.

Sir, I heard that a group of business people were seeking to acquire Erdiston Primary school compound for the construction of a high-paying elite private school.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I do not require the Minister to get up and deny it because he has already told me it is not true. I want the Minister to know that people have mentioned this to me and this is why I am speaking about it because I genuinely hope it is not true.

Sir, those who come and seek to live in this country have to be a part of this country. There should be no exclusive private schools for expatriates and their (big-up(white friends in Barbados. They should use the institutions in Barbados just as we used them and did well.

Sir, you do not sit in this Honourable House unless you have done well.

There is also another group seeking to develop a private exclusive primary school in Barbados and certain people will not be allowed to enter. Mr. Speaker, they should not even start to think about it because I will be in the forefront and many voices will also cry out against this new bigotry that could easily work itself into the society. God knows, we have enough bigotry as it is and we do not need any more of it.

Sir, I close by saying that I support the Resolution. I believe that Government has an outstanding record in public housing in this country but I part company with the Government on two serious issues. One is the question of equity and the allocation of resources across the country. I have difficulty with it because it cannot be fair that people in some constituencies are to be the beneficiaries of public housing while others are left out in the cold even though those left out also pay the cost of these things.

The second thing on which we part company, is the way Government is treating the constituents of St. George South. Sir, if I were a constituent in St. George South and the situation that obtains in Barbados today in relation to the provision of resources and services remain the same, the next election I would some have difficulty in voting.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Despite the fact that they have suffered, they kept their faith in their representative and, from time to time, they ask me what I have done the Government.

Sir, I am hopeful that the Government would put it right for my successor and for itself because I believe the Government wants to

continue to have the support of the people of St. George South. The people have delivered constantly to the Barbados Labour Party and it is not unreasonable to ask that something be returned to them.

Sir, I am grateful to you.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, I rise to lend my support to this Resolution before this Honourable Chamber. I want to begin by congratulating the Honourable Minister of Housing for her frank an open discussion in this Honourable Chamber which led to a debate of a high calibre that reflects the problems particularly in the Government housing estates across Barbados.

When I speak about the Government estates across Barbados, I am not speaking from a superficial point of view but from a practical one because I have resided in the Government housing estates for 32 years of the 50 years of my life and no one in this Chamber can tell me about the pressures and problems of persons residing in Government housing estates.

Sir, as a child I grew up in the Pine Housing, my mother had seven children and when I was ten years old she had a notice of eviction placed on the house. The entire family had to leave the house at midnight and we went to sleep at a friend(s) house because we were ashamed of what the neighbours would say.

Sir, we have to be humane, conscientious and understanding of the emotion and hurt one experiences once a notice of eviction is given particularly to those persons who are single mothers of large household because it can have a dramatic effect on the entire family.

H11/14:50 p.m.

Sequence 26

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of HON. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, I want to look at the problem of housing in Barbados from a position of homelessness. Over the weekend I prepared a document as it relates to homelessness in Barbados. I want quote extensively from this document so I would it a document of this Honourable Chamber because I believe that the information that is contained in this document is going to be useful, not only to this debate but for future planners of housing development in Barbados.

Therefore, I want to begin by saying that as Barbados seeks to meet the millennium goal, with respect to poverty eradication, there is a distinct link between homelessness and poverty. One of the more serious challenges facing this nation is homelessness. I want to look at homelessness because many people are not aware of the severity of this problem which is very much understated. Many people are of the view that homelessness is limited to persons who sleep on the sidewalks in Bridgetown, on the benches in Queen(s Park and other places.

Sir, I want to offer a definition of homelessness and outline the core of the problem, in terms of the Barbados context. I will also, to examine the contributing factors to homelessness in Barbados and to recommend some solutions.

Mr. Speaker, homelessness can be defined as:

(a) Persons having no shelter and who are surviving on the streets.

(b) Persons discharged from institutions but have nowhere to go.

(c) Residents of institutions that are specifically established to offer shelter to such persons, for example, persons residing in the home for battered women.

(d) Persons temporarily lodging at the homes of others because they have no way to stay permanently. In this category you would find mainly single women who are the heads of large households.

(e) Residents of institutions who have attained discharge status but cannot be discharged because they do not have a home to go to.

Sir, in this context you would find that one of the biggest perpetrators of this obscene evil is family members. I am going to deal with this item because, apparently, in Barbados when anything goes wrong, everybody points at the government. However, when an investigation is carried out you would find that center of the matter lies within the family unit.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sorry that I have to cross you. I know that you have done all your preparation, as you have said, but surely you must make a connection between what you have prepared, saying and what the Resolution states. You must make the connection soon.

HON. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, I am making the connection between homelessness, which is an obvious connection, and housing. The fact is, we have a big problem in Barbados as it relates to homelessness.

Asides

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you can speak generally but make the connection.

HON. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, I want the topic of homelessness to resound in this Honourable Chamber so that we would not forget what is the cause.

Approximately, 70 persons are currently

living on the streets in Barbados and they can be found in popular areas across Barbados such as Baxters Road, Nelson Street, Bay Street, Roebuck Street, Fairchild Street, Carrington(s Village, Swan Street, Martindales Road and St. Michael(s Row. Those living on the street tend to be like us in terms of pigmentation and range between the ages of thirty-one and eighty-five years.

It is also a fact that there are approximately 300 persons in Barbados who are currently institutionalised at the Psychiatric Hospital and who have attained discharged status but cannot be discharged because they do not have any place to go. Some of these people have been in the hospital for as long as thirty years. This is a lifetime because if you get a prison sentence, the maximum sentence in terms of a lifetime is twenty-five years and we have people residing in these institutions for over thirty years.

Let us look at the contributing factors to the problem of homelessness: Unemployment, mental health and domestic violence. Domestic violence which is very prominent in Barbados, and some men are also victims of domestic violence.

Asides

HON. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, substance abuse and eviction are also some of the problems facing the homeless. Eviction is a very trying situation where persons are evicted by unscrupulous landlords when the tenants ask the landlords to do some minor repairs to the houses and then they are served with eviction notices. In most cases you would find mothers evicting their own sons and daughters from living on house spots because in most case they want the land or want them out of the house. Sir, there are then the natural disasters and house fires.

There is an overcrowding situation in the

Government estates where a one-bedroom unit has six persons residing in it, a two-bedroom unit accommodating fifteen persons and a three-bedroom accommodating eighteen persons. These units have only one toilet and when it is being used by someone, the odour travels all over the house. I know some people are embarrassed but this is the stark reality of the situation in Barbados. These are experiences on a daily basis, of people in the Government housing estates across Barbados. Sir, if we are going to move forward and find better accommodation, then we have to look for an alternative solution to assist those persons in the housing estates.

Sir, some years ago Keith Simmons and I predicted that problem will evolve over time because the children that were living in those units many years ago are now adults.

15.00 p.m

H 11/27

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

3:00 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. H.F. LASHLEY:

They have children and when they try to ease the problem by adding on a room to the house, they are served another notice stating that they have added on the room illegally.

Sir, the fact is that people have to find creative solutions on their own, to solve the problem. I am not condoning people to break the law. I am saying that people must pay their rent because, if people do not pay their rent, it creates a critical problem for the Government, in terms of finding other alternatives. This Government has created more housing solutions in Barbados, than any

other Government.

Sir, I want to say that another serious problem we have in Barbados is homelessness. Research has shown that most of the homeless persons on the streets of Bridgetown have received education. I want to deal with this, because we ask ourselves why we have this problem when there is free secondary education. However, many of them have left school between the ages of 14 and 15 years old, without the requisite certification or skills necessary to secure employment. Some of these persons are also from Carrington(s) Village.

Sir, contrary to what people may think, substance abuse and drug abuse, for example, marijuana and alcohol are the major factors which characterise many of the homeless people that we see on the streets across Barbados. Many of these persons who are substance abusers have been evicted from their homes by their families, because of their aggressive behaviour and the families could no longer cope. Some relatives express fear of keeping such persons around, hence they are evicted and left on their own. A few are able to obtain a meal from other relatives, but are not offered accommodation, hence they are on the street.

Sir, thanks to institutions like the Salvation Army and the Sir Clyde Gollop shelter, which is under the Ministry of Social Transformation, at least, they could find some kind of temporary accommodation.

Sir, we have another serious problem where women who are evicted with their children lodge at a friend for a week, or three or four days and then go to another friend until they could find adequate housing. As I said, others would find accommodation at the Lancaster House which was specifically established for persons who are victims of fire or flood. At

present, there are some 21 persons in the Lascaster Home, and all other residents are there because they have been evicted from their homes.

I believe, Sir, that the time has come, in Barbados, when we are going to have to set up in Barbados a landlord and tenant court because I believe the problem is acute. In New York, in most cases, the court rules in favour of the single women who are mothers of large households and the elderly.

I do not believe, as was characterised in the newspaper some time ago, that old persons, whether they are living on the Government(s) land or on private land, should be evicted from their homes. A society is measured by how best it looks after the two extremes, that is the elderly and the youth. I seriously believe that it is an injustice for anyone to evict an 84-year-old person or a single mother who has five, seven or eight children, and put them on the street.

Sir, I make the important call for a landlord and tenant court, because the problem is getting more acute for the Ministry of Social Transformation. In this respect, the press has a critical role to play because they report the problems, but if they would come to the institution and investigate, they would find that there is number of solutions that were offered, but the problem normally lies in the fact that there is no access to land, or that the landowners have taken a very serious position that they want these people off their land.

I also believe, Sir, if you are going to deal seriously with this entire problem, that 10 per cent of all housing in Barbados should be allocated to persons with disabilities and that was described in the White Paper on Disabilities. We are entering a phase, Sir, where the Honourable Minister spoke about helping those persons in the lower socio

economic bracket, the gas station attendants, the maids, janitors, et cetera.

Sir, we want to enter into a 50/50 arrangement where if the person can find a carpenter within the neighbourhood, we supply them with the materials. This 50/50 arrangement is another solution for some of the housing problems that exist.

The basic problem that we have at the Ministry of Social Transformation is that of finding land, so that persons who come to us and need an urgent solution, we can help, but we are hamstrung, Sir, by the fact that we do not have the necessary land available to us.

Sir, I am dealing with the countless problems, so that the Honourable Chamber would understand the magnitude of problems that we are facing in Barbados. How about those persons who are deported from other countries who come to Barbados primarily from North America? As you know, Sir, it is now the policy, particularly of the present administration in North America that as soon as these persons commit a felony, they are deported to the country of their birth. Now, you will find that a lot of those persons who come back here are not accepted by their families and they become a matter for the state. Sir, we have this other problem as it relates to those persons that are deported.

Mr. Speaker, while dealing with this whole question of housing, we have to also look at squatting. Sir, in most of the housing areas around Barbados there is a high degree of squatting, particularly among young people. The problem is very acute in the Pine, Wildley and Parkinson Field where you would find that the young people are now trying to get houses on their own.

In the meantime, because of the problems we are having within the families, we are finding

that they are leaving home and setting up a shanty on a piece of the land. We are trying to grapple with that problem by using the available land space to build houses for them, in order to avoid this serious problem.

Sir, I want to say that fire, I think the Honourable Member for St. Michael East spoke about it in his delivery, is a very serious problem where we have many people in Barbados, some 410 persons affected by fire this year, in comparison with 375 last year. Mr. Speaker, because of this, there is a great demand for housing and the National Housing Corporation alone, cannot deal with this problem.

What we are doing in the Ministry of Social Transformation, as we find ourselves playing that role, are placing some of these fire victims in guest houses across Barbados. Sir, our bill to date, is more than \$43 000, in terms of providing alternative temporary housing accommodation, while at the same time, grappling with the problem of trying to create new housing solutions for these persons.

Mr. Speaker, there are many problems that are contributing to the housing situation in Barbados. Sir, we are trying to deal with them by creating senior citizen villages across Barbados. Shortly, we will be opening the one at Vauxhall. We are also going to St. George and St. Peter.

House 11, sequence 28, 15:1014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. H. F. LASHLEY:

Sir, we are encouraging families across Barbados to take up the challenge we are offering them to buy some of the welfare or urban houses so that they can secure a future for themselves and their relatives.

Mr. Speaker, years ago there was a flood in St. Peter and many of the houses of those persons who live close to Speightstown were destroyed and we replaced them with traditional welfare houses. I believe the time has come where we should be able to sell those houses along with the land which is Government land to those persons for a very small price. Obviously, there can be no divide on this matter because all of us on both sides are in this situation together and if we let commonsense, objectivity, nationalism and patriotism become the (hum(of the day, then we would agree that this is a national problem and we have to deal with it collectively.

I have not heard anyone in this Honourable Chamber speaking about getting corporate Barbados involved in this venture which is critical. Government alone cannot solve the problem. We cannot look only to the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission and the National Housing Corporation for the solution. We must be able to develop partnerships with the trade unions and the private sector to solve this problem.

Sir, we are also trying to give people a new lease on life by empowering them so that they could own their lots across Barbados through what we called the transfer of titles programme.

Sir, housing is a very serious problem in Barbados. We are grappling with it and we are coming up with all of the innovative solutions that is possible. We know that there is a particular target group we must look after. We also know, as the Minister said, that there is a group of people in Barbados who will never be able to buy their own houses despite the fact that this Government would like to see every Barbadian owning a house. Therefore, the building of houses for persons who want to rent must be a distinct possibility. We must also

move to the construction of high-rise buildings.

In terms of protecting some Barbadians from themselves, we as a Government is currently looking to use materials that are fireproof. The technology is here in Barbados and we are examining it in the Ministry with a view that all future houses we build through the Urban Development Commission will be of this fireproof material.

Additionally, we are also making sure that all of the houses we construct in Carrington(s Village, in the Pine and across the urban corridors of Barbados have the necessary smoke detectors so that the aged will know they are safe.

Sir, I believe we can deal collectively with this problem that is affecting so many Barbadians but we would have to pool all of our resources together to do so. Sir, I would just like to relive my experiences and let everyone in this Honourable Chamber know that this is a real problem and that they are persons who reside in the housing areas across Barbados who really cannot pay the rents. Some of them would have been affected by the 1991 structural adjustment programme and may still be grappling with the after effects of it, so we are introducing programmes that these people can come back into mainstream society.

Sir, on a weekly basis, I get more than 400 telephone calls in the Ministry of Social Transformation. Of those 400 telephone calls over 300 of them are for housing. Sir, twelve requests were mentioned but I am sure that when those 12 are multiplied you will probably get 50 or 60 requests for housing on a monthly basis. Therefore, we cannot lay blame all the time, we have to find solutions the problem. Sir, we must be able to encourage not only the business sector but the non-governmental organisations into a new style and type of governance. What is wrong with us as a

Government inviting organised community organisations, like the Israel Lovell Foundation, the Pinelands Creative Workshop and the social clubs of Haynesville and Lodge Road, once they have the technical expertise within their communities, to enter into a partnership with the Government by offering them contracts for the building of houses.

We are embarking on a welfare-to-work programme where we will train women of all ages, once they are able to work, in areas of work that are non-traditional for them such as masonry, carpentry, electrical installation and tiling. We are working very closely with the Ministry of Labour and the Vocational Training Board. There is a close relationship between the Welfare Department and the Vocational Training Board. We are trying to get the private sector on board. We are securing a loan. A grant is coming from Brazil and we are hoping to start this project very early in January.

Sir, if all of us, the Government, those on the Opposition side, civil society and the churches, because the churches in Barbados have to stand up too and take their rightful place and their responsibilities... The churches across Barbados have a lot of land and they have a responsibility to look after their flock other than collecting from them. I can say that because I, like you, Sir, go to church even though I go on Saturdays and you go on Sundays. They should not only worship God from a practical standpoint. Jesus himself asked the churches to invest in human capital. We cannot leave everything up to Government.

Mr. Speaker, I give support to the Resolution. I am very happy with the candidness of the Minister and also all other Honourable Members who spoke in the debate especially my friend from St. Michael East who echoed my emotions. Sir, when you look at it objectively, all of us in here are in this together,

therefore, all of us as representatives of the people are forced to find creative solutions and innovations to the problem.

Sir, today was the Minister of Housing time. My time will come when it comes to urban and when that time comes, I will be here waiting because I would not be as passive or as cool as I am now. I do not want to deal with it now, I will deal with it at that time.

Sir, I thank you for being extremely patient and tolerant with me so I will take my seat and allow other Honourable Members to speak.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for this opportunity to finally speak in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said in this debate and I would want, as a former Minister of Housing, to look at the policies which we in the Government enacted several years ago and which we continue to put forward as a programme for housing.

House 11 Sequence 29

3:20 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE: A survey was carried out in the urban areas to determine what were the problems and research has indicated that the greatest problems were housing and unemployment. It is significant, therefore, that any policies of Government to address any problems would have to be based on that scientific evidence of housing.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the survey did not speak to homelessness. We have heard in this Debate that homelessness is one of the biggest problems in Barbados but scientific evidence does not point to that fact.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the access to adequate housing which also includes access to water, electricity, adequate space and toilet facilities, seems to be the biggest problem in Barbados.

Therefore, Government at the time, laid a White Paper on Housing, to which I ask Honourable Members to refer. At that time, Government had committed itself to providing 50 terrace units per year for the next five years. It has not been possible to do so but the Government(s) policy is to provide rental units and so we continue to do.

Sir, over the eight-year programme, we have provided more than 130 rental units, and for others to say that we have not, is not based on facts. We have built London Bourne Towers, Country Road Park, Bush Hall Park, Deane Town, Flat Rock, along with others at Christ Church West, St. Barnabas and the Pine.

Sir, this Resolution today is to provide another 24 terrace units at Tweedside Road. Sir, plans are in place to provide opportunities for both the urban and suburban dwellers of Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment and the Urban Development Commission working together, have agreed that we would want to provide opportunities to spruce up the City. We have seen a plan to improve the lots of persons at Church Village. We have already started a process of relocating them, where more than 30 homes have already been built at Lower Burney, St. George.

Sir, there are plans to improve Greenfields, Cats Castle and Nelson Street. We have gone further and have provided more than 230 low income lots at Lower Burney. It is true that some of these lots are now inhabitable because

of the deep soil but the Chief Town Planner has agreed to a further extension of 20 acres of land at Lower Burney.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have constantly said in this Honourable House that development takes time. We first have to identify the land, then to acquire it but if it does not meet the requirements of the Chief Town Planner, the Barbados Water Authority, and other departments of Government, we still have to go back to the drawing board.

Sir, we have heard of land being situated in Zones One, Two and Three but the Chief Town Planner does not give permission to build if land is situated in Zone One area. The Resolution today speaks to Tweedside Road, where we are erecting more than 24 units for the people of Carrington(s) Village. There are Honourable Members in this Chamber who believe the policy of this Government is to provide opportunities for persons to own their homes. We understand that everyone would not be able to own a home but the policy is to direct persons to own their own land or homes, and this has been done by us. Over the last eight years, we have demonstrated that we are serious about giving persons the opportunity to own their home or lands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government came to Parliament and through an Amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, has given persons the opportunity to purchase land at \$2.50 per square foot and we have seen what is happening in the urban areas where a number of tenancies have now been transformed into new developments.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am saying that out of the White Paper on Housing, we have recognised that persons wanted to acquire land, to access mortgages, or to make home improvements.

H:No.11(30)1530 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

A number of tenants have acquired their land over the last years through the Urban Development Commission at \$2.50 per square feet and are building beautiful houses throughout Barbados, that is important for housing development. Very soon we will see the relocation of persons in the Seaview area to higher ground and with better accommodation. Government intends to do this and to say that this Government does not have a policy for low income people, is not to look at the facts. Honourable Members of this House need to be brought up to date on what is happening in terms of the transfer of title programme and with what is happening to tenants across Barbados because everyday people are getting title to their land.

Mr. Speaker, we have gone further afield to obtain lands if land were not available in the St. Michael. Government owns Coverley Plantation and over 100 acres of land has been earmarked for housing in that area. Sir, land has also been earmarked for low income housing at Dodds in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, we have acquired more land over the last eight years all across Barbados than any other Government but it takes time to develop these areas. The Honourable Member St. George South was saying that a lot of land has been acquired in his constituency and that there were no house spots available.

I am aware that we bought six acres of lands at Todds in St. George. We also bought land at Woodland, Greens, Farm Road and Buckeleys, St. George and, at that time, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said we were buying land in the agriculture zone.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. At that time, the Honourable Member said that the land was agriculture land and that it needed to be converted for housing. At that time, I also said that they began to cut up agricultural land in the St. George area, perhaps that is what the Honourable Member means.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make the point that the acquisition of land takes time. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has been speaking in this House for the last five years of how the Land Acquisition Act must be changed. He has been consistent in his argument and I opposed it every time because I believe that the Land Acquisition Act is very powerful and gives Government the right to acquire land for a public purpose. I have made the point that there is no need to change the Act as long as people are properly compensated for their lands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once the land is acquired, it will take time because we have to change of use of that land, put in roads, utilities and services before house spots can be created. I am sure that over the next few years the Honourable Member for St. George South will see development at Greens, Woodland and Todds.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have also sought to acquire land at Lears, St. Michael and Cottage in St. Lucy. Sir, these are future plans and it takes time because the land has to go through the change of use process. Honourable Members have forgotten that this Government sought to acquire land and also provided finance to develop the housing sector. We have provided mortgages through Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited and encourage other financial institutions to go into home lending through mortgage arrangements.

We have encouraged the financial sector to move interest rates downward from 9 per cent and today at Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited the mortgage rate is 6 per cent for \$100 000 and under. Sir, a number of persons have access to funds and do not have the down payment but they can now get a 100 per cent loan at an interest rate of 6 per cent from the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited. Sir, we have also provided the opportunity for hundreds of Barbadians seeking loans to repair their homes.

In the urban corridor many persons were able to acquire loans from the National Housing Corporation to repair their homes and between 1994 and 2003 more than \$25 million was lent to persons to repair their homes. Sir, it is important for this Government to state the facts and we believe that persons in the urban corridor need to improve their homes. Sir, we have done it in both the rural and urban areas. People in the rural area acquired their land at 10 cents per square foot because traditionally they worked on the plantation and people in the urban corridor would now get their land at \$2.50 per square foot.

We need to take this a stage further. We are aware that housing is the biggest problem and we are bombarded every day for houses. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy and myself argue constantly whether it is better for National Housing Corporation to build houses or simply provide lots. It is my view, that there should be a mixture of lots as well as low income houses.

H11/15:40 p.m.

Sequence 31

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Hon. G.A. CLARKE Sir, a number of persons have bought lots across

Barbados which have remained idle and are now causing a problem for the Ministry of Health. I want to make the point that the Ministry of Health has to embark on a debushing campaign to clear those lots.

Sir, I am convinced that all of the low income houses that were built by National Housing Corporation in the last eight years are occupied. It is true that we had problems with some of the contractors because all of the houses were not built to the best specification. However, when the Democratic Labour Party built house at Cane Garden and Oxnards they had problems too. I believe that National Housing Corporation still has a number of outstanding legal matters regarding some of the houses that were bought at Oxnards.

Asides

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: These are the kinds of problems that we will encounter from time to time. There will always be problems when a contractor builds a house for anyone.

However, the point that I am making is, that the National Housing Corporation must provide a mixture of houses and we cannot have only one solution to housing. The National Housing Corporation has not only provided houses for low income earners, it provided houses for the middle income earners when they built houses at West Terrace, Oxnards and Husbands.

Sir, over the years both Governments provided the opportunity for the lower and middle income earners as well. There are people who live in Husbands and Crane Development who are now earning large incomes. We cannot now say that they are the low income earners but the Government must provide the opportunity for persons to rent or own land. The policy of Government continues to be the same where housing is concerned.

Perhaps, the people who administer these projects on a day to day basis are the cause of the problem but have always been faced with this.

Sir, we have to strengthen the management of the Corporation but I am not one who would want to criticise them because the officers are bombarded daily by people who are looking for house spots. The demand for lots by the public is greater than the supply and for every house spot available there is approximately four buyers.

The National Housing Corporation does not have the lots ready to deliver because these things take time.

Asides

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Inadequate housing is the biggest problem that the National Housing Corporation faces and we have to address it and I believe that the joint venture programme would help to alleviate some of it. The joint venture programme is aimed at providing a solution to the lower, middle as well as the upper income earners. Sir, National Housing Corporation cannot satisfy the demand so it must get help from the private sector, therefore, Government has also encouraged the private sector to get involved in housing development.

Over the past eight years a number of developers have introduced new concepts in housing in this country. If you look at the report from the Chief Town Planner you would notice that the number of applications for approval has increased over the last year. The Barbados Light and Power Company Limited has also seen an increase in the number of persons who have applied for electricity to new premises.

Sir, you can also look at the mortgage portfolio in Barbados over the past eight years

show an increase in the number of mortgages being granted. For example, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company has approved more than \$21 million in one year.

Asides

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, National Housing Corporation and all the other financial institutions did well in Barbados over the last eight years. This is as a result of Government(s) policy to relax interest rates so that people were able to reduce their mortgage payments.

I believe that we would continue to provide opportunities for people in Barbados to own or repair their homes and to provide adequate housing to the citizens of Barbados. Sir, the problem in Barbados is not really homelessness but inadequate housing. I am sure that all Honourable Members are aware that there is overcrowding in the Government(s) estates. Sir, the extended family relationship because it no longer exists today. I believe that if we continue to provide a mixture of houses and lots for the lower and middle income owners, this would be the solution in the future.

I thank you.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the building of twenty-four houses in Carrington(s) Village/Tweedside Road but there are several concerns which I have and they relate to the pricing, allocation and the supply policies of National Housing Corporation.

Sir, there is no pricing policy, supply policy or financing policy of the National Housing Corporation and there is no evidence at all to support that there is low income housing being built by the National Housing Corporation. When I look at the information I cannot see any evidence but this goes back to a state of confusion on the Government(s) side when

some years ago an attempt was made to raise \$50 million to build low income houses in Barbados. The first tranche raised \$30 million and the Government took \$22 million out of that \$30 million and started to build the VAT office at Warrens. Sir, the VAT office as we know it has now become a major problem.

Asides

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Sir, the tranche that the Honourable Member spoke of a while ago was used primarily for low income housing, under a joint venture programme which was introduced in the late 1990s.

H11/32: 15.50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

3:50 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. G.A. CLARKE:

That is a joint venture that was introduced in the late 1990s. The Warrens Building had its own financing. It was financed by a consortium of lenders and was managed by the Central Bank of Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were all kinds of concerns in this Chamber and the Other Chamber about the use of the \$30 million, but that is history. What is not history is that there had been discussion about potential housing development at Coverley, Christ Church. The evidence which I have, suggests that there are 13 types of houses that may be provided by that project. These houses range from \$192 744 to \$375 286.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: On a point of

order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that there are two types of houses. As I indicated, there are two types of projects being built at Coverley. At some locations there are only middle income houses, but at Coverley, there would be both middle income and the so-called lower income houses, so that houses at Coverley would start at around \$102 000 and \$103 000 and go up to \$375 000. There is a wide range and anybody can get a house starting from \$100 000 approximately.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all we need to determine what is meant by low income housing in Barbados, and whether or not we can speak to the issue of low income housing. I am just giving the information which I have to demonstrate this because the Minister, in her presentation this morning said that almost 1 000 middle income houses are being considered for construction. A mere 172 for low income, so even by the Minister's standards, between 10 per cent and 15 per cent of the houses to be built will, in fact, be going to low income Barbadians.

I think this is recognition by the Government that, in fact, we have a serious situation to consider in Barbados. Are we really in a position to speak to the issue of low income housing, and are we doing anything to truly address the needs of low income Barbadians? I will get back to that issue.

The one that is really of major concern is the approach of the National Housing Corporation and this is to allow potential contractors to use the lands of Government as security to approach commercial banks for loans. Now, that is a major bone of contention, where a so-called contractor, without any finance could get access to Government lands to use as security at a commercial bank to acquire a loan.

It means, therefore, that the contractor is not carrying any risk at all in this venture. This has

been indicated to us that in fact, contractors are not in a position where they can utilise Government lands as security to secure loans from commercial institutions to start this process. Again, where are we going, if indeed a person who is looking to become involved in building homes, is not asked to carry any risk in the building of that home.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I do not understand the reasoning of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I want to make it clear, and I have made this point before, Sir, that the Government is not giving the land to the developers. They have access to it, only by way of a lease, which means that they can then secure financing, on the basis of the lease but they cannot hold the land. Essentially, what they hold is a document which says that we have an arrangement with you that you can build 100 houses on land, at a particular location. This is how the joint venture works. They do assume risks because while the land resides with the National Housing Corporation the private sector entity must put up all of the financing. They must develop the infrastructural works on the land and put in all of the sites and services. They must build all the houses and service all of the debt that they are carrying on borrowing the financing.

The National Housing Corporation is not putting up money. We are putting up land and we are holding on to it, so that the land never gets transferred to the joint venture partner. It goes directly from the National Housing Corporation to our client whom we recommend to the joint venture partners to build the houses. All of the financial risks fall on them. We do not assume any so that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is in a swiping mode. He is perhaps reverting to his bad cricketering days when he missed more balls than

he struck.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Anyhow, if the National Housing Corporation is giving the land directly to the potential landowner, then there is no transfer of a resource to the National Housing Corporation. I am yet to understand what is being said, because in actual fact, if you are leasing the land to the developer, and the developer is then able to use the land as security to access finance, there is no risk involved, so I do not know what the issue is here and I am not being reckless. I am just being open and honest, that what we are seeking to do in Barbados, we are not accomplishing. That is, to make housing affordable, available and accessible to low income Barbadians.

We have not succeeded in putting forward a policy that is, in fact, achieving the objective of providing low income houses. This is the problem. The very fact that the Minister is able to say that in excess of 900 homes will cater to the needs of middle income Barbadians and just over 170 would be going to low income, is an admission that the National Housing Corporation, whose mandate it would have been from its formation to provide low income housing, is now finding it extremely difficult to meet the objective of providing low income housing to Barbadians.

Now, the suggestion of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that in fact, what the National Housing Corporation should be involved in, is the distribution of land, is perhaps important and critical. It is very possible, given the spirit of the Barbadian that once provided with land or getting access to land, that they may find far more cost-effective ways of building a home at a lower price than a would-be developer. Remember, that the developer is in the business of making profit and getting a return, whereas, the homeowner is looking to secure access to shelter, at the most

affordable cost.

House 11, sequence 33, 16:0014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Perhaps the Government needs to rethink its approach because the National Housing Corporation is not catering to the needs of those people it intended to cater to from its inception. When you look throughout the potential areas for housing development, which are about 1 300 to 1 500 square feet, the actual cost of building a home range from \$206 000 to \$240 000 which is out of the reach of low income Barbadians. The only area in which there is apparently any attempt for low income Barbadians is the joint venture project at Hoytes Village where you can get a 560 square feet house for \$73 850 and a 720 square feet for \$95 040, which have to be wooden structures. I am saying that even in this attempt to provide low income houses the cost is still beyond the average Barbadian.

Let us look at the capacity to service a mortgage for \$100 000 and the income requirement. I do not recall the information at National Housing Corporation but it was something like \$2 700 per month. When you take out all of the other expenses for maintenance of the home, utilities, taking care of the children, bus fare, lunch money et cetera, is that individual going to be in a position to service a debt for even the smallest loan in acquiring a home in Barbados for less than \$100 000 even at 6 per cent interest.

It has been said that the National Housing Corporations through funding have been able to reduce the cost of the loans but when you check the actual cost per month in servicing the debt it is still beyond the reach of that so-called low income Barbadian. That \$2 700 per month

cannot be the income of a low income earner when you have a tax threshold of just over \$15 000 per year which would just be about \$1 400 per month. If that is so, it means that low income Barbadians must be Barbadians earning up to the threshold level for income taxation which is \$15 000 or \$17 000 in some cases per year.

The strange reality of Barbados is quite this. My mother who would have been earning just over \$500 per month when she retired some 12 years ago from the Psychiatric Hospital would have been able to purchase a lot of land at Kingsland, Christ Church on her income at that time. I am saying to you that a person who gets \$4 000 per month now would find it extremely difficult to purchase a plot of land in Kingsland Gardens at this point in time in Barbados. In short, people of less means years ago were able to acquire land and housing in Barbados far more easily than persons who now earn substantially more than they did even in real terms. That is a fact of life. We need to look at that because even though we are so-called developing and growing, the ability to acquire assets, a plot of land or a house in Barbados, has diminished. We are moving forward as a country, but then when one looks at it, the hopes and the aspirations of the people are not moving commensurate with the so-called economic growth. We are confusing economic growth with economic development. You are growing but you are doing so to the exclusion of several people who ought to be empowered, which can be extended even to the business class which has happened in recent times in Barbados where many small businesses have either suffered or have gone out of the picture and where there has been several mergers which will continue. In fact, the future does not look very bright for small businesses in Barbados nor for low income people to earn enough to purchase land and property across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Therefore, this is a problem which we need to address because it seems to be a developmental crack that we are in as a country. Even though we are driving more reconditioned cars and we appeared to be dressing better, the reality is that the aspiration and hope of the average Barbadian have been diminishing over time because the very assets they want to acquire and the very thing they live for in terms of getting housing and land is the very thing that is now beyond the reach of them. So there is a lot of difficulty in terms of our housing policy. We also need to get to issues such as the impact of the Value Added Tax, the property transfer tax, the fees by architects and the attorneys-at-law.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: What we are saying is not what goes to the lawyer, it is the way it is imposed. Therefore, when you look at it the stamp duty for a mortgage can come to as much as \$10 000 on fairly sizable mortgages. I am therefore saying that the time has come to look at that because that is an unnecessary imposition. If Government is thinking in terms of truly giving Barbadians the opportunity to own homes, then it needs to look at all of the other peripheral costs associated with getting a home in Barbados. That is why when you look in-depth at the concept of the 100 per cent mortgage, it is something you can scoff at because there are so many other costs associated with just getting the paper work done in acquiring a mortgage. So is it not now the time to look at the commitment cost, the legal fees and the many other attendant costs in getting the mortgage even before you start...

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. I just want to tell the Honourable Member that when the concept of the 100 per cent mortgage was introduced, it was introduced with the same things he is speaking about that persons

acquiring a home could acquire a home with legal fees, including stamp duty and commitment fee but they must buy a house within the bracket of \$100 000. We are committed in our Manifesto to move it beyond \$150 000 that is where we are moving. I just wanted to explain that, Sir,

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: The question is the overall cost of a house and the land and all the other associated cost. Therefore, I am saying that a very comprehensive policy on housing needs to look beyond just cosmetic changes at the National Housing Corporation. In all fairness, the funds available to the National Housing Corporation, are not sufficient to be rolled over in any significant way to impact upon low income housing provisions in Barbados. I am not at all concerned about the issue of the financing being provided because that would be minuscule in the context of what you have to do to truly provide financing for Barbadians.

On the question of the allocation policy, it has been alluded to in this debate that once a project is built within a constituency, then the representative of the constituency is entitled apparently, and it has been said by more than one person on the other side, to 80 per cent of the allocation.

House 11 Sequence 344:10 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to know whether or not it is a policy that in constituencies where housing is being developed by the National Housing Corporation, that 80 per cent of the allocation would be given to constituents. If that is so, it means that in the area of Carrington(s Village/Tweeds Road, the representative for

St. Michael South constituents should be entitled to 80 per cent of the 24 lots, which is almost 20 houses.

Sir, if I were naive, I would have thought that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, who happens to be a Democratic Labour Party representative, would have also been entitled to 80 per cent of any such allocation but I know only too well that it would not happen in this case, even if we were to push for it.

If it is the case that policy has been written, tested, tried, and proven to be correct, then the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central should be able to say to the National Housing Corporation that there are about 20 persons in his constituency who should have first call. Of course, the Honourable Member is going to make that kind of representation now that it has become apparent since the Honourable Member for St. George South has said it. It was also said on this side and was not denied to be a policy.

Sir, to the extent of the debate, are we going to allocate in a situation where a number of cars with the registration number (G) would be seen outside of St. George? Are we going to allocate on the basis of each family's needs? Are we going to allocate on the basis of the elderly? Perhaps we also need to give consideration to the provision of housing to the elderly in Barbados. We do not want to put them into institutions but could have them living among able-bodied, well-to-do persons. Are we going to give married persons a greater chance and opportunity at housing?

What I am asking is that within this 80 per cent allocation, is there a greater breakdown in terms of how houses would be allocated? Those of us who have constituencies with a lot of housing units, and I am very much in that category, are aware that there are some areas in

which there is the proliferation of single occupancies. Therefore, with regards to providing housing for families, if a check were to be made, one would find that there are quite a number of houses where single individuals have been able to get access.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It seems very obvious that special privileges are given to certain individuals on the basis of, I suppose, gender.

Sir, on the question of the supply policy, I said earlier that we need to look more carefully at how these houses would be allocated to contractors, which is a concern. There is evidence across several institutions in Government where persons were able to apply to deliver houses and pretended to be contractors, then were able to subcontract to the real contractor, and were able to gain a profit on that venture. In other words, there are persons who go forward because perhaps of their connections and are able to get access to contracts. These persons are then able to sell these contracts to true contractors. That is a problem that has occurred. Sir, it is a fact that the work of the Urban Development Commission and that of the Ministry of Social Transformation, have been required and have been quite good but it is the method by which we have approached the delivery of these houses that over the years we have been able to question.

Sir, we need now to look at how we are going to allocate our houses across these areas. Other housing developments, for example, Lancaster Phase 2, have been mentioned but taking the cost per square foot into consideration, Lancaster Phase 2 carries the highest cost per square foot of any housing developments by the National Housing Corporation.

The Lancaster ridge overlooks the West

Coast and there is no reason why the average Barbadian should not be able to live on ridges across Barbados. It is a very pleasant situation to be in when one could have a development on a ridge and could get the opportunity to see the landscape, the ocean or to feel the lovely breezes that come from the north/eastern parts of the island.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, even when one looks at the information that has been provided by the National Housing Corporation, there is no evidence that it is truly catering to the needs of low income Barbadians, and I suppose it has to do with the overall cost of building and land. When one looks at the price of land that is being sold by the National Housing Corporation, one would notice that in several areas, it is no less than \$8 per square foot.

Therefore, even though the National Housing Corporation is saying that it has entered the market to assist the low income earners in this country, they are still pursuing a policy on the market, that is allowing land to fetch its highest value. This has been a policy that has been agreed to by this administration in a document to the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB).

Sir, perhaps now we should not be surprised to see that we are incapable of providing true low income houses to Barbadians who need housing most at this point in our history. The more we appear to develop, the fewer opportunities are being created for the average low income Barbadians, which is contrary to what Government should be pursuing at this stage in our history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to enter this debate and to state from the outset that I would like to side with a

sentiments that have been expressed today in relation to the historical and philosophical mandate of the National Housing Corporation.

It was submitted that the mandate of the National Housing Corporation was to provide housing for the poor and by extension the needy. Certainly, if one examines the speeches we have heard today, there is a clear manifestation that the National Housing Corporation has moved away from that philosophical and historical mandate to provide housing for the needy and the poor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that there is evidence to support that. I believe an Honourable Member from the Other Side has said that the National Housing Corporation has not met the needs of ordinary Barbadians and as we examine the evidence, there is a clear manifestation that it is so.
H:No.11(35)1620 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. M.A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Minister and I had a discussion in St. Philip about the sale of National Housing units. At that meeting we told the Minister that we were unhappy and dissatisfied with the performance of the National Housing Corporation. Some tenants provided me with evidence to prove that for seven or eight years they have complained by letter and in person to National Housing Corporation to do simple things but their requests were not met. Sir, they pleaded but they are still waiting. To use the words of Bob Marley, I hope they are not waiting in vain. Mr. Speaker, I hope that at some time their needs would be met by the corporation.

Sir, I am respectfully asking that the National Housing Corporation show some presence in St. Philip North and that they will

listen and meet the needs of the people particularly at the Church Village Housing project.

Sir, this brings me to another point. The Leader of the Opposition spoke today about contractors and if we are to have a successful housing policy it is the duty of the Government to ensure that there is a national building code in place. I do not want to call them bogus contractors but, Sir, some individuals are masquerading as contractors. They go around building houses and they feel they are the be all and end all for housing problems in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we speak of providing low income houses, it is the Government(s) duty to ensure that the national building code is in place. Some contractors cut cost by providing inferior material and doing shoddy work and, at the end of the day, the person in need of the house will suffer. In the national building code we must have a building inspectorate that will send out inspectors to ensure that the house meets the required standard on the building code. Sir, the only way we could police this is by ensuring that the building inspectorate acts as an umbrella body to ensure that the contractor is doing his job. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is extremely importance if we are to have a successful housing policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that the Democratic Labour Party would want to see some incentive provided for persons in the low income bracket to make sure there is a policy of compulsory housing insurance. The Honourable Member spoke today about disaster and this is why I mentioned the national building coded because we houses that would withstand disasters.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is hurtful for a man or woman to put all his or her life savings in a home, then there is a fire, the

house is lost and it puts pressure on the Government. Sir, this is a policy that Government should look seriously at implementing. In fact, this policy is documented in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party at page 30 and manifests a progressive housing policy.

Sir, there are persons who do not have the capacity nor desire for home ownership and I would like to know what is the Government(s) position in this case. Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there would be a landlord and tenant relationship. We heard about unscrupulous landlords who rent houses to tenants that are in bad condition and the Government should seriously look at rent control legislation.

Sir, in the Magistrates Court there are cases where the tenant is evicted and he is given the opportunity as well as an extension of time to look somewhere for land.

H11/16:30 p.m.

Sequence 36

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Mr. M.A. LASHLEY There is no provision for that tenant to question why the landlords charge such exorbitant rents on their premises. The tenants cannot say by defence that the landlords flouted a piece of legislation or the law because there is no provision. The tenants are now at the whims and fancies of the landlords and sometimes the landlords have no mercy on the tenant.

There is a problem in Barbados with house spots and we hear a lot of long talk about 1 000 acres of land in a land bank but we are not seeing the evidence because people are still pleading for house spots that is why I am saying that there is an urgent need for rent control legislation.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: There is also an urgent need for a national building code. I know that legislation is in preparation because there has been a lot of talk about it but we want to see the compelling and convincing evidence to move the Opposition to say yes and to move the country to yes because they are serious about housing.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, I want to know when the National Housing Corporation is going to create their presence in St. Philip North, since the development at Church Village rental units, nothing else has been done. Constituents come to my office and plead with me to assist them in obtaining house spots because they have been asked by their landlords to move off the land. They have been given notice and they do not have any defence to the action. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the solution? The solution is for the National Housing Corporation to return to its historical mandate of providing housing for the poor and needy in this country.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: The Opposition has developed a policy in relation to how the National Housing Corporation should function. Sir, if there were such a department at the National Housing Corporation tenants would not have to complain that they have contacted the National Housing Corporation for seven or eight years and their complaints have not yet been addressed.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, we would encourage tenants association and would give a

representative of the Tenants Association a presence on the National Housing Corporation Board.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: The tenants association would be given legal standing so that they would have a body and justified that their views would be represented and that their problems would be solved in the fullness of time that is a progressive approach to the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I want to agree with the Leader of the Opposition in submitting that all the prices that are in place would certainly exclude the low income earner. In fact, there is an absence of a national minimum wage.

Asides

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, when we are setting prices for houses, we would have parameters so that we will not exclude persons in that wage group.

Asides

16.40 p.m.H 11/37

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

4:40 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. M.A. LASHLEY:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have heard about the promises that the National Housing Corporation has made to the people in St. John. They have made promises in St. Philip, St. Michael and all over Barbados and I hope that sometime soon, the people of St. Philip North would benefit from the programme of the National Housing Corporation.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am fully aware that I am in the Honourable House but what I have heard so far on the debate of this Resolution is a wailing and gnashing of teeth which to me suggests, that the Resolution which is before us, brings to the fore, the serious calamity which we are witnessing at this time, relative to the housing of the citizens of Barbados.

It is not an issue which I would want to indulge in any partisan behaviour on, because for us on This Side, one of the fundamental rights of the citizens of Barbados, in fact, the world citizens but today, we are speaking about the needs of Barbadian people, the people whom we must house and provide for, by our policies, direction, goals, incentives, methods and solutions. Sir, whatever practice or procedure they want to find, we should satisfy those legitimate needs of our people.

It is not important, as far as I am concerned, for those who thought it necessary to thump their chests, particularly those who currently hold the portfolio of housing and lands, and believe that by just simply dealing in statistics, what, if and perhaps, we would solve this fundamental problem which is eating away at the social fabric of this society and giving rise to such alien practices as squatting in Barbados.

If we are able to satisfy both the land and housing needs, then this rise in squatting would surely not occur. In this Resolution, we have a brief outline of the needs of the urban and suburban parts of Barbados. To some extent, this Resolution speaks, on one side, about urban squalor and, on the other side, about urban renewal. It must be our effort to move the citizens of St. Michael and the surrounding areas where urban squalor and poverty exist through a whole series of processes, of which urban renewal is one, up to a high level of

satisfaction and comfort.

At the end of the day, Sir, one thing is common and that is they are all Barbadians. I hold no divide, even if they voted for my colleague and friend for St. Michael South Central, or for the representative for St. Thomas or for the Honourable Attorney-General. I do not hold those kinds of divides, not on issues such as housing. I will flog her at another time and another place, the representative for St. Thomas, because of irritating behaviour, pertaining to the lovely gentlemen on This Side, and if I have to take her on, she will be taken on.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what stops Barbadians from owning their homes? In the 1950s, 1960s or even the 1940s, we had a situation in Barbados where a village community was cohesive, unified and well-socialised. Persons helped and assisted each other in house building, so that they move from the front house to the (shed-roof) to the back.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: They moved backward. The cost was minimal because communities rallied to help each other with housing. I help my conrad from St. Philip West and my conrad from St. Lucy, and that is how we mobilise. I also want to say that we shifted through time, and I understand the dynamics of shifting through time, and we are now involved in other processes of trying to bring housing solutions to our people.

Sir, we have the difficulty of cost of land. We have about five speculators in Barbados. There are foreign voices that grind on me and I am not xenophobic, but they are alien to the land culture and property-owning culture in Barbados. They see Barbados as right for

speculation and they have pushed the cost of land way beyond the reaches of good teachers like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, and former good teachers, like the Honourable Member for Christ Church East and surely myself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was unemployed...

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Sir, my employment now is on behalf of the people of Christ Church East Central. It is the right time for speculation and they are speculating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, about half of our Sunday newspaper is filled not with readable material but with advertisements of properties across Barbados, and I can speak about that because I know a lot about building. It was my father's trade and my brother's trade and I have also held a saw and a hammer. I will speak to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East about other implements for construction, if he does not know, even though he was involved in technical education, at a great school, not too far removed from here, the Louis Lynch Secondary School.

Sir, what we are seeing is a kind of speculation that denies Barbadians a right to own a home. As far as I am concerned, the National Housing Corporation is doing nothing to deny that kind of speculation, because as stated by the Leader of the Opposition, the National Housing Corporation seems to have joined the bandwagon and has become embraced in that alien culture and technique of landowning and property development in Barbados. This is frightening, because it says that a vast majority of Barbadians will never be able to own a piece of the soil on which they will construct their own (two by four(...

House 11, sequence 38, 16:5014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

We need to come up with some kind of solution which will change that view relative to housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that all of us in our journeys over the past several months of knocking at the doors and windows of people and having conversations with them, maybe some on the other side for the first time in their lives, would have recognised that it was not crime, transportation or even issues of employment\unemployment that was at the top of the pile of their needs but that the single most spoken about issue was their need not only to own a piece of land but to have housing for themselves and their siblings or for themselves and their children to move out of a situation such as the one the Minister of Social Transformation spoke about earlier today where eight, nine and ten were gathered together under one roof. We must ignite the debate with sensible passion leading to sensible action. It makes no sense talking about a 1 000 acres or hectares of land in a land bank. All you have in that instance is a deposit with no withdrawal. We need to have the right type of withdrawal and the sensible intervention in the marketplace to ensure that persons can access land for the construction of their properties so that the cost of land is not inhibited.

Mr. Speaker, I would not denigrate those who know, who understand and who can build. We on this side applaud them, but we must not be fooled. There have been some recent insertions in the building market aided and abetted by some criminal intentions who have shafted many persons who got a loan from a credit union or a bank to build their homes and were deliberately foiled in their attempts to bring a house to final conclusion. That is why

we must support the call made by the shadow minister of housing and lands that we must have building inspectorates as part of the building code. It is sensible and it must be timely to satisfy the needs of our people so that they are not shafted.

I believe that the management and the leadership of any process is important to the satisfaction of the people. Too many times persons in positions of responsibility with the title of manager, deputy manager or supervisor believe that by the simple designation of that title, their function or role is to manage, not lead. There are different processes involved. What we need from the National Housing Corporation is a lot more leadership of the process rather than management of the process. Management will come out of the leadership of the process rather than the other way around. I also heard complaints by persons from Wotton, Gall Hill and Silver Hill about the neglect and the abuse which they sometimes encounter relative to the persons they have to interface with from whom they rent. I do not intent to speak for you, Sir, but since you are now placed on the high chair I have to speak about those people who I breathe and walk with and on whose behalf you represent. What we need is humanity in dealing with all of these processes. I do not support anyone not honouring their commitment to their landlord. I want to make that point absolutely clear. I do not care who they are, they must pay up, but they must get good services and good response to the cause and the needs. We must be able to understand a situation when someone says I cannot pay my \$35 or \$50 this week. However, sometimes some of our people when unable to meet a particular commitment rather than go and lay a case would prefer to hide. It does not only happen in housing. It happens when you go to Fogarty and bring out a chair, so we need to change this culture.

The millions of dollars owed to the National

Housing Corporation have nothing at all to do with any politician telling the people not to pay the rents. It has to do with people in many instances, from my experience, meeting periods of hardships and then being unable to come out of those periods of hardships by having reasonable employment or resources flowing in to pay their bills. Unfortunately, the Government always end up being the one that suffers most because everybody else tends to be taken care of and not the Government.

We have now, as Government looks to sell the units to persons who owed rent, to find sensible and reasonable solutions for satisfying the rents which they owe so that those persons could eventually move on to owning those units.

I recognise, we spoke about it on the political platform, that the Democratic Labour Party solution was different from that of the Barbados Labour Party. We do not sit in Government today, someone else does and that someone else has brought a different solution. We all have to work with our constituents who reside in government housing estates to ensure that they are properly satisfied that the commitments made by the Minister of Housing and Lands and those who spoke on the behalf of the National Housing Corporation meet all of their commitments relative to the repairing and the refurbishing of those housing units before they are sold to those persons who are willing and able to purchase them.

House 11 Sequence 39

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that the voices of persons at Carrington(s Primary and

Erdiston Primary have been out in the wilderness for a long time. I want to say too, that I am not moved by the phrases of the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, which says in a hypothetical framework, if or perhaps. I would be moved more by the direct commitment of the Honourable Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports for those students, teachers and parents, of those two schools that something would be happening and that a timetable be established.

Sir, I am aware that the Honourable Member has come to this House on several occasions with plans to share with this Honourable House. The Honourable Member now has the opportunity to share those plans with this Honourable House and by extension, with those persons in those areas.

Sir, I want to say that we have several amalgamations, a few of them were mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. One of the things that we have never been able to understand... and I believe the former Minister of Education, now Attorney-General and the current Minister of Education would understand, is that when two cultures or ethos are brought together, there is going to be a period where there is going to be tension and frustration.

I have heard but have never supported it, where a number of persons at the school, where the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has visited, have stated that they do not want to be in the same physical place as Carrington(s Primary School students. We are all Barbadians and must never allow superficial notions of class, income or wealth, to separate us because part of it is wastage. We saw it in Barbados previously to the meltdown to the racial biases across this country and, therefore, we cannot encourage it within the school system. The taxpayers of Barbados provide the resources for

the education of our people and as teachers and parents, we have to work to ensure that those resources are wisely used.

This school would possibly become one of the largest primary school, only followed by schools such as West Terrace Primary, Eden Lodge Primary, Luther Thorne Primary, Lawrence T.G. Memorial, Wilkie Cumberbatch, Christ Church Boys, Christ Church Girls, Westbury Primary, et cetera. I believe from the figures given, an enrollment of 925, this is going to be one of the largest primary schools. Therefore, I would hope that within the plans of the Ministry of Education there would not be 30 small classrooms that are not spacious enough to accommodate these classes.

I do not like large primary schools but I do understand the amalgamation of these two schools. I would want to have the assurance from the representative for Christ Church East, that all would be done within the shortest possible time to satisfy those demands.

Sir, outside the efforts of the Educational Sector Enhancement Programme fulfilling one of its mandates of refurbishing schools, we had the hue and cry of persons from the St. Martins/Four Roads. I am pleased to note that it has been resolved by temporary accommodation at the premises of the Barbados Workers(Union Labour College. We hope there would be the accelerated movement in relation to the construction of a school to satisfy the students, teachers and parents. I would also want to go further across and make the same call for the St. Martins/Mangrove Primary School.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these schools are not within the suburban area but they are outstanding rural schools in Barbados. One only has to look in the print media over the last week, and recognise the cultural fair which

emanates from those schools is very outstanding. It is second not only to the quality of the academic work, which comes from teachers and parents in rural Barbados, and the quality of commitment to learning by the students. Therefore, if that happens in the kind of conditions with which they now have to undergo, there must be a lead to suggest that with improved conditions, their performances would be better.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before concluding, let me make a call, and I do not make it selfishly because I include Your Honour and my Parliamentary Colleague for Christ Church West. I would not want to speak for my Parliamentary Colleague for Christ Church South but since I am on my feet, let me speak for him as well and say that Christ Church in totality, sees itself as one. In Christ Church too, there is that substantial demand for housing, which is almost too painful to carry.

Sir, I am not persuaded by the lengthy promises or the amount of pledges that we have heard but by the manifestations of either those properties or houses being made available in Christ Church.

Sir, at Coverley, an estate with which I am most familiar, unlike the Honourable Member for Christ Church East who had his navel string buried in St. George, I want to implore the representative for Christ Church East, who most likely would have almost 80 per cent of those allocations under his charge, not to turn away any one member from Christ Church West Central.

H:No.11(40)1710 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Mr. R.D. JONES:

I am speaking for the Deputy Speaker and

myself. We have lands in those areas and we would like to get housing for our people, that is where our selflessness comes to the top. Sir, if I am made aware that there is legitimate demand for some of the housing and it is not adequately met I will speak quietly to those involved and if there are no results, then I will speak vigorously, vocally and maybe more embarrassingly to them about the solution to housing.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: It has nothing to do with stacking that area with people who will support the representative for Christ Church East because we have negated all of that partisan behaviour since he was exposed to the kind of debate even though he is a freshman.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Freshmen should learn from their gods and then bring that kind of behaviour to influence their colleagues. As a person in housing who has 80 per cent of the housing at Coverley and we need some of those houses. Sir, persons went into National Housing Corporation and put their names down so we hope that many of them would be satisfied. We have to accelerate the pace of housing because it is a terrible tragedy. Sir, it will not be solved by the flip of a wand because it takes, money, land, commitment and delivery, therefore, let us work towards it.

Sir, with the rehabilitation of the entire area of Tweedside Road persons will feel more comfortable residing there because people do not like to be moved away and transplanted from that which they know as the unknown can become frightening so we have to look around and identify areas for housing in urban and suburban Barbados to satisfy the legitimate needs of the people of those areas. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a point was made earlier about the

relationship between landlords and tenants. Let us not fool ourselves that some tenants can manipulate landlords. They know when to pay their rent, when not to pay their rent, when to say a tragedy impacted on them and landlords can feel the frustration of ownership. I do not know if the Honourable Member of Parliament for Christ Church West can speak of the agony that he faces from time to time in this endeavour but we need a situation where there is mutual understanding and respect for each other. The crisis arises out of a situation where there might be exploitation by the landlord to the tenant and because the scarcity of housing in the marketplace a person might opt to live in a house with rotten boards and bad flooring than to be out in the cold, and landlords will exploit that situation.

I want to say to the Government not to thump their chest and talk about what the Democratic Labour Party did not do because it is now the Government's responsibility and it needs to stop crying and looking back, truly rise to the challenge, get it done and everyone would be happy that something has been done in this area of housing.

Sir, I thank you.

DR. W.F. DUGID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give my quick submission to this debate. I support the Resolution and I am happy that some twenty-four families from the Carrington(s Village will get the opportunity to rent a unit in their area.

This is a fantastic opportunity and Government must realise that it is absolutely imperative that we provide housing for our people. Sir, not every person in Barbados will be able to get a house on his own and Government must be able to provide rental units for our people. I wholeheartedly support the decision of the Government to make this land available in Carrington(s Village for the

purpose of building rental units.

Mr. Speaker, this was not conceived by the present member for St. Michael South Central but by the previous representative for St. Michael South Central for the Barbados Labour Party. I must give him kudos for having the vision and foresight that this housing development is to come to Carrington(s Village.

I hope the Honourable Member is not thumping his chest, to use the words of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, and that he would not go to the people trying to take credit for this new development. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it belongs to the Barbados Labour Party and to the previous representative for St. Michael South Central.

Sir, not many members on the other side have spoken to the Resolution. It has basically become a housing debate and I will take that lead and continue in the same vein. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us not leave out the people of Sargeant Village or Pleasant Hall who would love house spots in their area as well. Let us not leave out the people in Bonnetts who want more units in that area so that more people could benefit from the wonderful units like what presently exists in Bonnetts. Of course, let us not leave out the people in Fordes Road who want house spots in their area.

The majority of constituents who come to constituency office usually ask for house spots, units or houses and all of us in here would agree to that.

H11/17:20

Sequence 41

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of: Dr. W.F. DUGUID The Barbados Labour Party recognises the need for housing in this country and we have devoted four pages in our Manifesto. The other side only devoted two pages, to which the Honourable Member for St. Philip referred routinely.

Asides

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, the Democratic Labour Party had two heads on housing in their Manifesto on pages 30 and 31, and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West referred to Page 30 routinely because they only had two pages, Page 30 and 31, which made reference to low income housing and government units and they called it visionary. Sir, that cannot be visionary, that is bereft of vision.

I am going to give the heads of the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party as it spoke to housing. The Barbados Labour Party spoke about land for sale, more than 8 000 lots resulting in 10 000 housing solutions. The Manifesto addressed rental and lease of lots, sale of rental units, 2000 house lots on sale, 1 000 homes over the next five years, getting titles faster, purchase of land at \$2.50 per square foot, new housing standards and lots for community-based enterprises. Sir, the loan limit was increased from \$100 000 to \$150 000, the earning qualification base moved from \$3 000 to \$4 000 and the earnings qualification category broadened, to ensure that persons who earned between \$4 001 and \$5 000 would benefit from concessionary mortgage loans. There are benefits for Seniors as well as the General Workers Loan Fund, Sir, the Barbados Labour Party recognises the need for housing, we are addressing the issue earnestly and assiduously as we would continue to move forward.

I am making a plea for some of the people in the constituency of Christ Church West. Sir, give us some more units at Bonnetts, Pleasant Hall, house spots at Sargeant Village and Fordes Road. Sir, being an urban constituency, we do not have a lot of space available. Therefore, because of the small space available, we have to resort to units, so that a lot of families can be housed in one location. In Christ Church we do not have the vast amount of land that is in St. Philip North, therefore, we have to come together in units. Sir, my comrade for Christ Church East Central would agree with me that everybody knows that Christ Church is the best parish.

Asides

Dr. W.F. Duguid: Sir, being a person from Christ Church you would understand the Tenancies need for housing in that parish.

Asides

Dr. W.F. Duguid: The Barbados Labour Party Government has been so visionary that when the Freehold Purchase Act came into being, people who were living on plantation tenancies were able to, and are still able to, buy a piece of land for 10 cents a square foot. Sir, I challenge you to find anywhere in the world where somebody can buy a piece of land at US\$0.05 a square foot anywhere in the world. Sir, this is an amazing opportunity. Over 4 000 people have already avail themselves to that opportunity and have had the land on which they lived for many years conveyed to them. Sir, that is a policy of the Barbados Labour Party and even the Honourable Member for St. Philip North would agree that is a fantastic policy that would carry forward for generations.

I want to talk about the sale of the rental units. The National Housing Corporation has 3 674 rental units to date and I am pleased that

the people of Bonnets and Pleasant Hall would be given an opportunity to buy their units. Some people in my constituency would buy their units for as little as \$25 000. I understand that there are some constituencies where people would buy their units for under \$10 000.

Sir, I would like to encourage all of those people who are tenants of the National Housing Corporation to go forward and purchase their units. It is an opportunity for them to bequeath their units to their heirs; after a period of time they can rent their units or use the units as collateral. Sir, the opportunities abound when they get a chance to own a piece of the rock.

The Honourable Member for St. George North alluded to the fact that we got six units in Bonnetts but the majority of those units are occupied by fire victims. We had a big fire in St. Mathias, approximately five houses were damaged and those units were used over by the fire victims.

Sir, it lends to the possibility of Government building units and setting them aside as a temporary measure for fire victims, a system which we call a revolving door scheme. The Honourable Minister of Social Transformation alluded that they had to use guest houses to house fire victims. I would go a step further and suggest that we build approximately twenty units in a particular area and use those units as a emergency housing when persons(s) homes are burnt and they are in urgent need of accommodation while their homes are being rebuilt.

Sir, this is one of the most stressful situations when somebody has lost their house and contents and they say that they do not have anywhere to go. This is usually a very distressing situation and I hope that the Government would take the process forward and build these units to facilitate fire victims.

I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would agree with me because when there was the fire in Halls Road a lot of those people could have benefited from such a system. I think that this would be a necessary compliment to the housing stock in Barbados and it would add to the emergency response needs of this country.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central made the point that he is now currently unemployed. If he is unemployed, I have great reservation for his constituents. As I understand it, his constituents have employed him to represent in this great House. I cannot see how he can be unemployed.

Asides

Dr. W.F. Duguid: Sir, the Honourable Member has now decided to clarify himself and I accept the clarification.

17.30 p.m.

H 11/42

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

5:30 p.m.

Continuation of Dr. W.F. DUGUID:

...I believe that the Barbados Labour Party will do well and will continue to do well with housing. It is providing house spots and units and I hope that we would continue on this thrust.

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because the Honourable Members on the Other Side cannot point, in recent history, to one housing solution that they have provided. I do not know if they have been out of power for so long that their memories do not cast back so far, but certainly,

there are hardly any housing solutions that the Honourable Members on the Other Side can point to, and say that they have conceptualised, had a vision for, and have put into practice.

Sir, they have managed to accomplish Church Village...

Aside.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: ...between 1986 and 1994, I am being told and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not another one, and with the progress and absolute vigour that this Government is moving, I do not think that they would get the chance for a long time to provide on any kind of housing solution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to the Government to press on with haste. Please empower the people of Bonnetts, empower the people of Sargeant Village, empower the people of Fordes Road and empower the people of Pleasant Hall. Give us some more house spots and units. Give us the housing solutions and give us an opportunity to empower ourselves.

I thank you, Sir.

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the Resolution, in principle, because I believe that any attempt to improve the housing stock, and to provide housing for our citizens in Barbados, and specifically for citizens who are residents of St. Michael Central, I will give my full support.

However, Sir, I do not believe that this debate can be contained specifically, within the context of simply a change of use of land. I think that would not make sense. I believe that this debate must be expanded to look at the reasons we are at this particular stage, in Barbados and having the difficulties that we have, with respect to providing the quality of housing that is necessary for our citizens.

I also believe that we must, by necessity, provide for an evaluation of not only Government(s) land use policy in general, but we must look at the National Housing Corporation(s) policy with respect to the development of housing. It is necessary that we intertwine that with the agricultural land use policy in Barbados. They are all linked together, and it is also necessary that we look at them as a combine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not too sure exactly what is the housing policy of the National Housing Corporation. I do not know if it is to function as an entity that sells houses to Barbadians, whether low income, middle income or to the rich. I do not know if they are to function as landlords in Barbados. I do not know if it is both, Sir, but I am now being told that there is an added dimension of providing office space in Barbados.

I would want to revisit a bit of history that is significant, Sir, because in 1936, under the Barbados Housing Board, the policy then was to provide housing for low income earners in Barbados. I would also want to suggest that after Hurricane Janet in 1955, again, the mandate of the Barbados Housing Authority was to provide low income housing for Barbadians. I would also want to suggest that in 1973 when the National Housing Corporation was established in this country, the mandate again, was the provision of low income housing in Barbados. I am very concerned that after all these years, we seem to have a fundamental problem with carrying out that mandate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, maybe one of the reasons for this is that the Government has failed in the redistribution of land in Barbados and the redistribution of wealth, by extension, that has resulted in this problem which we have today. I would give evidence to support what I

am saying.

In 1999, the Government, through the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust had access to more than 1 200 acres of land in this country. The only other three significant landowners in Barbados then, and still today, are Barbados Farms Ltd., Clico and C.O. Williams Company. Those major landowners in this country own more than 90 per cent of those plantation lands that could be subdivided for housing in Barbados. Therefore, we have not been successful in allowing for an effective shift of owners of land in Barbados to solve this problem. Unless we take stock to make sure that we do not systematically sell off lands in this country to large private sector entities, we will not be able to solve this problem.

I want also, Sir, to introduce another historical context that is important. There are many people in Barbados who need to recall that prior to 1964, and I refer specifically to Hanschell Inniss Estate in Eagle Hall, the Bosbivo Tenantry, when there was an attempt to disenfranchise those individuals and sell off the land in that plantation tenantry, that it was in 1965 that the Democratic Labour Party established the Tenancies Control and Development Act which gave effective security of tenure, even though the tenants could not purchase.

In 1980, this Act was amended by the Barbados Labour Party, and the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act and the Tenancies Development Act were established. I would want to say to Honourable Members of this House that the application of that particular Act has caused more problems in Barbados in a lot of areas, than it has actually solved. The intention, Sir, was not for the use of that Act to be dealt with under the urban tenancies. It was in the urban tenancies, Sir, where a landowner may have three, four or five spots on it that were being kept for his children and

grandchildren that those landowners became disenfranchised in Barbados.

I also have a significant concern, and it was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, and that has to do with how the Government is engaging in joint venture arrangements with the private sector in Barbados. It cannot be understated that the joint venture arrangement, where the Government leases land - the land of the people because they do not own it - to a private sector entity and then allows that private sector entity to go to a bank and raise money on that lease of land, that this can be construed as leveraging the financial capacity of the private sector entity. This is an absolute fact and it is wrong because it should not be done in this way. There will be some who may want to defend it but it cannot be defended.

House 11, sequence 43, 17:4014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

I would like to find out from the Minister of Housing how they determine the cost of land and housing at the National Housing Corporation. Do they utilise the same mechanisms that are being used by the Land Tax Department? I am raising that because I am being told that low income housing on average cost between \$100 000 to \$150 000 and that you require a salary of \$2 500 to \$3 000 to qualify. If less than 50 per cent of Barbadians earn less than \$2 000 per month, how would this Government ever be able to solve that problem.

This suggests to me that something is wrong in the determination of the land value that they own as well as how they determine the final price. I am concerned that part of that comes about because of the private sector arrangements that have a component of profit.

If they have an interest in providing the land, they should take it out of the landbank and subdivide it. Do not tell me that you have 1 000 acres of land but yet you are going to leverage the financial capacity of private sector interest to make a profit and then tell me that you are operating in the interest of Barbadians. That cannot be and I am not going to be fooled by that. That is unacceptable.

The reason Government has got itself into this difficulty is that in 1999, there were only four big players who own more than 90 per cent of the lands in Barbados that could be subdivided, Government proceeded to make it easier for a foreigner with millions of dollars to spend to buy Barbadian land.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: That is very simple, Sir, one and one is two.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the property transfer tax in Barbados is a perfect example. The property transfer tax upon the purchaser which is a foreigner in most cases was 10 per cent. The domestic owner, the vendor, had a property transfer tax of five per cent to Government but this Government removed the 10 per cent property transfer tax from the foreigner and increased the domestic tax from five per cent to 10 per cent on the local man - I am not wrong, Sir, that is what they did and they have to defend it - which contributed significantly to speculation on real estate in Barbados which pushed up the price of land and the cost of rentals.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is clearly misleading the House by giving the impression that a tax in Barbados has been applied on the basis of nationality. The

Honourable Member has indicated that the Government applied its land tax to make it easier for foreigners to buy land and difficult for locals to buy. Sir, the basis of the shift of the property transfer tax was that persons would tend to be more in funds when they are selling and whereas in the past the tax was split between the vendor the purchaser, it was all put on the vendor and that is basis for it. There is no difference. As a matter of fact, this Government removed the differential between the local and the foreigner, so the Honourable Member cannot say that the Government imposed a tax to make it more difficult for locals to purchase land.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is something called logic upon which you deduce or infer from a premise. If I can state without reservation that the Government of Barbados removed a tax that was 10 per cent on the foreign purchaser of Barbadian land so that this foreign person now pays no tax at all to the Government - he has more capital to buy land in Barbados which cannot be disputed - it is easier for him to buy Barbadian land because they come into this country with millions of dollars in the first place which is the point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on incompetent management. I have heard a lot about management and incompetent management. I want to ask the management of the National Housing Corporation if their fundamental mandate is to provide low income houses...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I have heard the Honourable Member made that point earlier but the reality is that under both administrations the National Housing Corporation has provided middle income houses as well as low income houses.

West Terrace, Oxnards, Husbands Gardens et cetera are all middle income developments that were developed by the National Housing Corporation. So there has always been a dual mandate residing within the National Housing Corporation to provide houses, lots and rental units to low income Barbadians as well as for middle class Barbadians. When you look at the areas I just mentioned, all of which I am familiar with because they are all in the constituency of St. James South, all of those houses and lots were bought by middle class people such as senior civil servants who still continues to reside in them. One cannot speak in terms of the fundamental mandate because the fundamental mandate has always been twofold under both administrations.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what definition of middle income the Honourable Member is using but it certainly is not mine. I do not believe that I have to use her definition, I am going to use mine. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are international criteria utilised for income definitions in Barbados. If the Honourable Member wants to find out about them, I can tell her about them. The Honourable Prime Minister found out that there was poverty in Barbados in the by-election through a publication from the World Bank which stated that there were ceilings which were placed with respect to incomes earned monthly and weekly.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I would not go any further on that at this time, Sir, I want to go to incompetent management. I want to ask the Honourable Member about the sale of the half acre lots that were considered as ridge lots in Husbands, St. James.

House 11 Sequence 44

5:50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Dr. D. C. ESTWICK:

Sir, if my research is correct, we are dealing with land between half of an acre and one acre, which could hold five 4 000 square foot lots or four, 5 000 square foot lots. How one builds is another issue.

Sir, the point is that more than one house can be built on 20 000 square feet of land. The important factor is that if the National Housing Corporation had 20 000 square feet of land, it should not be sold to any one individual but to several low income individuals. Therefore, I would not buy the argument that they are ridge lots. Mr. Deputy Speaker, are they saying that ridge lots are too good for ordinary Barbadians? That is an illogical thesis.

Sir, I have heard about rental arrears in the sum of \$10 000 and \$20 000 and about the difficulty being experience in order to collect such sums but one of the problems that has been created by this is the fragmentation of the services. It is now becoming more ridiculous because both the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission are building houses for low income persons.

Sir, let me indicate something that is bothersome and which needs to be evaluated and addressed. It is the concept of living in a Government house. There is a concept of perpetual property and anytime a man continues to live in a Government house and cannot do any additions or renovations to that unit, then Government is creating a situation of a stagnant environment for that individual. That is not what it is about.

Sir, furthermore, whenever I drive through the Pine and see some of those properties that

were built a number of years ago, I can see that there has been no changes made to them, which underscores the point I am making. Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if Government wants to establish rules, then do so but allow for certain fundamental changes to occur under an agreement, to allow persons to better themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also want the National Housing Corporation to make use of available tenantry developments. It is not always wise to develop a new housing project. I have travelled around and in tenantries where there are already established lights, roads, water, et cetera, there are lots of available lands. Furthermore, it is suggested that Government should utilise the available tenantries (lands that already have these essential services).

Aside.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please allow me to listen to the Honourable Member.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I want to establish a further concept which would provide for the greater and more effective management. It is the concept that would allow an individual who goes into a starter home at \$80 000 or \$90 000, on an income of \$300 per week. If that is done, it would become impossible for that person to be able to improve himself or herself while still in that starter home.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is deliberately misleading the Honourable House. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have seen it on many occasions and we have cases to prove that persons have started out with small starter homes and over a period of two or three years, have developed them into bigger homes. For example, this can be seen at West Terrace, the

Crane, Oxnards, Cane Garden, et cetera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member must tell this Honourable House that when they were in Opposition, they ran the National Housing Corporation down to a state where it was ...

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain to the Honourable Member the concept of shared ownership, if the Honourable Member does not understand what I am saying. The concept of shared ownership would solve some of the problems for the Honourable Members if they would only listen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if someone rents a property for five or ten years, what I am suggesting to the Honourable Members is that if the shared concept allows one to move beyond where one is, that person must have the available capital to inject into something new. Therefore, all of the rents that one would have paid to the National Housing Corporation, a portion of that could be held in escrow.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party even went further and in our Manifesto said that we would have given persons these homes because they would have already owned them.

Sir, if Government is going to make any significant dent in the provision of housing in Barbados, Government must first do something with the cost of land and buildings, and with the liquidity that the individual has. In the final analysis, I do not care how many landbanks Government has, nor about how many reserves they said they have, if the individual does not have enough money in order to qualify...

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I want to end by

making one fundamental point. In 1999, through the Agricultural Credit Trust, Government had access to over 12 000 acres of land in Barbados. It is now shown that two former BADMC Estates, Barbados Farms Limited, CLICO and C.O. Williams Group of Companies represent the four largest land owners in Barbados, with more than 90 per cent controlling interest. Sir, unless we could find a way to redress that, Government would always have a problem in providing adequate housing in Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am delighted for the opportunity to speak on this Resolution.

It is amazing that the ranks of the Opposition could offer such bountiful advice to this Barbados Labour Party, in circumstances where in the history of the last Century, the Democratic Labour Party's performance on housing matters for the people of this country has deteriorated steadily and has reached the point where it has become dismal and non-productive.

H:No.11(45)1800 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL:

Instead of giving the Barbados Labour Party credit for the way in which we have tried to enrich the lives of Barbadians they are heaping coals on our heads.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it appears to me that the Opposition fails to recognise something the economists would call the influence of the marketplace. They are seeking to throw on the shoulders of this Barbados Labour Party the responsibility for the escalating cost of real

estate in Barbados. Sir, Barbados is a country with limited land space and I want to say to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that we did not need foreigners to come to Barbados and allow us to recognise the intrinsic worth of our land. There are more Barbadians owing land in this country today than you will find Jamaicans by comparison owing land in Jamaica or Trinidadians owning land in Trinidad. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a signal honour for this country.

Sir, once you recognise that a population seeks to seize for itself resources such as land, you then recognise that the Barbadian public has a clear understanding of economic power and potential. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West is intent on misleading the House and the populace of Barbados but we forgive him for using this Parliament in this way.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West is suggesting that the Barbados Government should operate in a manner to which we are unaccustomed, where we should attempt to use our influence over other people's land and seize it. His most recent comment was that the Government should make sure that it uses land in tenancies where we have put in sites and services. There are constituencies like Bourne Village in this country where this Government has put in sites and services on a private individual's land but this (flies in the face) of democracy that this Government, simply because we have put in sites and services should seize this person's real estate with a view to passing it on to other member of the population. This is not how a Government in a democratic society operates.

Sir, I was horrified when the Honourable Member said that in 1999 the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust, one of the largest single landowners in Barbados, owned huge tracks of plantation land...

Dr. D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not want to interrupt the Honourable Member but I cannot allow him to distort the truth. I made the statement that they were owned by the Government through the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust. I never advocated that Government should go into tenancies and seize any individual's land.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: I am happy that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West clarified any points that might have existed in the minds of the Honourable Members of this House. He reiterated that the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust was the agency he referred to and if he is saying that Government owned these plantations through the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust, it is the same thing. If the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would get his facts straight, he would discover that the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust was the assignee of millions of dollars of mortgages that were being held by the Barbados National Bank through the agricultural loan scheme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust was nothing more than a mortgagee. I do not know in which world the Honourable Member for St. Philip West lives or wants us to live but no mortgagee can decide it is going to seize people's land or use land that is not theirs for housing or any other purpose because as a mortgagee he only has a charge over the land but has no legal basis for determining what is to be done with the land. Moreover, the lands were in fact leased to the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust by the various landowners so that the Trust would manage those plantations. When the Honourable Member for St. Philip West says that Government through the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust owns these plantations, it is a total fallacy. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West likes to throw out red herrings.

Dr.D.C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I want to reemphasize that the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House and misrepresenting the facts as stated by me. I will go slowly and repeat what I said before. I said that Government, through the Barbados Agricultural Credit Trust and BADMC had access to over 12 000 acres and were the managers of that land.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and perhaps all of the other Honourable Members on the other side have mastered the technique of creating things as they go along. We know what the Honourable Member for St. Philip West said and it should not surprise anyone that every time he rises on a point of order that he adds in some extra words. Sir, they did the same thing with their Manifesto. It was very hard to make sense of the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party and, therefore, we had to read it more times than they did in order to make sense of it.

Mr. Speaker, we are hearing about shared housing and ownership but these things are not in their Manifesto but suddenly it is a policy of the Democratic Labour Party. The same way they added to the Manifesto, every time the Honourable Member for St. Philip West gets up on a point of order, he proposes to add to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, apart from the fact that the record of the Democratic Labour Party in housing in this country is atrocious, particularly in their last two terms of office, at that time, they lacked any clear vision as to where they wanted to see the masses of Barbadians go when it comes to owning a home and this Barbados Labour Party has delivered to the masses.

H11/18:10 p.m.

Sequence 46 Tuesday, November 11, 2003 Continuation of: Mr. C.A. Mascoll On a point of order. Sir, the most revolutionary piece of tax policy that assisted in the building of houses in Barbados was introduced in this country in 1986 under the Democratic Labour Party. Asides Mr. C.A. Mascoll: Therefore, I am saying that in the last two terms the Democratic Labour Party did not do anything for housing. I am saying that as far as the Democratic Labour Party is concerned, the measures that were put in place in 1986 would have triggered a housing boom in Barbados. Asides Continuation of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Sir, on this side we can point to the fact that the last Democratic Labour Party administration abolished the income tax concessions which encouraged home-ownership. If those are the matters that are being referred to encouraging house, then, clearly, the Opposition is operating in an up side down environment because you cannot abolish an income tax concession for the purpose of encouraging housing and then want to broadcast to the world at large that they presided over a building boom. I do not know the building boom that they could be talking about. The building boom in Barbados for housing started after 1994. Asides Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: It started when the Barbados Labour Party introduced 100 per cent loans, reduced the interest rate on loans, lower than anytime in the history of Barbados.	Asides Hon. D.L. MARSHALL: It started when the Barbados Labour Party gave the National Housing Corporation a renewed vigour and focus through Settlement 2000. Asides Hon. D.L. MARSHALL: I believe that the Democratic Labour Party fails to recognise that not only the government agencies that have to be encouraged. The involvement of the private sector in housing development in Barbados to date is completely unparalleled. These are the successes on which we have built and continue to build but it is convenient for the Democratic Labour Party to speak about foreigners coming to Barbados and buying land. Asides Hon. D.L. MARSHALL: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central said that housing was a very emotive thing and they sought today to play on the emotions of Barbadians by again throwing in this red herring about foreign ownership of land in Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we changed the rate of property transfer tax there were other considerations which made it necessary, it might not be known to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that we have a double taxation agreement with the United Kingdom which states specifically that we cannot treat any Englishman, in a tax manner, any differently than we would treat a Barbadian and that applies as well to the sale of land. Therefore, it became important for this country, at that time, to harmonise the approach that we were taking to such an important matter as property transfer tax.
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This Government recognises that it has international obligations and it intends at all times to honour those international obligations but at no time has it imposed any hardship on Barbadians. The environment today is ...

Asides

Mr. C.A. Mascoll: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph is misleading the Honourable House. It is a fact that, in the 1999 Budget the Government increased the property transfer tax paid by local vendors from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, doubled the property transfer tax. The Government removed property transfer tax on foreign purchasers and increased the threshold from \$25 000 to \$125 000, the exemption on property transfer tax in 1999.

Sir, I am suggesting that those measures would have disadvantaged local vendors and would have encouraged foreign purchasers to purchase more land in Barbados.

Asides

Hon. D.L. MARSHALL: Sir, the point is, there was still a measure of sensitiveness to the way in which we were dealing with the issue so that we sought to ameliorate any difficulty that might have been encountered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am aware of the time but I want to speak briefly about the National Housing Corporation. I believe that it is important for the Honourable Members of this Honourable House to recognise that there are some truisms about governance, government and government institutions. I am not going to be a judge of these things. However, when I had the honour of serving as Chairman of the National Housing Corporation, a former Chairman sought to give me some advice. He told me that there is no government housing project in the world that does not experience a

high level of default and arrears than would happen in the private sector. Sir, it is a fact.

Therefore, we have to recognise that what we are dealing with is not something that is unique to Barbados but it is a phenomenon that seems to creep into the way in which citizens deal with Governments. However, despite the difficulties, the National Housing Corporation has been proceeding apace in delivering the services to the Barbadian citizens who need them the most.

Sir, I want to say to this Honourable House that when we consider the demand that exists for houses and the fact that the private sector individuals are doing development, the land is being snatched up in Barbados. Sir, what we are seeing is a renewed interest by Barbadians in owning a piece of this rock and the National Housing Corporation has performed well.

Sir, early in the Honourable Member for St. James South, she chose not to bury her head in the sand. It would have been easy for us to say that all is well at the National Housing Corporation but in keeping with her character, the Honourable Member for St. James South stood up and publicly acknowledged to the people of this country that there were some issues with the National Housing Corporation. We did not seek to coddle anybody or to shy away from our responsibility. We stood up to our responsibility and admitted that there were issues but we proceeded to indicate how we were going to try to address these problems.

Sir, we have to remember that these are not new things. The issue of poor maintenance existed when I went to Chair the National Housing Corporation. The issue of unresponsiveness in terms of repairs existed before I went to Chair the National Housing Corporation. However, this Government has stated its commitment up-front to deal with the situation.

Sir, a Customer Complaint Department was set up for the first time in the history of the National Housing Corporation and we also sought to strengthen the tenants association. When the Opposition talks about a tenants association, I do not know where they got that supposedly novel idea from because every government estate in this country has a tenants association.

18.20 p.m.

H 11/47

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

6:20 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL:

In a situation where this Government is selling 2 700 house spots which are currently being rented, in a situation where we are selling all of our housing estates, all that is left for the Democratic Labour Party to do is to congratulate us for the solid work that we have been doing in improving the housing lot of Barbadians. They must not stand up and criticise this Government for not being visionary and not thinking through things.

I was pleasantly surprised when I saw, in the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party, a statement and I will quote it for you:

(We will amend the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act so that Barbadians can own the land around them.)

Sir, that sounds like something which an eight-year-old child would put in an essay at school. It lacks substance. It does not say anything. So that Barbadians can own the land around them? How are you going to amend the

Act? Amend it to say what? Does the Act now not provide for Barbadians to own the land that they live on, but now the Democratic Labour Party wants them to own the land around them.

It is that kind of emptiness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot call it anything else, it is that kind of approach which does not think things through that is characteristic of the way in which the Democratic Labour Party has dealt with their matters. It is characteristic of the way in which they cast their Manifesto. It is characteristic of the way in which they have stated their policies on housing, and it is characteristic of the way in which they would treat to the running of this country. We have a record of which we can be proud, not just in Barbados but globally.

Asides.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: It is a record that has been publicly lauded by the UNCHS, also known as Habitat, not only in Barbados but as far afield as Istanbul at the UN Conference in the year 1999. Our record speaks for itself and therefore, I am delighted to speak in support of this Resolution. I would like to see more housing lots in St. Joseph. I am pleased that the work at Blackmans is moving on apace. I am pleased that the National Housing Corporation will shortly be moving to the sale of lots at Claybury, which represents a new approach to how we deliver services, such as land, to the people of this country.

I want to laud the Government of Barbados for continuing in the tradition that it has set over the last two terms. I want to also laud the current Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. James South for her leadership thus far, and I want to urge (Her Majesty's Opposition) to watch closely, the level of innovation and vision they will see in our housing thrust because you never know, but they might learn something.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to thank all Honourable Members on both sides because, having been in this House since 1994, I would have to say that this was a good debate. I did not necessarily agree with all that was said on both sides, but it was a good debate which I truly enjoyed. Some Honourable Members put out food for thought and others merely food for mischief but that is the nature of politics.

I do not quite understand why we spent so long on both sides talking about the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto, which though I understand why Honourable Members on the Other Side are enamoured with it, because it really is a document that was rejected across 23 constituencies. Therefore, rather than spending so much time talking about its content, perhaps you might wish to consider what is it that you need to say to appeal to a greater number and to look at the other Manifesto which was clearly accepted, and determine the comparative analysis. I make that as a serious point.

Sir, I do not know what process they went through or how long the conceptualisation period took, but really I do think that rather than saying, what was said, accept that people heard it, people read it, and people determined that was not what they wanted, and moved on to something else.

A wide range of issues was raised which, I regret that I am being signalled that I have to wind up quickly, because they are matter that we have to deal with by a particular time. Therefore, I do not have the time this evening to respond to the many issues raised by Honourable Members on both sides, but during the Estimates, we will have an opportunity to discuss these issues at length.

I will not resile from having a debate or discussion on housing because I believe that it is a matter of such national significance that there is no waste in debating it more than once as new issues are thrown up, and people can bring new thinking to the table. It is something with which we must be engaged, as a Parliament, because housing is one of the most important needs of the people of Barbados.

I did not need any Honourable Member to read a survey to tell me that, because as a Bajan and a Parliamentarian, I understand the aspirations of our people and the nature of the demand.

I recommit, as I said at the beginning, to improving the management of the National Housing Corporation and I gave the areas on which I am going to focus to improve that management.

In terms of new policy, there are two things to which I want to speak this evening. Up to this point, we have employed sanctions for persons who do not pay their rent. For example, we lock them out and we take steps to address that problem, some of which are harsh.

I would want to reiterate that we have not employed this policy with insensitivity for people who have children, or situations of genuine need. We have tried to engage with them and deal with them through the Ministry of Social Transformation, where they can have their problems addressed.

Sir, it is commonplace in the market with regard to utility services, and other payments which are charged to the individual, that incentives are given for early payment. This exists in a range of services, such as the Barbados Water Authority, the Barbados Light and Power Company and the Land Tax Department.

I would wish to inform the House, and I know I have not made this public before but at this time, we are considering giving an incentive to tenants to pay early, so that if you pay early, you will have your bill reduced by a certain percentage.

Sir, as I said, we are providing an incentive for tenants to pay early because as we apply sanctions and disincentives for persons who do not pay, we want to encourage those who are good tenants to give them some indication that we appreciate the fact that they are paying, and paying on time, even if we have not been as diligent as we should, in the maintenance and servicing of the units.

Sir, I do wish to improve that aspect of our management and, equally, our project management. People raised the issue of the quality of housing construction. Our supervision and technical services will have to improve, if we are to ensure that there are set minimum standards and quality standards, below which we will not deliver houses to people, whether those houses are for rent or for purchase.

I believe, strongly, and I have spoken, Sir, about my vision in relation to housing development.

House 11, sequence 48, 18:3014

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

I am totally averse to constructing developments, whether for low income, middle income or terrace units, without putting in the requisite services and recreational facilities for residents. We have a culture of building housing developments of 500 houses or 11 houses and leaving the worst lot of uneven

terrain that is of no use to anyone as recreational space. That has to stop. It has to become part of the building culture and the housing culture in Barbados that when we put developments on the ground that simultaneously we put in recreational facilities since we will be catering to people in their reproductive years and therefore there would be children and young people in these communities. We complain about the boys (on the block), but where are they to go if the Government does not provide recreational facilities for them. So we have to start building housing developments with recreational facilities.

In respect of the joint venture programme, I regret that I came to the programme late and my vision could not be incorporated into this set of developments. It is something that I have been urging on the House for at least five years. People have heard me speak about it at length in speeches in here and outside and it is time that we implement it. In fact, the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto speaks to it, so it is something on which we now have to act.

Recreational facilities will change the whole appearance of communities and would help to create a feeling of social cohesion. Right now people are living next door to other people and they know them only by their car numbers, but if the children are in the recreational space playing together and you have to go out to call them in or to be there to play with them you would get to see and know your neighbours. That in itself provides a form of security in a neighbourhood. You would know that Miss Browne lives across the street and no man lives at the house, so when you see a man coming out of the house you would make the assumption that the man went into the house for some improper purpose, if it is not at a certain hour.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I am just being mischievous here because I recognise that these things can be done at all times but I think Honourable Members take the point I am making that sometimes you would see a stranger coming out of a house, and because you do not have a relationship with your neighbour you do not recognise the person as a stranger and that there has been a breach of security at that particular residence. That is the only point I am seeking to make.

All through the day, Honourable Members have been asking for developments in their constituencies. We cannot all have. For instance, St. James South, especially now that the boundaries have been redefined, is nearly built out, so the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central could expect that I would send people from St. James to live in his constituency. As part of the social reality with housing, we have to accept that everybody cannot have a development or two in their constituency and that people from other areas are going to have to go into other constituencies.

There is a consensus emerging that we have to drive down the price of low income housing. So far we have allowed market forces to obtain. The economic principle is clear that where there is a high demand, as there is for housing, and there is scarcity, the provider of the service or commodity is king and can engage in price gouging. The Government, therefore, has a responsibility to intervene in the market and drive down prices, so there can be no divide on that as a matter of policy. I accept Honourable Members call for communities to be involved in the building of houses for friends and families. However, I must caution that when that happens, the engineering standards will not be the same as when you have professional builders. What happened with Tropical Storm Lili would therefore be typical of what would

happen when community building reigns, which is, that everybody who can put down a block will put down one without any reference to engineering standards and then houses which look wonderful, would just blow down, so we have to guard against that. However, I understand the culture and I would want to support it.

I agree we have to improve the way staff might treat people and I am conscious of that and I thank Honourable Members for their comments in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I am leaving out much of what I wanted to say in response because of the time constraint, but I wish to conclude on a point of vision and philosophy on which I hope there is no divide. The National Housing Corporation has a dual role to perform. On the one hand it has to provide housing. There is nothing wrong with it providing housing and making a profit from it that can be turned over into more houses and more units. On the other hand it also has to provide a social service to house the poor, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. Therefore, there must be some incidence and some instances of subsidized housing.

However, we cannot allow people not to pay rent who can afford to pay. We must not as politicians deny that there are people living in the units who are refusing to pay the rent simply because they are dealing with a government entity and not a private sector entity. We must not apologise for that kind of behaviour by saying that these are poor people.

My parents grew up poor and so did the parents of many Honourable Members in here. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West makes the point repeatedly about his mother buying land at Kingsland, Christ Church. She had to pay for it, it was not given to her. Even though she was poor earning only \$500 a week she cut her suit to suit her cloth

and she paid her bills. The culture of Barbados is to honour our debts and to pay our bills. So this notion that people do not pay for the units because they are poor is false. They make a conscious decision to do other things with the money and because they know they would be eased by the Government, they pursue that path. I want to encourage the people living in the National Housing Corporation units who can afford to pay the rent to do so because we can only improve our service delivery if we get money to carry out the maintenance and other functions.

We have to strike a balance between the services that the National Housing Corporation must provide at the social welfare level and those that it can provide for revenue and profit which are then ploughed back into the organisation to provide greater and improved services.

I made this point in a speech yesterday - I think this is what other Honourable Members of the other side were alluding to though they did not state it specifically - that we have a responsibility as a Government. A Government is Opposition and ruling party because all power at this level is only transient and temporary and how we exercise that power is critical for how we are going to be judged by future generations. People speak of politicians with contempt because of the way we treat them, of the way we treat ourselves and of the way we treat to issues that are fundamental to their welfare and well-being. So if we want to change the perception that people have of us, we have to treat to the issues that are fundamental to their well-being with a degree of seriousness that show them that we are committed to delivering on their aspirations.

I made the point repeatedly yesterday, in relation to land ownership in Barbados, that Barbadians do not want to feel marginalised in the country where their navel strings are buried.

Therefore, we must guard against the artificial inflation of house prices which alienates land from the grasp of the indigenous population. As Minister of Housing, I consider that to be my fundamental mandate as a black politician and the daughter of people who were born in poverty in Barbados.

House 11 Sequence 49

6:40 p.m.

Tuesday, November 11, 2003

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, I come to this Honourable House today in the very first lengthy debate that we have had on housing, to give my commitment to the people of Barbados, to deliver on the Barbados Labour Party(s Manifesto, to bring homes within the reach of all and particularly to serve those persons who were born poor and black.

I am much obliged to all Honourable Members who have spoken. I encourage all Honourable Members to help me in the achievement of this policy for two reasons. First, it would assist in giving the Government a fourth term in Office and, secondly, it would be an important acceptance and delivery of why we have all been sent here.

Honourable Members on the Other Side have been sent here pursuant to people(s aspirations to achieve certain things. There are times when giving the public what is right requires that we agree and set standards that would inure to the benefit of all administrations and all Barbadians.

Sir, the Resolution has been certified to be in order by the Attorney-General, which is the correct procedure. With those words, I beg to move that the Resolution before the

Honourable House do now pass.

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

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government(s) Business for today(s) Sitting.

Sir, before I move the adjournment, I would wish to announce that the Statement of Economic and Financial Policies to be delivered by the Right Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, would be delivered on Tuesday, November 25, 2003, at 4:00 p.m. On that date, the usual arrangements would be obtained where the Statement would be delivered on the Tuesday by the Right Honourable Member. On the following day, we would anticipate that either the Leader of the Opposition or someone speaking on his behalf, would reply.

Sir, with those few words, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now adjourned until Tuesday, November 18, 2003, at 10:00 a.m.

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

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

H:No.11(50)1843 p.m.