
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, October 7, 2003

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, October 7, 2003.

PRESENT

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

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

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

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

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees)

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C, 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. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil., J.P. (Minister of 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)

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.,

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

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 Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

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

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday 22nd July, 2003.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of Tuesday, July 22, 2003 which have been circulated, be taken as read.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I beg to second that.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am to report to the Honourable House that I am in receipt of Accounts and Statements from the Accountant General for the months of April and May, 2003.

PAPERS

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

1. Value Added Tax Order, 2003.
2. Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2003.
3. Value Added Tax (Refund) (The Barbados Legion of the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League) Order, 2003.
4. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Rudolph Griffith) Order, 2003.
5. Annual Report of the Barbados National Bank Inc. for the fiscal year 2002.
6. Report of the Social Investment Fund for the quarter ended March 31, 2003.
7. The Report of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the quarter ended March 31, 2003.
8. The Barbados Economic and Social Report for the year ending 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. The Annual Report for the Urban Development Commission for the year 1999-2000.
2. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Barbados National Standards Institute for the period April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002.

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

1. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the National Insurance Fund for the year 1997.
2. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of Severance Fund for the years 1998 and 1999.
3. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Sugar Workers' Provident Fund for the year 1999.

4. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Unemployment Fund for the year 1999.

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

The Barbados Finance Company Limited Financial Statements for the financial year 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Barbados Investment and Development Corporation for the period January 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Caribbean Community (Free Entry and Movement of Skilled Nationals) Bill, 2003 be read a first time.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Land Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2003 be read a first time.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's Sitting.

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

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

10.20 a.m.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT, CAP. 228 THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN OF PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE AT SPEIGHTSTOWN IN THE PARISH OF ST. PETER IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF WIDENING THE SALT POND DRAINAGE CHANNEL

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Resolution before the House forms part of the Government's effort to ensure proper environmental management of our resources, and to see that the impact of places which had a negative effect on surrounding communities, and sometimes on our tourism product, is mitigated.

In this regard, the Government seeks to acquire approximately 3 000 square feet of land owned by five different persons: Fitzherbert Griffith, 27.6 metres; Eddies Trading Company Limited, 100.1 square metres; Clara Jemmott, 56.3 square metres; Violet Doughlin and Clara Jemmott as joint owners, 50.2 square metres; Wally's Enterprises Limited, 47.5 square metres, making a total of 2 079 square metres or approximately 3 000 square feet.

The Salt Pond area at Speightstown is well known to Honourable Members of the Chamber and, indeed, members of the community. It has, for a long time, been something of a nuisance to surrounding businesses and persons who live in the district because there were often blockage of the channel, improper drainage out to the sea and collection of stagnant water, resulting in bad odours, blockage and other adverse impact on persons in the surrounding areas.

A number of studies were conducted that looked at drainage throughout Barbados. At Headleys Land, for instance, there has been considerable improvement of the drainage problem. We have tried to treat the drainage problem wherever it has occurred. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West is telling me to say that it has been considerably improved is to understate the quality of the improvement that has affected Headleys Land. I know he will give full colour to his language when he comes to describe the impact of the drainage improvement in that area.

The upgrade of drainage in communities, insofar as it affects residential or commercial activity, Sir, is of extreme importance to quality of life. Very often, people who live in areas that suffer poor drainage problems are unable to get out of their homes, are unable to leave home to get to work, for instance, unless they walk with two or three pairs of shoes. People talk about various dermatitis related infections,

arising from problems with stagnant water, the breeding of mosquitoes and the harbouring of other pests and bad odours.

There is a comprehensive national plan to systematically deal with drainage problems at the community level and at the commercial level. This project is being executed with the approval of the Town Planning Department. The study disclosed that part of the difficulty with the salt water channel was inadequate drainage capacity in Speightstown. There is sand that accumulated at the mouth of the pond which acts as an effective barrier and, therefore, there was no proper drainage or outfall system to the sea. There was not sufficient sloping or gradient in the Salt Pond area to allow for the natural downward flow of water toward the coastal lands and the sea. As a result, water would back up.

There are low laying lands adjacent to the channel which allowed water to flow into the Salt Pond itself, but then, of course, they could not get back out. Often, there was blockage by debris. Some of it was waste coming from other areas but because of the natural flow of water into the Salt Pond, this debris would get into the pond and further block drainage to the sea. And so, the project was conceptualised to improve the drainage of that area which would improve the area for residents and people who do business in the area, as well as boost the entire tourism product.

Sir, you will be well aware that there has been a massive redevelopment of Speightstown. The Speightstown that we know today, is not the Speightstown that existed ten years ago. There has been wonderful tourism infrastructure, upgrading of residences and high-end tourism products are now available with the increase of new projects.

In addition, there has been upgrading of the businesses in Speightstown and more people are coming to Speightstown for commercial activity. There are more hucksters now doing business in that area. There is also recreational space in Speightstown which did not exist before. Hence, this drainage programme is entirely consistent with the upgrading of Speightstown which has been undertaken in a very detailed and systematic way and treats to a multi-sectorial redevelopment of Speightstown as one of the principal towns of the country.

The project is being executed through the BTII and would involve the construction of a tidal flushing channel which would allow waters to flush through the drainage area, straight through the pond and drain properly into the sea as they should, if the area is to be effective and non-offensive.

The construction of the central span of the Speightstown bridge and cleaning of the Salt Pond channel itself, will take place cognizant of the effort that needs to be

made to help keep pedestrians off the road and out of the way of oncoming traffic. A footpath, adjacent to the bridge will be constructed to facilitate the movement of pedestrians, shoppers, sightseers and 'limers', along Speightstown with greater ease. This bridge will terminate at the Queen Street area.

We will also as part of the project, appropriately landscape along the drainage area, including the placement of lighting and seating. We have seen, Sir, that by strategic placement of public lighting and seating at various communities across Barbados, people tend to use the areas in a different way and they become a place for recreation and relaxation, where old men sit and play dominoes and young people sit and court.

We are hoping that with the upgrading of the Speightstown Salt Pond, the effecting of proper drainage works and then the improvement of the surrounding facilities, particularly with the landscaping of the recreational space and the seating and lighting, that the security and safety in the area will be improved, and that it will become a gathering place for people of all ages within this community.

A pedestrian bridge will also be constructed, from Church Street to Goddings Alley. I must confess this is not a place well known to me but that is, in fact, where that footbridge is intended to pass.

The Salt Pond will then be connected to an outfall which will prevent a further buildup which previously caused the stench. We hope that with proper drainage of the channel, marine flora and fauna would develop properly in the area, as there would be appropriate levels of oxygen in the water to facilitate the growth of marine, plant and animal life.

This project also...
10.30 a.m.

This Project converges with other projects being executed by the Coastal Zone Management Unit that effect improvement to our coastal infrastructure. I speak specifically to the coastal infrastructural programme being executed by the Environment Division of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment. Parliament may not yet be fully aware that Government is proposing to execute a BDS\$60 million project which is intended to improve the coastal infrastructure on both the southern and eastern coastlines of Barbados.

For instance, the same type of project that we are now executing at the Salt Pond at Speightstown will be executed at the Hometown Lagoon, which Honourable Members know

well, has been a major area of concern. We have had a number of fish killed in the area, and because of improper drainage, it has become a place where bad odours impact on the surrounding tourism plants and residential communities. So the Coastal Zone Management Unit will be effecting a programme at Hometown to properly aerate and improve the Hometown Lagoon.

Similarly, at the area where Chefette Restaurant is at Hometown and going southward – I use this property only because it is well-known to Barbadians and will therefore assist in locating a geographical area – the Coastal Zone Management Unit will be conducting a beach improvement exercise.

Barbados has an excellent reputation for coastal zone management and the construction of coastal infrastructure. The Coastal Zone Management Unit, by the strategic placement of groynes and other technical engineering techniques, has caused beaches to develop or become improved at various sites along Barbados. Rockley is perhaps the best example of this.

We intend to execute such a project at Hometown starting at the area approximating to Chefette Restaurant and going southward. In that area, a footbridge will be built that will take beach users across the beach in the areas that are now rocky and across terrains that cannot be easily traversed. So we expect to substantially improve the quality of the beach thereby enhancing the bathing experience and allowing people who cannot now do so because of the absence of good beach quality to have picnics and other beach activity. I expect that over time people will start to have volleyball competitions and other activities which takes place on the beach there.

A similar project will be executed at Welches in Christ Church where once again beach improvement will be conducted and proper footpaths put in.

Another coastal infrastructural project will also start in the area around the Drill Hall going further southward. Again I am giving rough approximations by using sites which are known to people. Improvements will also be done at Woman's Bay in Silver Sands. So there will be a variety of coastal projects of various types, some of which would require exclusively very hard core engineering and others of which will be the upgrading of beach sites.

In that regard, Sir, as you are aware, the National Conservation Commission (NCC) has just finished the construction of wonderful facilities at Worthing Beach for kiosks, a new beach facility with offices for NCC staff, storage facilities, lockers, seating for the public and structures which will prevent people from driving their vehicles on the beach.

I would wish to make an appeal here, Sir. The Government is spending \$60 million in a coastal infrastructural project and million of dollars in projects being executed by various agencies to improve the quality of Barbados' beaches. In this context, we have to ask persons to be careful in the way they use the beaches. There is too much littering on our beaches. People drive cars indiscriminately on our beaches. Four-wheel drive vehicles are now raced as a matter of routine on turtle nesting sites and on beaches all over Barbados causing untold damage to the beach. For instance, at Batts Rock where we are doing a major beach nourishment and redevelopment project, people continue to drive recklessly all over the sand. The Hilton is one of those areas that has suffered from severe damage, not only because of illegal works conducted at properties but as a result of people driving on the beach and causing severe damage to the turtle nesting sites. Sandy Beach is another area in which that is taking place.

When we did the redevelopment of Rockley, we therefore had to take deliberate action to place structures on the beach to prevent vehicular access. Sir, there is a cost to that, therefore, I would like to think that as a people we can be far more discipline in the way we use facilities which are provided for us and become far more conscious of our natural heritage and our need to protect and preserve them for our own use and for that of future generations.

One can, therefore, see by the execution of these projects, when one tries to look at them as a whole, what the beneficial impact for people will be not only in the tourism sector. That is the important point that needs to be made.

These projects are structured to include residential communities which are close to the particular sites – we have done a lot of work with them – and the fishing communities that make a living from the use of these particular sites and the commercial houses of whatever ilks which are situated around the sites that will be upgraded.

Government, therefore, is embarking, even early in this term, to comprehensively deal with our environmental challenges to improve the quality of our coastal and marine structures and facilities and to use the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated as an instrument for national development.

I am pleased, Sir, on the first day of this new session, to bring this Resolution before the House.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that the construction of the Salt Pond in Speightstown is indeed a welcome initiative. I live not too far away from it and there is substantial evidence of the improved drainage,

the obvious potential environmental benefits and the possible economic opportunities that can arise from improving the drainage in that area.

However, I must confess that the Speightstown which has been described by the Minister as being extremely active and buoyant is not the Speightstown which is described by the businessmen in the area. In fact, there is some concern that not enough activity is being generated in the Speightstown area. Perhaps, that has a lot to do with the building of the road that bypass the proper Speightstown area and carries traffic directly pass Heywoods.

My comments are not meant to be contentious, Sir, I am simply reporting my findings from my frequent visits to the area. Within the last three years, I have become a resident of St. Peter and I frequent the area.
10.40 a.m.

Sir, there is, in fact, much concern with respect to improving the level of activity. When the census status for Barbados is checked, there is evidence of a declining population in the northern parishes of Barbados. The growth rate in the parishes of St. Andrew, St. Peter or St. Lucy does not surpass 8 per cent. Therefore, in light of the definite need to improve the drainage facility at Speightstown, there is no doubt that this initiative is extremely welcomed by the businessmen in the area. In fact, on a recent trip there, it was pointed out that while the process has taken a long time, there is the belief that given the improvement that has occurred, and also the extension of the Speightstown Jetty which was built a number of years ago, it can be said the environment is being prepared for improved activity.

I think we know of an initiative to have water taxis in Barbados. That would certainly improve the potential for transportation between Bridgetown and Speightstown but though the initiative to bring water taxis to Bridgetown has not been fully ventilated in public, there is some knowledge that such an initiative is on the cards. We would hope that initiative would also be to the benefit of the Speightstown area and would improve the potential for economic activity there.

Sir, as we know, the recent merging of the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC) and Barclays Bank, would also impact on the level of activity because there were both CIBC and Barclays branches in Speightstown. It is very evident that the Barclays Branch will now become the single branch of First Caribbean Bank and that in itself would also improve the potential for economic activity because it would create employment in that area.

Aside.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I do not think that could be disputed because we know the amalgamation of CIBC and Barclays Bank would have implications for employment levels within the banking system and it is very apparent from the example in Speightstown that would soon start to take effect and would have implications for the level of employment within the area.

In addition, there is concern that there could be more windows to the sea in that area and also a public library. There is also a tamarind tree which could be considered for removal by the authorities, which would give an even greater opportunity for environmental enhancement if some consideration could be given to the seaward side of the Speightstown road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does appear and as is expected within the foreseeable future, the construction of the Salt Pond would redound to the benefit of businesses and persons who do business in Speightstown.

Sir, certainly it has been praised by several of the residents and to that, we on This Side would not oppose such an initiative which would certainly assist in improving the drainage system which has for many years been a problem.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the worthwhile resident of the constituency of St. Peter, for identifying himself and his Party with this Resolution.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Leader of the Opposition, has come to greatly identify himself with matters pertaining to St. Peter. It is a matter of public record that part of the constituency in which the Honourable Member lives, has in the last election voted for me by an increased number. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one is then left to draw a reasonable inference that all is well between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition with regards to issues pertaining to who the Leader of the Opposition would support.

I am glad that the Honourable Member has seen the wisdom for the development of Speightstown. I would understand he would have to find a way without appearing to be critical but there should be logic in that criticism. Sir, for the Honourable Member to suggest that the fall in business in Speightstown is due to the construction of the bypass road is, in point of fact, saying that an entity that was constructed more than 20 years ago has been causing a fall in business for a period of 20 years.

Sir, I think that all of us would agree that if there has been a substantial 20-year decline in business in Speightstown, that by now Speightstown would have vanished as a town. I think we could dismiss that as unnecessary carping Opposition criticism where there is nothing to criticise.

Sir, perhaps while the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West spoke with an element of enthusiasm, he also spoke with an element of newness. He obviously does not know Speightstown that well and perhaps should have taken advice from those persons who know Speightstown well, before committing himself to speak on this subject.

Sir, the truth is, there has been a substantial expansion of activities in Speightstown. Sir, very shortly the most recent approval for special development status will come to the House. The old derelict building closest to the Almond Beach Hotel, once called Bartlett Shop, has now been transformed for hotel purposes. Therefore, development is taking place to the north of Speightstown. To the south, development is taking place at Mullins and Kings Beach. Next to Mullins, Beacons Hill is being built. In the centre of Speightstown, the building of a new post office is taking place. Speightstown Esplanade has been remodeled and a boardwalk has been put in. There are new businesses including restaurants where there were none before. Persons have brought international business to Speightstown and generally speaking, the climate, as well as the capacity in Speightstown, is substantially advanced, subsequent to the building of the bypass road.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I raised this point because I thought this was an issue which the Democratic Labour Party had wanted to be put to rest. The St. Peter By-election in 1984 was fought and lost by the Democratic Labour Party on matters pertaining to the building of the bypass road and that issue was put to rest.

It now seems strange that 20 years after there has been a tremendous transformation of the town, the Democratic Labour Party is still opposed to the building of the bypass road, that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would now invent an issue where no issue presently exists.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to contribute to the debate by thanking the Honourable Member for St. James South for bringing this Resolution. The Honourable Member for the City and I are both passionate representatives of constituencies in which major urban centres are located and in relation to Speightstown and Bridgetown the reality is that there is an urgent task of rehabilitation. Sir, a massive

process of urban transformation has been planned and is being systematically executed.

Therefore, I see this not in an isolated context as the improvement of a drainage course but within the wider context as an important essential part of Government's programme to transform the physical dimension of our most important urban centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the transformation of Speightstown as an urban centre is intended to enable it to be evolved as Barbados' centre for heritage tourism. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West seems not to be aware that the old health centre that has been derelict for many years has been rehabilitated by the private sector to be an interpretive centre where the heritage of Speightstown and the north of the island can be showcase. Sir, that activity has taken place and the centre is shortly to be opened.

In addition to this work, there is now a boardwalk in Speightstown where there was none before and shortly the kinds of streetscape improvements that are evident through the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTII) at St. Lawrence Gap will be brought to Speightstown under the BTII.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier, the building for District "E" is being finalised. There was a popular myth that the only project that was abandoned by the Democratic Labour Party is the St. John Polyclinic but that is not true. The St. John Polyclinic was abandoned by the Democratic Labour Party but, in addition, a project in the centre of Oistins was abandoned and we have not been able to find an appropriate use for it.

Sir, it is not commonly known but the Democratic Labour Party had started a building for a mechanical workshop next to the bus stand in St. Peter which was also abandoned. We have struggled to find a use for it and we have found one by agreeing that the property that used to be District "E" Police Station which was in a relatively advanced stage of dilapidation should be passed over to Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated since it sits on the hill overlooking Speightstown, to be used for tourism investment. The building started by the Democratic Labour Party and abandoned, like the St. John Polyclinic, would be transformed at a cost of \$5 million into the District "E" Police Station thus locating the police station where it should be in a modern era, not on top of the hill, looking down on people, but amongst the people, with the people and working on behalf of the people. Sir, all these things are happening in Speightstown.

In addition, the private sector has invested in the first nature trail that gives the people of Speightstown the

opportunity to be able to start at a point outside of Speightstown and enjoy the benefit of an eco-tourism trail around the town.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all of these are things present and in the past. To come is the important project of the restoration of Fort Denmark. We will put in place a new heritage asset by way of a joint venture relationship between the private sector and Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated at Fort Denmark.

Fort Denmark used to be the most commanding fort of its kind in Barbados and for many years it was unwisely used as the location for the Sanitation Authority. Sir, we had reached the stage where a depot for the Sanitation Authority was located on the beach but that has now been rectified. The Sanitation Authority has moved its depot from Fort Denmark to Vacluse in St. Thomas and is releasing that land so that we can build up the heritage assets of Speightstown.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank the people of Speightstown and St. Peter in general for their patience in putting up with the inconvenience while this project was taking place. We now live in a society where sadly there is the tendency towards the expression of a love/hate relationship on the part of too many, with physical development in the country. While physical development is taking place people complain viciously sometimes about the dust and the inconvenience, ignoring the benefit that the physical development will bring. This is a tendency that is being found too often relating to many developments taking place in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is refreshing to see a community which accepts that development will come at a price. The people of Speightstown have been patient with the fact that within a radius of one quarter of a mile there are three major projects, namely, the Speightstown Salt Pond project, the building of a new bridge, the building of a new police station and the building of the boardwalk.

I must also thank the private sector for helping and putting us in a position where they have supplemented the efforts of the Government to reduce drainage in the area. Speightstown is the second largest drainage area in Barbados and with the best will in the world it will be subject to flooding once we have torrential rains in the country.

This Government has systematically constrained every private development that has taken place in Speightstown with the condition that the private developers have to make investment upstream in helping to relieve the problem of flooding in Speightstown. Therefore, it was a requirement on the investors at Port St. Charles that they had to invest in jet dams and other flood control measures relating to the investment upstream.

Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the investors of Chefette Restaurant Limited were required to make investment in flood control and I feel that kind of sensitive approach to private sector investment in Barbados should be encouraged across the country. Government has also made a substantial investment in relieving the problems of flooding in Speightstown beyond the investment of the Salt Pond. Jet dams have been built at public expense at Sailor Gully and in Mount Brevitor Gully to hold back water off Speightstown with the view to enabling us to reduce the problems of flooding. The Salt Pond investment will substantially improve the measures already existing to make sure that we mitigate flooding in that flood-prone area to the extent that is possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a duty to say to the House that this represents the first major piece of expenditure by the State in the redevelopment of Speightstown. All of the capacity that has been built in Speightstown some of which has a distinctly public purpose has been built by the private sector, inspired by the use of the special development concessions.
11.00 a.m.

Sir, Speightstown has a jetty that is for the public use but that was made possible by way of incentives given to the private sector. The redevelopment of the old Arlington House and the old health centre facilities are also private sector developments. Sir, the construction of a police station in Speightstown has not been by way of direct spending by the State. This was made possible through the swapping of assets, the conversion of one old asset and the transformation of another old asset into something new.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stress this point because very often there is criticism about the amount of activity that is taking place in Speightstown and the impression is given that this activity has been deliberately inspired by the Government through use of tax concessions.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West showed his innocence of the area by calling for windows-to-the-sea at Speightstown. The Honourable Member for St Lucy can tell you that in Speightstown, along Sand Street, there is, perhaps...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, on Sand Street there is the largest window to the sea on the West Coast of Barbados. Many people do not know where Sand Street is. It is the street between the public bath in Speighstown and Almond Beach Resort.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say, on behalf of the constituency which I represent and where the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has the honour and pleasure to reside, that there is a parcel of land between Almond Beach Resort and the Speightstown bus stand which is the last remaining area of its kind in Barbados. When the Arawaks came to Barbados, they settled in that area. Almond Beach Resort and Port St. Charles are built on an area of important indigenous settlement. Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to a caller on Radio 900, that area is a window-to-the-sea.

The Government wants to acquire all of the land between Almond Beach Resort and the Speightstown bus stand to beautify it as the last remaining area of its kind on the West Coast of Barbados and to preserve it for its historic heritage value. It is a wetland and there are still mangroves there.

Sir, when Almond Beach Resort and Port St. Charles were under construction, large quantities of very important artefacts were discovered on those sites. It would be a disgrace if that area of land, which is owned by the Barbados Mutual, is not used as a park for the general public of Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I stress the point because I am aware that Barbados Mutual had an offer of \$7.5 million for the land. The new physical development plan has been cast in such a way to now be defined as an area not suitable for commercial development.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, it is a wetland and it is the remaining area on the West Coast that has the characteristics of a wetland and bears evidence of the original settlement. We want to bring this land into the public domain to be used as a park for the northern parishes.

Sir, it is also important that the area around the major urban centre of Barbados is retained as green areas which should be kept in a pristine state so that it can be used for recreation, environment and ecology. There is that window of opportunity available to us in Speightstown to make that acquisition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have been in negotiations with the owners of the land to try to reach a settlement such that this area of land can be brought into public ownership. They are private sector people who are anxious to work with the Government in having that area restored and brought into the public domain as a park. I hope that we could rely on the Opposition for their support if or when a request for resources for the acquisition of that land comes to Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to commend both the Ministry of Housing and the Environment, as well as the Ministry of Tourism for this initiative and other similar initiatives that have been taken to substantially improve the tourism product of this country. The Salt Pond rehabilitation project is not only intended to improve drainage to the town but it is intended to beautify the centre of the town to add to the lustre of what it has to offer.

Sir, I would be delighted if in the 375th year of the existence of Bridgetown as a City, that the plan for the beautification of the Constitution River could begin. The Constitution River occupies a place in Bridgetown, similar to the one which the Salt Pond occupies in Speightstown. The Constitution River runs through the centre of Bridgetown but rather than a place of beauty, it has been allowed to degenerate into a place of squalor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we all would agree that when our nationals visit the capital of Barbados, it should reflect the pride and industry that we have in ourselves as a people. Sir, as it presently stands, what obtains in the centre of our capital is a poor reflection of our national image. The Government is determined that through the collaboration of the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated, the Port Authority, the Ministry of Public Works and the National Conservation Committee, that there must be the rehabilitation of that area running from the inner Careenage to the Globe Cinema.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, why should a country as small as ours have these important areas in the centre of an urban district which are not amenable to be used by the population, but stand as eyesores and symbols of squalor when they can be transformed into what symbols of great beauty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to commend the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated for the fabulous work that has been done to St. Lawrence Gap, the Wickham-Lewis Boardwalk, the Old Spirit Bond and the old Town Hall. There are many of us who would have never thought that we would see the Old Spirit Bond and Town Hall being rehabilitated. I would think that every Barbadian would be very happy if we could now live in a country where that stretch of land running through the heart of our capital, from the inner Careenage to the Globe Cinema, could be transformed into a place of great beauty so that the Barbados public can once again enjoy it, as it should be enjoyed. This area could be an area that lends itself so that people would want to live in the centre of the City rather than wanting to run away from it. These are the kinds of thoughts that would have inspired the construction of the Salt Pond. We wanted

to not only canalise the Salt Pond but to open up Speightstown.

Sir, the canalisation in Speightstown is the first phase in the general beautification of the area. Sir, it is intended that the area to the east of the Salt Pond, going towards the gully in the Whim, will also be beautified and eventually be linked to the nature trail, greatly enhancing the value of what Speightstown has to offer.

Sir, I thank the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, my most ardent supporter in St. Peter if I could trust by his voting pattern, for his support for this particular project.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West the assurance that now that he has chosen well, the only thing that he has ever done in his life that is commendable, to live in St. Peter.

Asides.

11.10 a.m.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, he and his residents once called the Member of Parliament to a meeting. He did not have the courage to come so he sent a surrogate, who was well qualified to represent him. They came and met with the representative and their needs were met as a matter of course, being fully represented. I know he is a very happy resident in St. Peter, if he might have been otherwise an unhappy resident in George Street.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad that he came to St. Peter, and I promise him that he will continue to find rest and solace from his battles, as he overlooks the beautiful sea cliffs of St. Peter. Sir, I am sure that he will join all of us who are of St. Peter origin, in embracing the developments that have taken place in the town, and in the constituency in general. I feel that he will come to speak, in due course, with great passion, as the Honourable Member for the City speaks with great passion about the rehabilitation of towns.

I want to leave on that point. Sir, it has been a great pleasure for me to be a representative of a constituency and associated with something as important as rehabilitation of a national treasure which is Speightstown. It is a town with tremendous heritage whose value, historically, has been ignored by the people of this country.

Similarly, the Honourable Member for the City feels that the heritage of Bridgetown has not been fully appreciated by the people of Barbados. For me, Sir, one of the great joys of representation, as I have had a long political career, has been the effort to see an old decaying town brought back to life and vibrancy.

It might not be yet fully vibrant, Sir, but I know the contrast between the town as it was in 1984, and the town that it is today. All may not be done, but I trust that the effort which has been started to rehabilitate Speightstown will continue until we can hold up the town for what it should be, Sir, Barbados' centre for heritage tourism and a wonderful place for Barbadians to live, people to visit and a showcase for all that is really refreshing in this country that we all love.

I am obliged to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Minister for bringing this Resolution before Parliament.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this Resolution as it relates to the Salt Pond and the special development areas. It is good to hear the Honourable Member for St. Peter, Sir, speaking in such glowing terms on what has been done for St. Peter. As you know, it is very important that in order to look after one's particular area, it is also important to look after the borders of that particular area.

I wish, Sir, that the Prime Minister would have recognised that the special development area in the north is not only for St. Peter and he should have taken the advice given from This Side. I recommended at the time that from the Naval Base to Road View – and I even remember stretching it as far to the area of Gibbs – should have been included in the special development area.

I was privileged this morning to hear about the amount of development going on in Gibbs, St. Peter. I also want to assure this Parliament, Sir, that to the north of Port St. Charles... I was told at the time that the special development area stretches to the area of Six Men's Great House, which all of us are aware that since that Bill has been passed, there have been substantial development to the north of that particular area.

I want to find out from this House, Sir, why Speightstown is so important, and to the north of Speightstown, starting from Kellman Road, going further, has not been included in that particular area designated as a special development area.

In this country, we seem to be developing a love/hate situation. That is, we can only represent or bring to this Parliament – if you are sitting on the Government Side –

matters as they relate to a particular constituency, providing that constituency is represented by a Government Member.

The Salt Pond, as we know, Sir, even though it is not part of St. Lucy is also very important to St. Lucy. I want to raise a particular matter at this time. It is good to have the Salt Pond, and we must recognise that we are now moving away from a natural salt pond, and moving to a man-made salt pond. We must ask ourselves if the water speed that will be coming into the actual salt pond, will be increased and what effect it will have on the fish when you put them back in that salt pond.

We must remember, Sir, that the conditions previously, would not be the same as they are now. We are now asking for a faster speed and a larger volume of water to come into the Salt Pond to the new channel that has been constructed. I would hope, Sir, that a feasibility study would have been carried out to find out the impact on the life of the fish that will be replaced in that Salt Pond and to find out what effect it will have on the Salt Pond. If we do not do that, we are going to have a very serious environmental problem. I think that before we go on to do anything more with the salt pond, this matter should be taken into consideration.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: As you know, my photocopier has kicked in and he is now giving me some advice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also have to recognise that the development which is going on in Speightstown will have an impact on the people to the north of Speightstown. It could be a positive one or it could be a negative one. It depends on how the Government carries out its projects.

I do not honestly believe, Sir, that the people to the north of Speightstown will continue to see the Government using all the resources in that one particular area, without recognising that the people further north also deserve some, and that goes for the rest of the people in Barbados.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to operate on fairness. I have always said that fairness is lacking in this Government. This fairness is not only from the point of view of a constituency, but the type of people you are, what you can offer and what you can give. It seems that is what matters in this country today.

I am saying that we are going in the wrong direction. Sir, for this country to be fully developed, everyone matters. It is clear to me in this country that fairness is not important anymore, but we believe that once you have something to

offer, then you are entitled to be heard, you are entitled to be seen and you are entitled to receive concessions.

I am saying, Sir, that the labourers who cut the canes in the fields, were the ones who would have used their labour to help develop the capital and if capital is entitled to compensation, labour is also entitled to that compensation. We cannot have a country where the resources are all slanted in one direction. The resources must be fairly shared among all groups in Barbados. This is why I have always said in this Parliament that the triangular system of politics should be practised. Sir, instead of that happening, I have witnessed a situation where the triangle is now a straight line. You might ask, how that can happen, but whenever you remove the workers and you join the private sector and the Government together and the workers are not there, you are now operating on a straight line.

I am saying to this Parliament that we have to understand that development must not only be seen in the eyes as something for foreigners. Development must also be seen in the eyes of the people of the country, especially those we regard as the masses.

I have said on many occasions, Sir, that in order for this country to go forward, we must fully appreciate something called, community tourism. Community tourism is not normally welcomed by the Government Side, for the simple reason that the people who tend to gain from community tourism are normally the people we regard as the masses of people in Barbados, and because they do not carry large capital sums, they are not regarded as important people.
11.20 a.m.

We have to understand that if community tourism is allowed to flourish the way it should, that the contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will be significant. Sir, it is interesting to note that the north of Barbados now seems to be the place where everybody, no matter where they come from, feel they should live. I have said in this Parliament on more than one occasion that the area must be recognised and must be treated and the boundary cannot now be at the beginning of Kellman's Road, it must go beyond Kellman's Road further to the north.

Instead of putting a proper tourism policy and a proper immigration policy in place, there is talk in Barbados about bad treatment, but all of that is just a camouflage because there are some people who would want you to believe that things are not happening. In truth and in fact, because we do not have a proper immigration policy and a proper tourism policy we are now seeing an increase in the numbers when the Government and other people are claiming that it is not happening, but it is happening in this country. One day, Sir,

I will fully explain what I mean by that particular statement. It is good to create a debate, Sir, because I am not being fooled neither am I being tricked. If we do not have a proper immigration policy and a proper tourism policy in place, there will be bigger problems later on down the road for us.

What I am saying is that we in this country should have open-arm policies to everybody but that policy must be seen through the tourism channel and not the population channel. So instead of looking at a policy and relating it to the north of Barbados as it relates to tourism, we are relating it as it relates to population. That is a very serious thing, Sir. The reason countries that allow people to come to their country and work are so successful in their particular industries is because they allow people to come and go. The day that we make the mistake and allow the people to remain, they will become climatize to become Barbadians and the same problems will occur.

So, I am hoping that we would understand...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South butts in, shoots off his mouth and does not understand anything until I speak and he then repeats it six months later.

Sir, you can expect that this Salt Pond debate will be picked up by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South six weeks or six months from now and you will hear him referring to what I am saying without saying that he is quoting. Under the Intellectual Property Act, if I do what I should do, he would be charged on many occasions. Anyhow, it is the Salt Pond we are dealing with today and not him.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It does not make sense to develop Speightstown and then create a relationship that would prevent the people from the north from going to Speightstown. You have to create an atmosphere of oneness to make the people believe they are also part of the development that is going on.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What I am saying is that the people of St. Lucy will not allow anyone to create a bad atmosphere between them and the people of St. Peter. We will do everything within our power to make sure that the people who like to frequent St. Lucy will continue to do so. Therefore, I will do everything in my power to make sure

that those people who shop at the famous supermarkets in St. Peter will continue to do so because I understand the importance of the trade-off between the two constituencies. So I will not be so narrow-minded to allow politics to get between myself and the people of St. Peter or allow my constituents to get involved in that because of jealousy. That is why in speaking about development, you will not hear me say that St. Peter has a Salt Pond and I want one too. I do not practice my politics like that. I will tell you what I want and I will fight for what I want.

I do not believe in comparison, Sir. That is why I had to tell the ZR people to stop talking about what the Transport Board is doing and put their own case before the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) and hire my honourable friend on the Backbench to teach them how to present their case to the FTC. You cannot ask for anything better than that. Because he is on the Other Side, it does not mean that I would not send work in his direction. I will do that because I think he is the best person to speak before the FTC on that matter on behalf of the PSVs.

I want this Parliament to know that there are two Honourable Members who understand what is happening now. They are the Honourable Members for St. Michael North and Christ Church East. They did not allow the new mechanical workshop that is being built in Speightstown that is now being converted into a police station to sideline their views of the FTC. They got out early and gave up their ministries so that the Barbadians would not be on their backs. So I want to congratulate both of them for the foresight in bailing out early before matters hit the mill.

I know the Honourable Member would not go to Speightstown speaking on the Ministry of Education building which is next to DaCosta Manning and the Salt Pond and announce that the telephones in that building will no longer be serviced by the Barbados Telephone Company.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East would not have gone into that school to use a telephone and feel good to know that one of his comrades announced that beginning the 1st of the month that the citizens of Barbados would have to pay for their own repairs and their own telephones. He would have gotten angry and would have thrown all the telephones in the Salt Pond and tell BARTEL to come and repair them.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: If there is only one reason that could be given to justify the rebuilding of the Salt Pond, that would be it.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East is a very smart politician and he would not allow his hands to be salted in the Salt Pond over this telephone matter. It is the same thing with the Honourable Member for St. James South, the P. J. Pattersons of the Other Side. They both hopped out at the right time so as not to get any blame and they can then come back in clean and clear as crystal water.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one must understand that the people of St. Lucy are not jealous of the people of St. Peter for all the development that is going on in Speightstown. If it is done correctly, we will also see it as our development and we will not put pressure on the Prime Minister to do likewise in St. Lucy, because as you know, Sir, there is a special relationship between the people of St. Lucy and the people of St. Peter, and that is they were able to bring two school into one.
11.30 a.m.

Sir, even though they were able to do that, it is clear to me that this Government seems not to appreciate the location of that particular school and is putting pressure on the offsprings of that school because it looks down on the rich and famous. But Sir, we will do everything within our power to protect that school and to keep it where it is.

I think I can get the assurance from the Honourable Member for Christ Church East because I know he would not want to offend his Prime Minister. I know that the Honourable Member would do everything he could with regards to the development taking place from the Coleridge and Parry School, down to the Salt Pond, and that it would not just look good to have fish in it but that the students would have a good school to be in.

I thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since the recess, I did not have the honour of encountering some Colleagues on the Other Side but in keeping with good tradition from Christ Church, let me say a pleasant good morning to each of them and to say that I hope this Session of Parliament would be viewed with the kind of intellectual thought that would guide the people of Barbados safely through the coming months as we seek to develop this country for all Barbadians.

Sir, I support this Resolution and believe that the development of any part of Barbados must be encouraged by all and sundry. We on This Side of the House have always stood up to support endeavours which would support Barbados for all Barbadians.

St. Peter is not an alien part of Barbados. In fact, it is an important part of this country, just like St. Lucy or any other parish and, therefore, this endeavour to deal with the issue of the Salt Pond must be encouraged and commended. Therefore, all other activities that are concerned with matters such as the conservation and preservation of Barbados must be encouraged.

Sir, I am a bit concerned that as we speak to issues – maybe because of the hubris of the political argument – we tend to become sidetracked from those issues and concerns which are, in fact, for the benefit of all Barbadians. We remember there was a time in Barbados, not too far removed from this current period when we went through difficulties both in our economy and in our social life. It is well known what were the causes of those particular areas of difficulties. It is well known that certain projects had to be shelved but they were projects which were important to the development of Barbados and which were more important to the development of those parts in which they were located.

It is all well and good for the Honourable Member for St. Peter to state that they cannot find any activity to place in these areas which were, at that time, put to a halt.

Sir, Oistins Town, as one would know, is an area where particularly on Friday and Saturday nights have a life of its own; it throbs with the passion and vibration of thousands of Barbadians who flock there. I believe one can still see steel girders both upright, vertical or horizontal not too far removed from the existing Land Tax building that was constructed, I believe, to house certain departments of the State. I believe it has become an eyesore because since the early 1990s, nothing has been done to that particular facility.

Sir, I am saddened that the representative for St. Peter, the Right Honourable Prime Minister, has admitted that no thought had existed in the minds of those on the Other Side, as to the utilisation of facilities such as that. At the end of the day, if one spends one dollar or millions of dollars of taxpayers money on any entity, I believe that entity should be brought to a logical conclusion, otherwise it becomes a wastage of resources. I would say the same thing if we, on This Side, had done the same thing.

I believe that we have to take sensible recourse in matters such as this. At the same time, there are a number of such facilities that are popping up across Barbados which demand that something ought to be done relative to those areas. If there are decisions taken that these projects would not be concluded, then these buildings should be removed before they become eyesores as they are now, where they become homes to rodents and such animals bearing all kinds of sicknesses. This area must be looked at carefully.

I would also want to see Oistins Town being further developed. There is room for expansion. I believe the Geriatric Hospital has been identified, either by the State or by persons who are close to the State, for development. We know that the residents of that facility were relocated into private nursing homes or into other places of the State, so that those buildings and the associated facilities would have been made available for development. We believe that in the fullness of time, everything would be revealed with regards to that project.

Sir, I commend the Honourable Minister and all those persons who are associated with the development of the Salt Pond and the other areas in Speightstown but we, from the South, must state most emphatically that we too must see accelerated development in that area.

I do not believe there is any other area in Barbados that attracts so much people in any one place within a 24-hour span. I believe if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy were sitting here, he would have drawn my attention to Moon Town, an area that I have not as yet visited, neither am I so sure about getting there, since I believe that Christ Church throbs most vibrantly and has always retained my attention. I have trekked to the North for other matters of matrimony but relative to moving or residing to the North, I have not yet considered as an option. Therefore, the call must be made to both the private sector and the State to enhance development in the South of Barbados.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we come to Parliament from time to time and bring Resolutions for the compulsory acquisition of parcels of land but we have cries from many persons whose lands have been acquired, that they have had to wait for an extremely long period of time before any money is delivered to them. Sir, even though these projects might be of worth and value, it is unfair to have those persons out in the cold from whom the land is acquired for the inordinate length of time that they have been in the past.

As I look at the development of Barbados and at the compulsory acquisition of land of Barbadians, I appeal that an accelerated pace of payment be visited on those persons whose lands have been taken up. It is a duty that Government has to those persons and I want to encourage the agencies and parties involved in these matters to satisfy those persons.

I believe that four or five persons will be impacted on by this particular acquisition and those persons should be quickly recompensed for the acquisition of their lands. Those persons and all other persons whose lands have been acquired should now receive the monies due to them from the passage of these Resolutions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we spoke of environmental impacts and other issues and we are speaking to limit the fallout on this country. Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East trekked through the cane fields and bush of that area and persuaded the good people of Christ Church East to support him again and when he was on the top of Fairy Valley and Wilcox Hill, he would have looked to the southwest and saw an area which is a pristine part of Barbados.

Sir, as a boy I used to walk down to Long Beach and survey the entire area so I know that it is a beautiful area of Barbados. We spoke about preservation and I hope that we would not see the desecration of that area because it is a beautiful part of Barbados and it should remain that way.

I, therefore, appeal to my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East to let his voice so resonate among his colleagues and if he needs my assistance it will be forthcoming because that area should not be dug up by bulldozers and other machinery.

I also want to say that there is still flooding in certain parts of Christ Church South where I live and I hope those responsible for that area would give the Member of Parliament for Christ Church East Central easy passage from his home so that he would not have to row to a safe spot in his dingy. There are also areas in Lodge Road that encounter flooding. I believe a lot has to do with the efficiency of the appropriate suck-wells which would assist with the alleviation of flooding in these particular parts.

As was said by the Leader of the Opposition, we will not oppose initiatives such as this but we urge the Government to look again at projects which the people of Barbados funded in the early 90s such as Sherbourne, which is now occupied by certain important ministries and facilities of Government, and cover its backside to ensure that the project is brought to an adequate conclusion. There may be a paucity of intellect that is residing on the Other Side at this time but we can look at these projects and make a recommendation to the Other Side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your patience.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to this Resolution which has much significance for us in Barbados. This is important work because it will have an impact on our lives for many years to come. The importance of this work is borne out by the practical nature of and the symbolism which it presents in terms of the society we are seeking to build and the industries we are seeking to strengthen in Barbados.

Sir, this particular piece of work has social and economic relevance for all Barbadians. First and foremost,

it has relevance for the environmental aspects and development of our lives. In my opinion, it has much tourism relevance as well and it emphasises that crucial link between environmental soundness and tourism development both for the existing tourism product and for the future development of the industry.

This project will bring benefit to Barbadians in two major ways. The future environmental soundness of our country as it pertains to the aesthetic appreciation of Barbados and the protection of the environment from which we derive our living as well as it also speaks to the wider concept of tourism potential and development.

Sir, this work is important because it is part of a continuum. It is part and parcel of the works going on in Barbados as we seek to create a country that is environmentally sound for future development. I link this work in Speightstown and what is being done to the Salt Pond to other outstanding works which are going on that seeks to protect our livelihood and build a platform for the future. This is important, in terms of creating a South Coast Sewerage Project, which has allowed us to see the discontinuance of sewage in the ocean. We are now able to dispose of sewage in a proper manner.

11.50 a.m.

Sir, this Bill also speaks to the pending West Coast Sewerage Project which will be similar to what was done to the South Coast Sewerage Project. This also fits in with the coastal work which is seeking to protect our beaches and the marine environment in Barbados. It also fits in with the planned rehabilitation work to the Constitution River and the inner and outer dredging of the Careenage development.

Sir, we have reached a point in our tourism development where people are now making decisions about where they would go to spend a vacation depending upon the developmental state of the particular destination.

In Europe potential travelers are making their decisions based upon how environmentally sound they perceive the destination that they intend to visit. In addition, they want to understand the parallel between their environment and the intended destination. Therefore, it is important that we understand that this particular project not only does a lot for our locals but it does a lot to our environment that we create for future development and tourism.

Sir, when there is flooding in Speightstown there is a stench in that area. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a good thing for tourism development.

Sir, this Bill speaks to where our tourism is going and it has some measure of symbolic significance. Barbados

as a mature destination and a destination that has been practising tourism for over forty years, and, maybe, one of the more matured destinations in this region, it means that most of the product within Barbados has already been patronised by most of our visitors. The more mature your destination becomes, the more it is important that product development becomes an issue in relation to where you want to go in terms of tourism.

In addition to that, the more competition comes on board, particularly markets which were once our source markets and which have now become our competitors; we need to enhance our tourism product. Sir, that speaks to overall infrastructural improvements as a plank of product development in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be able to create products, particularly physical products, without taking away what tourism development has been traditionally-based on that is the sea, sand and sun.

Therefore, it is important that we continue to develop places like Speightstown which are going to be important to us in the future. Speightstown's heritage value is significant to anything that we do in tourism in the future. It fits into the cultural heritage thrust which we are seeking to promote in Bridgetown, Speightstown, Oistins, Holetown and the Garrison area. These areas become important in building this new cultural heritage product which will become significant to Barbados in the future.

I believe that the expression of our uniqueness as a destination is what is going to set the stage for us and will be the plank for the future of Barbados' tourism.

Barbados' tourism must be built upon being able to highlight the unique features of Barbados as a destination, by making it more indigenous without neglecting the things that have made us what we are in terms of our tourism product. Therefore, this particular project is important.

Sir, one of the biggest complaints that we get is that many of the attractions that we have in Barbados are becoming outdated and need to be upgraded and that we need to build new ones if we are going to continue to attract people as a mature destination.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Speightstown is going to be a place where people would want to visit en masse. The cruise sector continues to speak to Barbados as a marque destination. This winter we will be having nine cruise ships homeporting in Barbados, more berths and larger ships, it means that we must be able to provide the products and services to facilitate this kind of activity.

Sir, we cannot have all the tourists running around Bridgetown and, therefore, Speightstown becomes very important. This project at Speightstown forms a centerpiece of all the areas of development that we are seeking to put in place in Barbados to be able to shore up the product development of our society.

Sir, it is known that niche marketing becomes critical to the development of tourism in the future and being able to create areas and giving people a reason to visit Barbados is important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Speightstown area allows us to take advantage of communities in and around that area by building them and linking them to the traditional businesses and creating a platform for entrepreneurs to get involve in tourism.

In terms of the expansion of the industry, not only would tourists want to continue to visit this area, Speightstown has become a hub and many Barbadians are visiting it. Sir, we have not discounted the issue of a cruise ship docking off the area of Speightstown. As a matter of fact, there is a cruise line that has an interest in being able to dock off Speightstown and to be able to use that area as their central disembarkation point rather than going into the Bridgetown Port.

Sir, when we think about the size of ships that would be cruising this winter and many of these ships would be bringing people to Barbados, it is important that we look at alternate places for disembarkation and Speightstown is becoming more important in that regard.

I do not think that is out of our purview to be able to see a cruise ship docking off Speightstown in the near future and passengers being transported into Speightstown. This has been discussed with major shipping lines and I believe that it would become a reality in the near future.
12.00 noon

Sir, this project also fits in very well with all of the other work that the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (BTII) has been doing in the past couple of years to really create this new basis for the product development of our country.

The most significant of these projects which really adds to the development of the tourism industry, has been the redevelopment of the St. Lawrence Gap. We are now in the process of being able to develop the southern side of that Gap from the Dover Playing Field to Highway 7. It is important, Sir, that we develop that particular area, similar to what was done on the northern side, but not of the same elaborate type. A lot of the streetscaping and the lighting

that the project will entail, are meant to give a new life to that part of the gap.

There are significant numbers of hotel properties on that side of the Gap and we are determined, Sir, that this Winter would not pass and leave a number of people stranded on that side of the Gap again. That is a site which also floods significantly, and this streetscaping project to that side of St. Lawrence Gap will now create a basis for that area to be patronized in the same passion as the other side of the Gap.

Sir, also going in, is the St. Lawrence Police Station. A police post has already been placed there, which has done a great job, in terms of being able to cure some of the lawlessness that exists in and around that area during the day and mostly at night.

In addition, there will be the installation of cameras in St. Lawrence Gap. I believe that we should soon see them operating and being able to continue to lend to the effort that I spoke about, in terms of curing some of the lawlessness.

Sir, we are going to see the Town Hall in our lifetime, totally refurbished and working, not as a Town Hall, but as a commercial entity that can add to the development of Barbados. This project is ongoing and is due to be completed by the end of this month.

Sir, there will be the reclaiming of the Waterfront car park and before the end of next year, the Swing Bridge is slated again to swing. This will add significantly to what happens between the two bridges.

We have seen what has been done with the boardwalk in Bridgetown, and what is planned for the next phase is that there will be an extension to that boardwalk that will run along the side of the inner basin between the two bridges.

Sir, we are aware that the boardwalk itself, has been a novelty for Barbados. Visitors and Barbadians alike, have started to congregate on that boardwalk. Sir, the Government admits that there are aspects of that boardwalk which need now some measure of refurbishment.

Sir, speaking about Bridgetown and all that Bridgetown offers, the Lower Green will become a green area again. We have already seen what has been done in terms of the relocation of the Lower Green Bus Stand in that area, to the bus stand beside Pelican, which has been outstanding work. Sir, I am sure that there are many of us in here who can appreciate what we now have, a green area in Bridgetown. Maybe some of us are too young to know when it was a green area with the evergreen trees, but those, Sir, I am sure

of your age group who will know, can appreciate what we will have again, a green area in Bridgetown.

The entire Jubilee Gardens will be landscaped and will be green and have water fountains. Sir, you could stay from the Town Hall and overlook that area. Sir, part of the issue about being able to bring a town alive has to do with people living in the town, which will happen in Speightstown and Bridgetown.

Sir, whenever you go to a developed city, there are green areas where you can escape to, in terms of any major city. There are no green areas in the heart of Bridgetown and we need these escape valves in a busy city. I guess you can walk up to Queens Park, but at the end of the day, we need to be able to bring back green areas to Bridgetown. These are the types of things that add and lend to the development of a city. They not only give people an opportunity to aspire to greater things but help us, in terms of the marketing potential.

In addition, we have done significant work in terms of the Old Spirit Bond and being able now to create a basis for that to become a commercial place with stores, a mall and a restaurant. Sir, this is really symbolising where our tourism industry is going and the development of our country generally and the real economic move away from sugar to tourism and services.

Sir, the Old Spirit Bond has now come away from the agricultural sector and has actually moved into the development of tourism, because of the shops and restaurant. It obviously becomes an avenue as well, for cruise ship passengers to visit.

In addition to what we have done in the Speightstown area, a public car park will be constructed in Speightstown. Condominiums and town houses will be built at Fort Denmark and that entire area will now be developed. There will be a walkway constructed, in addition to what has been done to the Speightstown Esplanade.

Sir, the work of the BTII is significant in being able to build up this new tourism product that we are seeking to put into the market. It will complement what we are doing in many of the areas.

Sir, the Minister of Housing and the Environment spoke about housing and many of the projects that will be done in that area. I am sure that the Honourable Member for St. George North will speak to the issue of what will happen with traffic in that area, and what we are seeking to do in terms of developing a new traffic plan in and around Speightstown that allows us to take full advantage of the commercial potential that we have in the area.

Sir, I also want to touch on a couple of issues that were spoken about by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central. Sir, one is the fairness of the distribution of resources. I do not know of any Government which has been more fair, in terms of how we have distributed resources, in and around Barbados.

When I hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central speak about the issues of what should happen in the South of Barbados, I sometimes wonder what has happened in terms of what we have done in St. Lawrence Gap, which is in the South of Barbados.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: I do not know if you have ever visited St. Lawrence Gap but St. Lawrence Gap is very much within the South of Barbados.

There is also an Oistins development project. Sir, apart from what happens there on Friday nights, we are now in the initial stages of a feasibility study, looking at a proposed development for the Oistins area. Sir, this area is an important area and we believe all the land that is on the seaside going up from the market to the police station complex is an area that could be develop to add to the tourism product.
12.10 p.m.

We have been able, over the last five to eight years, to develop significantly many areas in and around the South of Barbados, and St. Lawrence Gap is just one example. What has happened at Oistins is another example of what has been happening in terms of development in the area. So it is untrue to say that there has not been significant development in the South of Barbados as well.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, that development has served as a catalyst for a lot of the development that has come to the area. Sir, I know that you know the area well and you will agree that there are businesses that have sprung up in that area as a result of a lot of the work that has gone on there.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, for someone to make it sound as if there is little development in the South of Barbados is to really mislead the House. That development not only serves to shore up the potential of the South, but it has served as a catalyst for development in Speightstown and more development will come.

Sir, there are other areas in and around the South of Barbados which are also important for our own development. The Graeme Hall Nature Sanctuary is one of the projects under the community tourism development programme that has been receiving significant assistance from the Ministry of Tourism and its relevant agencies to be able to create the type of wetland and bird sanctuary that is important for tourism development. What that project has done is to create a community base in and around the South of Barbados.

I am sure that you know, Sir, that Graeme Hall is in the South of Barbados. The only person who do not know that is the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central. He does not go to the Graeme Hall Swamp, he does not go to Oistins and he does not go to St. Lawrence Gap, so he will never understand that significant development is taking place in the South of Barbados. He does not go to Moon Town either. In fact, I do not know where he goes. If he would drive around Barbados he would see the development that is taking place in and around Barbados, a lot of which is taking place in the South of Barbados.

I do not know how he leaves Barbados but the airport which is also at the southern tip of Barbados is being developed as well. Sir, if he would drive up there, he would know that it is being redeveloped. So when you hear people talking about not bringing any development to the South of Barbados, all that is, is pretty 'long talk', but if you look with the naked eye, you can see what is happening in Barbados.

Sir, the work that has been done in Speightstown is significant for Barbados and its development both in terms of its potential for business development in and around the northern areas of Barbados for our locals, first and foremost, and what it adds in terms of the tourism potential of Barbados. The work is important in terms of its practical nature and its symbolic nature for the development of tourism in Barbados for the future.

I want to commend the Honourable Minister of the Environment for the outstanding job that has been done not only in that particular area but for all that has been done to create and shore up a new environment for all Barbadians. In addition to that, I would like to also commend the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated for the outstanding work it is doing in terms of creating a better basis, a better opportunity and a better standard of living for all Barbadians.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am indeed grateful for this opportunity to commend the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated, the Drainage Unit in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the work that was done to bring this important Resolution here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the improvement of Speightstown depends to a great extent on the improvement of the Salt Pond. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke at length about the importance of the Salt Pond to the people of St. Peter and the business people of Speightstown. Those of us who know the Salt Pond would know that it runs for miles into the upper lands of St. Peter where water flows from the upper lands of St. Peter, St. Thomas and St. Andrew into the low-lying areas of Speightstown. Even though the Salt Pond just flows a few yards out of Speightstown, the artery in itself goes for miles into the upper lands of St. Peter. Therefore, it is important for us to create an atmosphere where flooding does not prevail as much as it used to in Barbados.

Recognising that flooding had occurred in the northern areas especially in Holetown, Speightstown and in the Bridgetown area which are merely low-lying, this Government, when it took office in 1994, established a Drainage Unit primarily to improve conditions in the low-lying areas and developed the study, "The Storm Water Drainage Study of 1996" which recommended a number of things to be done. That study recommended that Government should look at putting in a number of retention ponds and that check dams be installed in the uplands in order to prevent flooding in the low-lying areas.

Therefore, when one looks at the Salt Pond as it is today, one has to look at what has taken place in the last three years upstream in the upper lands of Speightstown. So far, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are installing a retention pond at Sailor Gully which is almost completed. Even though a lot of trees are growing in that area, a lot of money and resources have been spent in the Sailor Gully area in order to prevent the water from going into Speightstown. We also did a retention pond at Mount Brevitor as well. The two of these units, Sailor Gully and Mount Brevitor flow into one another. We are also looking at a third one at Richmond Hill which is almost completed where a check dam is being constructed out of concrete. So far phase one has been completed using private sector contractors as well as the team from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport. We have constructed an access road into the flow of the gully. We have also set up a reinforced concrete check dam which is about four metres high.

In the next phase we are going to put boulders at the back of the wall downstream in order to protect the water and the barriers from flowing into the Speightstown area. This is important work that is being done in order to prevent flooding, even though we cannot say with any certainty that it will prevent flooding in the low-lying areas, but we believe that this will help to some extent to minimize the amount of water that now flows into the area. We are hopeful that in the near future a study would be carried out on these three

important mechanisms to see how they have been used to prevent flooding in Speightstown.
12.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will continue looking at other areas. Already we have done the Headleys Land project at a cost of approximately \$3.3 million. Work is now being done from by the Globe Cinema, down to the Constitution River. We believe that we are now working with the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation (BTII) and the Bridgetown Port to look at the full phase from the Globe Cinema to the Careenage, which would be done by those three entities.

It is hoped that during the financial year work would be started from the Globe area, which would take a considerable amount of planning. Of course, as we have heard, the Honourable Prime Minister has spoken of beautifying that area.

Sir, as a young boy years ago, I could have looked from the bus stand and could have seen greenery along that road. That is not now the case and therefore we would have to put a system in where the three entities could develop a programme to help beautify and develop the area and help to prevent the storm water from going into the sea.

We are also looking at other areas, not only in the Bridgetown area but in the central areas as well. The Drainage Study of 1996 spoke to the fact that there is a need for Government and, indeed, the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, to install wells in the upper lands of Barbados. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one would notice that whenever it rains, water flows from St. James, St. Thomas or St. George, straight into Bridgetown. It is believed, if wells were dug in these areas, some of the water would be retained and would help to prevent flooding in the low-lying areas. Of course, it also depends, to some extent, on how often these wells are cleaned and so, over the past number of years, the Drainage Unit have been constantly clearing the drainage.

I am sure that all representatives of constituencies are familiar with the problems that this Unit has been experiencing over time and what is being done to help curb such problems. Sir, every year considerable sums of money are spent on drainage in order to prevent or mitigate flooding and it is Government's intention that every year large sums of money would be put into this department to assist with these problems.

Sir, flooding is a recurring problem and we will continue to see flooding in areas throughout the island. Sometimes people ask about the work that is being done by this Unit but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am convinced that we

would not be able to curb this problem altogether but we still have to try, therefore, representatives must continue to be vigilant in reminding the Unit to monitor people's concerns in relation to drainage problems.

Sir, I know there are householders who could help alleviate or solve some of these problems. There are householders who throw items such as beds, old stoves, *et cetera*, into the drainage system, which clog it up. There are times when householders can call the Sanitation Department of the Ministry of Health, to come and collect these bulky items instead of just throwing them into the drainage system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to commend the good work that is being done by the Drainage Unit and to thank them for working with the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated (BTII) and the other Ministries in ensuring that flooding across Barbados is kept to a minimum and for creating the opportunity for rain water to flow into the sea or into aquifers of Barbados to help with the water system. Sir, we will continue trying our best to ensure that we have a beautiful country.

I am obliged to you.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.30 p.m. this afternoon.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to second that.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.30 p.m. in the afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.
12.30 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to stand in support of the position of the Opposition as we support this initiative and principle because of its cultural, aesthetic and economic impact as its objective. However, I want to raise two areas of concerns one of which was already raised by one of my colleagues with respect to a possible environmental impact. Anyone familiar with the area would recognise that any time there is the movement of salt and fresh water combined that it will have its own ecological structure and as a result, one has to be careful when that ecological structure is altered with respect to development.

Sir, part of the problem with respect to the stagnation that occurs with water in the Salt Pond is that there is retardation of the movement of the water outward and to some extent inwards. When work is done is that allows for free movement of water in and out it also alters the ecological dynamics of that area. In addition, we have to be concerned about the types of flow during high tides and heavy rainfall because this will also undoubtedly alter the ecological dynamics because we are dealing with a salt water element which is extremely dense and will have a different settlement dynamic with respect to fresh water. I believe that if an environmental assessment study was not done, that one should be done as a matter of urgency.

Sir, I have heard a lot of talk about initiatives, developments, special development areas, physical development and so on. What concerns me is that development does not occur in isolation. In order for development to occur it must occur within a context that allows for total economic development and, in order for one to have total economic development, it must occur within a set of economic frameworks. We cannot get any development in a country whether physical, social, political or economic unless there is a stable macroeconomic environment in which it can occur.

This is where my concern comes because some Members on the Other Side are confused as to what development actually is and they believe that buildings and projects represent development. The confusion has to do with not understanding the conceptual difference between modernisation and actual development because there is no direction correlation between modernisation and development unless there is a social component to it.

Sir, I do not know how Members on the Other Side can argue about all of these developmental parameters occurring when in Barbados we do not now possess the kind of macroeconomic environment that allows all of these developments to occur in a sustainable manner. With the few minutes I have, I intend to demonstrate what I am speaking about because if we are talking about development we have to demonstrate that there is a stable macroeconomic development within which that development can occur. Sir, in order to have that you must demonstrate that you have (1) a low external debt parameter (2) low internal debt parameters (3) fiscal balance (4) balance of payment arrangements that are in good harmony (5) a low inflation rate and (6) a very low unemployment rate.

If we cannot demonstrate these things, we cannot speak of development in a significant way. I want to say without reservation that in Barbados at this time, we do not have many of those economic stabilising factors in operation. There is no doubt that in Barbados at this time we have a high and growing national debt. We also have a high fiscal deficit of over 5.6 per cent of the GDP and there are already

significant pressures on the balance of payments in this country which will worsen significantly once the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and globalisation comes into being. I do not understand the fancy talk about development when we have this sort of macroeconomic framework within which to work.

Sir, I will not be hoodwinked or fooled because I am going to bring statistics to this Honourable House to show the unstable economic environment within which this development is supposed to occur. Sir, if one would review the *Statistical Digest of the Central Bank, 2002*, this report would demonstrate that the Barbados Labour Party Government has increased the national debt of this country from \$2,407,000,000 million in 1994 to \$3,438 000 000 million by the year 2001.

1.40 p.m.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, this Government has also increased the foreign component of the national debt from \$675 million in 1994 to \$1 142 000 by the year 2001, an increase of \$464 million in a seven-year period. Sir, with respect to the domestic debt, this Government has increased the domestic debt from a national debt of \$1 731 000 000 to \$2 295 000 000, an increase of \$563 million in seven years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that cannot be considered an environment within all the so-called economic developments including the Salt Pond that we are hearing about. I am now being told that the Salt Pond is going to be financed out of State enterprise.

Sir, development cannot occur within a framework that is unstable and that is not what we are looking for. I would further demonstrate that the same sort of instability exists within our fiscal deficit position in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the Honourable Members on the Other Side to remember that in 1994 when the Democratic Labour Party demitted office there was a \$40 million surplus on the overall fiscal account, that is what the *Central Bank Annual Statistical Digest, 2000* would say. I would say that by the year 2002 there was an overall deficit of \$247 million, an unprecedented development. Sir, this represents a deficit of over 5.6 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product. Sir, that is an unstable position. It was one that the Prime Minister did not deny because the Prime Minister had been boldly indicating that he intended cutting back spending in order to reduce the deficit. This was a deficit that they had created by their expansionary policies and deficit spending. Sir, I am hearing about development in Barbados but that is not development, that is creating an unstable economic environment.

Sir, in 1994/1995 an analysis of Government's expenditure showed capital expenditure of \$103 million. By the year 2002 the Government capital expenditure had increased to \$234 million, an increase of \$130 million. Sir, that is where the fiscal deficit was created.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I want to reemphasise that anytime we talk about development or continuing sustainable development in a country we cannot do it unless we have a stable macroeconomic environment and Barbados does not have one. The reason Barbados cannot have one is because we have a high national debt, we have a high foreign external component of the debt, we have high local component of the debt and we have a high fiscal deficit on the current account. Therefore, we cannot argue about development.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I heard Ministers talk about possible growth in tourism and what they are going to do and there is evidence that tourism is out of the slump. I would like to know where we are going to get the money to cover the foreign component of the national debt.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, before I go any further, I would like to raise a concern which has to do with the bogus report that I heard regarding our net international reserves. Sir, I would not be hoodwinked by it. I would caution all Honourable Members that prior to the last election we heard about new increases in sugar production that was going to be responsible for pulling Barbados out of its economic slide.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Sir, the development that is taking place in Speightstown is almost 95 per cent completed. The Honourable Member is saying that development cannot take place within an unstable environment. I am saying that the development at Speightstown is almost 95 per cent complete.

Secondly, development has been going on in this country unabated and there is no evidence to prove that we are operating in an unstable economic environment. Therefore, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member for St. George North does not understand what an economic development is. I prefaced my statements by indicating that there is development which

can be construed as a modernisation component but that must have certain components to it as well. Sir, when we are talking about constructing buildings and roads, I am not getting involved in that. I want to see the social development that uplifts the social capital of Barbados that is what I want to see.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe that the Standing Rules of the House do require that the speaker speaks with relevance of the Bill before the Honourable House. I am hearing a departure from the Bill that is before the House.

Sir, I understand that the Honourable Member wants to spice up the debate but this is about salt not spice. It is not relevant, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Philip West, I would like you to get back to substantial information on the Resolution. I understand that you have points but you have to get back to the Resolution.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I thank you, Sir.

Sir, the angle which I am using must be seen within its true context. You cannot have an isolationist or separatist approach to development. It must be comprehensive and that is how the Democratic Labour Party sees it.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I do not believe that at the end of the day I am straying away from speaking about development because that is only development in its microscopic elements. I am talking about development in general. How have I strayed?

Sir, if the Barbados Labour Party understood what development is, then they would recognise...

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I spoke to you earlier and made the point that you strayed somewhat from the Bill before the Honourable House and I ask you to get back to the Resolution. However, you seem to be questioning the Chair. I want to say that any decision made by this Chair is final. Could you proceed with the Resolution that is before the House.
1.50 p.m.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your ruling. However, I would like to say that if this Salt

Pond development is supposed to have an impact as is touted by the Honourable Members on the Other Side, about the development of the Speightstown area with respect to tourism and the social impact, I want to see the evidence thereof.

I want to raise my concern again that if you are talking about the aesthetic or cultural impact, I can have an understanding of that, but I do not understand how it could have a positive impact on the environment at this stage. I would ask the Honourable Member, if an environmental impact study has not been done, as I have said earlier, one should be done as a matter of urgency.

Anyone who understands ecology and biological principles must understand that anytime you have an area where there is a movement of fresh water and salt water, depending on tidal changes and rainfall, from the time you disturb that by opening a wide channel to the ocean, you are liable to cause more problems than you had before. Sir, the Honourable Members on This Side would like you to have an environmental assessment study done, before you proceed with that particular project.

Sir, what is important for me, is that we had developments in Barbados, for example, the Sherbourne Conference Centre that is used every day and brings millions of dollars into Barbados, but it is never considered to be a developmental project.

Aside.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: It has never been finished, neither has the Rehabilitation Centre and the Geriatric Hospital, and furthermore, neither the St. John Polyclinic, that was raised by the Prime Minister. My point is, if you are going to tell me about how special that development is, and it has not yet raised a cent in Barbados, what would you say about a Sherbourne Centre that brings in millions of dollars to Barbados, which this Government refuses to finish. Please tell me.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: It brings in more than the Salt Pond. My point is that development cannot be seen only through the eyes of the Honourable Members of the Barbados Labour Party. Development must be seen through the eyes of all Barbadians. I want to see the St. John Polyclinic finished as part of development as well. I want to see also...

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Do not worry about that because there is no salt pond up there.

Mr. Speaker, I think what is important in this sort of debate is that we do not see development of any particular projects that may have an impact, economically on Barbados and it has contributed to GDP, in only terms that affect Government representatives.

I think it is important for us to understand that every citizen in Barbados that pays taxes would expect to have some of the appropriations of Government expenditure to be demonstrated on projects in various areas in Barbados. I would hope in the future that when Ministers on the Other Side bring projects as well, they do not only bring them in development areas that are within Honourable Members of the Government constituencies, but they also bring them in the constituencies of Honourable Members of the Opposition. If I start to see that sort of development, I would see it as true development.

Aside.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: It should also occur in the constituencies of Backbenchers.

I believe that if we have this sort of development in Barbados, the Democratic Labour Party will be all for it and we will give it full support.

In conclusion, Sir, I think that we offer our support to the Resolution in principle, but we offer our conclusions and reservations as well.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly after a break, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West desire to bring some excitement to the House and succeeded in so doing, even if he did not bring it with excitement relevant to the debate before the House.

The Honourable Member ended with the charge that if things were done in the constituencies of the Honourable Members on the Other Side, then he would applaud that development.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I know where he came from and I know he is rightly placed now, my most dear friend.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, if I could guide Honourable Members on the Other Side to the Order Paper for today, they would see that many of the things on today's Order Paper, including acquisitions, relate to development in their own constituencies.

I would like to thank all Honourable Members who contributed to this debate. I think it was a robust and energetic way with which to resume and I trust that we will continue in that vein, even if we cannot always agree on everything.

Sir, I want to make a few points. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West, during the course of his remarks, I think strayed, when he sought to give a definition of development. Yes, you can have a development that may be positive, which may be an engineering solution to a problem that does not necessarily impact on communities, economies or society, but this project which we are seeking to do at the Salt Pond, we believe does have a beneficial impact on the community. Particularly, the commercial community of Speightstown which, for many years, has suffered from unbearable stench, as the salt pond backed up, or as they have had flooding, heavy rains and various adverse environmental impacts and problems from the Salt Pond not being properly channelled and drained.

The fact that we bring this project to this House will considerably improve the problems that people have been having and we are saying that by extension, Speightstown therefore becomes a more desirable place for Bajans to walk through and a more pleasant environment in which business can be done. Sir, let us face it, if you are going into an eating place and beside it is smelling foul, you are not going to eat there, you are going to leave.

Similarly, if you are going into somebody's shop to make a purchase of one type or another, if you have to inhale foul odours, you will not stay, you will leave and go elsewhere. Hence, we believe that with an improved Salt Pond, the businesses there will benefit from increased flows of pedestrian traffic and purchasers. Also, persons who aspire to have restaurant type facilities can now set them up, safe in the knowledge that the offensive odours which previously ran the potential customers and 'limers', no longer exist.

Sir, insofar as it improves conditions for the commercial community, and it improves what is a town centre for the North, then, it does have a people component. 2.00 p.m.

It is not an engineering solution that does not impact on quality of life. It is an engineering solution that does impact on quality of life for the people of the North and for

the commercial centre surrounding the Salt Pond area as well as to improve the tourism potential in Speightstown.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West, with great enthusiasm, and not correct science, spoke to a need for an environmental impact assessment based on ecological change because of the change in environment which would occur arising out of the drainage project. I wish to assure him that this project is not a stand-alone project, that we just did not conceive of it solely from the perspective of drainage and that all of the engineering and all the environmental assessments which were needed to be made to determine what the full implications of effecting the project would be were done as part of the study and as part of the execution of the project, but that we will have to wait now to determine how sound the technical advice has been. However, until such times that there has been a defect in the quality of the advice given, I have to accept, not being an engineer myself, that sound engineering advice has been given to the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated and that the project is being executed in a holistic way with adequate consideration for the ecological issues raised by the Honourable Member.

Sir, we have heard comments relative to the tourism impact arising out of the execution of these works. During the course of my opening remarks I spoke to the coastal infrastructural project and would wish, since I am going to be closing now, to give some of the details of what the project includes. The project includes waterfront improvement from the Drill Hall to Rockley, improvement to the beaches at Holetown and Welches – I explained what would take place at both Welches and Holetown – and the carrying out of headland protection at Woman's Bay, Silver Sands. This is very important to the fishing and residential community at Silver Sands.

The Silver Sands beaches are popular for all kinds of marine type sports and activity and also for sea eggs. We know that the fishermen of Silver Sands with the help of their Member of Parliament will take cognisance of the closure of the season on 15th October.

The Crane Beach in St. Philip is one of the important southern beaches and the restoration and enhancement of it is a project that is long overdue. There has been deterioration in the beach quality, erosion and so on, for a long time, but that beach still remains very popular and is very heavily used by locals particularly those from southern Barbados and St. Philip. Therefore, some restoration and enhancement at the Crane Beach will take place.

At Tent Bay in St. Joseph, we will be constructing a boat access and slip-way for the fishing community. At Holetown in St. James, because of the problems suffered

similar to those at the Salt Pond, we will be conducting an aeration project at the Holetown Lagoon to improve the lagoon to ensure that the fishes within that area have enough oxygen and to prevent foul odours from impacting on the residential communities around the Holetown area as well as on the hotels on either side of the lagoon.

Walkers Beach in St. Andrew is one of the very important nesting sites for the leatherback turtle and we are going to be carrying out doom protection there. The Walkers Beach has become one of the areas most used for four-wheel drive vehicle racing and all kinds of activity which is extremely harmful to the beach and which impacts adversely on the turtle nesting sites.

We intend to increase the number of beach accesses and windows to the sea across the island particularly on the South Coast and the West Coast where there is a dire need for them. Those components of the project, as I indicated earlier, cost approximately BDS\$60 million and will be executed by the Coastal Zone Management Unit while the National Conservation Commission will be constructing beach facilities at Silver Sands, Pebbles Beach, Foul Bay and Bay Street to Brownes Beach.

Within the last couple of weeks we have completed the new beach facility at Worthing. It is also our intention to place kiosks at the popular beaches, Holetown, Brandons and Enterprise, for small vendors in order to expand the entrepreneurial opportunities available to those who are so inclined.

I bring this Resolution before the House, Sir, capturing it within the context of our national development plan and looking at the impact on the tourism product, and at the same time making the point that it does improve the quality of life for Barbadians.

With these words, Sir, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 9 – LAND TAX (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2) BILL, 2003

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to introduce the amendment before the House which have been circulated. I must set it in the context not just of the Bill which is currently before us which provides for a 50 per cent rebate for pensioners as well as for hotels but to set

it in the more recent announcement of the Ministry of Finance, which, having considered the rates yet again, has recommended that the first \$125 000 of improved value for residential loans be zero-rated with adjustments to the other bands which I will come to later on in this presentation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate today is being cast in the context not just of the amendments which are before the House but what must now come to be regarded as the historic announcement that effectively remove land tax from those persons who are residential owners of properties value at \$125 000 or less. This is a decision which will remove from the roll an existing 18 000 homeowners, and one for the first time, since taxes have been collected on land in this country which will provide that kind of benefit for people at the bottom of the ladder in respect of the value of lands in this country.

I am going to put it further in context for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because most people would not realise that virtually from the time of settlement there has been a tax attached to land in this country.
2.10 p.m.

Sir, we may be familiar with the modern system of the Land Tax Department and that as we know it, would have come into existence in 1973 when the then Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Errol Walton Barrow introduced the legislation which changed a system that was administered on the annual rental value of properties, to one that is based on the value of the property itself, thus divorcing it from the rental value.

Sir, that was the first time this country sought to move in that direction because hitherto, we had a system of rates and taxes for land that was based on the one existing in the United Kingdom, which was based on the potential rental value of property. It was, in fact, administered in recent times by the three local Government authorities that came into being in 1958 with the Local Government Act: The Northern District Council, the Southern District Council and the City Council. They, in fact, have replaced the twelve old vestry systems which hitherto had been responsible for the assessment and collection of rates and taxes.

Sir, it is significant that it was seen as a transition to a more modern and certain system for the collection of land taxes than the one that had existed under the vestry system and the local government authority.

Sir, I take the time to go into the history of this matter because Honourable Members of this House must fully appreciate the historic nature on the debate that will take place today and that as long as this Parliament has been in existence, even on the parallel track where the local

government authorities or the vestry system were responsible for the collection of rates and taxes, never before in the history of Barbados has there been a decision to exempt 18 000 property owners from the payment of land taxes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said that, conscious that this was not something that was pulled out of the sky by this Government, neither was it something that was determined as an election promise. Sir, when I came to public life in 1989, during the first election in which I ran in 1991, the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto at page 9 had committed itself to the abolition of land tax on residential properties to the value not exceeding \$150 000.

Sir, I started at that point because this is a philosophy that this Government has held firm as a political party and, through a period of phased initiatives, has seen it fit to accomplish. Therefore, it is not clothed in the responsibility of fiscal recklessness that might have associated the promises of the Democratic Labour Party in its last election campaign and Manifesto but it is rooted in the philosophy that is related to the capacity of the Government to manage prudently the fiscal affairs of this country.

Sir, let me go back because it is clear that some memories will need refreshing today and I would not want this debate to proceed on the basis of other than the most accurate information. There were at least 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002, that this Government has approached the question of the reduction of land tax rates in this country while, at the same time, increasing and changing the bands, such that there is a lesser tax to be paid by those for whom tax was payable.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also addressed the issue of the payment of tax by pensioners. That is what this Amendment before the House is addressing. This defines that as one was in receipt of a pension and had attained the age of 60 years, then one would pay land tax on the basis of 50 per cent value on the taxable improved value of that assessment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again that was an initiative that was unknown because prior to that, every property owner who was a residential owner had paid land taxes irrespective of means or circumstances.

Sir, I would like to believe that this all portends to a clear understanding that this is a Government that proceeds on the basis that there could be no political stability or any true economic development unless we could foster all of the virtues of a property-owning democracy. It must also be understood that it must be the legitimate aspiration of every Barbadian to own property and that those of us who have come to the task of public affairs, particularly in the

post-1930s environment, have a responsibility to work assiduously until that becomes every Barbadian's reality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a unique aspiration. Anyone who understands the philosophies of other developing countries would recognise that it is the core of involvement in public life and that leaders who have come to be respected across the Commonwealth have placed the desire to achieve a full property-owning democracy at the very bedrock of their philosophy.

When people have a stake in the society in which they live, they are more likely to work in the upliftment and building of that society and equally, are less likely to do those things that are likely to be destructive to that society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I set this debate in that context. Anyone who is familiar with the politics of this country would understand that there has been a continuum, broken only once to my knowledge, in respect of that serious objective, to be able to do those things that are necessary to make Barbados a property-owning democracy.

Sir, it was for that reason in 1999 I could not understand why the Democratic Labour Party's Government of the day would have campaigned vigorously against the abolition of land tax for properties reaching \$150 000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without seeking to prejudge the position of the Opposition, I would like to believe that is the position that belonged to a different reflection of the Democratic Labour Party and that they too would understand that any initiative which seeks to reduce the burden or the cost of owning land in this country would be an initiative that is worthy of the support of both Government and Opposition in Barbados, and thereby encourage persons so to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps for the benefit of Honourable Members, let me take some of the esoteric nature out of this debate and bring it down to the bold realities from which people would be benefiting. As I have indicated, there have been at least four adjustments in relation to bands or rates of land tax undertaken by this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994 when we came to Government, we found a situation where someone owning and living in his own house, which was worth up to \$125 000, was paying at least \$306 per year in land taxes or the equivalent of one week's salary, henceforth, that person will pay nothing. A person whose house was worth \$250 000 when we came to office was paying \$1 062.00 yearly in land tax. Mr. Deputy Speaker, under this new arrangement, that person will now pay \$125.00, almost 90 per cent reduction

over the life of this administration and if that person is a pensioner, that person will pay \$62.50.
2.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker if the house was value \$400 000, when we took over from the Democratic Labour Party the person was paying land tax of \$2 060 a year but that person will now pay the sum of \$550.00.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have already settled that 18 000 persons had houses valued at \$125 000 and less but when I referred to the person whose improved value was \$250,000 they have gone from pay \$1 062 yearly to \$125.00, less than the cost of a pair of Nike shoes and, this for the first time ever in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what must be borne in mind is that there is still the inbuilt incentive as was contemplated by the then Prime Minister on his introduction of the Act in 1973 that the land tax system must continue, apart from the revenue which it raises, to act as an incentive for the development of land which is a scarce commodity on an island of this size.

There is a differential in the rate that is charged for land that has no dwelling house on it as opposed to land on which there is a dwelling either owner-occupied or otherwise but even with those people, we have seen a corresponding reduction in rates such that if a person had a piece of land worth \$100 000 in 1993, on which there was no dwelling house, that person paid \$950.00 in land taxes but now that person will pay \$600.00. The \$600.00 still contrast to the fact that if there was a chattel house on the land, the person would pay nothing so there is still an incentive for persons to bring idle land into production by way of homes or some other form of economic activity, particularly agriculture and tourism for which there are rebates provided in the legislation and for which this Bill before this House continues to advance and cement that position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard so much about a fair share for all and I know that more than 18 000 property owners in Barbados are going to feel that they have had more than a fair share by reason of their removal from the tax role in respect to their properties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may well be that the only fair that the Democratic Labour Party can speak of is FEAR as opposed to FAIR. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have perused their Manifesto and consistent with the position expressed in 1991 by the then Democratic Labour Party administration we can read at page 12 their recommendation on how land tax should be dealt with. There is nothing about removing 18 000 persons from the tax role or easing the burden for those who can least afford to carry it and it is written in

language that is so cumbersome that no one can understand it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker I quote:

“Adjust the method of calculating land taxes. Tax payable will be calculated on a taxable market or improved value which will be reduced to 65 per cent over a five-year period.”

Sir, in other words, as your property value increases your taxable value will fall. These are the words of an academic professor.

This Government is committed to progress and we have clearly kept our promise on page 8 of our Manifesto that we will exempt the first \$125 000 in property value from the payment of land tax. Sir, we promised in May this year that we would exempt the first \$125 000 and we have done it and kept our promise.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go further. The Manifesto also spoke about placing a ceiling on the value of the land tax bill. I can report to this Honourable Chamber that we have already started the process of consultation because one thing we must never do is to bring into place a provision that is uncertain or incapable of appropriate enforcement because of the vague nature of the provision. I can assure this Honourable Chamber that consultations have started between the Minister of Finance and the relevant parties to make sure that we can hold faith with the second part of that promise but we have started where the majority of owners of property in this country can benefit from the first \$125 000 across the board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say a few words about the \$125 000 threshold because Honourable Members may want to know why that figure was chosen in the initial stages at this point in time. The reality is that this Government is committed to a consistency between the threshold for land tax and the threshold for property transfer tax. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may be aware that the first \$125 000 is currently exempted from the payment of property transfer tax in respect of transactions to which that tax is applicable. There is a consistency in the approach in relation to the setting of a threshold and one that finds favour with us because of the ability to have a uniform threshold across taxes pertaining to land in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to remind Honourable Members that there are other jurisdictions across the region that still have land tax. It is true that in most instances they have not modified the basis for charging land from the annual rental value as we have and many of them, with the exception of Jamaica and a few others, have retained the

annual rental value as the basis for the levying of land taxes in those jurisdictions.

2.30 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, very often people speak about these terms or systems as if we have the only system that is enforceable. However, we forget to recognise that in Barbados there is no capital gains tax.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: There is nothing wrong with it but the reality is there is none and, therefore, there has been a disproportionate burden placed in respect of those other taxes that remain and are in fact being used.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party mounted a campaign that was based on overtaxation of Barbadians. In the context, where in the course of the last year this Government has systematically sought to modify every form of taxation, even in spite of the fact that within two years we are aware that the Government would lose up to \$170 million in revenue from the lost of import duties as a result of the liberalisation programme to which we were locked in under the Democratic Labour Party, when they were in office.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that reform of our tax system has taken place in a very careful and steady manner. Sir, you would recall that the Budget of October 2002, presented by the Right Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, set out very clearly why it was that this Government was embarking upon a period of sustained tax reform; recognising that on a periodic basis, one needed to both revisit the rates and the thresholds applicable in a system of taxation. This has not been done for virtually ten years and the time has come for us to look at it.

The Prime Minister made the point that in the context of our preparation of our full entry into the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, we needed to ensure that Barbados maintained a competitive tax system to be able to make sure that this could be one of the preferred bases for business and the conduct of business, while at the same time ensuring that within your personal income tax framework a system is developed that inspired initiative that was fair, simple and equitable. Mr. Deputy Speaker, those were the objectives that inspired the tax reform that was announced by the Prime Minister in his Budget speech of October 2002.

Sir, I want to remind Honourable Members the corporation tax rate was reduced and would continue to be reduced every year until the year 2005 when it will come to 25 per cent. The personal income tax rates, as well as thresholds, were changed and this is not something that has

been left to a statement of intention to be executed at some future date.

Sir, so certain and committed are we in the process, we took the unprecedented step of amending the legislation to ensure that both the allowances which would be provided would go from \$15 000 to \$25 000 over the next four years, as well as to reduce the rate and taxation from 40 per cent to 35 per cent and from 25 per cent to 20 per cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a very clear position taken by this Government and, therefore, I set those other initiatives only for this House to appreciate that what is before it today is not an isolated act of tax reform but one of three major initiatives treating to reform the corporation taxation, personal income tax and the land tax systems, even in spite of the fact that we are on target to lose \$170 million of revenue in import duties by the year 2006 because of the liberalisation programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is reflective of a Government that is truly committed to making Barbados a property owning democracy and that is prepared to take decisions not in a whimsical or reckless way but it has paced itself. Sir, in spite of the objective which we had from the beginning, we recognised that we could do this by way of a gradual approach but one which nonetheless would yield benefits to property owners of this country.

Sir, we are committed to looking at the introduction of a ceiling above which tax would not be payable with respect to improved values and that consultative process has started. We recognise that there is a relationship between land tax and capital formation and, therefore, we will do nothing to perpetuate a disincentive in relation to the use of land in this country. I am saying to you, Sir, that this will not be the last time in which this House would be engaged.

Sir, I want to speak briefly to the fact that most people are still not aware that from the inception a system of land tax in 1973, there was always a provision for a Land Tax Relief Board. Persons who were genuinely indigent or incapable of paying but for whom there was still a liability to pay, they have always been able to go to the land tax board for relief. In fact, as recent as last year, approximately 4 000 persons were granted relief by the land tax board because of their inability to pay.

Sir, we anticipate that these numbers will reduce because rather than people having to make an appeal to the Land Tax Relief Board by way of supplication, we have taken the system and so designed it to remove its harshest burdens on the people who are least capable of paying, either in terms of their inability to be large wage earners or by reason of the fact that they are pensioners and, therefore, on

a tight income and hence only having to pay 50 per cent of their land tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must not forget that in 1998 the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced an amnesty, giving people the opportunity to come in and clear their arrears. It is true that we would have collected some money as a result of that amnesty but there was still a situation where too many people are not paying their land taxes on time. Therefore, arrears were calculated as of the first day of the next financial year, April 1st, even if you paid your tax late, it was calculated as arrears as the Commissioner of Land Tax would have deemed.

In addition to that, the Land Tax Department is continuing its programme of computerisation. One of the amazing things that would have made it possible for Barbados to move in this vein and, indeed, in the introduction of the debate in 1973 when the Prime Minister noted the challenge was that we have been able to map every parcel of land in this country such that there are some 100 447 parcels of land that are mapped out for the purposes of land tax. Although I would tell you that a percentage of them will be exempt under the Act. For example the Crown, churches, the University of the West Indies and certain charitable organisations would be exempt from paying taxes. Sir, while that represents the absolute number, it is not necessarily the number that pays taxes in Barbados.

Sir, I have taken the time to go into detail because I think that it is important that persons understand the historic nature of this debate today, in relation to where we are carrying this country and relation to our objective to want to have a fully-owned property owning democracy.

I would not go at this point to the other elements that we have put in place to support that property-owning democracy, like the 100 per cent mortgages at 6 per cent for the first \$100 000 or the other initiatives that we have put in place to be able to satisfy housing supply because this is not a housing debate *per se*. However, suffice to say this is not the only initiative that has been used by this Government to support the objective in establishing a firm property-owned democracy, recognising that real property, land, is not the only type of property to be owned in respect of one's pursuit for a property-owning democracy but that shares and other intangible property, like intellectual property, are also a party of that determination.
2.40 p.m.

Suffice it to say that for the purposes of this narrow debate here today, on the arrangements to be put in place for land tax, I focussed on the historical development. I have also tried to show that those 18 000 people, like the many thousands who would have benefited under the Tenantry

Freehold Purchase Act, given the opportunity to own land at 10 cents per square foot in circumstances where they never could contemplate owning land in the near future, or like the many thousands of people now in urban Barbados who are being given the opportunity to own land at \$2.50 per square foot, all of these initiatives go to support the architecture that speaks to a property-owning democracy.

I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have tried to be fair and equitable in the way in which we have designed the system. We have also recognised that there are some categories of people that have peculiar and more discrete needs, like the pensioners. I would not go into that today, because that is for another debate as to how the majority of pensioners benefit from the arrangements already in place under the tax system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have tried, generally, to be responsive, whilst still being faithful to the fact that there is a need for us also to be responsible, in relation to how we undertake tax reform. We also recognise that there must be a commitment to continue building for the future, by assuring that there is fiscal stability, unlike that which is asserted by the Democratic Labour Party.

I am prepared to share in the figures, in relation to what is really the unbelievable reductions in the payment of land tax, whether at the level of \$125 000, \$200 000, \$300 000, \$400 000 that has taken place over the last nine years. But suffice it to say, we hope that this will be a continued boom for both investment and development of land at a personal level for residential owners, and at the broader level within the context of tourism and agriculture, because as this specific Bill treats to the question of the rebate within the context of tourism and agriculture would have been dealt with last year, as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this amendment and from the outset, I want to make the point, Sir, what we are hearing today is nothing new. This Government, while in Opposition, made the bold promise that they would have removed the first \$150 000 off any property from paying taxes. Today, we are now hearing that the real promise is \$125 000 on the improved value which is completely different from the site value.

In other words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you own a piece of land, and you are hoping to build a house...

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, who seems to have confused himself from takeoff. The Manifesto which is applicable to this

current term, is the Barbados Labour Party which is a Government that does not disavow its Manifesto and believes that it is a social contract with the people of this country, unlike the Democratic Labour Party. The Manifesto entitled "EVERY BAJAN A WINNER – BARBADOS LABOUR PARTY – AGENDA 2003-2008", at page 8 of that document, FURTHER EASE ON PROPERTY TAXES:

"We will exempt the first \$125 000 in property value from payment of land tax, ..."

Sir, that was the promise made, that was the promise kept and in those circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I will not allow the Honourable Member to mislead this Chamber, in respect to what is before this Honourable House.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am accusing the Barbados Labour Party of a breach of contract, because if the Honourable Member is saying that it is supposed to be the first \$125 000 on property value and then comes in here and tells this House that it is the first \$125 000 on improved value, that is a breach of contract.

Furthermore, it is contract breached once, contract breached twice because in 1991, it was said that it will be \$150 000. Let me tell you exactly.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I am not going to allow the Honourable Member for St. Lucy or any Honourable Member on That Side to accuse this Government of misleading anyone, or of any breach of contract. The facts speak for themselves. Now, if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has an impairment in his ability to understand the English language, then we will sympathise with him but for the moment, he must not seek to foist that impairment on the rest of Barbados.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have one today, and I am going to continue with it because I will tell you exactly what happened in this Parliament. I have been in here from 1994 and I can tell you the reason for this amendment.

A couple of years ago, this same Government brought an amendment to the House charging taxes on chattel houses and it was warned by this Opposition, at the time only two Honourable Members, that the amendment they were to put on the statue books would affect those people who owned chattel houses because previously, Sir, when you own a chattel house, you did not have to pay taxes on that chattel house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that amendment was so dangerous, that the people who were renting land and had a chattel house on somebody's property were liable of increasing the liability for the owner of the land. I know you remember.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have another situation here because I also sat in the Committee that dealt with the lands use policy, do not mind that I opposed everything they did, which reported that the majority of the land owned and not used in Barbados are lands owned by foreigners, especially Barbadians living overseas.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN:

No. Foreign to living in Barbados at the present time.

I want to say to this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Government had a housing programme, called "Housing 2000" which they could not deliver and they are now using this amendment to force people who have land with no building on it, to build on it to reduce the tax liability. If you have the land and you do not have a house on it, you do not get the \$125 000 but if you build a house, you get a reduction in taxes. The facts are here and nobody can challenge them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, added to that, this amendment cannot be taken in isolation. One also has to understand that there was a Bill brought to this House dealing with derelict properties, and when one checked the list of the people who owned the derelict properties, they were all poor people. The Bill stated that if they do not have the capacity to remove those derelict properties, or repair them, that the Ministry of Housing and Lands, through the NHC, would remove them, charge them and probably sell the land. It is all a combination...

2.50 p.m.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would really be remiss of all of us on This Side if we did not seek to deal with something the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said. This is really another example of him going headlong to expose his ignorance on how Barbadians think about moves to become members of the property-owning democracy.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East was very clear in her exposition when she made the comparison between what obtains by way of tax liability on properties up to \$125 000 in the 2002/2003 financial year and what will happen going forward.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have sat there and heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said that with this adjustment a person having a property with an improved value of up to \$125 000 will be saving \$125.00. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would want Barbadians to believe that someone would make a decision to take a piece of land from lying idle, not cultivated or without a structure on it, to build a house in order to save \$125.00 in land tax. That is akin to craziness.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have made your point, Honourable Member.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What is this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You cannot have a point of order on a point of order. That cannot be allowed, Sir.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the Honourable Member is confused and is attempting to mislead the House. I heard him say that the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment demolishes people properties where such properties are derelict and takes over the land. Sir, I would not wish him to confuse those members of his side who are still innocent, though we on This Side know it not to be true.

The Ministry of Health is the agency responsible for determining when derelict properties constitute a threat to health and the environment. When that determination is made by the Ministry of Health using the health legislation, an instruction is given to the Environmental Engineering Department which is now located and has been for some years, although it used to be a department of the Ministry of Health, within the Ministry of the Environment.

Notices are sent out to property owners asking them to demolish the properties and notices are also placed on the properties showing that the properties are liable to be demolished because they constitute a threat to health and the environment. If the property owners do not take action, then the Environmental Engineering Division using private contractors will demolish them. It is not done by the National Housing Corporation or the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Neither the Government nor any of its agencies, statutory corporations or ministries takes over anybody's land. All that happens is that derelict properties are demolished. Very often, the owners of the properties are glad that the Government has stepped in and demolished them for them where they themselves did not have the means to do so, but the persons who owns the properties retains ownership of the

lands and can do whatever they wish with them. So I do not want the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who is entirely confused, as always, to mislead this Honourable Chamber, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. James South spoke on that in all honesty, but I would advise the Honourable Member to go back and look at the last amendment that came to this Parliament to find out which Ministry brought the amendment and what was included in that amendment.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I am confused, I would stay confused in my mind because I know I am right. If others think that they are not confused, they need to go and look at the facts because I know it was not the Ministry of Health that brought the amendment to this Parliament. I am sure about that. I also know that there was a strong discussion in this House of Assembly when a Minister, and I am sorry he is not now in his seat, made the point that there are too many derelict properties in Barbados that people can use and they have to get their hands on them. I remember that well, Sir.

Nobody can teach me anything about this House because I pay close attention to what is going on in here and I respond appropriately. I know that if we could call for the *Hansard* of that debate that I would be right and that person would be wrong. Anyhow, they will not move me from my point. What we need in this country is the ability for people to continue to own land and not to punish people for owning land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say up front that I have my doubts about this Bill and my support for it. After this Bill is passed today it is not going to influence the billionaire on the west coast who would build a multimillion dollar house and increase the land value on the west coast. There will be no change for the owner of that land but it will automatically increase the value of the land and the land taxes of the surrounding properties.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You have to understand that the site value is not affected by this amendment, it is the improved value, so stop mixing up the issues.

I am saying that what we have been fighting for, for nine years have not been corrected with this amendment today. I must admit that the Prime Minister has tried his best to ease the impact but he has not gone far enough, and I will be the first to tell him so. What he is setting about to do, he has not completed because if he is trying to protect the local landowners from the effect of the large prices being paid by the foreign owners, this amendment will not cushion the burden for those land owners. For example, the old lady who owns a piece of land down Gibbs next to the \$40 million house will not see a reduction in her bill.

Sir, I am telling him if that is what he wanted to do, he must not listen to the other Honourable Members on his side because all they are doing is misleading him, like the Minister of Tourism who is always misleading him about his figures and projections which make him do his budgets wrong.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. This Bill deals with relieving from taxation persons whose property value is \$125 000 or less. If that chattel house the lady is living in has an improved value of \$125 000, she will pay no taxes even if the person next to her has a \$40 million residence. It is this kind of reckless behaviour that is contributing to the disrespect that people have in public life for persons who are representatives because it is not even based on a scintilla of fact. The Honourable Member ought to at least satisfy himself that he can speak the truth before getting up out of his seat.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not even ask you to ask the Honourable Member to withdraw that remark. If what I am saying on behalf of poor people is reckless, let it remain in the records of Parliament, and if it is not the truth, because I am telling the truth, let it remain in the records of Parliament. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Peter, after he hears what I have said, would rethink what he is saying and would recognise that he needs some help on the other side because they do not understand what they are discussing in this Parliament.
3.00 p.m.

Sir, I am accusing this Government of not understanding the difference between site value and improved value. Sir, Government owns land and property and cannot separate one from the other. Sir, what we need is an understanding of what is a site value and what is an improved value.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Honourable Member is misleading

this Honourable House and Your Honour has not ruled on the matter.

Sir, let me give the facts as to how the Honourable Member is misleading this House. Sir, in relation to site value, I gave the example and will give it again. Under the Democratic Labour Party's Government, property worth \$100 000 without anything on it, in which case the Honourable Member is speaking about site value, a person would have paid \$950 in taxes. Under this new arrangement that was introduced last year, that person will now pay \$600 in taxes, a saving of more than one-third of taxes payable under a Democratic Labour Party's Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not let the Honourable Member confuse people as to what is site value and what is improved value. One is where it is the value of the site without any dwelling. The improved value, introduced in 1975 as a new measurement by a Democratic Labour Party's Government, takes into account the value of the site, plus the dwelling that is on it. What this particular measure which was announced last month seeks to do, is to relieve the burden from residential land and homeowners in respect of the improved value but we have already addressed the reduction in the rates for site value by as much as one-third.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy knows that. He is not a new Honourable Member like other Honourable Members in this Chamber.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, today we are dealing with the Amendment to the Land Tax Bill, Cap. 78, and this is what I am addressing. I am making the point that this Amendment will affect changes to the improved value and not to the site value and nobody can challenge me on that.

Sir, I would like the Honourable Member to get up and say that I am lying on this particular point.

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, clearly repetition is required for the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and clearly, the Honourable Member has not read the Amendment that is before the Chamber.

Sir, earlier I have spoken and have said that the Amendment was limited to the rebate for pensioners and hotels but that I was casting the debate in the context of the recent decision that was made last month. Therefore, this Amendment does not even relate to the September announcement that exempts \$125 000 in property value and, therefore, the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber again.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, if the Honourable Member that has just sat would look at the Bill and read Section 2, then the Honourable Member would not get up and try to rebut what I am saying.

Sir, I am saying that the agriculturalists in Barbados and the Minister of Agriculture should join me in this debate. Last week I praised him because he said some things about agriculture that sounded good to me. If the Honourable Member is serious about agriculture, then he needs to put his voice to this debate because he too would need a reduction in cost for agricultural land, which would reduce the impact on agriculture.

Sir, I have already said in this House that the problem is not the improved value but one of site value, plus improved value.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Sir. In 1973, the Democratic Labour Party presided over a site value rate of 1.25 per cent. In 1992-1993, the rate charged for site value was 0.95 per cent. The rate now being charged as a result of the recent announcement is 0.6 per cent. The one-third reduction, to which I have just spoken, is reflected in the difference between the 0.95 per cent that was then charged and the 0.6 per cent on site value.

In respect of improved value, the reality is that the first \$125 000 is now tax exempted and between \$125 000 and \$350 000, it is now 0.1 per cent, so that there has always been a differential between site and improved value. The fundamental point is that we have reduced both the rate for the site value, as well as the rate for the improved value and, therefore, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has no point and is misleading this House.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member has just stated that the rate of taxes were reduced by one-third but what the Honourable Member did not tell the House is how the values have increased. When one is doing equations, one does not only look at one component but one must look at it in its totality.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the impact on the landowners of Barbados who only have land without property, when they receive their land tax bills is that they would not see a decline in land tax. There is the possibility that they might see an increase because of the re-evaluation of their lands but those who have properties with houses on it, would see a reduction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you know what is interesting? For a Government that brags about a house-owning class, one would have thought that Government would have understood the point being made and would have done something to encourage persons as to how to get a house,

without impacting heavily on their pockets. Instead, Government is going to murder them and tell them to go to the banks in order to get loans, so that it would reduce their taxes.

Sir, I say no. The foreigners have impacted on the site value of land in Barbados more so than the improved value. If there is land located in a particular area that does not have a house on it, I am saying that this sometimes increases its value significantly and that land could become a liability to the owner, even though land is an asset. Sir, that should not be so. I have argued consistently, I have even been misquoted by my good friend and I know he remembers well. I am saying that we need to adjust the tax on land more so than on the improved value. We need to move to a policy where you pay as you use even as it relates to land. Sir, if a person has a piece of land and he is not doing anything with it, he should not be punished.

3.10 p.m.

Sir, the IADB dictate about land in Barbados has been misread. The Ministry of Agriculture is telling Barbadians that they have misused their agricultural land. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East making the point that if you have a piece of land which is vacant that it is best to put a house on that land and it will reduce your land tax liability.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. It is only because *Hansard* is a document of record that I am getting up to counter what is obviously nonsense coming from the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. The statement which I made is that there is an incentive for persons to use land either by way of housing or for other economic purposes, that the Land Tax Act recognises that and that in an initial debate on the passage of land tax in 1973, that objective was also recognised.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am glad that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East clarified that point because we are behaving as if we have large tracks of land in Barbados, that we can do anything with that land, then move a magic wand and bring it back to an agricultural state.

Sir, we need to understand that we have a limited resource in this country and that the opportunity cost and opportunities provided for having land must be looked at in a serious way. The belief that we can put houses on agricultural land and it does not cost the country anything, is foolishness.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Some of the best mould now being sold in Barbados was fertilized in the east.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I do not take any joy in interrupting the flow of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy but I cannot sit and listen to the Honourable Member on one hand saying that if a man has a piece of land and he chooses to keep it idle that he should not be penalised and on the other hand the Honourable Member on numerous occasions in this Chamber lamented the fact that this Government has an active Land for the Landless programme which, was established a few years ago when I was Minister of Agriculture and that there is excess land but even though farmers are willing, they cannot have access to that land, yet the Honourable Member is encouraging people to keep land idle.

Sir, last year this administration in the economic presentation by the Honourable Member for St. Peter decided that in the interest of developing the Land for the Landless Project and increasing agricultural production in this country that we sought to bring private land into the programme by using fiscal reform.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East is correct in saying that incentives are being created for the use of land either in housing or for agriculture. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has a confused mind but we on This Side will not allow him to confuse us.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member is talking about the Land for the Landless programme and I want to deal with it for one minute. Bawdens, Haggatts, River and all the other estates that private sector could not manage with all the money in Barbados, nor the estates Government could not run with all its money, the Honourable Minister is now saying that I should feel justified in defending him for taking that land and giving it to poor people who do not have the capital to work the land. Sir, they did not even have the decency to plough the land before it was given to farmers even though I begged them to plough the land.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am asking the Prime Minister because it is a waste of time speaking to the other Honourable Members and it is clear to me that the Prime Minister has been misled by the front bench. I know when he reflects on this matter that he will have to resort to the back bench Members.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: If the Prime Minister wants honest advice he would have to bring the Reverend on the front bench since he has been waiting for a long time to get on the front bench.

Sir, we need to protect the masses from those people who have large sums of money. I do not want the

Honourable Member for St. Peter to be accused of creating an atmosphere for people he does not know, burdening the people he knows, creating a climate for people to own and the true owner to lose. I do not want that charge to be on his mind because I know that his heart is in the right place but he might be in the wrong location. Sir, that comment was not only made by me, that comment was also made by some gentlemen in New York.

3.20 p.m.

Sir, this evening I am asking the Prime Minister of Barbados to play the role of a judge in this matter and I want him to forget that he is the Head of the Barbados Labour Party and the Prime Minister of Barbados. Sir, from his younger days, the Honourable Member always held the masses close to his heart and I want him to continue in that vein. I want him to take the advice given by the Opposition this evening and reconsider this matter because he does not want to impact negatively on the masses of Barbados.

I thank you.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the end of the day after the talk coming from the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the reality is, when people see their land tax bills they would make their judgement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a house or a home is, perhaps, for most people in Barbados, indeed, it may well be universal, the largest single investment that one would make in a lifetime. Barbadians are very property-conscious. Barbadians are working and yearning towards the day when they would have their own property and Barbadians are very 'house-proud' for the most part. As the Deputy Prime Minister pointed out when she introduced this Bill, this is not a one-off piece of legislation. This is part of an ongoing housing development in this country and this piece of legislation would speak to those of us who are in single dwellings, and we see them everywhere in Barbados being constructed. In recent years we are seeing multi-family dwelling houses being constructed; apartment living has come to Barbadians and we see this, not only in the public sector but in the private sector as well.

Sir, townhouses are now becoming commonplace across the social spectrum in Barbados. We are also seeing them in community developments. I was going to say housing developments but I prefer to say community developments. Sir, I despair of housing developments where I would see 40 or 50 house lots laid out and after a few years I would see 20 or 30 houses being constructed but I would not see a single tree being planted.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, you would not see any entity which you could describe as being able to help forge a community. Sir, a different situation obtains in the City of Bridgetown. Mr. Deputy Speaker, wherever you see public housing in Bridgetown, you would see an attempt to foster a community for example, Kensington Lodge and London Bourne Tower. Sir, the ground at London Bourne Tower is now being planned for recreational facilities for children and adults in that community and we have seen this growing apace in Barbados.

Sir, I notice that some people are starting to construct the wall from the back of their homes and coming forward, while some people are starting at the front and going backward. I also notice that some people are even remodeling their homes making them into split-level homes.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Sir, the Government has, over time, been consistently making all kinds of concessions available to homeowners and prospective homeowners. The Deputy Prime Minister has spoken about all kinds of tax relief. The most recent tax relief had to do with making homes more hurricane resistant. Sir, water conservation has become an important factor in home building and Barbadians are now being encouraged to conserve water. We allow water to be wasted by running off our roofs instead of capturing it and using it for household purposes.

In all of this, the Government has been bringing on a consistent basic relief to encourage home enhancement, encourage renewal, where there has been dereliction, and encourage first-home ownership.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a small thing for the average homeowner in Barbados and for those who are saving and preparing themselves on becoming homeowners., This is welcomed. I cannot imagine why any Honourable Member in this Honourable Chamber would have reservations about it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is going to represent a saving and it is money which I hope that people would put to good use. Those who are planning on becoming homeowners do not have to think whether they would qualify for a mortgage because Government has made it easier for persons in the lower income category to qualify for mortgages.

Sir, in the case of existing homeowners, I would like to believe that this saving would go to good environmental use. I have stressed that there are a number of properties that are covered in bush as the result of recent rains and properties which need to be well kept. Properties are like human beings

and if you do not look after them on a regular basis, they would become derelict. Barbadians have to get back to good old-fashioned habits of cleaning their front yards and their backyards as well. I have asked in this Honourable Chamber on diverse locations in the past, and I ask again today, that there should be one day in the year which would become an annual clean-up day. It is something that happens in other communities across the world. Sir, in advance of the hurricane season, everybody in Barbados would get out there and clean up their properties.

3.30 p.m.

It would not be a bad thing because there is a generation in Barbados today who do not know what it is to have dirty hands. They do not know what it is to clean dirt and they do not have any proper appreciation of the cleanliness which is akin to Godliness that an older generation was brought up to understand.

People must not be afraid to do their own debushing or to do minor repairs to their own property and this is partly what this legislation is about, the continued enhancing, uplifting and upgrading of properties which have to go on from year to year, if the value of your property is going to be upheld.

I see this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, also in terms of the generation and creation of jobs. There are so many, and I see it around me every day, who are claiming that they want jobs, until job opportunities are put before them and then you hear what does not suit them, what they are not prepared to do and what is beneath their dignity to do and so on. But there are people in Barbados crying out today that they would like the things done that I am talking about but cannot find anybody who is prepared to do that work, for any amount of money that they are willing to pay.

Sir, the housing development in Barbados has come to a place, where Barbadians are now prepared to spend some money on landscaping and garden maintenance. People want to have nice fences and nice lawns. Even a few people nowadays are going to the backyard gardening and that is a good thing. Sir, these are areas for job creation that will, I am sure, spin-off from the legislation which is before us.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is that this is part of ongoing social engineering that this Government has been undertaking and this is part of it at its best. I would like to suggest today, that from the inception in 1994 when this new Barbados Labour Party administration came back to Government... I think that this goes to improve quality of life.

I am not the only one who comments. People from outside of Barbados, returning Barbadians, what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy describes as foreign Barbadians who come back home, comment on the fact that there is so much which has improved, in terms of the

physical quality of life. Sir, this is something somebody is going to realise momentarily. Land tax bills are coming out already and people are going to realise this and feel the difference of it very quickly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening carefully to some of the debate now, that has started to flow from this legislation, I hope that it would not cause people to undervalue their property, or to feel that if you do not have to pay for something, then it does not have a value. I do not think that is going to happen in Barbados. I think that the opposite may well be a result of the legislation before the House and that people will now attach an even higher value to what they have. They will have more income disposable to them now to further uplift and enhance their properties.

In this respect, this Government has been leading, not only here in Barbados, but I would think across the Caribbean, in a remarkable way. We are in the process, as everyone knows now, in respect of public housing, of the Government making properties available to their tenants.

These new homeowners who are now coming into the market are proud homeowners, I certainly can speak for those in my constituency, who know even before they got that wonderful piece of paper in their hands, which told them that they are homeowners, that they could now treat this as their own property, they could dispose of it how they wish, they could paint it any colour they wish, they could put a nice garden around it and they could make an addition to it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a major step in respect of what a Government will do in terms of public housing anywhere in the world.

We live in a small community here and sometimes I think we take things for granted. Something like this is put before us and even before we have a sufficient appreciation of it, we are reaching out to the next thing. That is human nature, but do not let us take too much for granted. This process that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has been describing as the enhancement of a property-owning democracy, do not let us underestimate what statement that is making in terms of our democracy.

Our democracy is so often described as stable, in more recent years, participatory, is a democracy which is a model for others, not only in the underdeveloped world but, indeed, in some of the developing world. This little island state leads the way very often. I would want to predict, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this could be the beginning of a model for housing development, not only in Barbados but in other parts of the Caribbean, as well.

You must have a certain maturity of your democracy. You must have a certain stability in your economy. I am sure the point was made that the resulting lost of potential revenue, in respect of this adjustment that is going to be

made, is somewhere in the order of just more than \$4 million. This is not too high a price to pay for what this will mean to 18 000 homeowners straightaway, and to those potential homeowners and those who, by virtue of the Government's policy, will cease to be tenants and become homeowners in the next 18 months to two years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a large and important step. It tells us how caring and passionate a Government can be because, what we are pursuing here is a housing policy which is meant to make housing affordable to all of those who wish it.

3.40 p.m.

I put it deliberately that way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because there are many people in Barbados today who would like to masquerade as poor people who are not really poor people. These are people who are building massive houses beyond what is normally described as affordable.

For those who need that first house or for those who want at some time in the near future – people who are now starting out in the workplace or people who are perhaps now getting married and thinking of setting up a household – to have access in the next several years to affordable housing, this is good and welcome news. Therefore, I would like to commend it to the House and would like to believe that all Honourable Members would wish to give it their support.

I think too that we have to get away from some of the hypocrisy that surrounds the quality of some housing in Barbados. There is a myth – I heard it being repeated in here today – that if somebody builds a multimillion dollar house next to yours, the value of your house will automatically multiply. That is not necessarily so, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People have to have an understanding of how housing development works. If you have a new development and you have several lots and over a fairly short period of time you are developing land in that development, there is a certain valuation that all of the houses which were built during a relatively short period of time in that development will attract.

In a place like Barbados – and this is part of the stability of our democracy – where you still have quite substantial houses sitting cheek by jowl to quite small and modest houses and happily so, and you see it all over Barbados, I have never heard of anything to make me believe that it has in any way contributed to negative behaviour in our communities.

I have spoken about the way in which you will find, particularly in the City of Bridgetown, next to quite depressed housing, new and elaborate construction going on, which is not a good thing. I have done my best and will continue to do so to make sure that kind of divide does not come to a place in Barbados, so that what we see in other parts of the Caribbean would happen here.

Generally speaking, we live in a Barbados which after 375 years people are living in very fancy and elaborate

houses next to chattel houses and then you may have a little wood and wall house next to that. I myself have lived for years in that situation, it is how I grew up. All my life as a child growing up the whole social spectrum of Barbados was to be found on the street where I live. I like to think that has helped to nurture me as a person because it helped me to have an understanding that there are people who live in worst housing who had to make end meets in a way that other people further down the street did not. Further down the street there were some houses with long driveways from which you could not even see up to the house, so you knew that people were living in perhaps a grander lifestyle. That is part of the social fabric of Barbados and I would not like to see it changed tremendously.

I believe that this legislation will go a little way in helping that to continue because I do not see anything yet... True, we have a few gated communities but that is because we cover the whole spectrum in Barbados and there is nothing particularly wrong with that. There is a preponderance of housing in Barbados where ordinary people live out their lives, raise their family and watch their children and grandchildren grow up, this is the Barbados we know and love. This is the Barbados we have chosen to live in. I do not think there is anyone of us in here who could not be living abroad in a developed country if we had wanted to. Some of us may have had that opportunity but we all made our choice to live in Barbados. I certainly did and I would not wish to live anywhere else.

It is pleasing and makes one proud to be a Barbadian when one looks at the quite dramatic improvement in the quality of the housing stock in this country over the past 30 or 40 years both in terms of what we have done in public housing and continue to do and now what we are seeing in the private sector. As a matter of speaking, public housing has been the leading edge in terms of multi-family living in Barbados. It is an area too where that very old-fashioned virtue of self-help is still the order of the day.

At the end of the day, as I said when I first got up, and I will say it now before I sit again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the land tax bills arrive and people see the significant difference, this is only a first step in that process, that is going to be the proof of the pudding when people arrive at their own judgement irrespective of some of the confusion which is arising in this debate. I hope that as the debate goes on, that confusion would be laid to rest.

This is a good thing that the Government has brought before the House and I hope that all Honourable Members would see fit to give their support to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am much obliged for the opportunity to have made these few comments.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the premise or the foundation of this debate has been that this initiative or policy would give rise to a property-owning democracy in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be an honour if we could have access to the most recent population census in Barbados which was done in the year 2000 because to date we are not privy to the contents of that census, therefore, we do not truly know what the population distribution is like, what the housing stock is like and all the other parameters that are revealed in a census. So it would really be an honour if three years later it is possible for us to have such information.

To suggest that this initiative is going to create a property-owning class is to deny the fact that...
3.50 p.m.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is inadvertently misleading this Honourable House. Early in 2002, the Population Census for 2000 was published. I remember the Statistical Department indicating that it was one of the shortest periods they have ever experienced for publication. It was published in two volumes. There was also a summary from the two volumes.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am extremely happy to hear that the Population Census is available. It was never brought to the Senate, I am sure, and, therefore, I have not seen a copy of it.

Sir, to benefit from this initiative, one needs to own property and the difficulty in Barbados is getting access at this stage in the history of Barbados. No one can deny that within the last 20 to 30 years, we have made substantial progress but it is a fact of life that increases in lands and property values have significantly outstripped the growth of income in Barbados. For example, in 1991, the piece of land next to Queen's College, where a good friend now happens to have a house, was valued at \$3.50 per square foot. Sir, less than a decade later, that land is worth over \$12 per square foot, an almost four-fold increase in value.

Sir, in the private sector, and certainly not in the public sector, workers have not enjoyed such an increase in salaries. In fact, we all know that because of the Incomes Protocols there has been a tremendous lid on the rate of growth of public sector workers in Barbados. Therefore, to say that this initiative is going to give rise to a property-owning democracy, is to stretch it much too far.

Sir, if one looks at the data on land tax in the Central Bank's Report for the fiscal year 1995 to now, one would see that in spite of the several adjustments in land taxes, they have increased from \$44.7 million in 1994-1995 to \$67 million in the most recent fiscal year. In fact, under the Owen Arthur's administration, in spite of the adjustments downwards in land taxes, the actual revenue derived from land taxes have increased by 45 per cent since 1994.

Sir, could one imagine what the collection of land taxes would be at this stage if this administration had not adjusted the rates downwards? Therefore, what one is talking about is a necessary policy prescription in the face of increasing land and property values, which would have made the tax liability of owners unimaginable. Therefore, to hear that this is a major piece of policy initiative that would redound to the creation of a property-owning democracy is really to stretch the matter a bit too far. As I have said, in spite of the adjustments, we have seen a substantial growth in land tax revenues.

Sir, it gets worse. In the post-1997 period, after the introduction of VAT, one would have expected land tax and income tax in particular, to show downward trends. In fact, as was the case mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy at the time, the anticipation was that VAT would have brought in excess of \$200 million more than was required, which proved to be quite true. Therefore, between 1994 to 2003, the tax take of Barbados has increased from 30 cents to almost 40 cents. That cannot be disputed because the evidence is there to show that we have, in fact, become the most highly-taxed country, certainly within the Caribbean.

Sir, out of 10 countries across the world that were surveyed, Barbados is now being regarded as the most expensive destination. This information was published in the *Financial Times* of London two weeks ago.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It has to be considered because we have to look at the cost of living in Barbados in order to appreciate why it is that it is going to be extremely difficult to pursue a property-owning democracy, in the absence of policies directed at reducing the cost of land and property. No matter what we say, it must be admitted that land and property values have certainly sky-rocketed beyond the reach of the average Barbadian.

Sir, it is a fact of life that while my mother might have worked at the Psychiatric Hospital for a number of years and has hardly raised a salary of \$1 500 per month, she was able to acquire land at Kingsland, Christ Church. It is now unbelievable that with a much higher income, the ability to acquire land and property in such areas has now almost gone out of the reaches of the average Barbadian. It is a fact of life and cannot be disputed that it has now become extremely difficult to own land and property across Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, what I am saying is that it is anticipated that certain people in certain income categories should be able to acquire land and property.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, at the recent meeting in Cancun, Mexico, the Foreign Minister has indicated that what has happened is perhaps a blessing in disguise for developing countries, that is, the question as to how we negotiate agriculture within the context of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Sir, while we are pursuing these property tax and land tax regimes, we should have understood the importance of land use policy as part of the process of negotiating at the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Agriculture cannot be separated from an overall land use policy, therefore, it would have been premature of this administration to have adjusted the property transfer tax in 1999 without consultation on the question of agriculture and land use in the overall framework within the context of Barbados. We all know that the adjustment to the property transfer tax would have been to the benefit of foreign purchasers. This was one of the reasons we saw a substantial increase in foreign purchases of land especially on the west coast of Barbados. 4.00 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: There is nothing wrong with it but since you cannot draw an imaginary line, it impacted across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The evidence that exists show that there is no real increase in the percentages of land owned by foreigners in Barbados. It shows that some parcels of land have been transferred among the class of foreigners but there is no increase in the overall percentage of properties owned by foreigners in Barbados.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, it does not matter even if the percentage of foreigners owning land has not changed, the fact that there has been transfer between foreigners of land on the west coast, the transfer has occurred at very high rates and high land values and that is what is important. It does not matter whether the foreigners own 50 per cent of the land in Barbados. If they only owned 10 per cent, they were able to transfer land at very high values and since they could be no imaginary line placed on the west coast, it had an impact across the entire length and breadth of Barbados.

Sir, anyone who wants to deny it can look at Paradise Beach Hotel as the example. This property was bought because Sandals Hotel wanted access to *La Toc* but has improved substantially in value without a nail or a bag of cement being put into the property. The same thing happened with Elegant Hotel Group. They saw that land values had increased so dramatically as to make their hotel properties

useless as properties in tourism and sold them as real estate. Sir, the owner said he would not leave Barbados, that he loved Barbados but within one year he sold Tamarind Cove Hotel as well as the other properties.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I am speaking to the impact of policy on land values. I am further saying that the Government could have considered not to immediately adjust the property transfer tax at that stage by looking at the overall land use policy of the Government. Now, what has taken place at Cancun in terms of agriculture and the inability of the developed countries to get what they wish does not surprise me because I am on record as saying that globalisation is an experiment that has to fail. We cannot prevent it. Sir, if you have a situation in which countries come together to negotiate, who themselves set the rules for negotiation, those negotiations will never be resolved. This is the difficulty with WTO because a wide range of countries decide to remove barriers to make a level playing field but yet the rules of negotiations are determined by the same group of countries.

I have no difficulty in understanding why any Government would wish to relieve taxation because there is a need to do it especially after 1997 when VAT was introduced. Sir, there is a need to reduce income tax and land and property taxes. There must be a degree of caution because of the pending liberalisation but that cannot be the basis for preventing Government from understanding that if there is a true desire to have a property owning democracy that you first need to start with the ability to acquire a property. Simply to give relief to people who already own properties will not create that democracy. It has to do with the overall cost of land, the overall cost of constructing buildings and houses which must be addressed within the context of creating what we are calling a property-owning democracy, nobody can dispute that.

I have said at the beginning that if you look at the land taxes collected by Government that in spite of the so-called reductions that we have experienced in the rate, the base of tax has increased so dramatically that the revenue collection has increased in spite of the reduced rates. This has to do with the improving values of properties across the length and breadth of Barbados.

I have no difficulty because contrary to what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said the proposal of the Democratic Labour Party is not that convoluted. We said that rather than every year adjusting the rate from 0.6 per cent of one per cent of the improved value to 0.2 per cent of one per cent of the improved value, we said we would look at the improved value and reduce the actual base from 100 per cent systematically down to 65 per cent.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It is too easy to refer to little Clyde Mascoll or somebody else as an academic professor with something as simple as what we were attempting to do and when something stated in the Manifesto is now being challenged as an academic approach when we are seeking to reduce the confusion surrounding the nature of the land and property tax by adjusting the base and not the rate because the rate multiplied by the base gives the revenue you are seeking. Over the years there has been adjustments on the rates but we are saying that the base should be adjusted. In our Manifesto we are saying that there will continue to be increases in the values of land and property in Barbados but let us adjust over time the actual percentage base of that improved value from 100 per cent down and do not trouble the rate. Then, because the base increases in value, you can determine more systematically what the reduction in that base should be to offset the improved value.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It is very easy to say that the Opposition does not speak when we have been in the forefront of identifying the issues at the Urban Development Commission, the tree cutting incident where thousands of dollars were paid for one tree to be cut down, identify the \$60 000 loan where not a bag of cement or a nail was bought.
4.10 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: ... We were on record as saying that the appointment Sir, the appointment of Stetson Babb as a Vice President of Marketing at the Barbados Tourism Authority (BTA) was inappropriate because marketing is not customer service. Therefore, to return to the island and hear that Stetson Babb has been asked to resign does not surprise me.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Mr. Stetson Babb was never hired as any Manager or Vice President of Marketing, neither was he asked to resign.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is peripheral to this debate.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, I honestly thought that Stetson Babb was hired as a marketing expert at the Barbados Tourism Authority.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you get back to the subject matter.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, of course I will do so.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is quite evident that there is need to pursue a policy of land tax and property tax reduction in Barbados. In fact, it is on record that the other side is of the belief that there should be the abolition of land taxes. Sir, this is a belief that was held by the other side and I feel deep in my heart that it could be considered. The only reason that I have against abolishing land and property tax is this. When you impose a land tax, you can rest assured that the incidence falls on the owner but when you impose a corporate tax, you can rest assured that the incidence falls on the consumers.

Sir, land and property tax is the one tax in which you are sure that the person on whom you are imposing the burden bears the burden and that is the beauty of land and property taxes. There is no other significant tax where that happens.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, land and property taxes would have in them a special principle of fairness and equity knowing that the imposition of it lands perfectly on the individual on whom it is intended. Sir, this has implications because it means that you can target millionaires directly.

Over the last five years in Barbados, large properties benefitted substantially from the reduction in land and property tax rates in Barbados. I have done a calculation and I would expect that it cannot be disputed that large property owners have benefitted substantially from the reduction in land and property taxes. This measure has a special component. In relieving the first \$125 000, it gives a benefit to the low property value which is also given to high property values, which makes it fairer than if you imposed an adjusted rate that gives more relief to those in the higher categories. Sir, the use of this exemption benefits not only low property values but high property values as well. Therefore, to some extent it is not regressive. It is fair to the extent that individuals within the lower property values will get the same as those properties with high property values.

Sir, this means that it is consistent with a Government that prides itself in having a socialist agenda or a country that believes in the principles of philosophies of social democracy. There is nothing wrong in using a tax system to bring about that kind of equity. It can be very justifiable in what we are moving towards across the region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, have we stopped to consider whether these measures are in harmony with measures around CARICOM? Last year we were told that to give consideration to income tax relief requires us to consider whether we are coordinating and harmonising our systems *vis-à-vis*, the other countries within the Caribbean.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: We had a dispute in Barbados as to whether or not it should be site value versus improved value, so there is a need for consistency. Sir, it is not going to be easy to achieve it but suffice it to say that we are beginning to recognise that we need to give relief.

Sir, I was told by the gentleman who preceded me in representing the constituency of St. Michael North West that you do not have to speak long in a debate to be effective and it has guided me ever since then. I have recognised that what we have to do is to make sure that every time we embark on a policy, we can justify that policy. Sir, not only in the context of what we are doing locally because we have gone beyond the shores of Barbados. We have to embrace CARICOM, not just a few within CARICOM but we have to make sure that we are proceeding apace.

We have to understand that we are only going to be recognised across the world as a bloc. Therefore, the least fortunate in that bloc would still be our parameter. If we feel that we can advance more quickly than the others and the international world is going to recognise us and those who have advanced quickly, then we are making an error.

In fact, it is CARICOM as a bloc that will be recognised and that is where the world is moving. It is not about any individual state within CARICOM. It has to be what is CARICOM doing and how quickly is CARICOM moving.

Sir, I cannot fault this amendment if it benefits, according to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, 18 000 individuals. I do not know if it is true. I have no reason to doubt whether or not it is true. If it does benefit so many people, perhaps, it would be considered a good policy. I cannot fault it politically.

I am saying that it cannot be used as an indicator or the base upon which we are going to build a property-owning democracy. It cannot be used as that because it presumes the ownership of a property, when in fact a property-owning democracy must understand that we need to pave the way for others to own properties in Barbados and not simply to give relief, apparently, to those who already own properties.

Sir, my major concern is that we are pursuing a property-owning democracy and believing that an adjustment to land and property tax will pave the way towards that process.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give support to the measure before the Honourable House and to speak to the issue of Barbados as a property-owning democracy and what the amendment to this piece of legislation means for Barbados. I want, Sir, also to frame it in the context of some of the things that have been done by the Government so that one can see the full policy in context. 4.20 p.m.

Sir, before I do so, I must make just a brief comment on the remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. Sir, as he spoke, I could not help but go back to my university days. They gave us in our first year, some classes in reasoning and logic and the formulations went something like this:

Dogs have four legs. A chair has four legs, therefore, a chair must be a dog.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was vividly reminded of that because of remarks of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who said that land tax revenues have increased and therefore, follow with a logic, arising out of that. I would like, Sir, to make the point that land tax revenues increased in Barbados, because since this Government came to office, there has been a building boom and Barbados has become a greater property-owning democracy. Therefore to make that determination about increased land tax revenues, you cannot only look at land tax rates in isolation because you would come to the illogical conclusion that a dog is a chair or a chair is a dog.

You have, Sir, if one is to use deductive reasoning in relation to land tax revenues to look at all the constituent elements that would impact on land tax revenues. I want, therefore, to turn to the mortgage market because the mortgage market gives a clear indication of the property-base in Barbados from which land tax revenues are being drawn. When the Honourable Member takes a period of trend, and speaks to land tax revenues increasing over that time, because of an increased tax base, what I want to therefore point to is what has happened in the mortgage market and therefore what really is the cause of an increase in land tax revenues.

In 1993, the mortgage market stood at \$17.195 million. In 1998, the mortgage market moved to \$32.936 million. By 2001, the mortgage market moved to \$105.764 million, and in 2002, the mortgage market moved to \$122.814 million. Sir, this is why land tax revenues increased because of the ownership-base in Barbados on property, more people were buying and more people were getting mortgages. The

ownership-base for land and property in Barbados increased and land tax revenues also increased, as a result. A chair is not a dog and a dog is not a chair, even though they both have four legs.

Sir, I am amazed at the Opposition. There are times in my view when, as an Opposition, you have to say, yes, people will benefit from this, but my Party would have done it differently. We are criticised perpetually by the Opposition for doing nothing to help the masses, yet, whenever we take a measure that helps poor black people in Barbados, they find a reason to quarrel about it and they say that they are supporting it, but...and then they start to abuse.

Sir, the reality is that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, and I corrected her when I spoke very early this morning, said that 18 000 people in Barbados would be affected. Now, that is not an insubstantial number, that is a large group of people but it is not even 18 000 households. The reality is that with the sale of the terrace units and the implementation of this policy a further 4 100 potential households will also be taken off the tax role.

Sir, prior to the introduction of this measure, people who lived in terrace units and purchased them would have been subjected to property tax. Even though these properties were valued at less than \$125 000, they would still have had to pay \$125 per annum to pay property taxes.

Sir, since the introduction of the measure in this Chamber today, a further 4 100 who now rent tenantry units, should they buy, will no longer have to pay land taxes in Barbados. This further helps the small, poor and disadvantaged black man. It further brings home-ownership for the lowest income group of the people in Barbados. This is significantly supported by the fact that the land in those units is being sold to those persons at \$2 50 per square foot which is the cheapest rate available in Barbados, so that people will pay no more than \$2 500 for 1 000 square feet of land.

I want to focus on this group because we speak all the time about how expensive land in Barbados has become. We do not talk about the fact that Barbados is an expensive and high cost destination. We do not talk about the fact that we have a quality of life and services that do not exist anywhere else in the Caribbean, and this is the reality. We do not talk about the fact that many countries in Latin America, with all their natural resources, would love to have what we in Barbados enjoy.

Sir, for all we criticise our educational and health care systems, the reality is that what we have in Barbados, far exceed that which many people have in the rest of the world. We should never stop criticising because we must keep

striving to be the best people and to always deliver the best services. Sir, it is no wonder that people want to come here.

Sir, land prices have increased, but what we have to look at, are what measures the Government has put in place to ensure that people at the lowest end of the market are able to afford property. The sale of the terrace units is one of them, because it means that many low income houses are sold in the region of \$100 000, \$125 000 and \$150 000 per unit.

The terrace units which are being sold to tenants, will result in people getting three-bedroom houses with a bathroom. I am not saying that the National Housing Corporation (NHC) has been the most wonderful landlord. I have been the first to admit that throughout the years, in successive administrations, let us not deny that, there have difficulties primarily because the inflows of rent have not been able to match the cost of maintenance on the unit.

Therefore, today people are asking for their units to be fixed but there are \$5 million in rent arrears. Sir, if only people would pay us, we would be able to do the repairs that they want us to do. Sir, people would be able to get a three-bedroom, one bathroom house in the Pine. Some people will get theirs for as cheap as \$1 500 or \$5 000. Where else in the world could you find this? In the upper end of the market in Bonnets which has the newest housing area in Barbados, they will pay \$60 000 or thereabouts for their units.

Sir, even to get a three-bedroom, one bathroom house on 1 000 square feet of land, in today's land market in Barbados, cannot be regarded as anything other than a steal. 4.30 p.m.

It is an excellent deal and it is an excellent buy. I am going to be writing to all parliamentarians, including those on the Opposition benches, to say whatever our political divide let us agree that persons in Barbados should not lose this opportunity to own their parcel of land.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: How you do it, how you deal with your constituents is a matter for you, but I am trying to persuade my constituents to buy, and people are anxious to buy.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It makes no sense putting them there, if you are not going to encourage them to buy.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: In addition to having cheap prices on the sale of terraced units, this administration, that the Other Side often described as pro-big business, pro-white and pro-bourgeois, introduced the 100 per cent mortgages which have greatly assisted people in being able to own property at a far younger age. People with low incomes, as long as they are working, are now able to go to certain finance institutions and get a 100 per cent mortgage and can even borrow their legal fees. That is unprecedented in Barbados. That is why the mortgage market graph is going upwards because more and more people, as financing mechanisms are put in place to allow home ownership, are taking the opportunity to own a home. This means now that you can own a home because you no longer have to secrete money under the mattress for years and years or deposit it in the bank where every time you have a crisis you have to go and withdraw some to save yourself. If you have a very small base and you are working, you can go to a finance institution and get your loan.

It is also this administration that has introduced a six per cent mortgage interest rate through the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company, the National Housing Corporation and other institutions for first-time home owners. I believe this six per cent is the lowest the market has seen for a long period.

If you have a home and you want to have a second one as an investment you might have to go to the 6.75, the seven or the eight per cent interest rate which is available in the wider market, but as long as this is the first piece of the rock that you are going to be owning or the first roof you are going to be putting over your head or that of your family or that of your new bride or that of your boyfriend – because I cannot deny that there may be women who are in a position to put a roof over their boyfriend's head and I therefore except that is now part of the social dynamics that we see in Barbados – you can benefit not only from a 100 per cent mortgage but the six per cent mortgage interest rate.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I am being told that the Honourable Member for St. Michael, I will not say which one, has had the benefit of being housed by a number of people in the past.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The reality is that if you are going after a first home you can benefit not only from the 100 per cent mortgage but from the six per cent mortgage interest rate.

One of the consequences of what we have seen but do not yet fully appreciate is that persons are going to be able

now in their lifetime, because they are coming now to home ownership at a far younger age, to own two and three properties and would not have to spend their whole life paying off for that one house, because that often happened. You came to property ownership late in your life because you had to save the 30 per cent or the 10 per cent for the deposit and all the legal fees and other expenses and then you have to spend all of your working life paying for it and often people use some of their pensions or gratuities to pay off the last part of the mortgage. That is not going to happen anymore because as long as they are working, they can come to property ownership in their 20s.

We have to recognise the impact the subsidisation of land in tenancies by the Government has had on property owners in Barbados. It is our policy that if you live in a tenancy and you are a qualified tenant and you want to buy land that whatever the landlord charges you, you as the purchaser will pay only \$2.50 per square foot and the Government will pay the difference between the \$2.50 and what is charged by the property owner. This has resulted in land in urban Barbados and rural Barbados as well being far more affordable to the average Barbadian, maids and snow-cone vendors. I would not say room attendants at hotels because even though their basic salary may not be high, they are able to get credit points and therefore they do not do badly. There is a base of persons whose perception was that they would have to rent all the days of their life but who by these mechanisms the opportunity has been created for them to own property of good quality and good value.

Under the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company, in order to assist particularly first time homeowners Government raised the ceiling on the amount of money people can borrow from the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company. Again we are talking about first-time homeowners. I think people can borrow up to \$300 000 now from the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company. The sum was lower before but it was raised because some first-time homeowners have aspirations to own palatial homes, and we know what the construction cost in today's market is. Therefore, Government felt that a realistic level needed to be put on the amount of money that these people could borrow from the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company particularly for a first home without forcing them to go on the open mortgage market where they would not, except at CLICO, be able to get the 100 per cent mortgage or a six per cent mortgage interest rate. So the ceiling for the amount that could be borrowed was increased as well as the income levels for families or individuals or couples going to borrow from the market.

This has ensured that property ownership falls within the reach of the average person, the civil servant, the new couple and the person who is becoming a young professional. Those of us who work in what is regarded as

the traditional professions would know that unless you had wonderful connections when you first went into practice, you do not make substantial amounts of money, you would have needed this kind of assistance and these kinds of support mechanisms if you were to be able to own property in Barbados. When I came to law practice in 1987, no such mechanisms existed but at this time young professionals can benefit from it.

Sir, I think I should not go on unless I make the point that this combination of policies will transform the housing stock in Barbados. This means that there will be liquidity in the market and people can upgrade the houses they have as well as build new structures. People have improved their homes from wood to wall, built on new bedrooms and gone upstairs. People are proud of what they are able to do and they are boasting about the improvements they are making in their homes. Only last week I met with a constituent who told me that her mother was redeveloping their home. They bought a house from Government some years ago and now that the mother has got a promotion at work and they have access to more capital in the house, they are substantially improving the property. She is very proud of this change in the circumstances of her family and what the transformation of this house means to her. It was fascinating to hear her speak. If we want to be honest that is part of what we are here to do. Whatever our divide is we really want to see people who look like you and me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, owning property, having access to homes, being able to transform them and styling when they are going in or coming out of the house.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to see everyone owning their property and feeling proud of their accomplishment.

Sir, it is no small thing that part of our post-slavery experience is moving us towards the fact where we are becoming a property-owning democracy and, therefore, as politicians on Both Sides of the political divide, the next step we have to take is to ensure that there is a growth in the black entrepreneurial class in Barbados because owning a piece of the rock is a wonderful thing. I think this administration has already put measures in place to ensure that happens.

Sir, I want to go back to the question of the sale of the terrace units and to make the point that I have seen on television and in the newspapers, stories that give the impression that the town hall meetings the National Housing Corporation has had relative to the sale of the terrace units, have been acerbic, acrimonious, vicious and difficult.

Sir, it has not been like that at all. The Press has sensationalised it in terms of a news story but the reality is that there are persons who, for many years, have had issues relating to maintenance with the National Housing Corporation. They have interfaced with the National Housing Corporation at these town hall meetings and have vented their frustration about not being able to get any repairs done to their units. Therefore, when a town hall meeting is being held and the General Manager or Deputy General Manager is present, because these persons might have called them on numerous occasions and have not been able to reach them, they would now use this opportunity to vent their concerns on these persons. In that context, one has to understand this outpouring of emotion.

Sir, one member of the Press even noted in a story, which was entirely speculative but had no news value, that the National Housing Corporation might have to rethink its policy. Indeed, there is no need. After persons have vented their frustration, they came to us and said that they are still interested in purchasing their units.

Sir, if one buys a reconditioned car for \$35 000, given the rate of depreciation that the insurance company would put on it in four years' time, it would be valued in the range of \$14 000.

Sir, I am using figures given by a former Honourable Member for St. Philip, Mr. Warrick Franklyn, who spoke at one of the town hall meetings. He said it was a good deal. He made the point that property value in Barbados has increased between 5 per cent and 8 per cent per annum over the last 15 years.

He therefore made the point to tenants that if they were to buy the units at that price, they could not lose because, in the beginning, they would have gotten them for less than the market value, and the depreciation would have been added to what the market value was at that time.

We must therefore encourage persons to understand the value of property. It is not like a car that one drives that soon becomes written-off due to an accident or something, where that person receives less compensation than what they had originally bought the car for. Property has value in the marketplace, people can pass it onto their children. It could be used as investment or as rental income value because people sometimes lease out these properties.

Therefore, what Government has done is to get an independent valuation of the properties, then a 25 per cent deduction on every unit was done. For example, a unit valued at \$100 000 meant that \$25 000 would have been deducted from that \$100 000. We then looked at those tenants who were living in the units for a long period of time

and have decided to give some 40 per cent discount on all rents that were paid up to date.

Sir, in further recognition of the fact that after one purchases a unit, one might have to do minor repairs to it, we have decided to deduct up to a maximum of \$5 000.

Sir, in the Housing Area of Haynesville, St. James, for instance, units that cost in the region of \$80 000 and \$88 000, persons would be able to purchase these units at a cost of \$20 000 and \$30 000. In the Pine Housing Area, units will go as low as \$5 000 and \$1 500. In other places, for example Bonnetts, Brittons Hill, units valued over \$100 000, will now be sold at a cost of \$60 000.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has one minute.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, added to the opportunity for ownership of property, the National Housing Corporation administered General Workers Loan Fund has also contributed substantially to the improvement of homes at the lower income level and also the construction or conversion of homes.

Sir, between 1986 and 1994, \$5.7 million was lent to 821 persons for home improvement or conversion under that scheme. Between 1995 and 2002, the General Workers Loan Scheme lent \$45 million to 3 891 persons for home improvement.

Sir, these policy initiatives tell the tale. One has only to look across rural Barbados at what the Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act was able to do by giving persons the opportunity to own land. There was then the improvement, upgrading and redefinition of villages and communities.

Sir, I have no doubt that this initiative before Parliament today would tremendously help a large number of people in Barbados, by my estimation 22 000 and not 18 000, including the terrace units, and that it would substantially improve our housing stock and the quality of life. Sir, at the end of the day, a dog is a dog and a chair is a chair but a dog is not a chair. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West would do well to improve his logic.
4.50 p.m.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to bring this debate to an end and to thank all Honourable Members who have taken the time to speak in the debate so far, in particular Honourable Members on This Side who have sought to give greater clarity to the purpose of the legislation before us and also the additional Order

which will remove the 18 000 property owners from the land tax role. Suffice it to say, I noted with care the comments of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and while there is no gainsaying that increase in valuations will necessitate a reduction in rates, there is also no gainsaying that for the first time ever 18 000 property owners will not pay land tax in Barbados. This has nothing to do with increased valuation but it has to do with removing 18 000 property owners whose property value is below \$125 000 from the land tax roll.

I can empathize with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition because the precept they advanced in their Manifesto is one that still did not contemplate the removal of persons from the land tax roll and therein lies the distinguishing difference between this Government and the Opposition. Sir, we started from the premise that we believe there is a class of property valued at \$125 000 and under, that should be removed from the land tax roll and equally, persons who are still paying taxes should not pay on the first \$125 000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I only want to say that I trust that the limit as was expressed in their Manifesto will not stop them from supporting this initiative because it is the first time that people are being removed in these large numbers from paying land taxes since the settlement of modern Barbados because land taxes have always been a feature of the collection of revenue by the state in this country. Sir, we are not reducing the rate but we have made exempt from the payment of land taxes, property valued \$125 000 and under for the first time since modern settlement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to endorse the comments of the Honourable Member for the City who said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating and that when people with properties under \$125 000 receive their land tax bill and realise they do not have to pay one cent or go to the Land Tax Department, they will understand what this Government has done.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, for those whose properties are worth \$250 000, who in 1993 were paying more than \$1 000, they will now pay less than \$125.00 in taxes which is less than the cost of one pair of Nike shoes.

The other point that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made to support his claim was that the growth in land tax revenue over the last seven years has been about 45 per cent. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it stands to reason that if you have a larger percentage of commercial properties constituting your land tax base, where the rate for commercial properties is higher than the rate for residential

properties and where the reductions on commercial properties have been less than those for residential properties, you are going to yield a larger percentage of money from the aspect of commercial properties than from the residential base.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear that this Government's programme for reform has been primarily targeted on residential homeowners and that we have by extension extended the benefits last year that were initially put in place for agriculture in 1981 by the late Prime Minister Tom Adams. The first thing we sought to do in 1994 and subsequent to that as well was to give a level of relief to hotel and tourism properties because of the critical importance to the economy in terms of being a major foreign exchange earning centre.

The fact that the yield has gone up, does not mean that we are collecting more from residential homeowners because of an increase in valuation but the mix has changed and it also reflects the fact that a higher number of people are paying land taxes for the first time in this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, anyone who has been trained as an economist would understand such a simple point and I believe that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would surely understand the point.

Sir, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition also made the point that it was difficult to accept that this was one of the major planks of Government's strategy to the establishment of a property-owning democracy. I want to divert a bit and relate a story about something that happened when I first came to public life. There was a man of great repute and fame, in the name of Cecil Workman also known as 'Swine'. He was the son of the legendary Gwen Workman, whose shop in Nelson Street has fed many a person for years with meat of that same name. Sir, Cecil Workman used to live in Beckles Hill and was a beneficiary of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act because he lived on one of the plantations listed in the Act. When he got the notice that he was entitled to purchase his property he told the Prime Minister, a number of other persons and myself who used to be around the Opposition office in 1992 that he would not buy the land because he would have to start paying taxes. He was making the point that his perception of the acquisition of property was that it would render him liable to taxation in circumstances where his overall cash flow would be affected.

Sir, I made this point in all seriousness because while others may understand the logic that they would have a capital asset, his basic logic was that he would have to buy the property as well as pay taxes to the Government every year.

Sir, there is still something that I want to say to those people who feel that they prefer to view their lifetime in the

short finite period that it is and who are not necessarily interested in owning a long-term asset but who see it only in terms of cash flow. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it is a perspective that you cannot dismiss because it is a real perspective on the part of many Barbadians.
5.00 p.m.

Sir, for the first time people can contemplate the ownership of property in this country and their major stake in this country, without having to pay taxes if they own property that is worth less than \$125 000.

Sir, I do not think that we understand the revolutionary nature of policies that we have implemented in post-Independence in this country. Sir, name one other country that has seen a redistribution of land, such that people who could not even think of owning land could buy land at ten cents a square foot in any part of the Caribbean. Today, Brazil, as large a country as it is, is still battling with how it is going to tighten the land of ex-slaves. Little Barbados, from as far back as twenty years ago, made a determination that affected in excess of 20 000 people.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, 1965 spoke to the security of tenure; 1981 spoke to the transfer of land at a subsidised rate, and, fortunately, 1997 spoke to the transfer of land to urban tenants at \$2.50 per square foot.

I am saying that those who reflect on the policy developments in this country dispassionately, would be forced to comment that there has been a greater revolution in the distribution of land, the ownership of property in Barbados, than has taken place in a country that practise a form of political ideology that espoused that in a more forceful way than we have across the political divide in this country.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I do not think we understand the revolutionary nature of the policies that we have implemented in post-Independence in Barbados. These policies have been achieved without the shedding of blood.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the nature of what we have done, as the Honourable Members of St. James South and the City of Bridgetown spoke to, is to be able to put other policies on the table that treat to the legitimate issue, expressed by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, as to

how do people come into contact with owning land in the first place.

Sir, we have the Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act and land is now sold at \$2.50 per square foot and the 100 per cent mortgages. All of us in this Honourable House know that people may have the ability to service a mortgage but they may not have that small down payment to get them started.

Furthermore, the Government also took a conscious decision that we would subsidise the provision of mortgages to them by ensuring that while other people would have to access mortgages, at that time the rate on mortgages was 8 ½ and 9 per cent and which is now 7 ½ and 8 per cent, that they could get mortgages at 6 per cent in this country. Sir, paying \$600 a year as opposed to \$800 or \$900 a year, a saving of \$200 multiply by twenty years, a savings of \$4 000.

Sir, I know that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition accepts that because they put forward policies in their Manifesto that are built upon that principle. So, there is a philosophy that does not divide this Honourable House. We are grateful that Barbados produced citizens who accept that there can be no philosophical divide on the upliftment of people from the status of poverty or marginalisation in this society to ownership of property.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say to you in all humility, that we recognise this would be the major investment for most people but we know that at the turn of the 21st century, there is a responsibility to diversify the nature of property held by our citizens. I believe that there is no philosophical divide on that point as well.

Sir, to that extent, we are, indeed, blessed as a country that we can move forward on these basic precepts, at a time when countries like Brazil cannot reach unanimity across the political divide on how to treat the most vulnerable in the society and to bring them from the fringes of exile into the bosom of property ownership.

I also want to say to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, who spoke to the issue of harmonisation, that the issue of harmonisation within CARICOM has related more to corporation tax and not to the issue of land tax. In fact, Barbados is 30 years ahead of most of the CARICOM countries. Sir, credit must be given to the late Errol Barrow who was visionary in the establishment of a land tax system that related to the capital value as opposed to the annual rental value, in circumstances where that annual rental value would not have brought about an equitable burden of taxation across the country. In these circumstances, we believe that there may be ways how we improve what we have but our system is superior to that practised throughout most of the rest of the Caribbean in relation to land tax.

Sir, the Leader of the Opposition made a strong point on which there is no disagreement. He said that the incidence of land tax provides the ability for one to be certain in respect of where the tax was formed and from whom it would be collected. In that judgement, we have determined that no tax shall fall upon 18 000 landowners and that they shall now be exempt from the payment of taxes.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, we agree with him. Sir, there can be no disincentives provided by this Bill and I believe that this is a fitting way for us to resume from summer recess. We have come to the public of this country and we have said to them that this is the promise that we made to them, consistent with where we have been going with the reductions in rates and the adjustments of valuations over the last nine years.

Sir, we feel that we have reached the point where we have the confidence to say that we can make this step. I hope that no Government in the future would ever recede from this position which exempts the lowest income earners, by virtue of the value of the properties they own, from the payment of land tax in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I commend this Bill to all Honourable Members for their support. Sir, while the Bill does not speak to the incidence of taxation, the Land Tax Order will. We have used the opportunity in this debate to cast the debate in the light of those announcements in relation to the relief of land tax that will come. Sir, the pensioners shall continue to benefit at 50 per cent of the property value. For example, where a pensioner would be on a \$250 000 property at this time and previously you had to pay \$125.00, that pension will now pay \$62.50.

Sir, we recognise that those who can at least be able to protect themselves, shall be those on whom the state shall cast first its net of protection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg that this Bill be read a second time.

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

The question that this Bill be read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

COMMITTEE

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the House went into Committee, Mr. R. D. MARSHALL in the Chair.
5.10 p.m.

COMMITTEE

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

Clause 1 was called and passed.

Clause 2 was called.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, in Clause 2, in subparagraph (A) the line starting

“(2B)...improved valve”... I wish to delete the word, “valve” and insert the word, “value”.

There is clearly a typographical error and I would wish to have that reflected properly.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, the truth is that the word, “valve” could remain, but if they want to change it, it could be allowed. What should really be there, Sir, are the words “improved value” and “site value”. I am proposing that it should be “improved value” and “site value”.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy has asked that the word “valve” should be deleted and replaced with “value” and “site value”.

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

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has proposed that “valve” be deleted and ‘value’ inserted.

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Clause 2, as amended, has been passed.

Clause 3 was called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, with amendments, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Land Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Act, 2003.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government Business for today’s Sitting. I beg that this House be now adjourned until Tuesday 14th October, 2003 at 10.00 a.m.

The question that the House be now adjourned until Tuesday 14th October at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
5.18 p.m.

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 1

Confirmation of the Minutes of Tuesday,
22 July, 2003.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: 2

Accounts and Statements for the months of
April and May, 2003 prepared by the
Accountant General.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: 2

1. Value Added Tax Order, 2003.
2. Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2003.
3. Value Added Tax (Refund) (The Barbados Legion of the British Commonwealth Ex-Services League) Order, 2003.
4. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Rudolph Griffith), Order, 2003.
5. Annual Report of the Barbados National Bank Inc. for the fiscal year 2002.
6. Report of the Social Investment Fund for the quarter ended March 31, 2003.
7. The Report of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the quarter ended March 31, 2003.
8. The Barbados Economic and Social Report for the year ending 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 2

1. The Annual Report for the Urban Development Commission for the year 1999-2000.
2. Annual Report and Financial Statements of the Barbados National Standards Institute for the period April 1, 2001 to March 31, 2002.

Hon R. C. EASTMOND: 2

1. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the National Insurance Fund for the year 1997.
2. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of Severance Fund for the years 1998 and 1999.
3. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Sugar Workers' Provident Fund for the year 1999.
4. Report on the Audit of the Accounts of the Unemployment Fund for the year 1999.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: 2

The Barbados Finance Company Limited
financial statements for the financial year 2002.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 2

Annual Report of the Barbados Investment
and Development Corporation for the period
January 1, 2002 to March 31, 2003.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 2

- (a) Caribbean Community (Free Entry and Movement of Skilled Nationals) Bill, 2003.
- (b) The Land Tax (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill, 2003.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: 2

Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43
and 44 were suspended for the remainder of the
Sitting.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE
THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE
CROWN OF PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE
AT SPEIGHTSTOWN IN THE PARISH OF
ST. PETER FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE
OF WIDENING THE SALT POND
DRAINAGE CHANNEL 3

Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson, 3, 22; Mr. C. A.
Mascoll, 5; Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, 6; Mr. D.
St. E. Kellman, 10; Mr. R. D. Jones, 12;

Hon. N. A. Lynch, 14; Hon. G. A. Clarke, 17;
Dr. D. C. Estwick, 19; Mr. Deputy Speaker, 21.

ORDER NO. 9 – LAND TAX (AMENDMENT)
(NO. 2) BILL, 2003 23

Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, 23, 43; Mr. D. St. E.
Kellman, 28; Hon. Miss B. A. Miller, 33; Mr. C.
A. Mascoll, 35; Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson, 39.

SUSPENSION 19

ADJOURNMENT 46

Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, 46.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

ARTHUR, Rt. Hon. O. S. (St. Peter)
CLARKE, Hon. G. A. (St. George North)
EDGHILL, His Honour J. M. (Christ Church West Central)
ESTWICK, Dr. D. C. (St. Philip West)
JONES, Mr. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, Mr. D. St. E. (St. Lucy)
LYNCH, Hon. N. A. (St Michael South)
MASCOLL, Mr. C. A. (St Michael North West)
MILLER, Hon. Miss B. A. (City of Bridgetown)
MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)
THOMPSON, Hon. Miss H. E. (St. James South)