
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, October 12, 2004

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.10 a.m. on Tuesday, October 12, 2004.

PRESENT

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

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

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

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

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER, D.A., B.C.H. (Senior
Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prayers were led by Rev. J. J. S. Atherley.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of Tuesday, October 5,
2004.

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

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

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

PAPERS

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

1. Judges (Salaries) (Amendment) Order, 2004.
2. Value Added Tax (Refund) (Simone Lorde) Order, 2004.
3. Civil Establishment (General) Orders, 2004.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF
THE GREEN PAPER ENTITLED “TOWARDS A
SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES – A NATIONAL
POLICY ON AGEING”

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Honourable Members of this Chamber, it is with a sense of deep humility that I am compelled and justified to present to this Honourable Chamber this Green Paper on Ageing which represents this Government's progressive and practical response to the issues and challenges facing our older population.
10.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to inform this Honourable Chamber of the plans being made and the programmes already implemented by this Government to negate these challenges and to exploit the opportunities that lie before our elderly population.

Mr. Speaker, this document has seen some participation from all sectors of our society, therefore, it is my deepest desire to encourage further participation and discussion before this document reaches its final stage.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding all that I have just said, this document remains designed to improve the lives of the elderly in Barbados. As such, the greatest contributors have been the experiences and the lessons learnt from our elderly people, and must remain so.

Mr. Speaker, as our population ages, we will need to have developmental policies which will respond to that

population shift and programmes that will maximize the social and economic potential of our senior citizens. This will allow us to further improve the quality of their lives and recognise their continuing contributions to the national development effort. To this end, the Barbados National Policy on Ageing will be inspired by our determination to ensure that the expanding lifespan of our elders will be enriched by a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

Sir, it is my intention not to allow our elders to be regulated to a marginal or passive role, or to become second or third class citizens of this nation, but to ensure that they are truly part of a society for all ages.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, and I know that you are aware, ageing is a natural phase of an individual's life.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thanks for the compliment, Sir.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Therefore, just as we have developed programmes for child care, youth development and our working population, we must continue to focus on appropriate actions for an increasing older population. Indeed, preparation for our aged must be conceived as a lifelong consideration.

Mr. Speaker, among other things, our National Policy on Ageing seeks to ensure that older persons are treated as an integral part of the population and consider as such within the overall socio-economic conditions prevailing in our society. It also seeks to establish and strengthen our national coordination mechanisms on ageing. It promotes large-scale public awareness and sensitization programmes on ageing and its implications.

Mr. Speaker, our National Policy on Ageing will also prepare, disseminate and periodically update a directory of public and private organisations concerned with ageing and of services and opportunities for and by the elderly. It will establish mechanisms to examine and adjust existing legislation relative to discrimination and neglect and abuse of our senior citizens. Additionally, it is to improve our established standards by strengthening enforcement protocols for care providers of the elderly, whether in homes or in community-based or residential settings.

Mr. Speaker, we will focus on inter-generational programmes and the role of the family in an ageing society like Barbados. We will also explore the creation of learning centres for older persons or what we called in the Ministry, the university of the third age, to which I will speak more of in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, this is indicative of the role that older people must play in our society. Mr. Speaker, inherent to the success of this new role, there must be the simultaneous

re-thinking of all Barbadians as we seek to embrace more and encourage more of our older persons.

Mr. Speaker, more important is that this document speaks to the institutional changes that must be made to facilitate this process. In short, we must put to rest traditional systems as we attest to remedy the defects of past approaches.

Mr. Speaker, we are firmly committed to ensuring that our elderly citizens continue to be treated as important elements in the development process and at all levels within our society.

Mr. Speaker, I will present this Paper to this Honourable Chamber in three parts. The first part of the Paper gives a brief background to the ageing situation in Barbados.

The second part of the Paper is concerned with a situational analysis of ageing in Barbados. I will certainly discuss issues of population ageing and its implications particularly with some emphasis on health and health care, financial and economic security and the physical environment.

The third part of the Paper seeks to examine the principles that should guide a national policy and make proposals for the creation of that enabling environment for older persons to ensure that they are encouraged to use their skills and to be able to live in safety with independence and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, this enabling environment encompasses economic security, legislation, the physical environment and health care including mental, social and spiritual health. To this end, I am very thankful to the Honourable Minister of Health who gave me a practical lesson in all of these areas in my conversations with him. I see that he has his face in a distorted position, but that is true.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, inter-generational and family relationships are also promoted and support is given to the creation of learning centres for our older persons. I spoke before to that university of the third age. Mr. Speaker, let me explain this phrase of the third age. This phrase of the third age originated in France and has been adopted across the world.

It is used to describe persons over the age of 50. It is also defined as the period when the older person has time for himself or herself after the job and children are gone. Usually this happens at the age of 50. I am just two years over that, Sir, so it will be occurring to me too.
10.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the word “university”, a very loose term, relates to the imparting of skill. As there are no academic requirements for membership, all of us in this Honourable Chamber qualify, and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East will certainly testify to that.

Mr. Speaker, as I said before, this Green Paper on Ageing is intended that it should receive the widest possible discussion at the national level, so that the worthwhile suggestions which are certainly sure to emerge, may be incorporated into the final document which would, in turn, form the basis of a White Paper, setting out Government’s final policy position.

The development of the national policy will, therefore, require comments from other Ministries and the early involvement of all stakeholders such as ordinary citizens, professionals, organisations, corporations, workers, workers’ organisations such as the Barbados Union of Teachers, the National Union of Public Workers, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Association of Barbados (CTUSAB), co-operatives, research agencies, educational and religious institutions, and the media.

Mr. Speaker, I will now try to examine the background that lead to this Green Paper on Ageing. Sir, imperical evidence available to us clearly indicates that Barbados has an ageing population. This certainly can be attributed in part to the advances in public health, an improvement in living conditions, as well as the declining fertility rate and an increase in longevity.

The fact that greater numbers of persons are reaching an old age is certainly a very laudable achievement. However, it is time to reflect on the implications of our achievement and to recognise that this new development requires a national policy on ageing to be developed and related programmes to be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I have already said in this and other fora that low mortality rate and increased longevity mean very little if these things cannot translate to increased morbidity and exclusion for the elderly. Sir, Government is committed to ensure this does not occur.

Mr. Speaker, even though I have frequently used the term “older people” in this Honourable Chamber to describe a wide range of dynamic persons, I am certainly not under any misguided belief that all of our elderly people are the same. In fact, I am more than cognizant of the individual difference and social diversity that exist within this group. I, therefore, wish to assure you that this Green Paper will reflect that diversity.

Mr. Speaker, the very existence of the terms “elderly” and “older people” pose some difficulty, as these terms can be interpreted to mean a category of persons who are often associated with a negative stigma of a hopeless, helpless minority.

Mr. Speaker, on both counts, this stigma is wrong and as I go through this Paper, it will become clear why it is wrong to believe such. Sir, I suppose that in both the past and now present, the word “elderly” was used to describe everyone who had reached the age of 60, with little regard to that person’s ability or capacity to function.

Sir, chronological age was the sole determinant in deciding whether or not we are old. Little regard was given to the functional age. Indeed, if this is given equal consideration and we look at how, at age 60, persons can remain functional, we would then be forced to re-examine our thinking and consequently, we would be forced to examine our policies and certainly our policies formulation. This Green Paper is the result of that re-examination.

Mr. Speaker, I will now look at some demographic figures. In 1970, Barbados had an over-65 age group population of 19 488 persons, made up of 6 880 males and 12 608 females. However, by 2000, the total number of the population rose to 32 273, made up of 13 047 males, and 19 226 females. The Government Statistical Department has projected that by 2025 more than 15 per cent of our population will be over the age of 65.

Sir, if I am assured about those statistics and look around this Honourable Chamber, it seems that all of us would be in that category and profile of persons. However, in 2000, the over-65 age population was 12 per cent of the total population. The over-60 years population was 15.58 per cent. Sir, I want to repeat that planning for the elderly can no longer be a luxury. This situation makes it a necessity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to use this occasion to remind this Honourable Chamber that population ageing on this scale is a relatively new phenomenon in Barbados. We, therefore, need to ensure that we are certainly prepared for the challenges and opportunities that it brings. Too often only the negative aspects of population ageing are portrayed, for example, the view is that every growing population of older persons will place increasing financial burdens on a diminishing pool of taxpayers, but the benefits I will discuss will by far outweigh the negatives.

Sir, population ageing has its implication for individuals, families, communities, non-governmental organisations, community based organisations, social partners, and Government. Sir, individuals need to plan urgently for their retirement. I have always heard the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown refer to the fact that Barbadians are failing to plan adequately for their retirement age.

Sir, families need to plan for the care of their elderly relatives; communities need to identify the barriers that prevent the elderly from participating fully in community life; non-governmental organisations need to review their own supporting role. The social partners and Government also need to consider new ways of thinking about ageing and retirement and, at the same time, consider the gains to be made from making Barbados truly a society for all ages.
10.40 a.m.

There are positive aspects of population ageing. Sir, the elderly is our most valuable resource. They are the repositories of tradition, culture, knowledge and skill and are the much needed stabilising influence in the life of the family. These attributes are essential in maintaining inter-generational linkages.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social Transformation is aware that seniors are a diverse group with lifestyles, income, health status and personal and social needs that can vary overnight dramatically. Therefore, to address the issues of the ageing population of Barbados, I have established a gender-sensitive committee to formulate this policy of ageing.

Mr. Speaker, the policy identifies and makes proposals for Government, the Social Partners and the community to meet the needs of Barbadians as they age, making Barbados a society for all ages.

The document examines the policy impact of ageing in particular areas, for example, employment, appropriate housing, safety, protection and rescue as well as health and quality care.

Sir, the National Policy on Ageing acknowledges the Caribbean Charter on Health and Ageing of 1998 and the Draft National Policy on Health and Ageing in Barbados which was prepared by the Ministry of Health, as well as the Report of the National Consultation of Health and Ageing in Barbados.

It also recognises the work undertaken by the Barbados Association of Retired Persons (BARP) and the contribution of the National Committee established in Barbados in 1999 to plan activities for the International Year of Older Persons presently chaired by Dame Patricia Symmonds.

This Committee organised a national consultation on ageing and in 2000 produced a comprehensive survey entitled “Supportive Environments for Older Persons in Barbados” which I will make a document of this Honourable Chamber. I believe the contents of this document will prove a precious commodity for Barbadians in future.

Mr. Speaker, the international year of older persons helped to develop an awareness of the need for a national policy on ageing which seeks to identify the roles to be played by the various stakeholders. I want to explain clearly what is population ageing.

The term "population ageing" means that there are proportionately more people in the older age group within a population than in the younger age group. Our seniors variously described as elderly, senior citizens or older persons are those age 60 years and over. Population ageing in Barbados is the result of declining fertility and increasing longevity in conjunction with improved health care and standards of living.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados with an average life expectancy for males of 72 years and for females 77 years, has the highest percentage of persons age 60 years and over within the English-speaking Caribbean. However, recent information suggests that life expectancy in Barbados continues to rise.

Sir, this is certainly no small achievement. The 2000 Census gives the population of Barbados to be 268 182 persons with those 60 years and over to be 41 805. Of this amount, 17 298 or 41.3 per cent are males and 24 507 or 58.6 per cent are females. These percentages are projected to keep increasing and older women continue to outnumber older men. This gender variable is significant and has implications for both economic and financial securities as well as for health needs and provisions for women in the population.

Mr. Speaker, this Green Paper gives a gender-sensitive nature to the elderly situation. We think the term "feminisation of old age" is apt because there are more women than men.

Sir, population trends indicate that the workforce, as presently constructed, must support an increasing number of dependant persons both under and above the working age. Those in the population age group 0-19 and the group 60 years and over represent 44.6 per cent of the population. We, therefore, need to ensure that we are prepared for the challenges and opportunities created by the magnitude of changes both in the structure of the population and the workforce.

Mr. Speaker, I have already stated that our seniors are our most valuable resource. In 1995, the Statistical Department reported that of those persons who had undertaken voluntary work in the past twelve months, that 24 per cent were age 65 and over and that they have contributed 14.1 million hours of voluntary work.

Sir, if we were to pay \$1 per hour to these seniors for their contribution, the Treasury in Barbados would be \$14.1 million less. Therefore, it is a mistake to see our elders as a burden to young taxpayers.
10.50 a.m.

Our national policy should recognise and promote a continuing economic and social contribution and seek to remove the harmful stereotype of ageing which currently exists.

Sir, increased life expectancy requires that individuals take greater responsibility for their health and economic self-sufficiency, but good health in old age is a joint responsibility of individuals, communities and Government.

Similarly, Government, Social Partners and the society at large must ensure that older persons are able to participate fully in community and national life by removing any barriers that prevent them from remaining active, physically independent and economically self-efficient or which inhibit their ability to natural inter-generational activities and family relationships.

I, therefore, wish to take this opportunity to implore my friends, the Honourable Members of the Opposition, the private sector and civil society to help us create the environment that complements the policies that are outlined in this Green Paper.

Mr. Speaker, as a proportion of older persons in Barbados increases, the demand for Government and private sector programmes such as income security, health and age care programmes increases. The existing policies and programmes, for example, the compulsory retirement age, created when there was a much smaller proportion of the population over the age of 65, increased the demand. Social changes such as increased female workforce participation and changes in family structure have led to a shrinkage in the informal care sector and hence to a greater reliance on the formal care sector.

Sir, let me state categorically that the disappearance of traditional mechanisms of care that were once the hallmark of a Barbadian society is very troubling. I believe we must be our neighbour's brother and sister's keeper.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I apologise for the asides.

However, the training of older persons will require a special approach taking into account the need for a friendly and appropriate learning environment, the use of different

teaching and learning strategies for different age groups, gender differences within such groups and a slower learning pace or a longer time frame to revive old skills or to acquire new ones.

Sir, I submit that these small challenges should not prevent us from pursuing our noble good of training older people, but they should serve to galvanise our resolve to struggle and work harder.

Sir, we believe we may borrow from the special approaches and models of training for older persons that have been developed in other countries, obviously, modifying them to suit our needs and reflect Barbadian traditions, cultures and realities. Sir, with the help of tertiary institutions with expertise in adult and experimental learning such as the Barbados Workers' Union Labour College and the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies – at this point I would certainly want to use this occasion to commend Dr. Bradley Niles, tutor at the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies, who has been doing an excellent job in adult education.

Mr. Speaker, together with the resources of NGOs and CBOs we could tap a range of training programmes for older persons. Sir, employer/employee organisations could be recognised to provide on-the-job training prior to retirement, while the resources of the Small Business Association and the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity (BIMAP) could be called upon to assist with small business training for persons after retirement. This is not exhaustive, but it speaks to a collective approach that we need to pursue in order to achieve our goals.

Mr. Speaker, no old person with a good idea should be prohibited from accessing loans to start their own small business. Sir, I want to repeat what I said because I am very serious about it. Sir, no old person in this country with a good idea should be prohibited from accessing loans to start their own small business.

Sir, particular attention should be paid to computer skills. The Ministry is cognizant of this and has widened its community technology programme to include the elderly. So far a number of elderly persons have graduated from the community technology programme. In fact, persons over the age of 65 have participated in this programme and have graduated.

Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Joseph would permit me to say that his mother graduated from this programme. This is a true demonstration of closing the digital divide between the youth and the elderly members of our society. Barbados is truly becoming a society for all ages.

Mr. Speaker, the training in the technology skills programme for the elderly across Barbados provides an avenue to inter-generational activities. Sir, young persons attending the programme are paired with the older persons to familiarise themselves with the computer and the use of the Internet.

Sir, maybe, we at the Ministry will be widening the community technology programme to include a senior net programme where seniors can communicate with each other via the Internet. Hence, we could create senior net clubs across Barbados and we might be able to bridge that communication gap by using the new technology that is available to us.

Mr. Speaker, studies have shown that young people who learn with older persons have more positive and realistic attitudes about the older generation and the society because the moral fabric and the principles that guided us as youth are being imparted to our children by older persons.

Sir, the possibility of using Government's EduTech Programme to benefit older persons might also be explored and I want to set the scenario. For example, presently, parents may use the Study Pro laptops provided for their children to correspond with teachers by e-mail. By extension, Sir, parents and older persons could be offered free, on-line tutorials in computer and Internet use by teachers, or their own children.

11.00 a.m.

Similarly, the computer laboratories at the schools could be adjusted after hours, at weekends or in vacation periods to create a friendly environment in which older persons can be exposed to the technology at minimal cost and the link between the participating schools and older persons in the community would be strengthened.

Mr. Speaker, there are fears that as a result of a decline in the age of dependency ratio – ratio of those of working age compared to those of non-working age – a reduction in the tax base will occur. The rapid spread and the sicknesses associated with HIV/AIDS may certainly contribute to this problem.

Sir, with regard to the National Insurance Scheme, the amount paid out as pensions may certainly exceed the intake into the Fund, as a result of the increase in the number of persons of pensionable age. Mr. Speaker, as you know, steps have already been taken by the Government to counter those threats. However, our national policy should reflect those efforts and proposed additional steps to respond to the social changes outlined.

Mr. Speaker, I am more aware of the problems associated with pensions reaching older persons. All of us in this Honourable Chamber heard enough stories of the horrors faced by older persons in their own homes not receiving a single cent of their pension cheque. Our Ministry is fully aware of this and will be monitoring the situation very carefully, through the agency empowered to look after the elderly.

Sir, we also need to look at income security for older persons in Barbados, broadly related to the dual issues of the right to work and the right to retire. In most areas of the world, including Barbados, efforts by older persons to participate in work and economic activities, which will satisfy their need to earn essential income to contribute to the life of their community and to benefit society as a whole, are sometimes met with great difficulty.

Age discrimination in employment is also prevalent. Many older workers are unable to remain in the labour force or certainly to re-enter it, Sir, both because of existing statutory provisions and age discrimination in hiring practices.

Aside.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I feel that any person who is mentally and physically capable should not be denied access to work. This situation is likely to improve in the long term, following the revisions to the National Insurance Scheme which extended the retirement age, effective January 2003.

However, the phasing in of flexible NIS retirement pensionable ages from age 60 to age 70 will be gradual so that the age at which contributory pensions can be paid will increase from the current age of 65 to 67 by January 2018. Late retirement at age 70 with an increased pension benefit will also be possible for those who have other resources to bridge the gap between the normal retiring age of 67 and the optimal age of 70.

Mr. Speaker, the actual review of the NIS has now been received and the Government will soon announce changes, to both the Contributory and Non-contributory Pension to enable our older persons to live far better in their golden years.

Mr. Speaker, as Barbadians live longer, the issue of long-term financial resources becomes critical. National Insurance should be seen as a safety net and recent initiatives which encourage individuals to make provision to supplement their pensions with private pension plans should be expanded in our national policy.

Mr. Speaker, persons will be further encouraged to make contributions to their own pensions to enable them to receive a larger pension in their old age. Sir, many more Barbadians are now contributing to their own pensions. I must reiterate that some measure of consumer protection and pension indexation for older persons is desirable in the national policy.

Mr. Speaker, I am now dealing with issues related to health and health care in Barbados. Services are provided free of cost at the Government Health Care Institutions. Sir, I am not a doctor, but I consult with the Honourable Minister of Health, who has been giving me a formal lesson in medicine. It does not mean that I would graduate or I would ever be a doctor but, certainly, the lessons are very helpful.

Mr. Speaker, persons 65 years and older are also entitled to obtain medication listed in the Barbados National Drug Formulary free of cost at the point of service. Some prescribed drugs, however, Mr. Speaker, may not be on the Formulary and have to be purchased by persons who need them. I believe that the Honourable Minister of Health will speak to this in his contribution to this debate.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, to some extent, chronic, non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, coronary artery diseases, stroke, arthritis, cancer, diabetes and their attendant complications are more prevalent with age. Even those who escape such diseases are likely to find that the mere ageing of the body brings with it a greater number of medical needs, among them are problems associated with the eyes and the feet. An increasing ageing population, Sir, can be expected to place a greater demand on treatment for chronic diseases and other conditions. At the same time, new drugs and technologies have substantially increased the health care for older persons.

Mr. Speaker, since it is known that chronic diseases are lifestyle related, a national campaign to change lifestyle behaviour should be undertaken from the primary school level. Individuals and families should be encouraged to participate in sporting activities to keep themselves physically fit.

11.10 a.m.

Sir, to this end, our Ministry, in partnership with other ministries, the private sector and civil society, has been promoting recreational activities in the area of drama and athletics. This encouragement and support has reached a level where our seniors have the opportunity not only to look forward to participating in the national senior games, but also the regional and world senior games. Sir, there are some 13-day care activity centres across Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I believe you have been reading the newspapers and watching the television. I also believe that you are extremely informed about the exploits of our senior athletes. Sir, quite a few of our senior athletes are here in this Honourable Chamber today. Sir, I want to use this occasion to pay homage to those senior athletes who left Barbados and went all the way to Utah to go against the odds to bring 21 medals to Barbados.

Sir, that is an outstanding achievement which I would like this Honourable Chamber to recognise. I must also pay homage to the supporting management team that went with them. In addition to that, they did extremely well at the national and regional level by amassing 83 medals.

Sir, at the national level, there was a race for Ministers. That race included the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, the Leader of the Opposition, a Minister from St. Lucia and also a person in the name of Alf Padmore who won the race, but as he was not a Minister, he was subsequently disqualified and the Minister of Sports who came in second became the winner of that race. Sir, I was informed by the Prime Minister of Barbados that if the Minister of Sports did not win that race, he would have changed his position.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House in terms of content because, if my memory serves me correctly, the person the Minister spoke about that was disqualified this year placed second last year, and he was not disqualified then. Am I to believe that when you beat a Minister, you are to be disqualified, Sir?

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, in answering the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the race was a Ministers' race and the winner was not a Minister. Sir, there were five entrants and I ran fourth, not second last. To say second last would sound too bad. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition was ahead of me. Suffice it to say that This Side was represented by the official winner of the race.

Mr. Speaker, the games have certainly thrown a new light on ageing and healthy ageing in Barbados. Sir, a youngster at 42 years met me and said that he cannot wait to get to age 49. I was troubled because here was this young man at 42 who cannot wait to get to 49. His answer was that he never had a chance to represent his school at the National Stadium but he is sure that when he gets 49, he would be able to run for the first time in his life at the National Stadium.

Sir, empirical evidence clearly suggests to all of us in this Honourable Chamber, unless we are blind, that Barbadians are taking healthy ageing more seriously. The fact that so many Barbadians are on the street walking and jogging at 4.30 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. on mornings certainly speaks to this. Sir, I am saying that next year's games should be bigger and brighter. The committee that is organizing these games will sit down shortly to plan the games. Again, Sir, I want to commend that committee.

Sir, I must say that the National Assistance Board and their directives and staff are doing an excellent job in their recreational programme. In the area of drama, the senior citizens at the National Assistance Board have travelled to Trinidad and Tobago and to North America to perform. They have also performed on the local dramatic circuit with wide acclaim dealing with the issues affecting Barbados. Sir, I believe that one of the best ways of education is to use the medium of drama to pass on the message and the problems affecting the society.

Sir, those older persons, some of them in their 70s and 80s, have remarkable memories. Sir, the fact that no consideration is given for their age, because on stage you have to be a professional, their only reward is looking forward to performing and pushing the social issues to Barbadians. Sir, I would want to commend in this Honourable Chamber persons like Wayne Riley, Colleen Hunte and the Director of the National Assistance Board who worked over time some 13 years ago to start this senior citizens drama group.

Mr. Speaker, in getting back to the health care aspect, because this is all part of it, the elderly in need of care are accommodated at the Geriatric Hospital, the District Hospitals and private Nursing Homes. The Government has implemented an alternative care programme whereby it pays \$65 and \$75 per day to private senior citizens' Nursing Homes which admit persons under the Scheme. However, there are not yet enough facilities either governmental or privately-owned to provide accommodation to all of those seniors who require such services.

Mr. Speaker, while older persons can take advantage of services provided by the National Assistance Board, there are also home care, activity centres, residential care and a night shelter for the homeless. Shortly, we will be making it very public about the proposed share-the-shelter concept and the proposal of a home for the homeless in Barbados.

There is also a real need for the expansion of the existing community care services for older persons and the development of a variety of other services for them and their caregivers. Mr. Speaker, consideration will be given that such services would include day care units, laundry services for the bedridden and incontinent and some assistance to relatives as caregivers.

Sir, there is every indication that active ageing in the familiar surroundings of their own homes and community is far more effective and less costly in the long run than residential or institutional care.

Mr. Speaker, with education and continuing improvements in the standard of living in Barbados, the health status and longevity of coming generations of older persons is certainly likely to improve. In response, our National Policy on Ageing will need to build on the best practices and aspects of our unique health system with its mix of public and private sector involvement.

Mr. Speaker, two examples of this joint approach will suffice. Self-interest alone suggests the need for greater involvement by the health insurance sector in the prevention rather than treatment of chronic non-communicable diseases.

11.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, this approach would reduce Government's expenditure on the health services. The involvement of the private sector, including the private financial institutions such as community based organisations, non-governmental organisations and churches, in areas such as retirement homes for older persons, would provide an expanded market for the sector and would result in less capital outlay for Government.

Mr. Speaker, mental health concerns increase with advance in age. Depression and dementia are two of the major psychiatric illnesses of older persons. Sir, Government already provides for the treatment of such illnesses through the psychiatric clinics at each polyclinic, through the services of community psychiatric nurses, therapy at the District Hospitals, the Psychiatric Ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and at the Psychiatric Hospital itself.

Mr. Speaker, however, with all of its misconceptions and fears, the social stigma which attaches itself to mental illness, leads to failure by many older persons and their families or relatives, to approach mental illness in the same way as they would approach physical illness. Therefore, the need for more public education and public awareness is very necessary, in order to combat that stigma.

Mr. Speaker, this would help families and their relatives to realise that simple factors such as abrupt changes in surroundings, lifestyles, bereavement, financial insecurity, or fear of dependency, can affect the mental health of older persons. Sir, persons would also realise that several mental disorders in older persons can be prevented, treated or modified, by prompt diagnosis or treatment, without elaborate technology or without institutionalisation.

Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 13 Government activity day care centres, which provide social and recreational activities for older persons. Similarly, social support and stimulation are provided by a variety of individuals, community groups, church groups, non-governmental organisations and clubs.

Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to congratulate the Reverend of St. Barnabas Church for their Day Care Programme and the Chaplain and Executives of the St. David's Anglican Church for the wonderful work that is being done. There are approximately 68 senior persons registered in that programme, who have very limited space in which to operate.

Sir, this is what we are looking at and I am sure that I will speak to my comrades on the Opposite Side to make sure that we can work together to have the adequate space requirement for such persons to work.

Sir, the Soroptimist Day Care Centre at Eden Lodge is doing a wonderful job in relation to their day care programme for the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, a national policy should seek to increase the social well-being, independence and dignity of our older persons, by greater efforts to recognise their worth and contribution to the joint national effort. It should promote self-care, provide more information on available support systems and leisure activities for older persons. It should encourage relatives and care-givers to address factors such as poor nutrition, adverse family relationships and reduced mobility, all of which affect the well-being of older persons.

Mr. Speaker, I am trespassing a bit on dangerous ground, but in Barbados spirituality tends to be equated with religion. But while religion will continue to play its part, however in the context of national policy, spiritual well-being in older persons should be more broadly defined to cover all areas of their lifestyles, especially the basic human values and beliefs which guide their conduct.

In that sense, a national policy should seek through radio and television programmes, discussion groups, church, community outreach programmes, the creation of special centres for adult learning and opportunities for reflection, to foster that personal growth and development which give value and responsibility to life. It should be a sense of responsibility which seeks to guide and to nurture the next generation. It should also be a sense of self-actualisation which brings with it a cool and calm sense of serenity in one's old age.

Sir, as I reminisced when I was going to school, William Wordsworth in the poem "The Daffodils":

"I wonder lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

Sir, it reflects that kind of tranquility on the mind and that state of mind is what I would want in my old age.

Mr. Speaker, let us now look at the physical environment. Since ageing, until now, has necessarily been on the periphery of social policy, a great deal remains to be done to improve the physical environment to meet the needs of our elderly. Sir, policy decisions and programmes will be required in the areas of housing and access to public buildings, roads, public safety and transportation. The physical environment is a very crucial area and I would want to look at the housing stock in Barbados.

Sir, the housing stock in Barbados is generally inadequate to meet the needs of the elderly. With the exception of the Soroptimist Senior Citizens' Village at Eden Lodge and Government's Senior Citizens' Village, Vauxhall, Christ Church, no special purpose-built housing for the elderly has so far been provided. New financial approaches should be devised and have been encouraged by this Administration, so that the private sector, financial institutions and appropriate non-governmental organisations, are encouraged to invest in such housing.

Sir, it is my understanding that Government will help the private sector and the non-governmental organisations with the building of retirement homes for our elderly. To this end, Government has facilitated the Barbados Association for Retired Persons (BARP) with the establishment of a retirement village in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, there is no mandatory building code which requires senior citizens homes or public buildings to be constructed to accommodate the needs of the elderly. I am also aware that Government is actively working on this. Indeed, younger persons building homes, sell them, if ever built with the recognition that they too will reach an age when split levels, steep staircases, narrow doorways, passages, corridors, awkward bathrooms and kitchens, will make every day living very difficult.

A start has been made by making some newer public buildings more user-friendly to older persons by providing ramps, rails and wider doors, but there is a dire need to enforce a Barbados national building code, especially with respect to access to public buildings.

Mr. Speaker, Government and Honourable Members on the Other Side will say that the Ministry of Social Transformation is certainly inaccessible. This we know. I have already spoken about it on a number of occasions and this Ministry has made it a policy that when we move from where we are at Parry Street to Warrens, that building must be disabled-friendly, must be accessible to the elderly and must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this national discussion, it is essential that home construction and retrofitting should meet the needs for older persons.
11.30 a.m.

The road system in Barbados is old and I venture to say that it was developed to meet the needs of the sugar industry. Recent developments such as the Bridgetown Road Improvement Project have responded to the need for pavements and lights at pedestrian crossings for the safety of pedestrians.

However, the use of wheelchairs and scooters for the elderly on public roads is hazardous and independent movement by the elderly and the disabled is severely impaired, if not prohibited, on many of our roads. Sir, persons age 65 and over can also travel free of cost on the buses operated by the Transport Board on the presentation of their Identification Cards.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view, that there should be some encouragement by Government and private transport agencies to allow the elderly to travel on privately-owned public service vehicles and, in this way, the elderly would be given a choice of transportation. Sir, I also believe that the elderly in Barbados should be given a travel allowance.

Sir, when I get to the age of 65, I should have the right to travel as I choose. If I want to travel on a ZR van and listen to dub music all day, that should be my right. If I want to travel by taxi or the Transport Board bus, I should have that choice. I do not believe that a progressive Government should relegate our seniors to travel on public transportation only, nor will I be put aside by the belief that the only safe system in Barbados lies within the Government transport system.

In addition, I call on all families to play a more meaningful role in transporting their elderly relatives and friends because, in Barbados, we tend to believe that only the Government should have this responsibility.

The circumstances of older persons in rural areas may require special consideration in this national policy. For example, social services in rural areas may be fewer than those located in urban Barbados. Government should,

therefore, examine what supports may be necessary for the elderly in rural areas in order to provide an equitable service for all the elderly persons.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Social Transformation is, therefore, in the process of restructuring itself to improve the delivery of services in Barbados to all groups, and I want to assure this Chamber that no elderly person in Barbados will be left out.

Mr. Speaker, changes in the society have made the elderly more vulnerable. Improved legislation specific to their needs and the provision of legal aid, where necessary, would provide the enabling environment as well as the security needed to safeguard their rights. For example, there is a need to provide against deprivation of property, real or personnel from family, friends or care-givers; cruel treatment, abuse or neglect, improper nutrient and care and discrimination on the grounds of HIV/AIDS.

Sir, there are cases in this country where elderly persons have assets which can meet their expenses but guardians and relatives misappropriate those assets and fail to meet the financial obligations to nursing homes and abandon their charges to a Government facility. Sir, Government should be able to claim those assets to defray the cost of care for those elderly persons.

Mr. Speaker, as we plan for current changes of future development, some rationalisation of these roads and a greater degree of co-ordinator between agencies will be necessary. To this end, we envisage an arrangement that would vest responsibility for all matters relating to ageing in a single body, so structured and managed, that it can rationalise and co-ordinate existing Government services for older persons.

Mr. Speaker, ageing must definitely be seen as a central public policy issue.

I want to outline specific policy proposals emanating from all I have discussed before, outlining the vision and plans for the elderly in our community. Sir, as the Government of Barbados seeks to create a society for all ages where rights are based on the principle of equal opportunity and older persons are afforded the same opportunity, to participate fully in national life, Government recognises the need to combat discrimination based on age in the same way that it rejects discrimination based on gender, religious belief or any other form.

Mr. Speaker, the policy of the Government is philosophically grounded in the concept of active ageing. According to the World Health organisation, active ageing is the process of optimising opportunities for health and security in order to enhance the quality of life.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, it applies to both individuals and communities to allow people to realise their potential for physical, social and mental well-being throughout their entire life and to participate in society according to their needs, desires and capacities while providing them with adequate protection, security and care as deemed necessary by them.

Sir, the aim of active ageing is to extend healthy life expectancy and quality of life for all people as they age, including those who are frail, disabled and are in need of care.

Mr. Speaker, I have been associated with the elderly for a significant period of my life, and I consider myself a "young elderly person".

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, the concept of active ageing is not just an ideology. It is a reality to which most older persons must aspire and a lifestyle that derives limitless benefits.

Sir, Government, following the 1992 United Nations Proposals, recognise the rights of older persons to (1) dependence (2) dignity, (3) participation (4) security and (5) fairness. Government will include in its national policy a Charter establishing these enabling rights. I will now discuss the functions and institutional arrangements which will be needed to implement this policy.

Sir, critical to the integration of ageing into the national policy, the highest priority will be given to the creation of a Department of Elder Affairs, supported by an advisory commission. This Department will perform the following functions:

1. Co-ordinate all activities relating to ageing.
2. Provide information relevant to the elderly and promote a public education awareness programme on ageing and relating issues, particularly the removal of existing negative stereotypes.
3. Develop and strengthen communication, collaboration and planning among Government Ministries and Departments and to facilitate partnerships with CBOs and NGOs whose programmes have a major impact on the lives of the elderly in Barbados.
4. Promote training or retraining programmes to provide for older persons with economic and self-improvement skills.

5. Develop services not currently being offered, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all services and programmes relating to ageing.
6. Analyse trends and identify areas for research on ageing, commission such research and disseminate these findings.
7. Facilitate formal and ongoing training in geriatrics and gerontology.
8. Promote inter-generational dialogue and linkages which will benefit our society.

Mr. Speaker, the Advisory Commission will be comprised of representatives of Government and non-governmental organisations as we seek to foster collaboration and working arrangements with a third sector in Barbados, also the Social Partners and older persons' organisations.

The functions of this proposed commission will be to review and recommend a rationalisation of our roles and functions relating to ageing; conceptualise new approaches, including the use of new technologies, advise on strengthening communication and planning between Government Ministries, Departments, the private sector or community-based partners.

Sir, in keeping with the principles of wide public participation, the Government will seek to ensure that its Social Partners, professional and other organisations, communities, ordinary citizens and other stakeholders in Barbados participate in formulating the national policy, and in a spirit of mutual assistance also seek to support and be supported by them in implementing the agreed policy proposal.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Elder Affairs, in keeping with the Public Sector Reform Programme, will create or strengthen existing communication channels within bodies of Government as well as between Government agencies as roots of civil society, so that information sharing, collaboration and co-operation will be the key to its objectives and methods of operation.

Sir, Government will also seek to enhance effective collaboration regionally and internationally by encouraging discussion and exchange of knowledge and expertise among non-governmental organisations, churches, research institutions, professionals and national bodies concerned with the process of ageing.

The National Policy on Ageing will seek to encourage employment and eliminate discrimination against the elderly participating in the social and economic life of this country.

Sir, among other things, Government will seek to collaborate with the Social Partners in supporting the continued involvement of older persons in an economic life of the society; facilitate retired persons who are capable of and wish to continue using their skills and knowledge productively in employment; develop a wide-ranging training programme for older persons, embracing both employment and self-improvement skills and including familiarity with technological development such as the computer and encourage self-employment through the creation of micro-business and access to credit for the elderly.

In addition to this, the Ministry is developing a Micro-Business Unit for the disabled in our community in conjunction with UNDP, Urban Development Commission and other sectors of the Ministry, so that this marginalised and vulnerable sector of persons could also have access to direct financing and funding for their micro-business activities and ideas.

Mr. Speaker, Government will seek to increase the Government pensions at the same time and by the same rates as salaries in this increase for the public service; guarantee portability of pensions among employers; continue to increase and encourage individuals by tax incentives or other appropriate strategies to make private arrangements to supplement their retirement benefits.

Sir, it is clear that the focus of economic security for the elderly must be greater self-reliance and better economic preparation for their retirement years.

Government will therefore seek to facilitate and encourage retirement preparation programmes in the public and private sector. These programmes will be sponsored by employers and employees with the widest possible representation which will be put in place before my age of retirement and, indeed, possibly from the earliest of paid employment.

11.50 a.m.

Sir, the Government will seek to facilitate and encourage in Credit Unions, Banks and Insurance Companies, Retirement Savings and Investment Plans, which provide satisfactory returns to investors; amend the NIS Regulations to allow individuals to increase their pensions by personal contributions to that Scheme; (I am sure that the Honourable Minister of Labour will address this in his discourse), facilitate and encourage employers to undertake education and retraining for older workers who wish to upgrade their knowledge and skills, and promote new work arrangements and innovative workplace practices, aimed at sustaining work capacity and accommodating the needs of workers as they age, *inter alia*, by setting up employee assistance programmes.

Mr. Speaker, in support of the right to health, the Government will:

- a. implement public education programmes that:
 - (i) emphasise the responsibility of individuals for their own health and of relatives for the care of their elderly;
 - (ii) promote an understanding of the nature of the physical, mental and spiritual processes or ageing;
- b. ensure that all its health professionals are educated and trained in the ageing process and its associated social, psychological, mental, spiritual and physical aspects and that an adequate number are specially trained in geriatrics;
- c. establish a health information system, responsive to the needs of the elderly and an appropriate database for the use by health care and other agencies working with the elderly;
- d. pay attention to the impact of gender differences on the health needs of the elderly, and support research into those needs, particularly those of older persons.

Mr. Speaker, in order to provide comprehensive health care for older persons, the Government will:

- a. regularly review the organisational structure, function and services of all health care institutions. The review will include the length of waiting time for the elderly in the Polyclinics, the state of the physical plant, (I am sure that the Minister of Health is addressing this) furnishing, personnel and security provisions;
- b. ensure in private and public institutions, standards of practice which are sensitive and appropriate to the special needs of the elderly;
- c. formulate and implement standards and regulations for both private and public institutions, and establish an adequately staffed regulatory body.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will seek to improve secondary and tertiary health care for the elderly by:

- (a) developing mechanisms to foster understanding of the control and management of deterioration brought on by the physiological manifestations of ageing;

Asides.

(b) emphasising the prevention and control of all chronic and non-chronic diseases, noting that many of the physiological changes of ageing are exaggerated by chronic non-communicable diseases;

(c) establishing a preventive blindness programme;

(d) ensuring equal access to medical and rehabilitative services.

Sir, for the entire week, the Minister of Health was addressing the issue of mental health for the elderly. The Prime Minister in a recent public function, Sir, in a church in his constituency also looked at the whole aspect of mental health for the elderly. Against that background, the Government will give the same attention to mental health concerns as to other areas of health.

It will:

(a) undertake and facilitate Public Awareness Programmes to combat the stigma of mental illness, and provide information which promotes healthy mental attitudes;

(b) strengthen the Community Mental Health Services and provide counselling for older persons where necessary. Counselling will also be available to their guardians or care-givers in their own homes and in Government and private institutions.

Mr. Speaker, it is also against this background that the National Assistance Board is in the process of hosting, next year, sometime around this time, the first conference in this country on loss which is critical. They are doing an excellent job and I want to congratulate them for the work they are doing with the bereavement services, which is a counselling programme for those who have been affected by loss.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will seek to establish systems to identify the elderly "at risk" in the community because of their mental health and encourage them to seek early treatment.

Sir, the Government will also ensure that care given facilities take into account all the factors likely to affect the mental health of the elderly and provide motivational therapy for the promotion of active living and the affirmation of their sense of personal dignity.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will establish the partnerships with NGOs, CBOs, churches and corporate Barbados to promote programmes and activities, including day care and education, which foster a healthy lifestyle.

Sir, it is against this background that we must compliment the Nation Group of Companies which has been doing an excellent work of sensitisation and awareness of the whole aspect of healthy lifestyle, healthy ageing, when they launch their keep-fitness programmes. This aspect of journalism is very positioned from the point of view that it provides a well-informed outlet for our elderly to be informed on their right in society like us and their right to age gracefully and healthy.

Mr. Speaker, on care of the elderly, a sub-committee of the National Committee set up for the UN International Year of Older Persons in 1998 – I will lay the document in the House as soon as possible – carried out a survey of Government and Non-Government Institutions in 1999 to 2000. The recommendation of its Report on Institutional and on Home and Community Care are incorporated in this document.

Government will:

- (a) seek to reduce the demand for institutional care by intensifying programmes to control chronic diseases and to address the social factors leading to ill health and institutionalisation.
- (b) undertake a comprehensive analysis of future demand for institutional care by:
 - (i) projecting the number of chronically ill persons who will require long convalescence or long-term care and the “elderly for care” who must rely on institutional care:
 - (ii) taking into account the impact of demographic change, and assessing the strategic alternatives of meeting this demand, for example:
 - further develop Government’s alternative care strategy
 - extending Home and Community Care
 - building and facilitating the construction of additional community-based facilities for assisted and independent living across the island (such as the Vauxhall Complex);

Sir, there are plans to construct more of these institutions. Sir, it is right that when we seek to build these new types of homes for our elderly, that we put them in community centres similar to the Vauxhall Senior Citizens’ Home and that the people who are residing in the immediate vicinity be given the first option for care.

12.00 noon

Sir, we will also encourage our care-giving facilities, both public and private, to use rehabilitative approaches which seek to restore and maintain functional ability and independence and return the elderly to the community as soon as possible. Sir, we will ensure that the elderly have access to institutional care when necessary and access to services which enhance and protect their independence and dignity in such institutions.

Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we also look at a policy, which I call a 50-50 policy, where senior citizens, who are requiring homes, families who have the skilled labour such as carpentry, masonry, electrical engineering and plumbing would provide us with what we call the sweat equity, and we would provide the material. In that way we could even expand further and provide for a wider clientele on housing for the elderly in our community.

It is against that background that we should adopt more programmes which are community-based and community-oriented similar to that of the “Love Thy Neighbour Programme”. We have to make this kind of interventionist approach if we are truly going to revolutionize the concept of active ageing.

Sir, the Government will therefore seek to intensify homes and community care services to enable more seniors to remain in their homes. Among other things, Government will seek to increase the number of staff in the district nursing services with trained assistants; provide more daycare centres for older persons, and this is currently being undertaken by the National Assistance Board; will seek to establish day hospitals for the rehabilitation of the elderly who do not have to be institutionalized, but may require help in restoring and maintaining their independence, and develop a national certification programme on the care of the elderly for home care workers.

I must say that the National Assistance Board in conjunction with the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic and the University of the West Indies School of Continuing Studies has already started this programme.

Government will also seek to establish a system of identifying the elderly in Barbados who are at risk in the community due to their ill health, poor functional ability, dilapidated houses and unhealthy surroundings. Mr. Speaker, Government will also seek to expand the present daycare activity centre facilities to include district hospitals, a senior citizens’ home and any other appropriate community centres island-wide.

Sir, we will also seek to encourage the private sector, churches and non-governmental organisations to finance and manage part of this expansion. Mr. Speaker, we will also pay special attention to providing such services for older persons in the rural communities of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I would want now to speak on maintaining contact with our older persons living alone and to assisting with their nutrition. Mr. Speaker, Government will assist non-governmental organisations, associations of older persons, the churches and community groups to develop good neighbour visiting and telephone buddies programmes for persons living alone.

Mr. Speaker, Government will also consider co-ordinating a national meals-on-wheels programme to fill the gaps left by existing non-governmental organisation efforts to ensure that indigent persons, shut-ins, and the elderly who live alone will have access to at least one nutritious meal each day.

This process has already started. There are many groups such as the Barbados Red Cross, the Israel Lovell Foundation, the Pinelands Creative Workshop, many Pentecostal and Anglican churches and many individuals across Barbados who on a daily basis sacrifice and provide this service to our elderly persons, particularly those elderly persons living alone.

Sir, Government recognises the need to build on the existing strength of inter-generational solidarity in the family, at the community and at the institutional level. The elderly are the repository of tradition, cultural knowledge and skills. Such attributes are essential in maintaining healthy values in this society. Creative activity integrating the young and the old would assist in building stronger families and communities.

I must remind you, Sir, that this year has been designated as International Year of the Family by the United Nations. Therefore, the laying of this Green Paper on Ageing forms part of the Ministry's programme to recognise this International Year of the Family.

Mr. Speaker, Government will also seek to involve its agencies, particularly the Youth Affairs Division, and will continue to encourage schools, youth organisations and non-governmental organisations to create linkages between the elderly and the youth so that old and young people can engage in activities together leading to a better understanding among the generations and to mutual respect.

This will be an all-inclusive policy. We will also develop volunteer support programmes to allow the elderly to supervise young people after school so that they can share their knowledge as craftsmen, tutors, mentors or simply to provide companionship and guidance to our youth at risk.

Sir, I must compliment the National Assistance Board again, because they recently launched a broad and fantastic craft exhibition at the Grand Salle of the Central Bank. When I viewed the exhibits I was most taken aback by the

brilliance, the colour, the craft and the ingenuity and creativity of our seniors.

The time has come when the investment in the skills and craft of our older persons must be seen as a lifelong investment and treasure. I am therefore urging Honourable Members that when these exhibitions are on, to leave these hallowed walls of Parliament, and venture a few feet across the road, and have a look at the wonderful work that our seniors are doing.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has just walked in and I want him to know that his seniors in Gall Hill are also doing wonderful craft work and have also put on display a number of the work that is being done by them.

Asides.

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, we will propose to the Barbados Youth Service that its recruits should continue to participate in a structured programme with older persons especially those in institutions owned by the Government of Barbados. One of the most cruel effects of ageing is that of loneliness.
12.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes when one visits the Geriatric Hospital and speaks to some of these older persons, one would realise that all they basically want was someone to visit them, to talk to them, to sing to them, to reminisce about past experiences, or to bring them up-to-date on what is happening on the outside because of their institutionalisation, which is no fault of their own.

Sir, if we are talking about being a caring and understanding society, we must be able to develop policies and programmes. We must be able to go into these institutions and share our experiences, taking these older persons or those with illness that are not of their own making and exposing them to our kind of friendship and fraternity.

Mr. Speaker, let us consider whether active, older persons could assist in providing care at daycare centres and nurseries for children, as exhibited at the Vauxhall programme. This programme is on a pilot basis and we are trying to link the elderly with the very young, so that the inherent moral value will be instilled into these children from an early age.

We will also seek to develop or to expand projects in which the elderly and the youth can participate together, for example, the highly acclaimed Independence Parish Ambassadors Programme.

We will also seek to encourage the organisation of older persons, tertiary education institutions, and the Barbados Labour College, to explore the concept of operational learning centres, or what I spoke about earlier, the university of the third age, in which older persons may engage in experimental learning and reflection, who would assist in developing materials on attitudes in ageing for use in public awareness and inter-generational programmes.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn my attention to the physical environment. Government will seek to establish a national housing policy and building code, with standards and guidelines which will encompass the needs of the elderly. This housing policy will be informed by the recommendation on a national consultation on housing and long-term care for our elderly, to be sponsored by the Ministry of Social Transformation, in consultation with all the other Government Agencies and Social Partners of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in developing an improved housing stock for older persons, Government will seek to ensure low cost housing for older persons; would allocate ground floor units in older residential buildings provided by Government; would allocate a percentage of Government housing development to older persons; and as far as possible, would relocate older persons near to their existing neighbourhoods, when large-scale projects make relocation necessary.

Mr. Speaker, presently in the Government housing estates in Barbados there are some senior citizens who are currently residing in upstairs homes, who cannot even venture up the stairs. Therefore, with the new Government housing policy for the elderly, these existing units will now become vacant and available to those persons who actually need them.

Sir, this is a system which we would have to examine and undertake and certainly the information is there and could easily be accessed through local knowledge of those persons who live in the Government housing estates across Barbados.

Sir, we will provide standard two-bedroom houses for older persons rather than one-bedroom houses. This is in order to provide accommodation for the care-givers. Government will also seek to facilitate public awareness on education programmes on property maintenance for the elderly. It will also ensure schemes to improve the design and accessibility of private homes, public buildings and care-giving facilities.

Sir, taking the elderly into account, certain sections of the building code which applies to persons with disabilities should also apply to the elderly because as one gets old, most

likely one would have a disability. Mr. Speaker, these will include the provision of ramps, lay-aways, wide doorways and in some cases, elevators.

We will also seek to require that new housing, including housing constructed for the elderly, especially those persons living alone, must be structurally-designed to withstand a category three or four hurricane and be assigned an important factor of one for earthquakes.

Sir, we know that there is no country in this world that is immuned against the ravages of nature, whether it is an earthquake, a hurricane or a tornado. We will also seek to examine in centres the private enterprise, financial institutions and non-governmental organisations, to construct additional villages and complexes and a variety of retirement homes for older persons, of the likes of those which the Barbados Association for Retired Persons (BARP) has sought to proceed on.

We will encourage financial institutions to institute and facilitate mortgages for older persons to allow them, *inter alia*, to refurbish or to retrofit their homes. In this regard, commercial banks should be encouraged to offer loans to older persons, which is crucial.

Mr. Speaker, the removal of the age discrimination barrier in Barbados must end. It is one of the worst forms of discrimination that older persons face as they seek to lead meaningful lives in their olden years. Sir, in a series of phased refurbishments, Government will seek to ensure that the Building Code would provide for reserved parking spaces; traffic lights with audio, as well as visual signals at pedestrian crossings; stay-free pavements and ramps, to permit the elderly and/or disabled user, to be able to move around freely and maintain his or her independence.

Mr. Speaker, a number of business and Government institutions across the island have embarked on a policy where they have reserved parking spaces for the disabled by red displayed signs. Sir, many intelligent persons, however, abuse the Law by disregarding these signs and parking in these designated spaces which are reserved for the disabled.

Sir, in conjunction with the programme, we are determining legislation that will penalise those persons who park indiscriminately in those spaces reserved for the disabled.
12.20 p.m.

The work of the District Emergency Organisations in Barbados must be recognised. We must work carefully with them because those are the ones who have first-hand knowledge of the conditions affecting those persons after a hurricane or disaster.

Mr. Speaker, legislation is critical and crucial to all of this. Government will review the existing legislation as it affects older persons, and will seek to ensure that the elderly has access to legal aid, social and community services for their protection.

I am happy to report that Government has started the process of legislation for the safety and protection of senior citizens which will take into consideration areas such as physical abuse, use of physical force that could result in bodily injury, physical pain, impairment or sexual abuse.

Sir, a few months ago I read in the newspapers that an elderly person was raped at home. The legislation will also take into consideration non-consensual sexual contact of any kind, emotional abuse, inflicting anguish, pain and distress through verbal or non-verbal acts, the abuse of medication, the misuse of prescription for the medication of the elderly, withholding the medication of the elderly, or giving an elderly person too much medication, financial and material abuse, illegal or improper use of the funds of the elderly, misuse of the property or assets of the elderly by a guardian, stranger or person with a power of attorney.

Sir, neglect of the elderly would include inadequate provision of food, clothing or shelter and failure to attend to health or personal care responsibilities such as washing, dressing or combing the hair of elderly persons.

I want to look at desertion of the elderly by a person who has custody, or who has responsibility for providing care to that elderly person, or discrimination in any form purely on the ground that a person is old. Government will seek to introduce legislation to ensure that it can, where circumstances warrant it, have access to the elderly in residences, private or public facilities where care is given.

I now turn to the Charter for Older Persons. Government will examine models from other jurisdictions and institute a Senior Citizens' Charter or Bill of Rights for older persons based on the rights outlined in this document. This Charter may impose no legal obligations but would serve to educate the public and older persons themselves about their rights and responsibilities.

Government will also consider specific charters between agencies, institutions and older persons as the client of such agencies. This charter will guarantee rights to certain services at a minimum standard of service and will indicate the corresponding responsibilities of older persons to the agency concerned.

Mr. Speaker, Government will propose to the Advisory Commission that as a basis for future policies, the Commission should consider research into the following areas which, at this time, appear relevant to the elderly in Barbados.

- (1) the influence of economic and demographic factors including migration on national planning;
- (2) the impact of biological, medical, cultural, social and behavioural factors on the process of ageing in Barbados including the use of tobacco and alcohol among older persons;
- (3) the role of genetics and environmental factors and gender in ageing and longevity;
- (4) healthy ageing as it relates to the elderly in Barbados;
- (5) health and social services for the elderly especially in rural areas;
- (6) the attitudes of the elderly to such services;
- (7) the extent of abuse to the elderly in Barbados;
- (8) the recognition and use of the skills, expertise, knowledge of seniors in the society.

I want to thank Dr. Carol Watson at the University of the West Indies for developing a memory bank which seeks to tap into the memory of our senior citizens. Sir, memory banks such as these exist in Jamaica and Trinidad and this will be the means of empowering the elderly to recognise their own capacity and contribution. The effect of this will postpone the negative functional consequences of ageing.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to make the point that population ageing is an issue with ramifications for individuals, families, communities, businesses and the wider society. Population ageing presents opportunities as well as challenges for our entire society. A national policy on ageing is, therefore, critical and timely.

Mr. Speaker, the focus of the proposed national policy is on the creation of a national machinery for elder affairs including:-

- advisory, executive and co-operative mechanisms;
- public awareness of ageing and its implication;
- continuing education;
- training for older persons;

- the teaching of individual responsibility for health and security;
- formal education and training for care-givers and health professionals in the field of ageing;
- private and individual strategies to provide financial and economic security for the elderly;
- access to affordable health, physical, mental, social and spiritual;
- expansion of home and community care;
- increased provision of long-term care with the emphasis on standards of care;
- improving the physical environment to meet the needs of the elderly;
- legislation to protect the elderly against discrimination and abuse, and to ensure safety in the physical environment;
- the promotion of appropriate instruments that facilitate ongoing inter-generational linkages.

12.30 p.m.

Sir, having established the policy, Government's role will be that of a catalyst and prime mover rather than of the sole implementer. Participatory government, public participation and the empowering of older persons will all benefit from such an approach and will increase the resources necessary to implement the proposals.

Sir, our Ministry and the Ministry for Elder Affairs must collaborate with its partners in other Government sectors, the private sector and all other stakeholders to create and sustain an enabling environment for older persons. Such an environment will allow older persons to maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life and to continue to make valuable contributions to national development.

It will also ensure that the nation continues to benefit from the experience and wisdom gained over the years by persons who are truly its prized citizens, our elders.

Sir, I recognise that it is not an effort for the Government alone, but it must be the product of inter-agency and inter-ministerial collaboration.

Therefore, in closing, I want to extend my warmest thanks to all those persons in Barbados and the agencies who have contributed to our making this document a reality.

I also want to say special thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and his staff, the Minister of Labour and his staff, my comrade, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the National Committee established by Cabinet to plan activities for older persons, the Barbados Association of Retired Persons, the Pan-American Health Organisation, the Chairman, Director, Board and staff of the National Assistance Board, the United National Development Programme, the Organisation and Committee who produced this document and the Heads of the Department of the Ministry of Social Transformation and its staff, former and current Permanent Secretaries.

Again my sincere thanks to all the NGOs, CBOs, churches and individuals who would have contributed to this document.

Sir, as we proceed with this document, let no obstacle be greater than the cause. It is written and we hope that it will be done.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East was at his best this morning. Having heard him, the hour now indicates that we should be taking the luncheon interval which would allow us to reflect and prepare ourselves for further debate this afternoon.

In the circumstances, I beg to move that this House be suspended...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you just move the motion, please?

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 1.45 p.m. today.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.35 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to contribute to this particular debate on the Green Paper, a National Policy on Ageing. I consider the care of the elderly as very important, not only because it helps to measure the sophistication of societies where years gone by, they used to define the sophistication based on elements as maternal mortality and infant mortality. This new paradigm has been introduced to help us to determine how we regard the contribution made by those who would have gone before us, and how we intend to provide for them as a response to that contribution.

However, Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Minister of Social Transformation very carefully and what I heard being delivered today was simply an exercise of marketing. It was an exercise designed to tell us what the Government would do if this happens, or if that happens, and what the plans are for this and for that. After 10 years of an administration, I am at the stage of hearing what they plan to do. If the elderly people in this country want to believe that, it is their business.

The population in Barbados did not age overnight. Demographic shifts do not occur overnight. Therefore, the type of demographic transition that this country experienced in a short 45 to 50-year period, was one that the data would have predicted. It is one that would have allowed a forward thinking administration to have used the information to plan proactively, Sir, with respect to those demographic changes. 1.50 p.m.

Those changes are being defined in a large category as a rapidly ageing population but I would not get into the specifics. That would mean that interjections at timely points to deal with the chronic disease shifts, with elements of rehabilitation, with elements of housing and with elements of finance, would have to have been looked at much earlier.

Sir, it is somewhat of a concern to me that I am now hearing of the plans that Government now has in place or propose to put in place, because many of them are plans they intend to put in place. I will speak of many other plans that were to be put in place that never materialized. Therefore, I do not know which plans I intend to trust, and I will get to those.

Mr. Speaker, I do not work for the Ministry of Social Transformation nor the Ministry of Health, so it is not my responsibility at this stage to enunciate any solutions to the problems that exist. I will deliberately and diligently highlight many of the fundamental problems that exist with

care to the elderly in Barbados. My job, at this stage, is to protect the interest of the elderly because it appears that their interest has not been protected for the last 10 years, and I have the evidence to support it.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that older persons in Barbados should be considered to be a population of indigent individuals without the capacity to contribute to a continued developing Barbados within the context of a Caribbean Single Market and Economy and a globalised world.

Sir, for many years, at many of the International Labour Organisation Conventions, these matters with respect to how you integrate the elderly population into the productive workforce in relative states were dealt with. Sir, after all these years I am now hearing what it is that this Administration is going to do for the elderly.

What has happened over the last 10 years is that we have been developing an attitude which condemns many elderly people in Barbados to go to Government institutions cap in hand looking for fundamental services that could have been provided by many of those persons on their own. This Administration does not understand that mentally, physically and competent elderly individuals define their own self-esteem and worth directly to their capacity to be able to provide for themselves and to take care of themselves. However, this is not the course of action that this Government has embarked on, and I would explain my points later.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has failed to maintain a productive healthy population over the age of 65. It has failed miserably because of the current statistics that define the rapid increase in chronic diseases within that same age group, and within the 50-59 age group in Barbados. One only has to check the research from the Chronic Disease Research Centre in Barbados to verify what I am saying.

All of a sudden, I am now hearing about all of these newfangled approaches to deal with chronic diseases that would somehow result in an improved health expectancy of old people in Barbados, but it cannot work like that. There are no immediate solutions to those types of problems and that is the reason why I am somewhat saddened.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has failed to have a senior population that is still productive. It has failed to develop systems that would provide for the development of self-respect and for the elderly to take care of themselves.

After the Minister rightly indicated that it is an accepted position within the field of elderly care that an elderly competent, mentally and physical individual should not be in an institution, and that community care and home

care is the best way, I am now hearing the Minister speaking about the building of senior citizens' homes and that approval has been given to the Barbados Association of Retired Persons who have been asking for the provision for more than 10 years to build a senior citizens' home.

Sir, I want to be very candid about what I am going to say, that approval has only been given to the Barbados Association of Retired Persons after permission had been given to a private sector interest to build one, after taking 122 acres of agricultural land in Barbados to build it. I know that. I am waiting to be challenged by any one of the Honourable Members on That Side on that matter, but I will deal with these matters more specifically a little later.

Mr. Speaker, I have to deal with the reality of the alternative health care programme. Mr. Speaker, it is one that I spoke strongly against prior to this establishment and I will speak out strongly against it at this time. This is a programme that pays \$1 500 a month to keep a mentally and physically competent elderly person in a nursing home, when the Minister admits that the best place for them is at home.

If the individual is mentally and physically competent, and we accept that they should not be in an institution in the first place, I want to ask the Government if it would not be better to make sure that the individual's non-contributory pension is increased so that they can take care of themselves at home or pay somebody to provide the services for them. I do not want to see Barbados becoming a concrete jungle of old people homes at all. I want no part of that. I have seen firsthand what institutionalisation does to old people.

After the International Labour Organisation had been preaching about ageism, discrimination with respect to age in terms of insurance, loans and access, 10 years after I am now hearing what they are going to put in place. That is a marketing exercise that cannot convince any of the elderly persons out there.

Mr. Speaker, I want to get into some specifics now. The problem of the elderly in Barbados in terms of care is a multifaceted problem. Sir, my experience in geriatric care suggests to me that this Administration must decide what it actually wants to do.
2.00 p.m.

Do they want geriatric hospitals or do they want to have residences for old people that are called hospitals? That is a fundamental question which must be asked because if the distinction is made, Government can then develop a plan of action.

Mr. Speaker, this is important because after 10 years and three Ministers of Health, one being the goodly doctor who I thought would have been able to bring his

understanding of the systems and delivery mechanisms to impact on the improvement of health care, what we have is a precipitous fall in the delivery of health care in Barbados.

Sir, how in Heaven's name can we have a modern health care facility where if you, Mr. Speaker, were to become ill today, and I would not want that, but unless you can pay for an ultrasound examination, you would have to wait for at least three months? Therefore, to be able to get an appointment or an X-ray, you would be in trouble because the equipment is all breaking down because the plant is run-down, yet this Government is masquerading about all they are doing for the elderly of Barbados. They are not even assisting the young. They must explain to Barbadians why we do not have an MRI machine, a fundamental piece of equipment that is necessary for any state-of-the-art hospital.

Mr. Speaker, this is important business to the people of Barbados. Barbados should have an MRI machine and it is scandalous that after 10 years, we do not have one and our patients have to leave Barbados and go to Trinidad and Tobago or to Miami to be treated.

Mr. Speaker, there is an MRI machine located at a private institution located at 3rd Avenue, Pine Road, yet the Queen Elizabeth Hospital does not have one to treat the poor people of this country.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I know, I have been on the ground in it. If one wants to get an X-ray or an ultrasound in a timely manner, Government has now set up a quasi-payment system, where upon payment, one would be treated more quickly.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Social Transformation is talking about geriatrics but what is important is the time that it takes to get an appointment at the Hospital for these geriatric patients. I have evidence from four doctors within the last week who have sent their patients to the Hospital with letters stating that their cases were urgent, and yet the most immediate appointment these patients got was four months after.

Mr. Speaker, let an individual try to get an eye surgery done. Unless you have money in your pockets...and I am being told nonsense in this Honourable House about what we plan to do 10 years after, where three Ministers have failed miserably.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if it does not put you out in any way, you need to connect some of your points to what we are dealing with, which is a national policy on ageing, to make your points relevant. Therefore, I would not want you to be focussing on the Ministry of Health as such.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, in the beginning, I made the point that we were dealing with a multifaceted problem, one that has an economic base, one that has a social base and one that has a medical base, and I will deal with them sequentially.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, one cannot divorce what is happening at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital with respect to elderly care in Barbados because there are old people waiting in the Casualty Department, who cannot get down to the Geriatric Hospital. There are old people who cannot get admitted to wards.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if that is so, you will need to say, without trying to show that it is a problem which relates to the general population and the Ministry of Health only.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 12.1 per cent of elderly persons over the age of 65, a significant percent of the population. If I have to link that and do a general concept of care, which I do not believe should be defined in terms of what is elderly, what is young or what is old, that does not make sense to me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the parameters for debates in this Honourable House are set by the Order that is given. I am trying to tell you that this is not a general debate on the Ministry of Health. Your points must relate to ageing, and if you have to bring in the Ministry of Health then, by all means do it. You are free to do that.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, if this is the line that your judgment requires, then in order to become old, chronic diseases would have to be controlled. In order to live to age 80 or 90, one would have to create a system that not only allows for the diagnostic realities but one has to provide all the ancillary inputs such as drug service, nursing, medical, *et cetera*.

These inputs are necessary in order to be able to live long in Barbados and, therefore, would have to be part of the policy of ageing. If they are not, then something is fundamentally wrong. Those who drafted the discussion paper, do not understand what is going on.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I believe that any policy that looks at ageing must necessarily bring to this Honourable House the weaknesses in the institutional aspects that provide the care for them. Therefore, not having access to rapid turnaround with respect to X-rays, ultrasounds, CT scans, *et cetera*, is a fundamental part of the problem.

Sir, I want to go to something even more fundamental which relates to a statement made by the Minister of Social Transformation, regarding pensions.
2.10 p.m.

I want to remind this Honourable House that the non-contributory pension that old persons now receive to provide for themselves, whether medically or otherwise, is \$144. This pension cannot maintain housing or help the old man or woman to buy appropriate food, and as a result, there is an impact on the care of the individual by not having the financial capacity to take care of themselves.

Sir, this is a major issue because the Ministry of Social Transformation would not now be advancing a cause for building two-bedroom homes for old people in Barbados. They should understand that the cost of living is high and that a subsidised pension should be given to that an old man or woman who gets less than \$400 monthly and then the old man or woman could repair or build his or her own house.

Sir, housing is part of the problem with the care of elderly. I have worked for many years in the geriatric system and the major problem is that of placement because the waiting list is extensive. The reason for the ill-advised establishment of the alternative health care programme in the care of the elderly was to alleviate the massive backlog, not only in the community, but at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, I was the doctor responsible for moving many elderly from the Accident and Emergency, as well as the wards at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to different institutions, yet this Government closed down the Christ Church District Hospital and this Administration now says that there are not enough rooms for old people but, Sir, I would not be fooled by that statement.

Mr. Speaker, despite all the talk about healthy lifestyles, many elderly patients in Barbados cannot eat healthily, based on their revenues. If we look at the non-contributory pension and the maximum allowable deduction and pension on an annual basis, on average it would be \$1 200 to \$1 800 monthly.

Mr. Speaker, if a man used to work for \$10 000 monthly but does not have a private pension, he is in real trouble because, automatically, he becomes one of the retired

poor people who get \$1 100 monthly plus \$334 monthly as non-contributory pension and he cannot live on this. Sir, the system is failing because the financial element is impacting upon the medical and social elements in Barbados.

The Minister spoke about unifying the services within a single unit of the Ministry. This is a commendable act but it is long overdue and we need to move forward with this as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister also spoke about the care of the elderly but I want to speak about the medical element because it is a critical component to the care of the elderly in Barbados and we also have to deal with chronic diseases. I define this point by saying that people in Barbados who live to age 90 or 100 are not afflicted with diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, *et cetera*.

It is important for me to understand why, in this Green Paper, no discussion was brought to bear on fundamental elements of the Barbados Drug Service. Mr. Speaker, I now speak to two specific components of that.

I have reviewed the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer and paid special attention to pages 13 and 39. There are three categories defined on page 39 which relate to categories of persons who have access to free medicines in Barbados, those under 16, those over 65, and those who have a specific set of chronic diseases in Barbados like diabetes, hypertension, asthma, seizure activities and HIV/AIDS.

I want the Minister responsible to explain why elderly people in Barbados over 65 years of age have to go to private pharmacies to pay for their medications when many of those medications are for those specific chronic diseases.

Sir, I know that many doctors write prescriptions and label them with the words "No Substitution" simply because these doctors do not like the generic medication on the Drug List and I know that old people still have to pay as much as \$200 out of the \$344 received for pension. Sir, I can call the name of those doctors if I am required to do so.

Mr. Speaker, when elderly people go to a pharmacy to fill their prescription and the pharmacy is out of stock, they have to go elsewhere to purchase it. I want to know why this is so because these things impact on the elderly from a social point of view. Sir, the pension is small and if there are conditions where the elderly have to pay for painkillers, cough medicines and medications which the polyclinics do not have, what money does the elderly have to feed themselves?

Sir, I want the Drug Service to understand and consider as part of the policy to abandon the programme where an elderly person who suffers from chronic arthritis can get pain

killers for two weeks only and must purchase the remainder from his pension.

This is a scandalous programme which leaves old people in Barbados decrepit with pain. Sir, it needs to be abandoned and this is why earlier I said that decision must be taken on this matter. The Government must decide whether it is providing the service or whether it does not want to provide the service. I have a suspicion, based on looking at the projected plan for health care for 2010. On page 23, by 2006 the plan was to establish and amend the fee structure for the delivery of health care.

2.20 p.m.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: That is why there was a capping of the subvention and in the policy programme the fee structure is now being adjusted. Do you know what that means to the old people in Barbados who have to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and any other hospital in Barbados?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, order.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Subsection 1 says that by 2006, the plan was to establish and amend fee structures for the delivery of health care throughout the health care system. It did not say to amend some. It did not say to amend X, Y or D. It said to amend all. This simply means that all the poor people in Barbados would have to pay for their medication very soon. That was a policy programme that was planned to be enunciated from 1996/1997 in Barbados under the late J..M.G. M. Tom Adams. I remember that and I researched it.

Mr. Speaker, when this Administration looks at the area of pensions, I want them to look at income security for older persons in Barbados. It was clearly defined that the average earnings of 80 per cent of Barbadians are below \$3,100 a month.

Sir, 80 per cent of persons in Barbados are earning less than \$3,100 a month and I want to know whether those old people who now get \$344 a month, how can we even contemplate in an ageing society going towards a strategy of prepayment – it has already started because of the time it takes to get an appointment for an X-ray or ultrasound.

There are now facilities at the Hospital where you can pay for these services so that you can get an early appointment. This is an insult in Barbados and I must be angry about these things.

Sir, I know several doctors who have encountered such situations. I want to underpin it by something that is even more challenging to me. We have a growing tourism sector in this country and a problem with traffic in Barbados. As part of caring for the ageing population, I want to ask the Administration why is it that, based on their Manifestoes of 1994 and 1999, and the Haynes Commission Report, they refused to do what they said that they were going to do and turn the St. Joseph Hospital into a special centre for geriatric services?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I am going to quote at page 21:-

“The use of the St. Joseph Hospital as a centre for specialist services such as geriatric services.”

Sir, this Hospital is not yet open even though it was mentioned in their Manifesto – geriatric services including caring for the elderly and dealing with ageing in Barbados. Do they not believe that old people also travel by plane as tourists too? Sir, how are we going to get old sick people from St. Peter to Bridgetown with respect to the crisis we have on the roads with traffic? Mr. Speaker, that is not planning.

Sir, in this document we should be looking at decentralisation of primary health care components, the polyclinics in the north and upgrading them to have diagnostic capacities, x-rays, ultrasounds and laboratory capability. We should be looking at trying to take the pressure off the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and taking the Hospital in the north and developing that facility. That is what the plan should be.

Sir, do you know what they said with respect to that facility?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: In their 2003 Manifesto, with respect to caring for the ageing population that would need an ambulance and who cannot afford to pay for the services of a private ambulance service, like Get Help Ambulance Service, it stated in their 1999 Manifesto that Government was going to decentralise the ambulance service in Barbados.

Sir, five years later in their Manifesto, on Page 36, they said that they are still committed. Yet we have no ambulance service in the north or east of the country. Mr. Speaker, people living in those areas and who need the services of an ambulance have to wait for five hours to get one or pay private transportation to reach the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Does this Administration know that this impacts on the elderly persons in St. Peter, St. Lucy, St. Andrew and also the elderly who are tourists in Barbados?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to deal with an area that I feel strongly about. I heard the Honourable Member, the Minister of Social Transformation, speak about looking at the possibility of acquiring the assets of elderly people in Barbados and those who were in public institutions in Barbados.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Furthermore, I am not taking it as simply a matter said in here because I am aware that the admission criteria is always shifting to a particular gold coast. When I was responsible for admission at the St. Michael Geriatric Hospital, and I was responsible for that for many years, the criteria established were fundamental.

It is either that you are an old man or woman, and there were five criteria we used, but fundamentally that you did not have housing. Your housing was dilapidated, and this was verified by the social workers, or you had a medical problem.

Sir, all of a sudden we have creeping into the system a strategy regarding who gets admitted into the Geriatric Hospital is whether the individual has property.

Sir, in fact, I know of two cases within the last month, and one of them grieves me immensely, and the best place to speak about it is in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, an old man who has cancer was discharged from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He was sent home and there was no one to care for him because all of his family members live overseas.

2.30 p.m.

An application was made to the Geriatric Hospital to admit the individual, but they said that he had property. They not only said that he had property, but that he was earning \$1 100 a month in a pension. Think about the level of care required for somebody like that? They may need NG tubes, they may have bleeds, or a whole range of things. You are talking about some measure of high intensive nursing care, but he had to be home because of \$1 100 in pension.

Sir, \$1 100 a month could not pay for a nurse, buy food, put a pants on the old man, because of the toiletry required. This is the policy of the Geriatric Hospital and I can speak about it. Let the Minister defend it.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not want to interrupt the Honourable Member unnecessarily but, I really must say that it is not the policy of the Geriatric Hospital that a person who has a pension is not admitted. If he has this information, I would like him to share it with the House or, indeed, with myself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I always like to be precise and what is important with respect to elderly care and ageing, had assisted this Administration in looking at certain proposals that they would bring in their Manifesto. I like to go back to the Manifesto, because it is a contract with the people, so it is either that you are proven to be a liar or not.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, can you imagine they said that in order to expand the care of the elderly, in 1994 they were going to provide special tax concessions. Where are they? Do you know, Sir, it was said in the same Manifesto that they wanted to increase the capacity at District Hospitals for the care and accommodation of senior citizens? Which District Hospital was expanded?

This is the Administration that closed the Christ Church District Hospital, and when Hurricane Ivan came, they did not have room and had to move the people from the old house in St. Lucy to the Gordon Cummins for fear of leakage.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I must help the Honourable Member that on the approach of Hurricane Ivan, the residents of St. Lucy's District Hospital were relocated to the Psychiatric Hospital, not because of the fear of leakage, but the concern about the isolation of those individuals, if there was severe flooding. Certainly, he would understand these circumstances.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the St. Lucy District Hospital was renovated because it was in such a dilapidated condition, that it was almost condemned. If the Honourable Member for Christ Church South wants to go down that road, I would have to ask him what happens to the people at the Geriatric Hospital when the rain falls.

The windows in the day room leaked. The roofs leaked. There were puddles of water all over the Hospital

and all the old people beds and clothes got wet. The nurses in the Geriatric Hospital had to go and buy toiletries with their own money.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, this is serious business so you see, this is what happens when you are dealing with fundamental issues like these and you have situations where you have a Government attempting to market its way out of the reality.

Sir, the kitchen at the Geriatric Hospital in Beckles Road was condemned over five years ago. I was there when it was condemned. I went there with the various individuals. Recently, Sir, the Health Inspector condemned some utensils that were not fit for the use by human beings. The Geriatric Hospital is very hot with no extracting mechanisms.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I speak to what I know. Can you imagine that all of the doctor's offices on the first floor are flooded when the rain falls? Please explain that one to me. Can you imagine that the boiler at the Geriatric Hospital has not been working? I want to find out why the Ministry of Social Transformation in preparing this Paper, did not bring a policy position that relates to the transmission of communicable diseases, because they have no hot water down there. They use solar powered water. Sir, I know what I am saying. The boiler there is not working so the old people's clothes cannot be pressed.

Sir, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the premier institution that is supposed to assist our elderly people in Barbados, only one tub is working out of the three or four at the laundry. The boiler breaks down every three months. They should take the taxpayers' money and spend it on them and stop wasting it.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to these sorts of matters, I will speak candidly and plainly and, I will say what I have to, because this is in the interest of the people of Barbados.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, in the 1994 Manifesto, they were going to modernise the island's Geriatric Hospital. I want one of you to leave here today and go to the St. Philip District Hospital, Gordon Cummins, St. Lucy District Hospital, and then go to the Geriatric Hospital in Beckles Road. You would not see a modernised hospital.

Yet, every year, the amount of money voted for the hospital in this hollow Chambers is increasing and the Honourable Member is bold about it. I have the figures here. Sir, do you know what surprised me when I reviewed the figures? I now understand why the health care system in Barbados went into some difficulties.

Sir, I looked from 1996 to 2005. The total health care expenditure was essentially \$226 million to \$232 million in 1996/1997. Then, it was decreased in 1997/1998 to \$226 million. It was further decreased in 1998/1999 to \$178 million. There is no wonder it went into a crisis situation and all the equipment at the Hospital is breaking down and they cannot replace them.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, this quotation is from the Chief Medical Officer's Report of November, 2002. It frightens me that for the clinical application that is, the Geriatric Hospital, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Psychiatric Hospital, we had a similar reduction, from \$166 to \$162 to \$133 million. This is what happened in Barbados under this Administration that is now telling me what they want to do to enhance things in the health care sector for the elderly people in Barbados.

Sir, I am not here to mix matters. Those who think that I holla too hard, well, that is their business.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please. Everybody is silent and you must be silent also.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to make two last points before I sit, and I refer to the document on the National Policy on Ageing, the Preparation for Retirement that was discussed.

As we just indicated, or I would have just quoted from the same document that 80 per cent earn less than \$3 100 and there are over 8 000 people who get less than \$344, you would remember, Sir, we are talking about people who have been born 65 years ago where the monies would be smaller, so tell me how these people could invest in a pension?
2.40 p.m.

What is even more sinister is that this is the Administration that came in here and reduced the retirement age to 60 to encourage people to retire early at a time when contributions were declining and benefits were increasing. That is what happened, Sir. Individuals who do not understand reciprocity up and down, never went to school. Some never learnt, Sir.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I chuckle at this but this is a very serious matter. It is all right for us to get in here and talk about pensions and this and that. In 1996, the World Bank Report from which the Honourable Member for St. Peter found out that there was so much poverty in Barbados, 56 per cent of Barbadians were living below the poverty level. The poverty level then was \$5 100 per year in terms of per capita income.

Sir, elderly persons in Barbados now get \$344 per month as a non-contributory pension. That is approximately \$4 100 a year. These elderly persons who are living below the poverty level are the ones who have to buy cough medicines, pay for pain killers for arthritis, buy non-generic medications and who cannot put a board on their house or change a toilet. If you cannot help yourself, you are supposed to go to the Ministry of Social Transformation cap in hand when the mechanism should be to help advance the ageing population in Barbados and enhance the capacity of individuals to take care of themselves, not to create a welfare mentality or to lift up the welfare services.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: I can say this because I represent a rural constituency. When I made my rounds through it after the hurricane, almost every home that was destroyed was a home that was in disrepair. Sir, what bothered me was that many of those individuals had applied to the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission years ago for assistance.

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Writing letters do not make a difference now because nobody in St. Philip West pays any taxes in Barbados. Sir, a national crisis should be used to manifest the mandate of the Government to provide and care for the elderly. They are talking about it but they are not walking the walk.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned that this was a marketing exercise. It told us exactly what the Government was planning to do after 10 years of doing nothing. I have not heard or seen anything in this document that would enhance any of the delivery mechanisms at any of the Geriatric Hospitals. I have not seen anything that would enhance the Queen Elizabeth Hospital either.

When we talk about general care, we go into the housing elements. I do not know how the Honourable Member, the Minister of Social Transformation, could be talking about building two-bedroom homes for the elderly

while at the same time paying \$1 500 per month to keep an old man who is physically competent and can bathe, feed and clothe himself and can walk about.

That is \$18 000 per year which if you multiply it by five years would equal \$90 000. That is more money than the house the Honourable Minister of Housing is building. What is the common sense in that, Sir? If these are individuals who are supposed to be mentally and physically competent, where should they be by the admission of the Minister? I am now hearing about concessions. That is two houses in five years that they could have built for the old people in their community.

Sir, I am now hearing that they will be paying a little bit more if they need a little bit more intensive nursing care. It is an ill-fated concept that has led to an increase in the number of older persons at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, as soon as you remove those older persons from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and put them into the alternative health care plan or the Geriatric Hospital, within a couple of months the numbers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital go back to the same level or higher. I moved them myself on four occasions, Sir. Let the Honourable Minister explain how many there are now and why they are coming back all the time. I do not believe that he knows.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at this Green Paper, I do not believe, for what this Government has done over the last 10 years, that it would substantially alter anything fundamental with respect to delivery networks. I do not believe that it will alter in any way the fundamental social and economic problems that the elderly in Barbados face. They only talk about increasing National Insurance pensions. I thought that there was supposed to be an increase in National Insurance pensions since last year.

Sir, they never even took up the Barbados Association of Retired Persons (BARP) indication of the unfair nature of the double taxation elements they now face. National Insurance is paid out of taxable income, and then at the end of your tenure, the little bit of money that you would now use to help yourself, in error of rising cost for everything, they tax it too.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. I do not like to interrupt the Honourable Member but he is certainly mistaken on that matter. In Barbados, when you are over 65 years old, your deductible before your income tax is worked out is \$30 000. That is doubled that of the average person who is under 65 years which is \$15 000. This means that if your National Insurance is \$1 100 a month that is taken care of because you do not get into the amounts of \$30 000. Therefore, that statement must certainly be withdrawn because it is misleading this Honourable House.

I thank you.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, what is interesting is that there are people in this country that do pay it. The Honourable Member should go and read the most recent BARP proposal that was submitted to the Barbados Labour Party for consultation, because what was happening is explained explicitly in that document. I would say no more on that matter, Sir. I prepare myself when I come here to speak and if the Honourable Member does not know about it, he should do the research before he opens his mouth.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, please. Order, please. 2.50 p.m.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Let me make it clear again for the record. Sir, any pensioner who is making under \$30 000 a year is not paying income tax on that. Therefore, what the Honourable Member is referring to is the rich pensioner who has income in excess of \$30 000 per year. Those are persons who would have some of their income taxed and not the average person.

I do not disagree with the Honourable Member that there are some persons who have income which is greater than \$30 000 per year, but one would have to consider them as rich pensioners.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, what I find to be absolutely amazing here is that the Honourable Member is referring to someone in Barbados who gets \$2 500 to live on as a rich person and because they are 65 years old. What nonsense am I hearing? Is this an indication of affluence or an interpretation from a position of affluence or of wealth, that there is no understanding of how the poor, old man has to live with \$2 500 per month?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Sir, I want to close by documenting for the record what I find to be wrong with this Green Paper on Ageing, and I hope that the Honourable Member would look at it very carefully.

We have to thaw the administrative problems that now encumber the delivery of services for the elderly in Barbados. We must be able to remove those administrative problems from within the financial system and from within the social services sector that fall under many elements under the Ministry of Social Transformation and from the physical plant requirement with respect to the Geriatric Hospital which falls under the Minister of Health.

Sir, as long as these elements are fragmented and there is not a central coordinated component, these problems will not be solved because at many times, the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

Mr. Speaker, if Government wants to enhance the provision of care for the elderly at the geriatric hospitals, Government must readily and expeditiously enhance the plant and ancillary staff inputs. No more can one nurse be put to bathe 40 patients and expect that nurse would not burn out and would not want to leave Barbados.

Sir, the type of staff morale that exists in all of the geriatric hospitals, polyclinics and Queen Elizabeth Hospital, has to be dealt with as a matter of urgency. We have to deal with the movement towards the hybrid management system where workers do not know whether or not they are employed by Government or by a board. These things can only make matters worse.

Sir, a lack of decentralised services is crippling the delivery components such as ambulance elements, polyclinic elements, secondary and tertiary care elements, a lack of decentralisation of diagnostic services and problems with the Drug Service.

Government must understand that when they are rationalising distribution, for example, in the geriatric hospitals, one cannot see it as a protocol that one is not supposed to dispense a pain killer and medication to stop one's stomach from burning, when one suffers from reflux as a natural ageing process, or arthritis that disables one from walking. That is what they do, so they need to understand what they are doing.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member has recognised the social problems now facing the elderly is as a result of the lack of respite and through respite inputs, as well as the lack of financial capacity of the individual to provide for himself or herself, then they would look at mechanisms which I saw a number of them have introduced, that is allowing for certain levels of tax concessions to families who would want to keep their elderly persons at home. They would put the checks and balances in place.

They would also recognise the importance of immediately revisiting the concept of giving \$1 500 to the private sector to keep an old person in a home, if nothing is wrong with that person, and look at giving that person an increased pension to take care of himself or herself. Sir, as I have just demonstrated, \$90 000 in five years could be used to build new homes for older persons.

Mr. Speaker, if Government continues with that policy, what would happen, as is happening, is that more and more older persons would be left at the geriatric hospitals and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because they know that if nothing

is wrong with them, they would be put in a beautiful nursing home and Government would provide for them.

Mr. Speaker, finally, what is critical is that this all stems from the fact that the elderly in Barbados is being viewed as a worthless group, a group of persons who do not contribute to the economic development of Barbados. Sir, as long as these persons are being seen as an element that is drawing from the public's purse and the Administration not understanding how to have them reintegrated back into the productive capacities, it will always be considered that way.

Mr. Speaker, while being employed at the Geriatric Hospital, I remember a number of things were asked for in a number of Estimates that were brought to this Parliament. Sir, because other persons who did not have a clue to what that particular required element would have meant in terms of the delivery of service, have said that there was no need for that particular item to be purchased.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Member tries his best. All I would want to say to him is that he has a challenge on hand, but as long as the elderly person is being seen as a worthwhile contributor to the continued development of Barbados and we decide to implement the many dictates of the World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation and take them seriously within our policy programmes, we will go nowhere.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be able to make a contribution in this debate. What we have before us is the Green Paper which is the object and subject of the debate today. It is something that I have been calling for since 1980.

In fact, 1980 might have been the year when I began that call because I was in the Ministry of Health and had recognised that Barbados was already in the process of coming to a place where, before the end of the 20th Century, we would be exhibiting a First World profile or a developed country health profile. Indeed, when we looked at the population profile, it was very clear that, like many developed countries in this world, Barbados would, by the year 2010, be a well established ageing society, and will continue to be so.
3.00 p.m.

It will continue to be so because the demographic profile of Barbados for some time now has been that of a developed country. Barbados is now in the process of reaping a large dividend of generations of development which successive Administrations in this country have made in the social sectors.

Sir, in terms of health care, there is no other country, developed or developing, in this hemisphere that in the 1940s and 1950s has put in place a network of health centres which were later updated to a network of polyclinics and a public health service second to none. Sir, as children we looked down on the public health inspector because we did not properly understand the important role that he played in our community.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have stated to the Honourable Member who just spoke that this matter before the House relates to a national policy on ageing and I would prefer that your comment in some way connect to the Resolution before the House.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Sir, it will connect quickly but I have to speak within a context. The Honourable Member who spoke before me made the point that this did not happen overnight. I want to remind Honourable Members in this House that over a number of years, this social revolution which took place has brought us to where we are in 2004 so that we are able to put before this House a Green Paper on A National Policy on Ageing.

Mr. Speaker, we have to be clear on this Green Paper. Those who have perused it would recognise that this is a document put out for public discourse and dialogue which would, in time, lead to a White Paper where the Government's policies would then be embodied.

Sir, I hope that the debate here today would lead to a wider public debate, and I have no doubt that it would, because we have an age cohort in this country who is now looking to this matter of ageing. Mr. Speaker, I belong to that age range and many are looking to see how they would plan their years of retirement.

Mr. Speaker, these issues must be addressed if we are to look at how we would deal with this question of ageing over the next 20 to 25 years in which time there is going to be a far larger percentage of the Barbadian population who will fall into the over-65 category.

Mr. Speaker, family planning in this country has worked well together with the social revolution to which I referred, to provide a better quality of life for Barbadians. There are pockets of poverty but we have set a high level and are entitled to demand the highest and best for ourselves and our people.

Barbados continues to be one of the most densely populated countries in the world apart from the visitor population to the country. The percentage of the elderly or "recently-young" as I refer to them, will continue to increase

over the next 50 years, and this age cohort will become larger within the population than it is today. Sir, this is a feature that is found in many developed countries of the world and is not peculiar to us, and other countries in the world have addressed it in several ways.

I hope that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East when he is maturing this Green Paper into a White Paper which would now properly reflect the policies of the Government, that a comparative analysis would be made of what obtains in other countries.

Sir, the elderly today in Barbados has experienced rapid change during the 20th Century. In Barbados we are speaking about a population of people who have adapted and embraced electricity, radio, air travel and the Concorde in the 20th Century. There are still a lot of people born in the 1920s who saw air travel for the first time and saw it moved so rapidly that Barbados became one of the two destinations in the world to which the Concorde flew on schedule. Mr. Speaker, the Concorde flew chartered everywhere else in the world but flew scheduled only to New York and Barbados and, Sir, the elderly today accommodated all that change.

Mr. Speaker, in the community programme, we hear that 80-year olds are proficient with the computer, cell phones, laser surgery and that people go to surgery in the morning and have their cataracts removed by midday. Sir, the population in Barbados is highly educated. If there is any doubt about this fact, the UNDP Human Development Index shows Barbados to be the first developed country and, it is incredible that it continues to be the highest developed country in the world among all other developing countries. Sir, in the Human Poverty Index, Barbados is number 1 and Singapore is number 6.

3.10 a.m.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Barbados is number 1 in terms of the quality of life our people enjoy. Singapore is at number 6 and Brazil is at number 18, and Brazil is spoken of in the world as a highly developing country and is one of the G20s. Mr. Speaker, just put this in perspective and in context. That is the generation that we are planning for.

Sir, I believe that in the 21st Century, driven by the collective experience, collective wisdom and institutional memory of the elderly, the structure and the way of work is going to differ significantly from the way we worked in the 20th Century. I have made this point in here many times and I need to go on making it. It is happening as we speak.

People are going to work in modules of time. We are going to move away from working 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. and 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. People will work certain weeks and months of the year. They will work in some countries at certain times. We are seeing it happen with returning nationals. Some people will live six months in Barbados and six months in another country, so, the style of work will differ.

Sir, when you travel abroad and visit a shop, you will realise that the person serving at the counter is under the age of 70 years old because young people do not want to do that kind of work and I will come to that in due course.

Mr. Speaker, the kind of work that the elderly will take up is the work which would put paid to the myth that there will be less work and less productivity from the elderly. That is not going to happen in the 21st Century.

Sir, Barbados is unique with its developed country health profile. The benefits and the gains of social investments that we have made, and we make no apology for it, neither Side of this Honourable House in and out of Government.

Sir, look at the average life expectancy in Barbados. I refer to the Human Poverty Index. The highest life expectancy for Barbados, as the Minister told us, is approximately 77 years for women and rising. If you look at this Index, you will see that the life expectancy at birth, in 2002, is 77.1 years. The country at the top of the Index is 78.9 and Barbados is 77.1 because Barbados is in the high human development. Sir, I am just putting it in the context.

Sir, in Barbados, retirement, education, housing and health care delivery would have to be adjusted to accommodate this new generation and how we operate. The benefit of this social revolution that has brought us to the place where Barbados enjoys this kind of human development experience is not something that we have for the luxury of having it. That is why the age of retirement must be moved.

If you put in place, an education, housing and health care programme which allows Barbadians to enjoy this quality of life, the investment that you put into that individual, are you going to curtail it at age 60 or 65? Barbadians are now living longer. My maternal grandmother died at age 63. My father died at 78 years old. By definition we are programmed to live to 80 years and older. I am one of six children.

Sir, I am amazed at the number of 90-year olds that I meet who are active and looking after themselves. It is not the majority that is going to inhabit senior citizen homes and the senior citizen villages. It is the minority. I have no doubt

that the Minister of Health will speak to that. I can probably speak to it but there is another point that I want to make in my contribution.

Sir, having made that investment, there are now obligations on this generation. There is an obligation of self-care. There are pluses and minuses. Those who came before us and in our own generation, by way of our taxes or other ways, and we are contributing to this, why would we want them to smoke, eat the wrong thing, and too much of it, and drive recklessly on the roads? In other words, to indulge in a lifestyle that is irresponsible.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to self-care if we want to take the fullest advantage of this. If you want to live to the age of 90, you cannot be doing 90 m.p.h. on the highway as a matter of course.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Even though this Index will show you that our literacy rate is 99.7 per cent, you have to avoid lapsed literacy. In other words, continuing education, which I have no doubt the Minister of Education will make which is critical. You will find in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party this agenda for 2003-2008.

Therefore, we have a duty to avoid self-inflicted damage to our health. Sir, frankly speaking, the day may come in this 21st Century when there will be a penalty for self-inflicted damage. Sir, for example, smoking and all of the things to which I referred.

Mr. Speaker, there are negative implications of ageing. Those of you who have read this document before, I recommend that you not only read the document itself, but the Appendices that are attached. Appendix II speaks to Views on the Implications of Population Ageing and there are some negative and positive implications. Let me deal with the negative implications first because I want to dwell on the positives.

Sir, this document tells us that the negative implications speak to less work, productivity, income and poorer health. Sir, this need not be the scenario nor the case for Barbados. The Green Paper, I believe, will trigger an enormous public discourse and I believe that, in the end, most people will come to the conclusions that I am coming to.

I am not saying that there is not going to be a small number of elderly people in Barbados in the mid-21st Century who will not be doing less work and enjoying better health. You are going to have that anywhere at any rate in the world in the most developed societies and those that are middle income, as we are, and, perhaps, even in less developed countries.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I do believe that people are going to work in modules of time. I believe that the elderly are going to contribute even more to the work place and workforce. Some are going to do it at home. There are people who are already working from home in their offices.

There are people who are doing ordinary work at home which has never had a dollar cost attached to it but in this Century, it will. It is nothing new. Our grandmothers and mothers had a little garden and there is no Barbadian backyard, I believe, that does not have a lime tree and a pepper tree in it.

3.20 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: You are going to go back there, because if you are going to healthy living and to health care, you are going to go back there. Some are going to be returning to the workplace for reasons I have said before, to do work that the younger generation does not want to do, or because they have highly specialised skills they would take back there. They would work in modules of time that suit them. Some are going to do voluntary work.

Again, in this community, we do not attach a dollar value to these jobs. I was very interested to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, as he introduced this debate so brilliantly, put a number, at least to the hours, of voluntary work that is done in this community. It is not a new thing. We beat up ourselves in our generation a lot, but there are areas where we are not doing badly at all.

People give back in their churches. People are servers. People come to sweep. I passed the other morning and saw a woman outside Paynes Bay Methodist Church tending the flowers. Sir, that is her self-appointed job.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I am a Methodist, so I would notice these things.

I see the same thing at Holetown. People are self-appointed. They clean the windows. They launder the Altar cloths and so on. They do tremendous work now in churches.

Sir, churches around the City of Bridgetown in my constituency provide daycare for seniors, day care for children, catering services and all kinds of things. You can go into homes now, and there are old people who tell you that they do not cook. They are not able with that now and the catering service looks after them.

This Manifesto speaks about a National Meals on Wheels. This is almost in process already and it is a good thing that is coming out of the private sector. In that respect, the private sector is ahead of the public sector.

Sir, I am saying that the elderly will be filling gaps by virtue of highly specialised skills. Some of them are also going to start new businesses because retirement itself is going to become one of the biggest industries in the first half of the 21st Century. This is a fact of life. It is happening already even as we speak, so that new industries are arising every day as a consequence of ageing.

Sir, rather than less work, there will be more productivity going into the national economy, coming from the elderly who will be supplemented and complemented and, sometimes, even overtaking what the productive age cohort before it, will be doing.

Mr. Speaker, income security is another area which, I think, is ripe for new and innovative thinking. Pensions, insurance, living Wills, and investment instruments have to be designed now, to address the needs and the wants – and I distinguish between the two – of an elderly society. It is happening already in many of the developed countries and we have now to tailor to suit the needs and the wants.

Mr. Speaker, because of the constraint of time, I am not able to elaborate on this and I wish that I could.

The National Insurance, I believe must be a part of this. It cannot only be a matter for the private sector which is ahead of the public sector. The National Insurance Scheme must look to these new methods of social security in a new century and, indeed, a new millennium here in Barbados. Older people with property and other investments will want to supplement their pensions and they are going to find other ways of supplementing their income and it is going to be their value added.

Therefore, it is very natural to assume that a growing age cohort within your population, with highly honed skills, with experience, and with the wisdom of age will bring a value-added that we cannot even begin to recognise in our society at this time.

In respect of health, the negative side will tell you that health will be poor because you are an elderly person. I do not believe that the majority will fall into this category, in this century, if people will adhere to self-care, eat properly, exercise and live a responsible lifestyle.

Do not let us fool ourselves, Mr. Speaker. I have no doubt the Minister of Health will speak to the killer/chronic diseases in Barbados. They say that if by the age of 50, one

of them has not established itself in your system, with a hop, skip and a jump, you will get 75 easily and then, it is coaxing down to 90 after that.

There are many, and I do not agree with the Honourable Member for St. Philip West when he spoke about people with chronic diseases, and what their survival rate would be and what their morbidity would look like. There are many who have the chronic diseases well-established in their systems in their 40s and 50s. I see many of them going up to age 75 and 85, because they learned to manage their diseases.

Sir, disease management is part of it.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Yes, we have to try to contain health care cost. The Honourable Members on That Side, Mr. Speaker, were over here at the time and I was over there in Government in the late 1970s, when I brought the National Drug Service to this House. I would never forget it. They made me see stars of every colour in here. It was the first time some of them were hearing the words, “generic”, and “bulk purchasing”. Sir, Oh, the predictions! For example, I was going to bring Barbados to ruin and people were going to die off from poor medicines and pharmaceuticals.

Asides.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Yes, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, he who sits beside you, his profession nailed me up to the cross in here. Mr. Speaker, 25 years later, I am living to see that in the United States, generic is in and bulk purchasing is in. It is the only way to go.

Sir, I just came back from Brazil and one of the matters discussed there had to do with Barbados becoming a production centre for the antiretroviral therapy for those who suffer HIV/AIDS. I heard the Honourable Member who spoke before me, glibly lipping off the special benefit areas.

Sir, if nothing else, that could be said to what was done in health in my time, it was the National Drug Service. It was the longest time I ever spoke on this Floor, 5½ hours and, I wish I had that time now.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, you only have two minutes more.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Oh, no, no, but thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I had the whole medical profession against me and the pharmaceutical profession against me, but there is no Government now or in the future that would dare to reverse it.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we have to bear in mind the killer diseases, the return of communicable diseases which we were not banking upon, but they are coming back now, such as tuberculosis and malaria. Then, there are new diseases like HIV/AIDS, so we do not know what will come in the next 20 to 40 years.

Sir, before I sit, I must speak to housing because this is part of it as well, that a national ageing plan must speak to. Again, we have to look at a broad set of options, geriatric hospitals, senior citizens' homes, assisted living complexes and shared accommodation. The Golden Girls' Programme has triggered a reaction in Barbados.

Sir, there are people who have large homes and they do not want to live in them. Some of them cannot afford to maintain these homes, as they move into their later years, and now I am seeing shared accommodation and senior village communities. Across all the spectrums, there are going to be some very upmarket ones. There are going to be some middle-class ones and some working-class ones, and we see the beginning of that at Vauxhall. The Honourable Minister is to be lauded for taking that first step.

Mr. Speaker, daycare for the elderly is not a new thing. It was started at the Geriatric Hospital over 20 years ago. There are home care-givers, where people come home to give care on a special basis. They come and spend two hours, take the blood pressure, help people bathe and do what you have to do. This is an industry going in Barbados today.

Mr. Speaker, let me close on this point. Mr. Speaker, I would wish the Honourable Minister and his advisers to consider this because I see the extended family, which we thought was disintegrating, reinventing itself. It is happening already, but in a different way. Persons used to take their children to the daycare centres, now they are taking granny and great-granny to daycare although some of the grannies are taking and collecting the children at the daycare centres, so that you do not lose productivity at the workplace. Sir, socially and otherwise, I see the extended family in Barbados now beginning to reinvent itself, which I think is a good thing.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the private sector has a large role and function in these national policies which are going to be put in place in these early years of the 21st Century. My time has virtually gone so there is no time to expatiate on that but I will do it at another time and place. The public sector is going to be engaged across many Ministries and Departments of Ministries.

Sir, we must not only see this in terms of the Ministry of Social Transformation and the Ministry of Health. There are implications here for the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of International Business, the Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs as well as a Ministry of Senior Affairs which will come perhaps sooner than we think.

There will be nothing that the elderly will think is beyond them because the generation of the elderly that we are moving up to now will be persons who have peopled all of the sectors of our economy, so there is no reason to believe that they cannot continue beyond the age of retirement, whatever that age will be.

Mr. Speaker, retirement is only a notion now you know. In this Century all retirement really means now is that you do something different, you do something else or you do the same thing but in a different way, at a different time, or in a different context.

Mr. SPEAKER: Your time has expired.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I apologise that I move at such great speed but I really wanted to make my contribution in this way.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too rise to speak in this debate. Unlike the Other Side which refer to these men and women using the process of ageing, I would prefer to use the term "the experienced people of Barbados".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is clear to me that there is a big divide between the two sides on this particular issue. One only has to look at the extension of the age for National Insurance pensions, which I do not support. We have to understand that there comes a time in one's life when you have to allow one a freedom and a choice. Sir, I believe that after you have gained experience, you should be allowed the right to decide whether you want to retire early or to go on working. Nobody should be able to deprive you of the right to retire early, to stop you from going into a different form of work to use your experience where you can then help people who are close to you or to set up a business and employ people.

Sir, as it stands now, this society is dictating to people who have accumulated experience and want to have the opportunity to use that experience in a different light. Sir,

their work life must be divided. It cannot be a continuous thing where if you are working in the Civil Service you must spend all your working life in the Civil Service and you cannot take the opportunity to use your experience and then use it in the private sector. Sir, what is amazing is that this decision does not affect the high flyers, but the masses who cannot operate as independently as those at the top.

Sir, we must reconsider and rethink what I have said about changing the retirement age from 65 years. I do not support the view that the age of retirement should be from 65 years up, if anything it should be brought down.

Sir, if we are really going to be a part of a competitive world, we must allow people with experience to leave the normal workforce and become employers of themselves. What we are doing is tying them down to a system and not allowing the system to expand at the rate that it should be.

Sir, we speak about globalisation and trade liberalisation, but I do not see any evidence in our actions to show that we really understand what we are up to, so instead of expanding, we are limiting. I am saying, Sir, that if we are really to go forward, we must change our approach. I want the Government to understand that these people are not old people. They are just experienced people who want another opportunity to go into another turn of their lives to be able to help their families and the people around them.

Sir, I can see that at least the Front Bench agrees with this particular point. However, I do not only want an agreement, I want to see implementation.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: If the Honourable Member for St. Philip South does not agree with this point, he can say that. Sir, because I say the Front Bench, it does not mean that I necessarily mean him. If he does not want to associate himself with this particular comment, he needs to get up and dissociate himself from it.

Sir, we also have to understand that we are also dividing our communities. There was a time when we used to try to encourage young people to be around the experienced people – you would not hear the word "old people" from me – but all of a sudden we have certain social agencies within this Government and within the previous Governments and we seem not to understand the bonding between our people and have now removed certain factors and are now allowing experienced people to compete with younger people for social services.

I speak of the National Assistance Board and the wonderful job it used to do as it relates to the affairs of the experienced people. We took those services and gave them to the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of housing, we are now asking the experienced people to compete with younger people for the same type of services. Before when we allocated a budget, we knew that full budget was allocated to the experienced people, or as the Barbados Labour Party would call them, the old people. Technically and socially, that is wrong. We need to bring those persons back into the budget in their right form and their right amount so that on a yearly basis we would know how much money would be spent on those experienced people and they would not have to compete with the younger people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to understand that we have to allow these experienced persons to have the capacity to expand their incomes. If we continue to tie them to a particular age where they are stuck in a particular direction, they cannot use their capacity as it relates to experience to expand themselves and to provide for themselves and for others.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, even though the Honourable Member has made a beautiful speech, I want him to understand that was only the beginning. He now has to make changes, now that he has heard common sense in this Parliament as it relates to experiences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to understand that we in Barbados, cannot make changes which are politically expedient. We must make changes that will expand and better the lives of our citizens.

Sir, I do not think we understand what is going on in this country or in the world. Whereas the world is seeking to expand their economies, it seems to me that we are seeking to decrease the capacity of our people. We have to understand that we have to be very careful in the direction in which we are going.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard the Honourable Senior Minister making the point that the concept of senior citizens' homes is a wonderful one, and I agree. Sir, it could only be a wonderful concept because it was conceived by the Democratic Labour Party when the former representative for St. Michael West, the Honourable Branford Taïtt, was Minister. That concept included the St. Lucy District Hospital, which persons now speak ill of. The land to the east of that Hospital was supposed to be used for individual housing units for the experienced people of Barbados.

In other words, the concept was not to put them all into one block but to allow them to continue living as though they were in their own communities, so that they would have a kind of camaraderie with the people of Hope Road, and would not have been alienated, thus making persons believe that they were rejected but are a part of the society.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people have to understand that the concept of housing for the aged was not one that was thought of yesterday. It was carefully thought out as usual, but it came from the Democratic Labour Party. It had a social need and a social understanding to it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this reminds me of when the Democratic Labour Party did our housing development and had understood the importance of putting a church and a shop within that housing development. I am saying that there is always a difference between the two parties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, seeing that this Honourable Minister was over here before, he should not get himself into any trouble over this concept but should know how to implement the policies of the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, I do not think I have to worry about how this policy would be implemented. The Honourable Member understands the feelings and should be able to implement it correctly. I have no fear of this particular Minister as it relates to how he will implement this particular policy, because his grounding was right.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am not too sure that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, being a true "BLPite", would have been able to implement this particular policy without having any problems. Sir, many others could afford to implement them because they understand the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party and it would not have been difficult for them to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why when I speak of some of the things they have implemented, I have to be very careful. I always have to remember that speaking to certain Honourable Members on the Other Side was like speaking to my brothers and sisters on This Side.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to come to the conclusion that the people who are experienced are not rejects in the society, and that we must come to a common understanding that they must be treated the same way as the younger ones within the society.

Sir, I am calling on the Honourable Minister to take the bold step and tell the Barbados Transport Board that they cannot limit persons to travel at certain hours. If these persons had the capacity to carry us all over the world and

could have done for us what the younger ones cannot do, we must free them up. We must understand that these persons have brains that are working and can think for themselves.

They do not want a Government agency to dictate to tell them when to travel. Sir, to do that would be to create stress on these persons. We need to understand that and to appreciate these persons for who they are and for their capacities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we must also understand that there comes a time in these persons' lives where they recognise that they do not want to compete with the normal workers, to create stress for themselves by rushing to do an 8.00 a.m. or 8.30 a.m. job, when they could be relaxed in their communities where they could use the money they would have been amassed over the years, to create employment within their own communities, instead of creating stress by travelling along the roundabouts of Barbados.

Sir, if we continue to expand the age upwards for retirement – that is exactly what we are doing – we are putting unnecessary pressure on these experienced persons. All I am asking the Government to do would be to allow these persons to retire at the correct age so that they could give back something to their communities.

Sir, I know the Honourable Member for St. James North understands what I am saying because if he had his way, he would have spent most of his time in the north of Barbados, which is stress-free. He would not have moved to the south where it has created stress for him.

The Honourable Member understands the point I am making, that is why he appreciated the point when he went to the college on the hill, looking down on the rich and famous. He understands the joy of being able to do something like that, where one can go on the hill and look down. It gives one a particular easy feeling and an experience that many persons would never be able to enjoy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that by the time the White Paper reaches Parliament, and we are able to make legislation to suit this, that I would not have to repeat these points. I would hope that they would be all included and that there would be a common understanding on Both Sides, so that we would be able to appreciate what is happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they are not old people. You are not old, Sir. What you have that is different to other persons is the experience to give out. Sir, you must stop your

comrades from believing that you are an old person. You are an experienced person with a capacity to give to others what you should have been giving to them for some time now. Therefore, no one should tie you down to a particular time-frame, nor should they decide when you should go home.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I think you are trying to make me feel as though I am a little boy.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, Sir, I said experience and experience comes with time. I would never say that you were a little boy. I know you are a fully-grown man and would stand up to anybody to hold your point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to understand what is happening in the world and that we have to be one step better than anyone else. We cannot allow persons to pass concepts and ideas down to us. Sir, because we are a small country, it does not mean that we have to copy everything.

The problem with this Parliament is that we believe everything we want to know has to be read from a text book. This Parliament has to be a thinking Parliament and the sooner it becomes a thinking Parliament, the more advanced this country would be.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make my contribution to this historic debate.

The first thing I would like to do would be to support the Honourable Member for his excellent presentation today. He has not only identified the problems with which the elderly or experienced members of society are faced with but has also given an idea and has made suggestions to solutions. 3.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I like to identify problems as well as putting into practice the solution to those problems and it is one thing to speak about the problem but it is significantly better to solve those problems. Sir, this Green Paper would go a long way to providing solutions to the problems that the elderly experience.

I was impressed by the Honourable Member for the City who gave a wide-ranging speech with respect to the difficulties of ageing. Sir, I am impressed with the Drug Service and both the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and the Honourable Member for the City would have to agree that the Drug Service is an excellent policy brought into being by the Barbados Labour Party.

It has existed for 28 years and continues to be a model for a drug service and the delivery of drugs for people worldwide. This is something the people of Barbados should be proud of because it enables our seniors to benefit from generic drugs. It is an excellent opportunity for them to maintain their health and a reasonable standard of living.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak about life expectancy in Barbados. The Ministry of Social Transformation and the Senior Minister lauded Barbados for being able to maintain life expectancy up to 77 years of age and I understand this age is increasing.

Sir, let us look comparatively at life expectancy in some of the other countries in the world. As would be expected, the developed nations generally have high life expectancy, but we have to look at the other end of the scale. The worst life expectancies in the world in 2000 are Malawi - 37.6 years, Mozambique - 37.5 years, Zambia - 37.2 years and we have to examine what was done differently in Barbados to have a life expectancy of 77 years as compared to people in Africa who have life expectancy as low as 37 years.

The Senior Minister mentioned that it was the significant progressive policies put forward by successive Administrations to improve the environment, health, standard of living and all facets of life for our people. These are the main criteria for enhanced life expectancy for people in this part of the world.

Sir, we do not have problems with malaria like the African nations do. We have a problem with HIV/AIDS but are trying our best to contain it through active, virile medication which is now being offered free of cost. We are controlling the vertical transfer from mother to child by giving anti-retroviral drugs during the months of pregnancy so that the child will not contract HIV/AIDS at the time of birth. These are fantastic things that successive Administrations have brought about to enable our people, our number one resource, to be able to experience life expectancy in excess of 77 years.

Sir, this comes with pluses and minuses. We have the benefit of our people for longer periods of time, but this puts significant stress on our social services and the health sector. There is an interesting quotation which says that there are no diseases peculiar to old age and very few from which it is exempt.

This is obvious because as people live longer, they accumulate significant diseases like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and Alzheimers. Sir, all these diseases put significant stresses on the society and the health care system as we know it today. Sir, because of this, all Governments and all progressive institutions worldwide must

be looking forward to plan for their ageing population. This is why we are discussing this Paper today because it is a planning process so that we would be in a position to cope with our ageing population as it continues to mature.

Sir, I will make a document of the House the Population Pyramid Summary for Barbados in 2000, 2005 and 2050. It is clear to see that from 2025 there will be a significant number of people who are over the age of 65. The age cohort for 55 and above will almost equal, if not surpass, the number of 50 and below. This is significant because it means that the number of persons who have to work to pay pensions over 65 becomes significantly decreased.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is why this forward-thinking Government has made the important and necessary arrangements and adjustments to the National Insurance Scheme so that it does not go bankrupt like what is happening in other jurisdictions where, because they did not make the necessary changes at the time, are now running the risk of being bankrupt. Sir, Americans would tell you that there will be nothing to receive from Government as a pension because there will be no money by the time they retire since the necessary policies were never put in place and that they will have to rely on private pensions to take care of them in their elderly years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Barbados Labour Party Administration, recognising the need, has made the necessary changes to the National Insurance so that by 2025, when many of us here will be pensioners, there will be something for us at the National Insurance Department. I salute this Barbados Labour Party Administration for thinking and moving in a progressive manner to provide for our citizens in their twilight years.

It is also interesting how the age cohort result in feminisation of the population. This is because as people get older, the ability for females to live longer is enhanced over the ability of the males.
4.00 p.m.

Sir, this means that the population tends to lean towards more females than males, especially in the older age groups. It is particularly interesting the age cohorts at 2050. At 2050 we see that there will be approximately 15,000 ladies over the age of 50, which is significantly higher than other age cohorts through 2050.

Sir, I think this is absolutely significant because it shows the great need that care of the elderly will play in this society. It is a new industry. It is an industry that will

continue to make significant strides. It is an industry that we have to pay very careful attention to because it is an industry that would provide for our seniors in their twilight years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that from the life expectancy we see here in the Caribbean, it is obvious that the fountain of youth can be found here in Barbados. There is another study done in 1993 by Duke University. It found that the percentage of older Americans in good health is growing at a greater rate than the percentage of those with disabilities.

What is that saying? It is saying that someone who is 65 years old continues to maintain excellent health, continues to do the right things, for example, exercise and eat the right foods and maintain themselves in an excellent manner, in comparison to someone 50 years ago, when they reached the age of 65 they were looking to go onto the other side. Sir, age 65 or 70 is not what it used to be.

I have to disagree with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who suggested that we must have people retiring at age 65. Unlike him, I am pro choice. I believe that people must have a choice when they want to retire, whether it is age 60, 65 or 70 because everybody is not the same. Some people might continue to be sprightly at age 65 or 70 and feel that they want to retire at age 70. Others may not be so genetically inclined and, therefore, might want to retire earlier at age 60.

I think that the removal of the restriction is significant and it gives people an opportunity to choose their age of retirement. This was a significant move by this Barbados Labour Party Administration and I salute it. Sir, older people can live more vigorous and active lives than in the past and if they are encouraged to be productive, they can be productive economic contributors to our society.

Sir, I want to make a point about the banking sector in particular and their discrimination against the elder population. Are you aware that if a person who is 65 years or older tries to obtain a loan from the commercial bank that they have significant difficulty? The loans officer would say that their age disqualifies them from being able to achieve the loan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say that is wrong. We must stop this conservative and inward feeling in the banking sector. Sir, people who are older than 65 years and want to continue to be productive and add to this economy they must be allowed to do so. Your age must not be a discriminatory or limiting factor on your ability to achieve a loan.

Sir, your ability to, maybe, set up a small business, employ others, start or add to an industry, to remortgage your house and use the proceeds to maintain your care. These types of things are essential and we must be prepared to speak out against them because discrimination in any form is bad news, whether it is discrimination of age, race or any form and it must be routed out of this society.

Sir, it is not the quantity of life but the quality of life that is important. Of course, longevity has its place and everybody wants to live to 100 years old, but it is no point living a long life unable to cope or to take care of yourself. This is why the quality of life is equally as important as the quantity of life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that if a middle-aged person in this society has a right to be able to achieve and afford, every person should be given the right to be able to achieve as well. They must be given immediate access to health care. They must have the confidence and security in knowing that they are protected. They must be given the right and ability to remain active and independent.

We must offer and provide an environment that reduces the anxieties for them if they have to live on their own, which we see often in seniors. We must give them every opportunity to continue being productive members of this society.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East said on many occasions that the senior citizens are our most treasured and able resources and I agree wholeheartedly with him.

Our elderly people have institutional memory of how it was. They understand the morals and virtues of which this society must espouse and must get back, like loving thy neighbour and being thy neighbour's keeper. These are significant morals and values that our grandmothers and grandfathers would have taught us but somewhere along the way, we as a society have lost touch with that.

We need to get back to it and it is through the direction and guidance of our elderly that we will be able to get back because they are the guiding lights for this society and they are the ones that will keep us on the straight and narrow path. Sir, I want to tell the young people that they have to be prepared to listen and learn and that is very important.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I first came back to this country to work as a young dental practitioner, I could have gone and opened my own practice but I said "No". Why should I go out there and make the mistakes that other people would have made? Would it not be better to align myself

with a senior practitioner of 20 years experience and learn from the things that he has done, learn from his successes and mistakes as well and through that be able to make my practice better?

I believe that I have achieved it. I took his 20 years of experience and condensed it into 6 years and improved my practice but that is a lesson for the wider society. Learn from the mistakes of your elders. Learn from the successes of your elders and through them you are not doomed to make those mistakes. You can capitalise on their education, experience and make things better for yourself and make the society a richer and better place for us all.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very wide-ranging debate. I salute all of those Honourable Members who have contributed. It was really an experience for me, as well as an education to listen to the Minister of Social Transformation. I look forward to the changeover to the White Paper and to be further involved in the national debate, as we hear comments from other members of society who also would put their contributions and ideas to making this policy document better for this society and this country. It is an important facet that cannot be ignored.

I also could not speak today without saying a few words about the elderly in Christ Church West, who caused me to be here today. I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that like others, we also have our needs of elderly people with houses that need repairs, need for proper bathroom facilities and better environmental conditions in Christ Church West. I hope my pleas would not go unanswered, as I continue to lobby and ask that their lot in life will be enhanced by this Barbados Labour Party Administration.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the Honourable Members who have spoken, I rise to make my contribution to what I consider a very important topic. I put this presentation in its proper context by beginning with the particular aspect of it that the Honourable Member for the City addressed when she spoke, which is, how does a society become an ageing one and then I will look at the implications of an ageing society.

Sir, when I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, I did not get the impression that he clearly understood that it takes years of social and economic engineering to improve the quality of the environment in general in which persons live, such as, improving the quality of the health care system, and the relationships which people enjoy, over time, that would eventually lead to persons living longer.

The Honourable Member for the City put it well, when she said that it was years of addressing the social needs, called "the social revolution", which successive Administrations over many decades, would have contributed to significantly. I said that at the outset to make this point. This is not the type of issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should want to come into this Honourable Chamber and seek to politicise in the same way that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West spent his reply doing.

Sir, on one hand he is saying that during the last 10 years, precious little, if anything of material significance, was done in this country, in order to improve the lot of the older persons, but at the same time the phenomenon continues.

Therefore, if it stands to reason that meticulous planning, to facilitate social and economic engineering is at the heart of contributions being made for an ageing society to emerge, and indeed, develop, how could you then say in this Honourable Chamber that over the last 10 years, this Government has done precious little. If that were the case, then you would expect the phenomenon to get on a reversing trend and that this ageing phenomenon would not have continued on the path that it has been on for some time. Therefore, that is a contradiction. It is what I mean when I said that you come in here and you try to politicise everything.

The other thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West came into this Chamber and said that he has no obligation to offer any solution whatsoever to anything. All he is paid to do, and all the people of St. Philip West sent him down here to do, is to criticise.

I dare say, Mr. Deputy Speaker...

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I did not make that statement, and I will repeat the statement. Sir, I said that I do not work for the Ministry of Social Transformation or the Ministry of Health, so it is not my responsibility to announce solutions to their particular problems, and my job is to represent the interest of the elderly. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how the Honourable Member could have deduced that statement to the statement he just made.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not waste any more time on that particular matter. At the rate he is going, all Barbadians would ensure that he never becomes a worker of the Ministry of Health or the Ministry of Social Transformation, if he is not in a position to present himself and his team, as a reasonable alternative.

While I am on it, I would like the Honourable Member of St. Philip West to know that this Administration thinks seriously about the elderly population and the senior citizens in this country. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East would have made it very clear that this Administration, which brought this Green Paper on Ageing, treats the senior citizens in this country as a national resource.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Administration, to the best of my knowledge, has never come into this Chamber with either a Green Paper on the Ageing, a White Paper on the Ageing, or a Blue Paper on the Ageing. They have come with no paper on the Ageing. This Administration will continue to see senior citizens in Barbados as treasures, and that is why we have this Green Paper on the Ageing and that is why...

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South is obviously misleading this Chamber. His own argument is that social economic issues have been advanced by Administrations over the years to provide for the elderly. He said that early in his speech.

Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the greatest piece of legislation or in fact, the best White Paper ever brought to this Chamber to take care of the ageing or the elderly would have been the National Insurance Scheme, under the Democratic Labour Party in the 1960s.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.
4.20 p.m.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said that it is as a direct result of this Administration acknowledging that senior citizens in Barbados are to be treated as treasures and that there is a need to revisit our social and economic arrangements that this Green Paper on Ageing has come to this Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Administration wants to go forward in a very structured and systematic way in how it treats to issues pertaining to improving the lives of elderly persons in Barbados. We need to anchor it in a policy and this Green Paper sets the stage for that policy to be developed through further consultation with other members of the society.

Asides.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: The Opposition has not done anything like that. The Honourable Member may speak to sporadic attempts at a particular scheme or a policy but I am resubmitting that they cannot produce a document when they were in power which addresses treating to issues of the elderly in a very fundamental and systematic way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, before I get further into the meat of what I want to say, I just want to let the Honourable Member for St. Philip West be aware of something. It seems to me that at the height of his exuberance he is quite unaware of some of the things he is saying. He said earlier in his presentation, and even quoted from a document that revisiting the fee structure for the provision of medical services, would necessarily mean that they are going to change all of them thereby suggesting that they are going to increase all of them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a fee structure is just what it says. You provide many services. There is a rate charged for each of those services and all of them put together would give you your fee structure. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a fee structure is altered or adjusted if you change one of them. A fee structure is adjusted if you increase some and you do not touch others. A fee structure is also adjusted if you hold some constant and reduce others.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member must not come in here waving a document without the facts about how the fee structure has been adjusted and wanting to give the impression that we have taken a decision to increase all the fees because there is a need to revisit the fee structure. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West should have leaned across and told him to say things that make a little more sense instead of just jumping off on a tangent in making things that can be totally dealt with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me get on with the meat of what I wanted to say which has to do with the implications for an economy and society of an ageing society. The three things I want to look at in the allotted time are the implications of it for pensions, for the health care system, the components of that health care system – I need to bring some constituency experience in issues to bear on this – and also for employment practices. We cannot divorce the implications for pensions from the employment practices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I listened to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, I did not get the impression that he clearly understood what this Government was trying to achieve when it made the changes to the National Insurance Fund and to the pension arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, all we are saying, as responsible Governments looking down the road, as economists would say, in an inter-generational sense, is that we have a duty to

make life as comfortable as possible for those who will be around when we are long gone. We cannot continue with the current pension arrangements in Barbados because all we would be doing is jeopardizing the chances of persons living many years down the road.

Therefore, if we are to properly prepare for them with the present employment arrangement as it relates to entry and exit of the labour force, those who are contributing today and in the near future may be called upon to make significantly larger amounts of their current earnings in order to support a fund 20, 30 or 40 years down the road. That is a simple principle. In order to protect the integrity of the National Insurance Fund we had to make those adjustments. It is either that we adjust now or over the next 15 or 20 years some of us would have to pay through our noses in order to maintain some level of integrity for the Fund going forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recognising, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy acknowledges, that experience counts for a lot, let us hold these workers into the workforce for a longer period and at the same time allow them to make contributions to the system for a longer period and in so doing the younger members of the workforce would not necessarily have to make increasing levels of contributions in a disproportionate way in order to maintain the integrity of the Fund.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I share the same position as the Honourable Member for Christ Church West that persons should be given a choice especially if they had gained considerable experience. A high premium is to be placed on experience that is gained in the workforce and knowledge that is gained along the way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me use the West Indies Cricket Team as an analogy. There was a time when we held the Richards, the Lloyds, the Haynes and the others into the team well beyond the age of 35. When those people were still engaged in the West Indies Cricket team, the success of the West Indies Cricket team was far superior to what it was when we moved to another policy of discarding people when they turn 30.

Of late, we were all rejoicing at the success of the West Indies Cricket team because of someone they had discarded and who they had to go back for because of the strings of his performance, that is our national captain, Courtney Browne, along with Ian Bradshaw who is also age 30. Up until that time, you would hear that the cricketers in the 30s were advanced in age and there should be no room for them and bring in some youngsters.

I can assure you that the performance of those two gentlemen coming obviously on what was done by the younger members of the team would have sent the correct

signal to the selectors of the West Indies Cricket Team that there is a lot to be gained by maintaining and keeping a couple of the experienced players in the team.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this issue of training and retraining of workers raises another issue which relates to the employment practices and how we prepare persons who are in the workforce for many years for continuing for longer periods in the workforce. I am being very serious about this one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because when decisions are being made in respect of who to train and for how long to train, it becomes very fashionable for employers to look toward the younger person in the workforce instead of toward persons who were more advanced in age and who were in the workforce for maybe two or three decades.
4.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we all acknowledge and agree that senior citizens still have a lot to offer in terms of facilitating and contributing toward national development efforts, it means that with all the other strides being made which would help improve the quality of life and the quality of the environment in which these persons live, that greater efforts must be made to ensure that these workers who would have been in the force for a long period and are able to get the necessary training and retraining to make them productive workers for longer periods. Sir, we are saying this against the background of us accepting that it is a choice for persons to leave at 60, 65 or at 67.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the other hand, we do not want persons holding on in the active workforce, without being able to make the necessary contribution to the development of the enterprise and at the national level, to the development of the economy. That is, we do not want them to be drains on the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, recognising that a person might want to stay on in active service until reaching age 65 or 67, that employer and Government would have a duty to ensure those persons who want to stay on can make meaningful contributions to the development of the nation. That is why I said the ageing phenomenon would have an indication for the employment practices.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this raises another issue, to which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy did touch, despite the fact I do not share his views with as much force as he does. We also have to consider that those persons who would want to go early would still have a contribution to make as self-employed persons. That should be encouraged as well and the necessary facilitation should be given them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings me to a programme that the Government has launched in the communities, and I want to personally laud the Ministry and the

Minister of Social Transformation and this Government for launching this Community Information Technology Programme, because Government understands the importance of the telecommunication technology to the aged and to the development of nations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not too long ago, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East provided some statistics to indicate that 25 per cent of persons have been able to access this training free of cost. The good thing about the programme is that it is decentralised, where persons can go to centres closest to them that are equipped with computer laboratories to access this training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, 25 per cent of the more than 3 000 graduates in the communities carry ages in excess of 60 years. Sir, that opens up opportunities for elderly persons to diversify their economic bases. It opens up opportunities for those elderly persons to stay in family-owned businesses for longer periods, thereby taking a longer period to pass on valuable knowledge that they would have assimilated over the years onto younger persons in these same communities who are employed within family businesses. These are the possibilities that this Government has opened up for elderly persons within these communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another implication of an ageing population is the implication for the health care system. We are not saying that the delivery of health care is without flaw but I can assure you that there has been a serious commitment by this Administration to improve the delivery of health care in Barbados over the coming years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can also assure you that in order to perfect the delivery of health care in any society, it would require having access to considerable sums. Sir, persons cannot have it both ways. That is, one cannot be asking Government to make maximum amounts of sums available for the delivery of the health care system and not expect that it is going to cause a crowding-out effect in the provision of services in other areas.

Sir, if persons want a better health care system, which is the expectation of all of us, and if we also recognise that it would cause considerable sums to do that, it must be recognised that we may have to ask persons to prepare themselves to pay more for the delivery of this health care system. Sir, this is what has driven us to revisit the fee structure because we all accept there is a need to improve the quality of delivery in the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, another argument is for a decentralisation of the ambulance service. I do not live close to Bridgetown.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West does not represent constituents living in Bridgetown. Sir, I have argued strenuously for a decentralisation of the ambulance service and for improvements in the St. Philip District Hospital. I am a regular visitor to that Hospital and the workers had, at one point, asked me to pass on some information regarding their request to the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, which I did.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look forward to the day when there is a decentralisation of the ambulance service so that an ambulance can be housed at the Six Roads Polyclinic, or if there is room at the District Hospital, an ambulance could be sent to my constituents or the constituents of St. Philip West and St. Philip North. Sir, Government is conscious of that and I am certain that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South would speak more eloquently to Government's plans to the decentralisation of the ambulance service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak to another issue of an ageing population which has to do with the provision of the necessary public education, to help individuals to prepare themselves better for retirement. It is a very important issue and one that has already been spoken about in this Honourable House and one that we will speak about for a long time to come.
4.40 p.m.

By now all Barbadians should understand that this society is an ageing one and when you are actively engaged in the workforce that a special effort should be made beyond what is already being made in order to provide for your retirement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is incumbent on individuals, entities and groups in society to help with public education to ensure that Barbadians are better prepared for their retirement. Sir, persons can contribute to the National Insurance Fund or by being involved in a retirement savings plan and Government has offered tax concessions for participation in retirement savings plans. This Manifesto of this Administration continues to pledge and, where financial circumstances allow, will do more by way of tax concessions and public education to ensure that Barbadians in their post-working years would enjoy a fairly predictable stream of income to maintain a reasonable standard of living in their later years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to be political in this debate but we need to revisit some initiatives which this Government took to make life more tolerable for the elderly in Barbados. One of the important initiatives taken was when this Government moved to establish institutions like the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission in order to fast-track the delivery

of services to the less fortunate in this society. Sir, within that group was found elderly persons who have worked assiduously and diligently to help with the building of this nation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the Minister responsible for the Rural Development Commission, I have seen the joy that the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission brought to the faces of a large number of elderly people in rural and urban Barbados. Sir, those two Commissions have provided yeoman service in respect of improving the social conditions under which elderly persons live in this country.

I want to continue to support this Administration and provide the encouragement to those in charge of allocations to continue to support these two institutions because a lot is still to be done even though a considerable amount of work was done since the establishment of these two institutions in 1997.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I close by acknowledging the contribution made by Government in respect of providing for the elderly in the various spheres of their lives. I also acknowledge that this Government, through this Green Paper, is recognising that this phenomenon is here to stay, given the progress and improvements we have been able to make in our social and economic life. Sir, by putting together this Green Paper, we are saying that a more systematic, structured way must be utilised as we go forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these elderly persons should be treated as a national resource and planning must be done in a more meticulous way. These plans must be based on a consultative process so that it moves from a Green Paper to a White Paper because, at the end of the day, all Barbadians should share in the framing and design of the policy which, when properly executed, would lead to improvements in the quality of life in the elderly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to you.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that all Honourable Members take these debates seriously so I have no fear that I would be misunderstood when I suggest that I take this particular debate very seriously because we are talking about the well-being of our elderly people through whose efforts, sacrifices and contribution this nation has been built and as a result of whom we are all here today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that one of the valid tests to the maturity of the character of a society is how it treats its elderly. We could talk about provision of educational opportunity, infrastructure, employment generation and

housing but when we talk about the character, calibre and level of maturity of a developing state, one of the indicators is how that State treats its seniors.

It is against this background that I want to commend the Government, in particular, the Minister of Social Transformation and his Ministry, for the important focus being placed on the matter of care and well-being of our seniors and the elderly in Barbados at this particular point of our journey along our way to development.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the valid measures of a Government as to the quality of that Government is how it pursues its policies with respect to the well-being and treatment of seniors. Sir, one of the things which most gives legitimacy to an administration is its treatment of its elderly citizens.

Sir, you can get legitimacy by constitutional means, through the electoral process or an administration can claim legitimacy on the basis of its popularity among the people even after the electoral process has been gone through.
4.50 p.m.

I believe that this Administration is standing on good ground when, in this regard, it claims a high degree of moral legitimacy as an administration. One of the things that marks off the difference between this Administration and those who represent the Other Side, historically, is the policy with respect to the care of the aged and seniors in our society. Whether it had to do with housing, health care or pensions, there is a marked difference in performance and policy position between those who speak for the Other Side and those who speak from This Side in the interest of our seniors and elderly in this community today.

Sir, any Government which is worth its salt or any Government which is worth the label of legitimacy, which it attaches to itself, must find that it is obligated to create the enabling environment within which each citizen is allowed to be as productive as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the distinct impression on reading this Green Paper, which is the subject of our debate today, and from interaction with the Minister of Social Transformation, that he understands this point with respect to our seniors. He does not see them as discards and the Policy Paper suggests that they should not be seen as discards or relics but they are part of the productive resource of this country.

Sir, being advanced in years does not preclude one from being productive. Perhaps, one might be differently productive than one was in earlier years. Sir, being advanced in years does not necessarily preclude you from being productive.

I think that one of the philosophical premises upon which this Paper is postured is the view that our elderly do constitute a significant resource and therefore should not be seen as discarded or relics, and they do have the capacity to produce.

Sir, we have clear living examples of such persons who, having reached the senior stage of their lives, they are still actively engaged in gainful endeavour on behalf of themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one speaks of the capacity to produce, one may speak of the capacity to produce for their family, community or country but there is, perhaps, another element which comes into the discussion when one talks about the capacity to facilitate oneself in the daily needs exercises with which one must engage oneself. I am referring to the issue of dignity.

Sir, when the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East made his presentation, he spoke with reference to 5 or 6 rights which he associated with the elderly. One of them was identified as the right to dignity. I believe that our seniors must be allowed to retain their sense of dignity. In fact, it is a right for them to be able to retain a sense of dignity even as they advance in age. The ability to help oneself and not be totally dependent on others but to be in a position to have the capacity to help oneself speaks to the question of the retention of dignity.

Sir, since 1994, part of the effort of the Barbados Labour Party has been to ensure that our seniors can live an experience with which dignity can be associated. I continue to regret the view expressed by those on the Other Side that providing for housing and sanitary care of our elderly people are to be seen purely as welfare gestures and not as potent initiatives designed to ensure that this right of dignity, which was identified by the Honourable Minister, is, in fact, retained by our seniors.

On behalf of the elderly of St. Michael West, who have, to date, benefitted from such initiatives which have significantly improved their lives and circumstances, I publicly express appreciation to the Honourable Minister, the Ministry and the Government, as a whole, because these things are absolutely important.

Sir, people are denuded of their dignity when they are not in a position to see their basic needs are being met and when daily bodily exercises cannot be pursued without a sense of shame and embarrassment, inconvenience of awkwardness and sometimes the threat to life. These are potent initiatives and not just welfare gestures. They are very much in keeping with this policy of trying to ensure that our seniors retain their sense of dignity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one does not surrender one's right to a sense of dignity when one reaches the age of retirement. I think this is echoed very loudly in the pages of this Green Paper, which is the subject of this debate today.

The Honourable Member for the City spoke with reference to the extended family. I do not know if I am possessed of the view which she shared that we will see the re-invention of the extended family. Perhaps, she is right because she is possessed of a greater wisdom in these matters but I am not yet to the stage where I see that.

Asides.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: The fact of the matter is that one of the dynamics in this matter of the ageing population in Barbados has to do with the extended family. That is one of the principled mechanisms for older people in former times. Sir, with the disappearance, almost, of the extended family, that support prop is no longer there for some of our seniors when they reach their more advanced years. That has gone both as a consequence and a manifestation of economic development.

Sir, you will agree that our national economy has developed providing greater opportunities for work and we have seen situations where, in many instances, both parents in households going out into the job market. Sir, both a consequence and manifestation of national development in the economy have given rise to the matter of the extended family, taking away some of the traditional support for our elderly and seniors in society.

It, therefore, becomes an important matter of policy to Government how we will treat to that. I see this Green Paper as an attempt to put on the table proposals how we as a nation address this matter of looking after our seniors in the new environment in a context where some of the traditional props and supports are no longer there. In that context, this discussion is very important.

Sir, it has already been said, and I support the view, that our seniors are our very resource. They are certainly not a liability. There is a tendency that we see the elderly and seniors among us, especially if they are ailing, as a liability rather than a resource. The challenge is to see them as a resource for their wealth of experience, the knowledge that they have gained and can pass on, the wealth of knowledge that they still retain and the skills and energy, to whatever extent that still exists, even in their advanced years, they are still a resource. Again, I think that this is one of the philosophical planks upon which the Paper is based, which is that they are not a liability but a resource.

5.00 p.m.

Barbadian society remains what it is, gets better, and the quality of life for our seniors is something that we can be proud of, as a developing nation on the doorsteps of a greater level of economic maturity.

In that frame, I would suggest that the incidental way in which we often seem to develop arrangements for sharing responsibility, ought not to be the one to be favoured. In other words, we need to form strategic partnerships. I do not, Mr. Deputy Speaker, favour the incidental way in which we so often seem to get into an arrangement with individuals or groups here, in pursuit of noble causes.

I believe we have now reached a level of a consensus about many things in this country and a level of social maturity and social dialogue, that forming social partnerships have become a thing which we can effect fairly easily. I believe therefore, that we ought to be thinking in terms of forming social partnerships around matters such as this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have the Church, outside of the family. I say this and I hope it catches the attention of the Minister of Social Transformation in a very forceful way. Sir, outside of the family, the Church is the most experienced agency in the business of caring for seniors and the elderly in this country. I am saying, in terms of an institutional mechanism response, we need to develop a social partnership between State/Government, the Church and Non-Governmental Organisations about the business of caring for the elderly.

We cannot simply create a policy position which would allow Non-Governmental Organisation A to involve itself in a programme if it wants, or Church B to engage in a programme if it wants with the help of God. We need to formulate a strategic partnership which allows the tripartite arrangement to do that, as a response mechanism. This is what I am talking about. We have formed social partnerships around other issues in this country and, I believe similarly, we can form one around this thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some implications for this country as there would be for any developing country that come out of the matter of ageing, some of which have been mentioned already. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that when the Honourable Member for Christ Church South speaks, he will address this matter of increasing health costs both personally and nationally since we have heard some utterances earlier from the Honourable Member for St. Philip West with respect to health services provision in Barbados. There are some things that need to be dealt with and responded to, not that I would get that far into that aspect of it.
5.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the process of ageing, you tend to spend more money on health, perhaps that is your experience, and less on entertainment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also now live in a world where the dynamic of marketisation is very potent. We live in a very commercial world where marketisation is driving everything and impacts on the provision and the cost of health services in an even greater fashion. Therefore, the issue of health cost to Barbados nationally and to individuals who can afford it becomes critical.

How do we deal with that in the medium and long-term? I think that this Green Paper gives an indication that this is appreciated as part of the reality which we would have to face as we treat to the well-being of our seniors. Some persons will not be able to fund their own health care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a change in the culture operating around psychiatric and psychological services. I think the Ministry of Health has already expressed realisation for this in terms of how they see the health services provided through the Psychiatric Hospital developing from here on. We need to deal not only with the physical decline but the mental decline. This will therefore represent a cost to Government as we seek to modernise mental health care in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are some economic implications. If we become an ageing population as we are, like many other countries in this world, consumption patterns will change. Very few countries in this world now are not said to be an ageing population. A few countries in the Middle East and Africa are said not to be going through the process of depopulation. The United States of America is said to be one of those countries in our part of the world not going through the process of depopulation. Their position is perhaps made better because of the practices of immigration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, older people consume differently. Some of that consumption is medicinal consumption, as you would know in your professional sphere, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of that consumption is nutritional but consumption patterns will change, therefore we have to plan and prepare for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also the development of small economic enterprises around the business of our ageing population. Whether that is providing care, transport services, food services or other supply services, an ageing population will become a centre around which a whole raft of small enterprises and endeavours will emerge.

The social security mechanism which has already been spoken to will be impacted upon. That also has implications for us with reference to taxation and the

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The social security mechanism which has already been spoken to will be impacted upon. That also has implications for us with reference to taxation and the

pensions levels that we are able to afford. I do not need to go there because that has already been stressed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the question of national wealth generation. If our people are getting older, are able to produce less, though they still can produce and if our population, in terms of balance, is an aged population, that has implications for wealth generation and the labour resource pool which is available to us.

Some countries in Europe, such as Italy, are already going through the trauma of not being able to indigenously provide for their labour force and so they have to look for a lot of imported labour. These are some of the implications which are facing us right now as a result of an ageing population.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the proposals which are outlined in this Green Paper because I understand the philosophical premises upon which it is based. I also understand the appreciation which is being expressed through the presentation of the Minister for the realities which we now face and which will confront us in short order as a result of the fact that our population is ageing. I think the Government is suggesting to the Barbadian society that we are properly planning for that.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give my full support to this document, the National Policy on Ageing, which is before us. I also want to compliment in a very solid way, the thinking and the commitment that was reflected in the pronouncements made by the Honourable Minister of Social Transformation.

Sir, I begin by saying that there is nothing new about ageing. What is new are our efforts to correct the longstanding wrongs that we have witnessed and shared in denying those who can be considered as elders in our society their rightful role in the mainstream of this society.

It was most unfortunate that the debate came to a level where we began to blame each other for the marginalisation of senior citizens in our society. Sir, I said there is nothing new about ageing because the anthropologists would produce evidence to demonstrate how long men and women existed as individuals on the face of this earth.

Sir, if you look back at the findings of Lucy which is in the museums of Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, you will realise that men and women lived for hundreds of years, but what is creating a problem for us in this whole discourse is the damage which was done by our de-culturalisation that affects

our focus in understanding at what time in our history the elderly was marginalised and rejected. The elderly were not rejected by us.

The whole concept of the communal spirit was destroyed as a consequence of black people becoming captives. I know people do not like to hear this, but I have to go back to the antecedents because you cannot analyse what is current unless you understand the history that leads to where you are.

It is only when you make an analysis based on the history and the current affairs, that you can then create policies and programmes to remedy the wrongs in the future. You cannot do that unless you have clear philosophical guidelines that are based on an historic background that will enable you to understand the elements of social antagonism and conflict that exist in the society today.

Sir, what we now call the extended family in the western world, as though this is some new phenomenon, is really the communal spirit of the African paradigms. In Africa, the hierarchical structures of governance were based on the elders at the top, men of wisdom, men that were multi-disciplinary and men who possessed the potency to heal and to extract anything that was demonic from within the individual because of high spiritualism, so the elder was an important individual in the family structure.

In those communes, what we call communities, there were grandparents, great grandparents, mothers, children, everything but that was destroyed as a consequence of black people becoming captives. You never knew where your brother was, your sister was, your father was or your grandmother was.
5.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were brought into an environment where there was no respect for mother, father, sister or even relatives. The system saw people as individuals, which was further re-enforced during the *laissez faire* system.

During the *laissez faire* system there was no interest in the State being at the centre responsible for providing services for persons. Instead, the *laissez faire* system was based on individualism, where every man had a right to look after his own destiny. If that individual did not do that, it meant that he was either cursed or perceived as a man who was indifferent to his own self-interest. Sir, that was the kind of framework we brought to the western world and one in which we were shaped.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Minister tried to do was to recognise that barbaric system that has been perpetuated by focussing the attention exclusively on the individual,

and trying to create a model which was based on the community spirit of bringing the extended family back together, a concept expatiated by the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, which is grounded in the stability of the characteristics of the elders. Sir, the elders were the major stabilising force within the family units, who imparted values, preserved norms and shared wisdom and experiences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when those elements collapsed, the foundation of the family was disrupted and, therefore, we had to find all types of systems to hold this society together. Therefore, when we blame a party or a minister of health for some of these defects in the system, it is that our focus is so narrow on the partisan politics that we refuse to accept a holistic view of what are the causalities of the problems with which we are trying to deal.

Sir, the problem is far more fundamental than the superficial view that was expressed by the Honourable Member of the Opposition, who tried to put the blame on the Minister of Health and, to a lesser extent, the Minister of Social Transformation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the problems we have in bringing these services to the poor is that when we were brought to the western world under a plantation system, and were scattered all around, we were also brought into a geographical environment that did not provide the network of roads for an easy distribution of the sources, even if these persons who were at the centre of that barbaric culture had any good intentions, which we all know they did not.

They could not provide it because the network of services were not there in the internal structures of Government, neither was it in their interest. It was not part of the network of the roads that would enable them to provide a home-help service, so that they could provide an equitable distribution of those services to those who are in need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was not until the post-Emancipation period, and more so the period when black self-Government came at the centre of governance that we recognise radical changes in the efforts of providing services and systems, so that those services can be carried out, to touch and to connect with the lives of the ordinary poor people. Sir, whether it was facing the challenges of child labour, child abuse or matters relating to women not playing a central role in politics, where they could not vote or could not participate in anything.

Sir, it was not even at the time when the pro-lords were in existence because most of the time the homes that we saw were mostly homes for whites. It was even before self-Government came into existence that we saw men like

John Beckles coming on the scene. One has to understand these things so that we can begin to address these social problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, John Beckles, who was a member of the United Negro Improvement Association, the "Garveyite" Movement and so was Israel Lovell. These were advocates on the ground, in advance of Government's policies, driving Government to respond to the concerns of the poor and the elders in the society. Their cause was well articulated by men such as John Beckles and Charles Duncan O'Neal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one would read the details of Barbadian history, one would see what men like John Beckles would have done. Therefore, the Meals-on-Wheels Programme that we now talk about as innovative measures that have been developed by black governments, were programmes that we witnessed in precedent by John Beckles, Charles Duncan O'Neal, members of the Working Men Association and the United Negro Improvement Association.

In the past, these Meals-on-Wheels Programmes were called soup kitchens, where poor people used to go to John Beckles, a man who was relegated to only two or three lines in Barbadian history, to get their meals. Sir, John Beckles understood the importance of respect for the elderly and recognised that we had a responsibility for the poor in the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we begin to analyse, to generalise and to globalise on these issues, the reality is that we are talking about poor, old, black people because there was a clear distinction between what was provided for poor, old black people and what was provided for poor, old white people in the system. The white community had homes built for their elders and in many cases, preserved and did everything to protect the elders in the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one visits the home of any white person, one would see pictures of grandmothers, great-grandmothers and great-grandfathers. On the other hand, there are black people in this country who have never seen their grandmother's or grandfather's picture because they do not have any interest in that.

Sir, something is wrong with that psyche that we have to correct and, therefore, what the Honourable Member seeks to do is to open up new horizons to remove the clouds that serve as encumbrances in creating a new civilisation for our people in general, which would not be inhibited by an age difference. That is why out of this Ministry, the Honourable Member has focussed his attention on both the youth and the disabled because he has recognised that there are various constituencies that belong to one group of people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether or not we say that the programme is for all, the reality is that the recipients of the programmes are persons who look like you and me because there are other communities in this society that take care of their own. If one visits the Hindu community, one would see the elderly in that community living with their families and worshipping together in the temples. If one visits the Islamic community, one would see them taking care of their elders, and for every white family in this country, they do the same. Persons who have been stripped of their persona, totally deculturised in the system, do not understand that this is an important role and that it is a moral duty that must be executed by our people.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are attempting to reclaim that spirit of family and community. We are not interested in rejection and abandonment of our own family members because it is a last resort and must not be perceived as a last stage of refuge because the reality is that the fear of the disconnection from the family is such that many times my observation is, even though there is not empirical evidence to support this view, that when those families abandon their elders the end result is rapid death.

Sir, when the elderly are put in Homes, it should be a last resort and must only occur in extreme cases, but at the first stages of the Alzheimers, they are rushed out of the house and there is no compassion or commitment to them because we feel them to be an obstruction to our social life as well as a burden on the pocket.

The State must not collectively function with that phobia in relation to a pension fund as well. The social component that influences the pension fund must be more emphasized than any argument based exclusively on an economic focus that it becomes a burden on a pension fund. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there should be no burden on the pension fund because it is a collective pool of the very people who look forward to that service.

We have to demonstrate our wisdom as elders in ensuring that we make the required adjustments from time to time in the event that there is a demographic change caused by the reduction in the birth rate. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been a reduction in the birth rate but we have been able to sustain life on a longer period. There is nothing new about this because in the early days prior to the 16th Century, there were rapid early death rates but people lived longer, so ageing existed even then. Sir, the difficulty is always passing through that fragile stage in the life of a human being.

We have the responsibility now at this time when very much like the period of the *laissez-faire* system, where globalisation is now saying to us, in a neo-colonial

atmosphere, that there is no other alternative ideology but the one that is perpetuated across the world. Sir, it is not a gradual thing but an imposition called "globalisation", which seems to create some fear in the lives of intellectuals and politicians and everyone believes it is wise to retreat and suffer from a fear of apathy of contributing to a national debate on these important matters.

Sir, nobody wants to advocate an alternative, ideological perspective but the Minister has to be credited because in that atmosphere of so-called intellectuals, we have a Minister who lays no claim to honours of intellectualism, who has come up with innovative thoughts and providing an alternative based on sound, ideological principles. Sir, the Minister understands because it is a reflection of his views based on consultation with people at the grassroots level, organisations and such like which has been manifested in this document today.

Sir, the Minister is to be complimented and respected for his contribution. If there is one man in this Chamber committed to the things which he says, not a marketing programme, advocacy for publicity of an individual or political party, but speaking from a position of conscience and conviction, it is the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Sir, this programme brought by him today is not one cast in concrete. The objective of this Green Paper is to allow broad participation at all different levels, by the wise and by those not so wise, to make an input to the final document which will come to this Chamber.

This is not a fixed policy document but a model that says to the general public of Barbados, senior citizens, young and all types of people in the society to get involved in it.

This document encourages the participation of people in the decision-making process of a Government. It is a wider and more democratic process than the one which existed prior to black Government in this country.

We are not asking for the puerility of partisan conflict but to include into the discourse a reflection of wisdom as a major asset to contributing to cultivating a more advanced civilisation. We are asking that this debate be now moved to a higher level where the Minister can deduce some words of wisdom and logic from what is being offered from the opposite Side.

There is no doubt that this document is clear in stimulating national debate because he has a background and I want to claim credit for having a similar background. We have put before this nation a parochial programme that demonstrates that we put action to talk and not talk in a vacuum.

5.40 p.m.

Sir, if you come to the Pinelands Creative Workshop, you will see the reflections of what I am talking about. If you come to the Israel Lovell Foundation in St. Michael East, you will see programmes of success, not people talking about what ought to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Monday morning over 60 senior citizens gather at the Israel Lovell Foundation for a programme which includes recreational therapy, a community theatre where they are involved in writing plays and acting. Sir, every year the Honourable Minister and I travel with senior citizens. Sometimes when he is arriving at the Airport with senior citizens, I am leaving Barbados with senior citizens. Mr. Deputy Speaker, at no time, since I was the Representative for St. Michael East, have I taken less than 35 senior citizens per year on overseas tours. Let me explain this to you all.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Every year the senior citizens, in conjunction with a number of groups that sing gospel songs, volunteer their services in an effort to raise funds for the Israel Lovell Foundation. Sir, every year I structure a format which would enable the members of the Israel Lovell Foundation to raise money within their communities in order to offset the cost of overseas travel. This is innovation, not loud unnecessary aggression from an unwise mouth.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Every year the senior citizens of the Israel Lovell Foundation conduct a concert and the money raised is deposited into an account which is exclusively used for the senior citizens. Sir, three days a week the Pinelands Creative Workshop conducts a programme where hot meals are provided for the senior citizens.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: The food for the hot meals is provided through donations to the Israel Lovell Foundation by small black farmers, Ras Iley, Ras Alsindor and others, who operate seven acres of land in the Pine Basin, to assist with the Meals-on-Wheels Programme. Sir, R. L. Seale has committed themselves for five years to monthly allocations to assist the Israel Lovell Foundation.

Asides

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, if white, black, Muslims, Chinese, Indians or whoever make donations to assist the poor, it is my duty to accept those donations and give them

to the poor. Marcus Garvey had negotiations with the Klu Klux Klan.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: I accept assistance from anyone who demonstrates, sincerely or insincerely, humanitarian efforts.

Asides.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: The programme which we are talking about is a programme where elements of it have been tested and they have been successful. We tried to expand this programme at a national level along with a number of other elements that would complement what we have tested as a pioneer effort in two constituencies.

Sir, during the Election campaign the Opposition spent a lot of time talking about a Meals-on-Wheels Programme and when it failed, they were unable to visit the homes of the constituents. The ignorance exists when one believes that it is an insult to poor people if the State provides Meals-on-Wheels to them. Only a man with a perverted mind would believe in something like this. Sir, whether he is in this Honourable House or outside of this Honourable House, no man, who has reached a higher level of thinking, would conclude that this would lead to mendicancy.

Sir, there are unfortunate characters who have risen to become representatives of the people.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you please withdraw that statement?

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, I am not speaking of any specific person. I am speaking about this society.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. Sir, Rule 34.(5) of the Standing Orders states that no Member of this Honourable House can speak language that is offensive or insulting in this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you rephrase what you said?

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sir, there are a number of unfortunate persons who have risen and, as though to some knee-jerk reaction or a nervous shock, it is most unfortunate that the Honourable Member concluded that he was an unfortunate individual in this Honourable House.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD: Sometimes in this system political fractions occur and people who might not function in the best interest of the society can rise to the top that is the point I was trying to make. Sir, not only at the parliamentary level do we see this, but we have seen it happen in many institutions in the western world. Sir, that is why I speak of the characteristics of compassion. I thought that it was a major point in order to make people understand why the Minister can produce a document, based on introspection and compassion, and which enables him to feel and understand the dynamics of persons when they have reached the elderly stages of their lives. Sir, that is the point that I am trying to make.

Sir, apart from the history of success, not only the Barbados Labour Party as a Government in introducing social policies that assist the elderly in improving the quality of their lives, there were elements of the social policy that were put in place during the history of this Government, and since Independence that have helped strengthen and improve the quality of life of senior citizens, for example, health and social policies, technology and science. Sir, this is why persons are able to live past the age of 75 years and both dispensations have contributed to this.
5.50 p.m.

In the 1980s, we saw a significant expansion in the Home-Help Programme across Barbados, reaching a wider group of elders in this society of a specific type, not beggars. Black working class people who receive assistance from the State or any NGO working-class organisations, should never be described by any Honourable Member in the House of Assembly as beggars or mendicants in the system.

We have Honourable Members in here that purport that ordinary working class people who receive assistance from the State or any NGO, even if it is subsidised by the State, the private sector or individuals, that is an exercise of mendicancy, is a criminal charge. I want to reinforce it because we must do everything that we can to eradicate this type of psyche from the body politics of Barbados.

This programme is worthy of praise by all and sundry. This programme is courageous at a time when the global view on the State is creating fear on the leaders across the world, that a Minister can put a programme in place where the State caters to the need of the most fragile people in this society, the seniors in our society, those who are black and poor in our society and become even poorer in the latter days of their lives. This programme is to restore pride and dignity to the ordinary working class poor elders in the society itself.

I want to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Social Transformation for his innovative and courageous ideas reflected in these guidelines for public discourse.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this Green Paper and to commend the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East for bringing this Paper and the dedication and commitment which he has shown in this whole process. At a time when the demographic profile of this country is akin to that of a developed country where we are told that in 2001, the percentage of persons to this country over age 65 was 12 per cent, and it is projected that this will rise to 17 per cent by the year 2010, at a time that life expectancy which stood at 62 in 1966 is now 77, at a time when Barbados is second only to Japan in the number of persons living in their 90s per capita. I think it is really important that this Paper would be coming at this time.

There is no doubt in my mind, though there would be some doubt in the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, that this is primarily as a result of the socioeconomic changes which have occurred in this country, and indeed, the improvements in health care in this country. He can believe this or not, but this is the reality of the situation with which we are faced in Barbados.

Sir, this has certain critical socioeconomic implications for Barbados. It has implications for the NIS of this country, and we have heard about this, but at a time when this country is becoming more and more developed, the extended family system I have heard the Honourable Member for the City speak, a hope in the resurgence of the extended family but I have my doubts about that, we find that the State would have to play a greater responsibility in the role of providing care for elderly persons. In addition, there would be a concomitant increase in health costs. There are new and improved drugs which are more expensive and are being provided for the citizens of this country, through the Barbados Drug Service.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke about the Barbados Drug Service at length, and the problems that he said persons were having in obtaining drugs from various pharmacies.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you, perhaps, know more about this than me, but I was certainly surprised to hear his outburst. All I would say is that the Barbados Labour Party Government in 1980 had the foresight to introduce the Barbados Drug Service. In 1986, before it emitted office, it extended the coverage to persons over age 65.

Sir, what I am saying is that if they feel so strongly about the Barbados Drug Service and it not being any good, in the eight years, after 1986, why did they not make it possible for all drugs which are produced in the world to be free for all persons over age 65? They had eight years to do it. They boasted that in the eight years, they had development and all sorts of things.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: He went on to speak about elderly persons being referred to the QEH for treatment and not being able to have appointments. He should have been pleased as a Barbadian citizen to get up in here this evening and to say that in this country, unlike any other country in the English speaking Caribbean, there are well over 100 persons who have had the benefit of joint replacement surgery.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Tell me what sort of people get hip and knee replacement surgery, if it is young people. Bypass surgery is available in this country free of charge. Who do you think benefit most, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not the young people? I go further, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West who I had some respect for, made the remarkable statement in this Honourable Chamber today, that people who are 90 years old do not suffer from chronic, non-communicable diseases. What utter nonsense?

Asides.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is either willfully or deliberately misleading the House. I never made those statements. Sir, the context of what I said was that because of the shift in the demographics of Barbados, the ageing population will result in an increased number of chronic diseases and, as a result of that shift, we are now seeing some emergence of communicable diseases.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, please. I would like to listen to the Honourable Member.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Honourable Member realised that his speech was going ahead of his thought process, he said that a small percentage of these persons... He was trying to make the point that people who were living longer and the elderly have nothing. He was trying to belittle the developments in the improvements in the health sector in this country.

I want to tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that 77 per cent of persons in this country...

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. No statement that I made indicated in any way, form or fashion that elderly persons in Barbados would not, because of improvements in the health care system, have an increased health expectancy.

The point that was made, Sir, was that there would be more chronic diseases in Barbados because of the demographic shift and the ageing population in the country. That is irrefutable.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, 77 of the persons who get strokes in this country are over 65 years old, and 74 per cent who have amputations are over 65 years old.
6.00 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member should know the causes of strokes and amputations. If you are speaking to such high percentages of persons over the age of 65 having these problems, then it stands to reason that with an ageing population the vast majority of them will suffer some form of chronic non-communicable disease. Indeed, cancers are more prevalent among the elderly. All of these have cost and all of these affect the health care cost of this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak a bit about the current situation in case the impression might have been conveyed that absolutely nothing is being done for the elderly in this country because from what we heard from the Other Side today, I am sure that persons and Honourable Members would have formed that impression.

Sir, in the primary setting, old people can have free medical attention. There is even a home care service where nurses and doctors go and visit persons who cannot get to the health centres or clinics. That happens in Barbados today. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital that the Honourable Member spoke at length about sees, on average, 7 000 elderly persons every year at the Accident and Emergency Department. Sixty-five per cent of the persons in public beds at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital at any time are persons over 60 years. Sixty per cent of the budget allocated to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which has doubled since 1994, is spent on the care of elderly persons.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West in his presentation said he was quoting from the budgetary allocations to the Ministry of Health and went on to quote figures which he said showed that there was a decline in the expenditure in the health service in this country, thereby implying that since this Government came to power, they have been neglecting health. That was the impression conveyed or meant to be conveyed in this Honourable Chamber this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994-1995 – \$165 272 000 was allocated to the health sector, in 1997-1998 – \$201 million, an increase of \$35 million, in 1999-2000 – \$217 million, an increase of \$16 million, in 2001-2002 – \$247 450 000, an increase of \$30 million, in 2002-2003 – \$260 million,

an increase of \$13 million. For this year 2004-2005 – \$314 251 000 has been allocated to health. Sir, this Government that knows nothing about health care, and has been neglecting health care has given an increase of \$149 million in 10 years to health care in Barbados.

Sir, we have the Geriatric Hospital and three District Hospitals, the St. Lucy District Hospital, the Gordon Cummins Hospital and the St. Philip District Hospital. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West seems to be very familiar with the Geriatric Hospital and he should be. He was supposed to have worked there at some time in the past.

Sir, approximately 330 patients are accommodated at the Geriatric Hospital. It has a 30-bed daycare unit and it is a main assessment and referral centre for geriatrics in this country. Sir, a comment was made that in some cases there is one nurse to 40 patients on a ward in that institution.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wondered, I searched, I checked and I knew something was wrong. It was clear there is no ward at the Geriatric Hospital that can accommodate more than 25 patients. Indeed, the average number of patients on a ward is 19.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member obviously knows nothing about the Geriatric Hospital and is therefore misleading the House. Every ward at the Geriatric Hospital has that capacity and on more than one occasion we have had to put two and three wards together in one ward because of leaking roofs. I presided over that movement, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the number of patients on the wards varied from 17 to 24. Indeed, it was tabulated that an institution that size would need to have a nursing staff of 63. It now has 17 staff nurses and a combination of 49 nursing assistants and health aides for a total of 66 nurses, although the study and the research that was done had shown that you only needed 63, so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can assess if this condition really exists where one nurse is attending to 40 patients on a ward.

Dr. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because at any point in time more than 40 per cent of those people are either on vacation or sick leave.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the budgetary allocation for geriatric care in this country which

was \$24 298 000 in 2003-2004 has moved to approximately \$226 million for this year, an increase of approximately \$2 million. Indeed, the allocation for structures has moved from \$20 000 to \$550 000 this year.

Sir, the Honourable Member made light of the St. Lucy District Hospital by saying that on the approach of Hurricane Ivan the Ministry of Health had to move the patients from there to the Gordon Cummins District Hospital.

Sir, the St. Lucy District Hospital is very near to the sea. On the approach of a hurricane, with all the precautions we were taking throughout this country, were we supposed to leave 34 elderly persons in the St. Lucy District Hospital? We in the Ministry of Health felt that we had a duty to those builders of this country to look after them, so we brought them closer to us so that if the hurricane had affected that institution, we would have been able to get to them to provide care and attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will move on. Sir, we also have the Gordon Cummins District Hospital and the St. Philip District Hospital which together accommodate a total of 253 patients.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to get up in this Honourable Chamber and say that conditions are satisfactory in these institutions. Barbados has done very well in terms of health care, but we must face the reality that Barbados is a poor developing country. The Honourable Member should know that in 1987 the Democratic Labour Party Government started refurbishment of these institutions. What happened in those seven years from 1987 to 1994? They were so caring about these institutions. Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you really believe that these institutions reached this stage in 10 years.

Asides.

6.10 p.m.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Government that has increased the allocation for St. Philip District Hospital which stood at \$4 million in 2003, to \$5.4 million this year. The allocation for the Gordon Cummins District Hospital has moved from \$1.9 million in 2003, to \$3.6 million in 2004. The allocation for the St. Lucy District Hospital has moved from \$1.9 million in 2003, to \$2.5 million in 2004.

Sir, I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not in his seat because I know he would have been pleased to hear of the things that we are doing. Indeed, there are plans for this year and we have been going through a phased refurbishment. I can understand why the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, if he had spent

some time at these institutions when he was allegedly employed by the Government of Barbados, would have been familiar with some of these phased refurbishments that are occurring.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this financial year we plan to renovate Wards 1 and 2 at the Gordon Cummins District Hospital. We also plan to renovate the Rehabilitation Unit. In addition, we have started renovation of the kitchen and the laundry at the St. Philip District Hospital. If the Honourable Member had made a visit there recently, he would have noticed that we have started work on the renovation of the general workers' quarters. We have also refurbished the female ward at the St. Lucy District Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can see that there is a commitment on the part of this Government, but everything cannot be done by waving a magic wand. There are countries in this region, at Pan-American Health Organisation Meetings (PAHO) and at Latin American Health Organisation Meetings, that marvel at the kind of care we provide for elderly persons in this country. Sir, in 1999, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West made a big play of this that he was instrumental and gave the impression that he was the architect, the brain or the contractor.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1999, being mindful of the fact that we were faced with a problem of approximately 700 beds in the public sector and there was a waiting list of over 359 persons, to which the Honourable Member has alluded, we realised that there was a pool of approximately 600 beds in the private sector. Sir, in discussions with the Ministry of Health, Government decided that all those persons who were on the waiting list and who necessarily had to be referred from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, needed to be in an institution with 24-hour nursing and, from time to time, medical care. It was also discussed that we could enter into a partnership with the private sector and, therefore, the alternative care of the elderly was devised. This has been a very successful programme, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: The Honourable Member has asked whom for. I do not know if there are any Honourable Members on the Other Side who have a particular interest in any of these Homes, so I cannot say whom for. Sir, what I would say is that as I speak, there are over 130 persons being accommodated in this system. Government pays \$65 per day for a well or ambulant person and \$75 if that elderly person needs more care. In fact, in the last financial year, this budget has moved from \$2.6 million, to approximately \$3.4 million. Sir, this has been a most successful project and I would be pleased to report that we have seen a drastic decline in the waiting list. We see this as one of the areas in which we need to move.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, unfortunately there is another institution where the elderly are being accommodated, which is the Psychiatric Hospital. Approximately 28 per cent of the elderly there is categorised as psycho-geriatrics. They have no specific underlying psychiatric diagnosis. They are essentially there because their relatives are unwilling to accommodate or to accept them. This is unfortunate and is something we have been speaking about when we spoke about community psychiatric care and about moving persons back into the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, however, in the 2003 Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party, I noted that it was proposed that the grounds and buildings now occupied by the Psychiatric Hospital at Black Rock would have been turned into a Village for the Elderly and Homes for the Homeless, on completion of a new hospital for mental health.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know how familiar are you with the Psychiatric Hospital but that Hospital is constructed out of solid stone and I am yet to see how that Hospital would have been turned into a village.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: I do not know in a country like Barbados where we speak about feelings and beliefs, that we are going to put a village for the elderly on the grounds of the Psychiatric Hospital. I am wondering what the general society would feel about it and perhaps if the Barbados Association for Retired Persons (BARP) would be interested in this venture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only is the Ministry of Health involved in the process of caring and providing for the elderly, so too is the Ministry of Social Transformation, to which the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has alluded. The Honourable Member spoke of the fact that there needs to be closer communication and a process of working together. Sir, if the Honourable Member had read the draft Green Paper, he would have seen that throughout, it spoke to that need for the two Ministries to work together.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these two Ministries provide Home-Help service for over 1 000 Barbadians, the majority being elderly Barbadians. As the Honourable Minister of Social Transformation has said, 13 daily activity centres are being provided. As yet, no mention has been made of the more than 600 houses which were repaired for the elderly in this country since the establishment of the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission. This shows a Government which cares about providing housing for the elderly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, of course, the Barbados Association for Retired Persons (BARP) and the Soroptimist Village play a vital role in providing for the elderly, and we want to encourage that. Sir, indeed, lest we forget, this Barbados Labour Party Government has a lot to be proud about in its provision for the care of the elderly in this country. For example, the Barbados Labour Party Administration started the Drug Service in 1980, of which there is no other example in this region or in this hemisphere. There is nothing like it in Canada, the United States of America, or in Mexico.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of other examples are: the establishment by the National Assistance Board and the Home-Help Programme, established by the Barbados Labour Party while in Government; the introduction of the payment of electricity and water bills; the reduction in the qualifying age for pension, from 68 to 65; the most significant increases in non-contributory pension, and the provision of the alternative care of the elderly programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to know from any Honourable Member on the Other Side, what they can claim ownership for in this country, in terms of the provision of care and housing for the elderly. Let any one of them get up and state one thing for which they can claim ownership. Sir, there is not one thing in their Manifesto, page 34, which speaks to the care of the elderly, which is set out in three sentences.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a way forward. I believe that the Honourable Member has spoken to the need for an integrated holistic plan for the elderly in this country, a plan that will improve the quality of life for these citizens, to provide a life of dignity for the elderly and not to convert the Psychiatric Hospital into a new institution for the care of the elderly. That is not our plan.
6.20 p.m.

We plan to provide a comprehensive healthcare for these persons, to look at how we will promote healthy ageing within the entire community, how to work on early intervention, how to visit persons at their homes, how to organise community groups, how to mobilise doctors, nurses, social workers and occupational therapists from the polyclinics to go to the homes of these persons and deal with them so that we have early intervention and assessment rather than have people come to the Hospital when it is too late.

I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael West that we need to look at how we are going to improve the clinical management of elderly persons within these institutions. Sir, we need to look seriously at aggressive and efficient rehabilitation of persons in this country who have been hospitalised because of a stroke or an amputation.

These are the sort of things we should be trying to achieve and the things I expect to hear when a Minister comes to this Honourable House and lays a Green Paper on ageing to have a national consultation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not expect to hear criticism for the sake of it. I want to hear criticism that is constructive that will redound to the benefit of all elderly Barbadians. Perhaps in the next 20 years when we get to that stage, we would be able to benefit from measures introduced at this point in time.

Sir, there is no easy task to the issue of housing for the elderly. This is not one-size fitting all as the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would have us believe because there are different categories of elderly persons in this country who have disparate needs. Sir, some persons would need to be in institutions but others would not need such intensive care and can be managed in alternative care of the elderly programme.

Sir, these alternative programmes need to be expanded. We have to look at increasing the number of daycare centres because there are a number of persons who need only to be looked after during the day.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West said that BARP had been granted permission to construct a village at Six Cross Roads. Government has built one at Vauxhall and there is the Soroptimist Village in Eden Lodge. Sir, there is a need for this in this society.

I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not here because we spoke to the fact that the St. Lucy Hospital, rather than it being refurbished, that it should be built in the community so that the elderly can benefit from the ambience and the breezes from the sea.

Sir, having said all of that, some elderly persons want to remain in their homes because they can survive at home and continue their daily activities in their surroundings, but they need assistance. We must provide the means by which these people can be assisted to live in their homes. Government has been doing this through the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission by repairing homes and providing home help.

Government is also looking at the process of giving compensation to care-givers as well as to encourage the whole concept of volunteerism about which the Honourable Member for St. Philip West spoke.

Sir, I am pleased that these things are being discussed on the Green Paper on ageing. It is unfortunate that Honourable Members on the Other Side seem not to have

made any connection with this Paper and if they read it, they did not understand about what we speak or plan.

Sir, this is not a wealthy society so the phased refurbishment of the Geriatric Hospital and the other District Hospitals will continue. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West said that he disagrees with the plan to expand the alternative care for the elderly programme but did not say why. Sir, we are here to discuss the business of the people.

This is the Green Paper on ageing and the Honourable Member should say why he does not agree with it and give a suggestion how it should be modified. If you care in your heart about the care of the elderly and see a defect in the system, can you not see it in your heart to give the information which would help in that regard?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government understands its role in the provision of care of the elderly citizens in this country. Having said that, the society as a whole, has a responsibility to those citizens and families and need to be much more involved in the provision of care for the elderly citizens. Sir, it is not an easy process and it cannot be done overnight so we may have to start in the schools by including a module on care of the elderly. This has to be done because, in this society, we must understand that we are the builders of the society and that we have a responsibility to them. The work of the Soroptimist and BARP is commendable and we must encourage other NGOs and the private sector to become more involved in the concept of retirement villages.

Sir, I have said that the task is not an easy one and that it is the responsibility of everyone. It is not an issue on which there should be a political divide or any animosity. We should work together in the interest of the citizens of this country.

Again, I commend the Honourable Minister for the Green Paper on Ageing. I look forward to working with him and his ministerial officials in the further development of this Green Paper and the implementation of the recommendations which would come from it.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that we defer further consideration of this Resolution taking note of this Green Paper.

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

ORDER NO. 7 – TO MOVE THAT THE HOUSE RESOLVE ITSELF INTO COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY TO CONSIDER THE GRANT OF MONEY FOR THE SERVICE OF THIS ISLAND

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER, the House resolved into Committee of Supply, Dr. W.F. DUGUID in the Chair.

6.30 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

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

HEAD 19 – MINISTRY OF FINANCE & ECONOMIC AFFAIRS – \$206,000.00

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the sum which is being required of this Honourable Committee relates to the sum of \$206,000 in order to procure short-term consultancy services for the procurement of technical expertise to assist in the design of a new Tax Administration System for the Inland Revenue Department. The sum is being supplemented by the provision of a further figure from the Caribbean Regional Technical Assistance Centre (CARTAC) which is an agency that has been established here to assist in the provision to technical consultancies.

I understand that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between CARTAC and the Inter-American Centre for Tax Administration (CIAC) and the Government of Barbados and that Memorandum of Understanding would provide for the redesign of the Tax Administration System dealing with a number of issues.

The consultancy, in particular, will deal with a detailed assessment and documentation relating to the development of processes to identify and control late, underpayment or non-remittance of monthly PAYE contributions; a thorough analysis of the current arrears collection system; the development and implementation of a strategy to address and isolate arrears collection accounts; to look at the issue of electronic filing and other reforms of the management information systems. The preliminary work has been going on since 2003 but the project has reached the stage where these consultancy services are required in relation to it.

Honourable Members may be aware that the Minister of Finance introduced, sometime last, a system where the Honourable House is kept up-to-date as a result of various

key departments under his portfolio, in particular in relation to the revenue departments. We have been aware of the fact that there have been arrears across various Government departments. This programme relates only to the Inland Revenue Department and it is simply to facilitate the work which I imagine would lead to changes in the system which I hope this Honourable House at some point in the future will have a full opportunity to discuss.

Sir, CARTAC is providing some of the funds but our contribution towards the work which is to be done is \$206,000.00. Sir, with that I beg to move that Head 19 stand part.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

HEAD 30 – ATTORNEY GENERAL – \$20,812,538.00

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, this matter which stands before this Honourable Committee today relates to the request for a sum of money that relates to a guarantee which previously came before this Honourable House some months ago. Honourable Members may recall that the Honourable House was requested to give approval for Government guarantee for a loan that would be used to provide telecommunications to upgrade and modernise the telecommunication facilities of the Royal Barbados Police Force, in so doing, eventually establish a backbone upon which other emergency services can develop.

Sir, I remember a very full and lively debate in this Honourable House at that time in order for us to be able to move forward with the signing of the contract with Motorola as well as to have the work started as a matter of urgency. I would have indicated that our telecommunication system has not been modernised in over 30 years.

Sir, you would agree with me that given the technological advances, it is not a good thing that every time someone calls into the emergency room at the police that persons in Fontabelle can pick up the details of that report as easily as the person on the other end of the phone at the police station. This is something that we would wish to bring an end to because there is an absolute need for secure telecommunication across the emergency relief services as well as the national security services of the country and this will allow it.

Sir, the sum that is before this Honourable House under Sub-Programme 255 is \$5.2 million for structures. Sir, work will be done at five different sites across the island, Highgate District C, Husbands, Central Police Station, Castle Grant

and Mount No. 2.

Mr. Chairman, you can clearly see that the infrastructural work is being done across the island which will allow for the towers to be placed, in some instances varying in height from 150 to 200 feet and in some instances repairing or removing towers that are no longer capable of withstanding high winds in the country.

Sir, under Plant, Equipment and Furniture, we are also asking this Honourable Committee to approve the sum of \$14,260,456.00 which will facilitate the acquisition of the Automated Fingerprint ID System. As you are aware, all fingerprints in this country are dealt with manually and in files. We want to be able to move to an automated system which will allow for far greater efficiency and a quicker turn-around time in terms of searching for prints, a digital network and microwave system which will facilitate the telecommunications connectivity, which I spoke about earlier and today, and an Emergency Response sub system.

Sir, many of us watch television and see that people in the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada call 911 but I am not sure what our emergency number would be here in Barbados, but I think it is 211. It is, therefore, to facilitate better emergency response and recording which, as you know, becomes of assistance in the investigation of crimes thereafter.

A person calling immediately after the commission of a crime tends to say more than they may do afterwards, Sir, also another Mobile Data System which would allow for officers on patrol to be able to have access to critical databases back at Central Police Headquarters, the Barbados Licensing Authority or other places. Therefore, we are trying to modernise the equipment and capability of the Royal Barbados Police Force such that they can do a better job in containing crime and deviancy in this country.

Sir, I use this opportunity to say that I believe the entire country remains in their gratitude. Mr. Chairman, at a time when Jamaica, in the first nine months of the year, has already exceeded the number of murders for last year; at a time when murder and kidnapping in Trinidad continues to raise the spectacle of how people can secure themselves and their property and also ensure that investments continue to flow into the country and at a time Guyana, in the last two years, had on occasions to declare states of emergency.

Sir, the fact that the Royal Barbados Police Force, along with the people of Barbados, have allowed us to see a reduction in the commission of crime over the last two years is something that I do not feel that we should gloat about but something I also feel we should not be complacent about and recognise that we need to be grateful for those who are on

the frontline, but, equally, we need to continue as a society doing those things which would allow us to continue to reduce the incidents of crime and deviancy, Sir, even recognising that there is great pressure in terms of the social practices and mores of the society changes. Therefore, I believe these funds would be well spent.

6.40 p.m.

Sir, the last amount is for \$1 310 416 which relates to the professional services associated both with the civil construction that will be done, as well as the implementation of Telecom's part of the project, in terms of the equipment. As I said, this House had a full debate on the guarantee and, therefore, all this is in effect, bringing to the House specific permission to ensure that, rather than waiting until the 2005/2006 financial year, we can advance the work.

May I alert the House that there will be a sum in the 2005/2006 Estimates, somewhere in the vicinity of \$8 million because as you would remember, the entire loan was just over US\$13.5 million, and I speak from memory on that sum.

With those few words, Sir, I beg to move that this House do now support the move of Head 30.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir,

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, I rise to lend my voice in relation to this matter before the House. Mr. Chairman, from the outset, I must state that any initiative that seeks to enhance law and order, or by extension, improve the administration of justice, the Opposition will support and place their hand in the hands with any agency that seeks to improve law and order.

I want to say, respectfully, Mr. Chairman, that we are providing the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force with all this equipment and it is indeed a good thing to do. What I want to say, respectfully is that members of the Royal Barbados Police Force are still asking for higher salaries.

We heard talk some time ago that the said members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, in fact, a statement was made that they are not special. Indeed, Mr. Chairman, what is the policy of this Administration, in terms of improving the terms and conditions of the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force?

Mr. Chairman, this money which is allocated, sets a framework to assist the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force in the gathering of evidence to enhance the criminal justice system. I want to say that I examined the record of this Administration and I want to refer to page 60 of the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto of 1999. It states:

"We will therefore address as a matter of urgency those disabilities under which the Royal Barbados Police Force now labour, particularly as they relate to the garnering of evidence."

It further states, Mr. Chairman:

"The Barbados Labour Party will proclaim the provisions of the Evidence Act that permit the electronic recording of confessions and in that way make evidence so obtained less susceptible to impeachment."

It further states:

"We will also introduce new procedures for the identification of suspects, in order to protect witnesses on whose co-operation much of the police work depends."

Sir, they said in 1999 that would proclaim the sections of the Evidence Act that would support or enhance the garnering of evidence and today, we are still waiting on those two items, the proclaiming of the section of the Evidence Act and secondly, the new procedures for the identification of suspects.

Mr. Chairman, this Administration, in relation to the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, I would respectfully submit that when we looked at the conditions that members of the Royal Barbados Police Force work under at these stations, for example, some of the air-conditioning units are not working, no proper seating facilities, limited space and leaking roofs and, Mr. Chairman, what can we say? This Government is not providing better conditions for the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, some time ago, we were promised that we would get the District "C" Police Station placed in Six Roads. The Station is still under repairs since 1995. There has not been a single word on the status of the repairs or what they are doing about that promise. Sir, nothing has been done.

I want to respectfully submit that they are dragging their feet, in relation to improving the terms and conditions of the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the Honourable Member who spoke. I am conscious that he would not have had an opportunity to speak for the last three months. Therefore, he needs to speak to a constituency that he believes to be his own.

Perhaps, he will recognise, Mr. Chairman, that if one has not spoken for some time, one must do so with a buttress of facts. Indeed, Sir, his ability to even read the documents which came and were laid here in this House today may, in fact, be the first problem that he encountered, as he rose to speak this evening.

Mr. Chairman, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter and Prime Minister laid this morning, the Civil Establishments Order, 2004. It will be the first time in a long time and I challenge him, Mr. Chairman, to produce any other time within the last 20 years, where the civil establishment of the Royal Barbados Police Force has been increased by 200 persons. Sir, it is a 20 per cent increase in the establishment of the Police Force.

Sir, the Honourable Member, versed as he is around Coleridge Street, and the Law Courts, would know that the terms and conditions of a police constable far outweigh the terms and conditions of a special constable. Sir, that represents for those 200 Special Constables, the most significant increase in terms and conditions that any Government could, in fact, give to those Special Constables.

Mr. Chairman, had he but only read those documents which were distributed here today, he would not have made that statement in this Honourable Chamber. I go further. I take it that the absence from public life over the last three months, caused him to forget that this Government has introduced flexibility allowances, which for the first time, compensate officers for working outside of the straight eight hours that they are required to work in this country. It means that those who pull the weight are those who are being compensated.

6.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, this Government in good faith indicated that the Police would be the subject of a job reclassification exercise like every other public servant in this country. However, because we were sensitive to the onerous duties placed on police officers in relation to the execution of their duties, we indicated that we were prepared to support the establishment of a flexibility allowance. That allowance has been in place for two years and officers are drawing from it.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member may not have been following the debates before he came into this Honourable House and therefore he may not have been aware that 18 months ago I brought to this Chamber information suggesting – I think he is aware of this in his other capacity – that the families of policemen dying in the course of duty will for the first time be able to draw three times their annual salary as a compensatory mechanism.

We know that we can never replace the life of an officer fallen in the line of duty but we do believe that we should help their families to adjust to the loss of that person who in some instances might have been the only income earner in that family. This Government put that compensatory mechanism in place 18 months ago and I oversaw it.

Mr. Chairman, were that the extent of it all, I could understand. I suppose that all of what the Honourable Member said was simply to ask the question, could the Honourable Attorney General tell us where we are with the job reclassification exercise? Now if that is the question he would have wished to ask, may I now respond to the question.

As I understand it, the job reclassification recommendations have been the subject of consultations between the various unions, including the Police Association which I believe had extensive opportunity to make comments on the proposals. In those circumstances, they have now reached the point where I believe the consultation process has finished and has been referred back to the Ministry of the Civil Service.

Mr. Chairman, I also happen to know that there is a Cabinet subcommittee that has to investigate and examine all of these things. We understood that this exercise would be a lengthy one but rest assured that it is one to which this Government remains committed. The Police is given the assurance that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North might not have been able to give them, given the record of his Party in relation to reclassification of the Police.

Mr. Chairman, there are some Honourable Members of the Opposition who come here only for lunch and then leave, but the Honourable Member who was part of the Government that was in office at the time of the reclassification exercise should have been in a position this evening to be here to advise the Honourable Member for St. Philip North who is his representative, that in 1989 the reclassification exercise ended up with a few officers at the top carrying home wheelbarrows of money while those at the middle and the bottom got nothing. That is a part of the record of governance in this country as it relates to reclassification in the Police Force.

Mr. Chairman, I give the Honourable Member the assurance that he will not have to hold his head in shame when he intermingles with them in Court on a daily basis by being a member of a Parliament that would have unfaired the officers at the bottom and in the middle as they were unfaired in 1989. This Government will ensure that those injustices that were perpetrated against the majority of the members of the Police Force will not be repeated. Mr. Chairman, in respect of the question in relation

to the identification and the proclamation of the Evidence Act, we in the Attorney General's Chambers took a policy decision last year that that section of the Evidence Act must be proclaimed.

However, not wishing to put the cart before the horse, the Commissioner of Police can speak publicly and give you the figures in relation to the hundreds of officers who have been trained in the recording of evidence by both audio visual mechanisms as well as audio over the course of the last year. They have computers and they have video cameras attached to the computers.

Sir, it is necessary for all the officers manning the police stations across Barbados to be in a position to use that equipment so that when the specific section of the Evidence Act is proclaimed where all interviews are to be recorded for all serious offences, you will not be hearing that a man has been kept in custody for an extra 12 hours because nobody was on duty who was capable of using the equipment and who could follow the protocols.

Sir, clear protocols have to be set down, approved and issued such that there is a certainty how the system will operate and there is a transparency to its operation such that defence lawyers such as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North would not be given an unfair advantage against law-abiding officers who simply want to give evidence of the truth that transpired in a court. Mr. Chairman, I am sure he will understand these things.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member spoke about facilities, but that is very wrong thing because between 1987 and 1994 virtually no work was carried out on police stations or primary schools across this country, particularly between 1991 and 1994. I know that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, who would have understood the difficulties at the time can indicate today that all forms of discretionary expenditures would have been reduced during that period of time. I am not blaming anyone for it, but those are the facts.

Sir, the reality is that my predecessor in office fixed a number of police stations across the country such that he was accused of just wanting to repair police stations. Sir, the nature of the work the Police do means that the wear and tear sometimes require far more than is being done, therefore we have started a complete rehabilitative package for the entire accommodation of the Police.

Mr. Chairman, Cabinet has made decisions about a number of police stations that either need to be completely refurbished or that need to be rebuilt. We now need to go to Cabinet to work out how we are going to treat to the financing of this in a package such that we do not disadvantage the Police.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is not the representative for St. Peter so he would not know that there is a new District "E" Police Station but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West who is forced to pass the vicinity on his way home can tell him that work has now been completed on what used to be the old bus terminal. I am told that we are expected to receive the keys some time this week, if it did not happen last Friday.

We have also completed work on that main building at District "A" which was built some 20 years ago which had fallen into extremely bad shape. We have also awarded the tenders of Crab Hill Police Station.

Sir, it is unfortunate that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is not in here. He feels that we should move that police station from Crab Hill, but the reality is that we are ensuring that his constituents benefit even before a number of others.

Sir, there is no police station in St. Thomas yet, but we have come to St. Lucy to fix the one in St. Lucy. The reason for that is that in the last 10 or so years there has been an increase in the finding of drugs off the eastern coast of Barbados. Therefore, we believe it is necessary to maintain strong police presence in those parishes where there are a number of coves and inlets that allow drugs to be brought into the country. We have not made a political decision to put a station in St. Thomas before we fix the one at Crab Hill which affects the security of the country. We would come to St. Thomas and I give the Honourable Member for St. Thomas that assurance.

In relation to St. Philip, the Honourable Member speaks about our decision to construct a police station at Six Roads as if it is *fait accompli*. We said in this House that if we were to build police stations from scratch today, we will not build a police station at District "C", we will build it at Six Roads because he – I am sure both the Honourable Members for St. Philip West and St. Philip South, recognise that the area of activity that gives us more trouble relates to the centre of St. Philip.

7.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, it is true that there are areas in the north too that are of particular concern to the Police Force. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North knows these things and may I say, has been very helpful to the Government in these matters. Sir, I, therefore, believe that he would appreciate that we are doing our best to ensure that we locate a police station at Six Roads, where the need is most.

Mr. Chairman, over the course of the last three years, we have begun the practice of using mobile stations so that the Police Force can go into areas where the needs are greatest. We have used the mobile stations at various

locations across Barbados and until such time as we can get a completed construction at Wildey, which is immediately on the cards, the drawings have been done, one at Dover, with which the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporation (BTII) has been assisting us with in its preparation; one at Hastings, which will replace the old Hastings Police Station; one at Cane Garden, which is to involve a complex with magistrates' courts, *et cetera*.

Sir, Tamarind Hall will be going back out to tender because we have decided that we will be doing that as a turn-key project, rather than as a public/private sector partnership and expressions of interest on Tamarind Hall will be going out shortly.

Mr. Chairman, the activity of the Government in relation to civil works for the Police Force, I venture to say, cannot be exceeded by any other Caribbean Government at this stage. When we combine that with the \$27 million that is being invested in the modernisation of the telecommunication system and with the continued improvement in terms and conditions...

Mr. Chairman, there are some other things that are coming. The renovation works at District "A" Police Station is completed. Two weeks ago, the Commissioner of Police has discussed with me the fact that when one of the buildings now being used at District "A" is vacated, we will be able to establish a baby crèche where officers' children can be kept when those officers are doing the people's work, while trying to keep this country safe. Sir, I have agreed with the Commissioner that we can do that as a joint project with the Police Association.

Sir, for the first time ever in this financial year, we have put money in the Estimates to start a fitness programme, so that we can have gym equipment bought, so that we can have three gyms established across the island for off-duty policemen and women, who want to remain fit and who should not have to pay money to a private gym, in order to keep themselves fit.

Mr. Chairman, we have also discussed the possibility of instituting a system for counselling and mentoring of officers that is outside the scope of Network Services. Network Services is doing such a tremendous job for the entire public service that we are beginning to feel the need for dedicated counselling and mentoring for the Police.

Therefore, to that extent, with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs and the Civil Service and the Churches of Barbados, we want to investigate the establishment of a system where we can have chaplains assigned to certain districts across the island, so that they can be of benefit in mentoring and counselling the Police because of the nature of the job which these policemen and women face.

Mr. Chairman, none of us in this Honourable Chamber is a policeman or woman and, therefore, we do not have an appreciation of the kind of stress and the extent to which it impacts on them personally or on their families. Therefore, I take all that was said by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North in the light in which it was said.

I am cognizant that we are early in this term and that for the last few months, he would not have had a chance to speak. I would, therefore, understand why he would want to appeal to the constituency which he shadows, in relation to causing the Police to feel that he too cares about their welfare.

Mr. Chairman, I can say to them that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has always been supportive of the improvement of terms, conditions and policies for the policemen and women of Barbados, as the Government has been.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Chairman, I want to appeal to a number of different matters in this issue. Initially, we were thinking in terms of borrowing BDS\$27 million. I well recall the debate because it was strange that Government was, in fact, borrowing this loan in United States currency from a local commercial bank to the tune of \$13.5 million.

The explanation was that most of these funds would go out because the contractor would have been a foreign contractor and, therefore, there would have been an outflow of funds. Sir, the question is, have we been able to get the entire allocation of US\$13.5 million from the Bank of Nova Scotia, and have we drawn down the entire allocation?

Mr. Chairman, it is always disadvantageous on the Opposition benches not to know of the details. We are aware of the intended cost of BDS\$17.75 million for voice communication network and a microwave. The question is, would this have been determined by Motorola Incorporated or would there have been preliminary work done by the civil servants within the Ministry, as an initial start?

Would we have started with Motorola Incorporated coming in to do all the necessary preparation work, or would there not have been some work done by the local civil servants with respect to understanding what the requirements would have been? The company Illuminat (Barbados) Limited would have been the local counterpart in this exercise.

Mr. Chairman, I am not querying whether or not it is necessary, but it seems to be a lot of money to put a voice communication network in place. Therefore, to be in a

position in Parliament where one does not have any details with respect to what are the requirements of the voice communication network... Was it the case that another organisation might have put forward alternative means of voice communication? Would there have been alternative modules or methods by which we could communicate? Could we have used a different kind of equipment? Have we accepted the lowest bid?

Sir, these are the kinds of concerns which we would not have been privy to in the Parliament of Barbados, yet we were asked to support this initiative, which we are doing.

Mr. Chairman, I think that at some stage all Governments need to provide Opposition parties with more details in respect to these kinds of technical issues. I am aware that no one module or set of circumstances with respect to voice communication network would have been put forward to the Government of Barbados. There would have been alternative choices which we would never have had the privilege of knowing about.

Mr. Chairman, there is another component, mobile data, at a cost of \$1.38 million, the emergency response mechanism that is being used, and \$1.648 million for automated fingerprint identification. Sir, again, we on This Side, are not privileged to know the details and we are, therefore, asking Government to provide us with more information.

In addition, I hope that the collection of information would be greater and far more efficient in pursuing the kinds of cases that the police would have to pursue in the foreseeable future. I am aware that there were a number of exercises being conducted across constituencies in Barbados in which St. Michael North East would have been chosen for the pilot project, based on the information that would have been collected with respect to the survey.
7.10 p.m.

We have no choice but to fully support the initiatives of Government with respect to improving the quality of delivery in terms of the services provided to the community by the Police Force. We have no difficulty in understanding the need to increase the capability of the Police Force to investigate, not only local matters but, given the increased technology and propensity of the criminals to know how to use networking systems to perform white collar crime. If this enhances the Police Force to pursue that area of investigation, it would be a much needed impetus to the Royal Barbados Police Force.

I understand in some small way that these kinds of systems that rely heavily on the computer that over time they can be impacted on by cost and become obsolete. I wonder

whether the Attorney General had considered putting in place now for this eventuality. We know what happened with EduTech where today computers are capable but within the next two to three months, may suffer because of one reason or the other.

Sir, in putting this kind of system in place there must be some anticipation of potential difficulty and hidden costs that may lie beneath the network system that of which we might not be aware. When you put it in place, in the first few months, there might be a situation where it does not function as adequately as you wish and rather than having to come to Parliament to improve the quality, Government must consider that there could be such an eventuality and has prepared for it because of the nature of the technology.

I understand how tempting it is when we have this type of Resolution to recite all the improvements in crime detection and to suggest that everything is now on a rosy path. It really disturbed me in the last two weeks or so when I saw hidden in some part of the Press something that should be responded to by Government that apparently was never made known to the public with respect to the abundance of rapes that occurred somewhere in the north of Barbados over the last year or so. Again, this is only for information purposes because we were also made aware that North America, Canada and England were putting out some negative reports as they relate to the crime situation in Barbados.

Sir, this information has now emerged, but it has long been the case that people offshore know a lot more about Barbados than we know onshore. I hope this is not the case, but we fully support any attempt by this Administration to improve the quality of crime detection and the overall quality of the operations of the Royal Barbados Police Force.

Sir, like the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, we are hoping that you make quick strides to upgrade the conditions of the officers because, unlike years ago, they are now required to have three CXCs. It is not now just a question of being tall but persons must have qualifications and on that basis alone are deserving of regrading.

Sir, I support this attempt on the part of Government.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I thank the Honourable Member for his comments and general support. He has raised a number of disparate issues but I thank him for supporting the Government's position that there should not be a repeat of the 1989 system of regrading police officers, that there should be an equitable evaluation in relation to that. Mr. Chairman, having said that, he has raised a number of legitimate issues which I wish to address.

He raised the question of the request for the Supplementary coming at this stage. Sir, as you know, the Financial Rules of Government require that once expenditure takes place, even if there is going to be an inflow of money, that there has to be voting and recording of it by Parliament and effectively that is what is happening.

We have not as yet signed the agreement with Motorola and Aluminat but would want to have this done, such that when we sign it, this is in place. The money will cross financial years so I cannot tell Parliament exact details of the draw-downs at this stage, but I imagine there would be a periodic draw-down.

Sir, the loan would have been approved subsequently to the preparation of the document and this will properly be accounted for in the documentation at the end of the financial year.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to his comments to the initiative, I believe he was speaking about the Anti-Burglary Project and I can assure him that the pilot project was carried out in Grazettes, Long Gap, Bush Hall and across the constituencies of St. Michael North East and St. Michael West Central.

I also want to assure him that these choices of areas were not determined on the basis of constituencies, but were determined by the Police and the National Task Force on Crime and Prevention based on the crime statistics in relation to the incidences of burglary.

Sir, as a result of the success of that project which showed a reduction in burglary in the aforementioned areas by 50 per cent, and in the Estimates of this year we allocated funds for two other communities.

The two communities represented as having the highest incidences of crime were along Maxwell Coast Road, Christ Church and Brittons Hill which straddle both the constituencies of St. Michael South and St. Michael South Central. I give the absolute assurance that those choices were made, not on the basis of constituencies but on the basis of recommendations.

Sir, in relation to obsolescence, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has made a good point but, the reality is, that the majority of expenditure in this project is for hardware and infrastructure because this will effectively be the backbone upon which the Barbados Defence Force, CERO and others can build upon.
7.20 p.m.

Sir, where we would have some software issues will be in the automatic fingerprint ID, which is approximately \$1.6 million and elements of the emergency response in terms of the software interface.

Sir, once again, I am assured that the things we are getting are scalable and, therefore, with scalability you are allowed to be able to build upon what you have, once there are improvements in technology. This is going to be an issue that would face a Government of Barbados for the next few decades in terms of whether we eventually continue with the hybrid approach of procurement of equipment and software or whether we lease, given the increasing pace in technology.

Sir, across various Government Departments there have been various approaches but I believe that, in a sense, we have almost to test and fix as we go along once we acquire the experience. In this case, however, the majority of expenditure, approximately \$5 million on structures, \$3 million on professional services and elements of the voice communication emergency response and the mobile data relate to the data more so than the software.

We are working separately to try and get the convictions data established electronically and that is not related in this. We are working under the IDB project to have an integrated Justice Information System so that we can track persons from the point of arrest to the point of release, whether that release is at the court or the prison, that is not included in this.

This is a completely different thing. This is to connect the stations, connect the officers, allow for rapid deployment, allow for movement of data and allow for efficient database management of fingerprints but there are a lot of other processes within the Royal Barbados Police Force which stand to be modernised.

Sir, as I indicated to this Honourable House, we do have a preliminary report from a Dr. Bond who would be advising in the modernisation of the Royal Barbados Police Force. Most of the processes are approximately 70 years old and we feel that the time has come to be able to revisit a lot of those processes and aspects of the modernisation programme. We are to meet with Dr. Bond to be able to discuss the report and following that a Cabinet Paper will be prepared making certain recommendations to the Government.

I hope that by the beginning of the next financial year we can start with aspects of the modernisation. In fact, this modernisation with telecommunications would otherwise have been an aspect, but we have pulled this out separately.

Sir, unlike previous modernisation programmes, we have already discussed, with the Commission of Police, the allocation of two dedicated officers to be able to monitor and implement the modernisation reforms over a five-year period. Unless you have someone coming to work every day to make sure that the reforms are implemented, they would fall through the cracks.

Sir, that is on the cards and I undertake to keep this Honourable House updated once Cabinet has approved that and, hopefully, we would be successful in our applications with the Ministry of Finance at Estimates time such that they can be the subject of debate next year.

Mr. Chairman, the comments in relation to the spate of rapes that we had, I try my best not to involve myself in the operational details of the Royal Barbados Police Force. That is not constitutionally what I am required to do. However, having said that, I, like you, have been aware that there was a problem. I was aware of the concern because in this particular instance the people who were being targeted were non-Barbadians.

I do not think it is fair to say that non-Barbadians have a greater level of knowledge than Barbadians of what goes on here. Indeed, the Commissioner of Police would be very disheartened to believe that would be the position as genuinely held by the Leader of the Opposition since the Commissioner of Police, I am sure, ensures that the Royal Barbados Police Force is available to all Members who constitute the Parliament of Barbados, both in the Lower and Upper House.

Sir, the Leader of the Opposition is, therefore – taken in the spirit in which it was given because he is normally a very straightforward man when it comes to these matters. However, suffice it to say, I do not think they had to await scientific evidence, from what I understand, subsequent to the capture of a person who is now being charged, without going further into the matter, and that scientific evidence was, in fact, the linchpin in relation to them being able to identify and subsequently arrest a suspect who now stands before the Law Court.

For example, I question, and the Commissioner of Police knows that I have commented genetically, why the Police does not ask, for example, people in Barbados for help when they are looking for someone but, in recent times, they have been doing it. I think that is a good thing because you cannot assume that the 1,380 Police can see and know everything that is going on in the country but if they share the information in relation to persons who they are trying to find, then you immediately enlist the co-operation of all law-abiding citizens in the country in the effort and that has been

happening. I want to commend the Royal Barbados Police Force for that, over the course of the last few months, in particular.

Sir, I have taken what the Leader of the Opposition said in the spirit in which it was given. Suffice it to say that I believe that there has been a more proactive approach to communication with the public and I think that the Commissioner and his officers must be commended for that.

However, I think that the Honourable Member is saying that he would like more information. Suffice it to say I will not force the issue because at the end of the day they must make a judgement based on whether they feel there are persons whose security or liberty may be affected by them ensuring greater disclosure to the public. I think the Commissioner has also heard your comments and they are taken in the spirit in which they were given.

Sir, may I also say for the record, that there is no attempt on the part of this Government to paint the crime picture as cozy. We have a problem in Barbados insofar as we continue to see a degradation of values and a general overall level of deviancy over what it was 30 years ago.

The ironic thing is, the only major areas of crime that have not risen in the last 30 years have been homicides. The murder rate has not increased over the last 30 years in Barbados and the crime against visitors has fallen substantially over the last 20 years and I am sure the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is aware of that.

There are other types of crime that we have seen an increase in, drugs, some types of violent crime, some types of crime that for the first time that we start to record, and we have to remember that too. Domestic violence was not recorded before generally and the level of reporting for sexual crimes may have been far less than it is today. Sir, because of the sense of confidence as well as the measures that have been put in place, women are encouraged to report such crimes. The victim's co-ordinator is there to help victims of domestic violence.

Sir, there are a number of variables when you look at it that you cannot get too tied up in but suffice it to say we feel that while we have a problem, we have established a Commission, the National Commission of Law and Order, and I see that the Democratic Labour Party is embracing aspects of its discussion fully, as recent as last Friday. I wish there were more than the 20 people who attended because I think that would have assisted in ensuring that we have a livelier debate when the Resolution is debated in this Honourable House on that Commission.

Sir, having said that, we view this as a long-term situation but we simply say that we are grateful to the work of the Police as well as the people of Barbados for ensuring that we are not in a position that other countries are in around the region, but that does not mean it is rosy.

We do not believe it is rosy. We do not believe it is at crisis proportions either. We believe that there is work to be done by all good law-abiding citizens in the country and by ensuring that the Police can do a better and more effective job with the tools we have provided for them.

Sir, I too, like the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, have not had the chance to speak for a few months and I want to, perhaps dispel rumours that I may have been sick or something else. One of the newspapers in this country seems to feel that it is their duty to purvey but I am in good health. I am strong and I feel good about the work of the Ministry and that is why I am using the opportunity to update this Honourable House about aspects of it.

I beg to move this Head do now stand part.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that.

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

7.30 p.m.

SCHEDULE 2 – HEAD 24

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, this is a social matter before the Honourable Chamber. Basically, it is to note a change to Object Order 6EX23 – Structures, which is to complete work on the agricultural project at Mangrove in St. Philip. This is an area which has long delayed the completion of this project. The money is already there but it was listed under the wrong Head.

Therefore, we are seeking this change, so that we can get ahead with the completion of the Farm House at Mangrove in St. Philip for the disabled. Sir, as you would see, we will be providing the construction of ramps, bathroom adjustments, changing rooms and storage facilities.

Mr. Chairman, it is against this background, I ask that Head 24 be amended in Schedule 2.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His HONOUR the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply without amendment, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, seconded by Hon. R. R. FARLEY, the Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government's Business for today's Sitting and I beg to move that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, October 19, 2004 at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that this House be adjourned until Tuesday, October 19, 2004 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative with division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

7.33 p.m.

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