
THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION OF 2003-2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, October 25, 2005.

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10:15 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, G.C.M., B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker) His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P.(Deputy Speaker) Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and the Civil Service) Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) Hon. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C., LLB. Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A.(Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C (Minister of Labour and Social Security) Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed.,J.P. (Minister of Public Works) Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees) Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation) Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B.(Hons.) Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON-MCDOWALD, LL.B. (Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment) Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) 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. N.A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International

Transport) Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P. B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil. (Minister of Energy and Public Utilities) Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P.(Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports) Mr. C. A. MASCOLL, BSc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance) (Leader of the Opposition) Dr. W. F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS., J.P. Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S.(Edin.), J.P. (Minister of Health) Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B.(Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade) Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B., (Hons.), L.E.C.,(Attorney-General and Minister of Industry and International Business and Attorney-General (ag) Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Ed.) J.P. Mr. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Cannon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, October 18, 2005.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of this Honourable the House of Assembly of the meeting of Tuesday, February 1, 2005, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

PAPERS

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

1. Reports on the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the quarters ending March 31st and June 30, 2005.

2.Reports on the Social Investment Fund for the quarters ending March 31 and June 30, 2005.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following Bill.

1. To approve the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of parcels of land at Hope Land near Rices, St. Philip for housing development.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of this day(s) Sitting.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 15

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF THE PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT BARBAREES HILL IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

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

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before the Chamber today seeks to vest lands situated at Barbarees Hill in the National Housing Corporation for housing development. The Honourable Chamber is aware that this particular Resolution relates to the Pickwick Gap/Kensington Oval relocation, which represents the culmination of the Ministry of Housing(s) role in the facilitation of the redevelopment of Kensington Oval for Cricket World Cup 2007.

This Honourable House debated this issue before. In fact, the country was engaged in some theatrics from Honourable Members on the other side, who turned up at Pickwick Gap to create issues. However, I am happy to report to this Chamber today that the housing development for the persons to be relocated from Pickwick Gap, to facilitate the Kensington Oval development, is completed.

Sir, twenty-one houses have been built to accommodate residents who agreed to be relocated to Barbarees Hill. This was the vast number of residents from Pickwick Gap.

A number of arrangements were made to facilitate residents. Sir, we arranged to have on standby housing for temporary relocation in the

event that we did not meet our schedule. However, I am happy to report that we have met our construction schedule. The houses are soundly built and attractive. It is a development well- laid-out and aesthetically pleasing. A number of mature trees have been left on the site to enhance the scenery, creating a natural greening component to the development.

In addition, we are at the stage where, I believe, we are in the process of issuing, through the National Housing Corporation, contracts for landscaping the development. Sir, in the early days Government promised the residents beautiful and scenic landscaping typical of the kind of development, Government would be seeking to bring to the city.

Sir, already, at London Bourne Towers there is high-rise development, which is well-appointed and architecturally pleasing. At Barbarees Hill, we have in the heart of Bridgetown, a very attractive housing development. It is part of the Government's ongoing initiative to upgrade the housing stock in Barbados and to ensure that there is high quality housing.

I also need to report to the Honourable House at this time that much dialogue has taken place with the residents to bring us to this point. A number of community meetings were held. I think there were approximately five, with face-to-face interaction from the Ministry of Housing, in the form of the Housing Planning Unit to ensure that residents got improved circumstances. Sir, you will recall that it is a policy of the Government not to grant housing houses which fall below the planning requirements or a certain size.

Mr. Speaker, where residents live in houses that may be considered substandard, that is below the requirements of the Town Planning Act or Regulations, on relocation residents

have the comfort of larger houses, enjoying a better standard of living.

Sir, in this situation, all of the houses are of stone construction. Residents with two-story houses have received similar replacements. Persons with wooden houses are now occupy stone or wall. They are moving from chattel houses to wall bungalows, as we like to say in Barbados, to use the Barbadian vernacular. Many of those houses at the new Barbarees Hill location are substantially larger than the chattel houses which people would have previously occupied.

Sir, not only are there larger but better appointed. We liaised directly with residents to accommodate them with minor changes to the design and layout to improve their level of physical comfort and surroundings.

Sir, keeping the residents at this location also has two other social benefits. One, residents now remain in relatively close proximity to the Kensington Oval, which is to be redeveloped. Sir, since some of them derived revenues or income from activity at Kensington Oval and were looking to the continuation of such a relationship, this physical proximity to the Kensington Oval helps to facilitate that particular wish. I would imagine that some of them will make their homes available to visitors for short-term periods; others may wish to sell food and refreshment or have street fairs on evenings after cricket to attract visitors and spectators to their area where they can prepare a typical Barbadian cuisine, to show-off the Barbadian community.

H 80: 10.30 a.m.

Sequence 3

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 04, 10:30 a.m.

Continuation of Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON:

Sir, it is up to residents how they will exploit the opportunities that are to be available to them from their relocation to a site that continues to be within the close proximity to Kensington Oval.

The second social benefit which this relocation facilitates or supports, Sir, is keeping the community as a homogeneous community. There is always a certain difficulty when you seek to relocate a community and there are existing friendships and relationships where elderly people and senior citizens rely on the assistance of younger people in the community to go to the shop for them, to help pick up their pension cheques or to come in and check on them and make sure that they are okay in the morning and they had a good night's rest and are not feeling unwell, and just the sheer familiarity of the surroundings and the faces that they are seeing.

We talk in Barbados, Mr. Speaker, of older people being uprooted from their homes or their community and breaking their hearts and dying from a broken heart. I do not know how medically sound the perception is, but I know it is a reality that older people tend to like the familiarity and certainty of patterns, schedules, faces and surroundings with which they are comfortable and to which they are accustomed.

Therefore, moving the community as a whole, allows some of the social relationships and interactions, the support mechanisms for older people, and for younger people who may go out to work and have a child kept by an elderly neighbour and there is some social relationship or economic benefit derived one from the other for playing the role of caretaker.

Sir, it may not be a financial relationship. It

may just be giving that senior citizen something worthwhile to do, during the course of the day, so that the community does not feel dislocated and separated from its familiar environs but remains a community and does not have to seek to forge new links as they settle into the new environment.

Land at this site will be made available to the following persons:

Those who are seeking to purchase land.

Those who were property-owners and owned land and house at Pickwick Gap, would have their properties replaced by a full property, land and house.

Those who were renting lands but owned their house, would now have the opportunity to buy land from the Government at the very concessionary rate of \$2.50 per square foot.

The initial plan was that there would have been a number of detached units and duplex units. Ultimately, we went for all detached units for the residents, after the negotiations were conducted. You will recall, Sir, that when I spoke to the Parliament initially, I indicated at that time that though we were in the process of planning, that planning would be finalise when we sat with residents and found out from them what they wanted.

Therefore, apart from the former tenants of land who would now be given an option to purchase at \$2.50 a square foot, there are other opportunities available to former residents, which would not have existed before.

The land has been paid for at this time and what we are seeking to do today is merely to vest the land in the National Housing Corporation - which carried on the construction on lands acquired from a private owner by the Crown - and give permission to the National

Housing Corporation to carry out the necessary housing development.

Sir, construction was carried on by private contractors under the supervision of the National Housing Corporation's senior staff members. We anticipate that the keys will be handed over during the course of the next week and there will be an opening ceremony to which the new residents will be invited.

They have had the opportunity to walk through the development, indicate what physical developments they would have wanted, any improvements, amendments and so on. They have requested, Sir, that the development should be separated from the St. Leonard's Cemetery and Church by a physical barrier. There is partly a wall at the site of some historical significance, I imagine, because embedded in it are a number of tombstones which date back several years. There are people who help to read the history of a particular country or location through the tombstones.

The wall or barrier which would be put in place, whether it is a wall or a fence, will not disturb any of the existing development in the cemetery on the property of the Church. I believe that is the only physical development remaining to take place at the site, along with the finalisation of the landscape development proposal and the actual planting of the greenscape, which is proposed for the site.

Next week, we will also allow the Press a final walk through with the NHC. The Press had the opportunity to visit during the time of construction to showcase it to the public, ask questions about the construction and to check with residents to ensure that they were satisfied with the development which was underway. Next week, before the keys are handed over and before the residents move in—because we really would not like to have press traipsing in

and out of people's homes, without their individual permission since these are now completed, we will allow them one last viewing. Sir, we are proposing to have a formal hand-over ceremony and a last Press Conference, just to allow the public to see what has been developed and what has taken place at the site.

I believe that all of the other persons who are required to move that negotiations are still ongoing, in respect of property settlement. Those will be concluded in due course. As I indicated to the House when the matter came on the last occasion, this is a negotiation process which has to be finalised and we want to make sure that the members of the public who are moving to allow for further national development, are given a fair opportunity to conduct their negotiations in the time necessary to get the best result for them. Therefore, those negotiations are ongoing and we expect that they will be concluded in due course.

House 80, sequence 04, 10:4012

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON:

Sir, I am happy to say that the Ministry has been able to effectively perform its role in respect of this particular development and the implications for the hosting of the Cricket World Cup. I wish to thank all the members of staff of the Housing Planning Unit of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, the other administrative staff, the senior staff at the level of Permanent Secretary and the National Housing Corporation for the way in which they went about this project to have it completed in the appointed time frame.

Mr. Speaker, there was some controversy in the early days but the Ministry did not allow

itself to be sidetracked by that public debate. It stuck to the agenda and work together with the National Housing Corporation to achieve what I think is a happy result. I will have the opportunity to meet and interface with some of the residents during the course of next week, when we hope to start the process of the handing over, so we are pleased.

Mr. Speaker, we are urging the House to approach this vesting in the National Housing Corporation for work which is now complete and which has been done to the satisfaction of all those who are involved. The National Housing Corporation has on this occasion delivered creditably and well and we would have to thank them and applaud them even though there are many occasions on which we do have to criticise and lament their particular performance. However, this is not one of those occasions.

Mr. Speaker, I would have been gravely distressed had the National Housing Corporation or the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment been responsible for any delay that could have impacted adversely on the hosting of Cricket World Cup. I, therefore, commend this Resolution to the House with some high degree of satisfaction that we have come to this point of happy resolution and delivery.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate to ask a few questions about the process that might have been gone through at Barbarees Hill. According to the Minister, we have had a bit of controversy but as far as I could recall there was never any controversy surrounding the removal of houses at Kensington. All that we were seeking to do was to represent the interest of the residents in that area because initially, we thought that the whole question of the Cricket World Cup and

how it was being approached deserve some degree of questioning. This is what prompted the Opposition to intervene on behalf of the residents at Kensington.

Mr. Speaker, what is now fascinating is that in agreement with the position of the Opposition, the Government has come to the position that there is need for an audit of the accounts of the Cricket World Cup. That audit would include not only those in the region...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, please. I would like you to restrict your remarks to the item that is before the House. It is a simple vesting. The Minister was clear, as she did not move away, and attempted to explain all of what was involved in the vesting. I think you are really out of bound now, so let your comments be restricted to the vesting, please.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: So there is no direct correlation between the vesting of this land, Mr. Speaker, and the issues pertaining to the method of payment employed initially?

Mr. SPEAKER: That is something different you are saying now.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, the method of payment must certainly be critical in this entire process, which is what constituted our initial concern with respect of payment to the original owners and how this matter was dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, I think you would recall that the Opposition felt at the time that given the nature of the transaction that there should be more transparency with respect to whom would have been responsible for the execution of the payment to the residents of Kensington. Therefore, in light of that, we were querying precisely whether or not the National Housing Corporation would have been directly responsible for such payments or if it had

something to do with the whole question of the redevelopment of the Kensington area and by extension whether or not the World Cup company would have had any responsibility with respect to the overall payment of the residents. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that was always raised as an issue by the Opposition and it is in that context therefore, that I manage to raise the matter.

Mr. Speaker, what is more critical here is the overall question of the selection process for allocating the tenders. I think what is required is that each and every house should be given its adequate value at the new location at Barbarees Hill. Sir, part of the discussion had to do with whether or not the residents who were involved in business would be compensated when moved to Barbarees Hill. Therefore, the overall value of the property took into consideration the activity that was being conducted at the time by some residents who benefited from the proximity to Kensington and would have been able to derive benefit by way of commercial value.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all of that and in light of the discussions that took place subsequent to the proposed move, we, on the Opposition bench, felt that it was important for the private residents to be treated in a similar vein to the commercial residents who had been given the value by way of private treaty and for which there would have been some degree of commercial value added to the overall transaction. That constituted a major concern of the Opposition at the time with respect to those persons who were involved in commercial activity as well as having a private residence. I am therefore saying, Mr. Speaker, that what is very critical here is for us to know what is the value now assigned to each and every house at Barbarees Hill.

By extension we would also need to know what was the method for selecting the

contractors in the rebuilding of homes at Barbarees Hill because I read somewhere recently that the National Housing Corporation does not have to go out for tender. If the National Housing Corporation, as a statutory board, does not follow the rules for tendering under Government, that would have had required a change to everything else in Government.

Mr. Speaker, I have always been of the view that regardless of whether or not it is a central Government or a statutory board that certain conditions must apply in terms of tendering and that a limit of \$100 000 would constitute the level at which there must be a tendering process. In fact, I well recall an event at the top of Deacons Road in which the Urban Development Commission was involved that required such an approach.

Indeed, there are other such statutory boards that would have required over the years to have gone to tender once the amount being contracted for exceeded \$100 000. Therefore, I would hope that what was said, wherever it was said, was just an incorrect position taken by one of the senior members of the National Housing Corporation because every house built at Barbarees Hill that exceeds \$100 000 should have gone out for tender.

House 80 Sequence 5

10:50 a.m.

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Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Therefore, it makes absolute sense that every house built at Barbarees Hill should have gone out to tender. In particular, there is a house at Kensington, which had a commercial value attached to it, to which we paid particular attention. Therefore, in light of that, I think that the onus is on the Minister to tell the people of

Barbados exactly how tenders were arrived at and the selection process that would have been used.

Sir, to date we do not know. What we were promised by the General Manager is that after the tenders for roads were considered, it was said that there would have been a tendering process for the rebuilding of the houses at Barbarees Hill. Has that been entered into? If so, could we be given the benefit of that tendering process?

Mr. Speaker, another area of concern for the residents when we visited was the question of the proximity of those houses to the graveyard. It was always believed by the residents that there would have been a more permanent wall structure, rather than a fencing, which would have alienated the graveyard from the private residents and to stop the (duppies) from entering their homes. This is a concern which was expressed only recently by the residents to the Opposition, at a meeting which the Minister and some other members of Government were supposed to have attended.

Sir, there was a committee set up to make the process of moving from Kensington to Barbarees Hill easier. It also allowed for the Opposition to be represented on the Committee. I am suggesting only a few nights ago there was a meeting with respect to this process and what were the concerns of the residents at Barbarees Hill in the movement. Sir, there was hardly any attendance from Government(s) side. At that meeting there were concerns expressed as to whether or not there would be a permanent structure in the form of a wall or whether there would be a fence of the type that we see generally across the landscape of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the residents are suggesting that there is need for more permanent structure between the graveyard site and the current area

at Barbarees Hill. Therefore, overall I think it must be agreed that the role of the Opposition in this whole exercise which is to give some kind of representation to the residents, when we reflect on it, it would have been a reasonable role, one which was not simply motivated by wanting to get political mileage but more out of concern for the residents of Kensington area and certainly for those residents whose properties had a commercial value attached to them.

Mr. Speaker, it does appear as though you are fully restricting the parameters of this debate and, therefore, concerns that have been expressed by residents on the southern side of Barbarees Hill, would have to be raised in another debate. I can understand the level of attention you are paying to this particular Resolution before us because in the current environment, there is the potential to speak to several other issues relating to the National Housing Corporation and several other matters that have been raised recently with respect to the involvement of the Minister in the process of allocating certain tenders over the last few year.

Mr. Speaker, let me end by saying that there is not much more that we can say in this vesting, except that we are concerned about the overall cost of those houses that have been erected at Barbarees Hill. Sir, most importantly, we are concerned about the selection process that was entered into with the contractors and the National Housing Corporation. I think it is only but wise and fair that the public of Barbados knows exactly the methodology used by the National Housing Corporation in the payment process, as well as the overall cost of the project, which to date the cost has exceeded \$1 million but we do not know how that money has been allocated between the provision of the road and the actual building of the respective houses for the residents who have been displaced by the Kensington Redevelopment

Project because of Cricket World Cup, 2007.

Mr. Speaker, in light of that and in light of your ruling on this matter, I am, therefore, saying that we will agree with the question of vesting but we feel it necessary to express certain concerns which were raised by residents a few nights ago at a meeting with respect to the graveyard wall, the overall allocation of financial resources among the residents at Kensington, the question of the tendering process, the contractual arrangements that would have been entered into, and whether or not the contractual arrangement would have been one between the contractor and the homeowners, or between the National Housing Corporation and the homeowners.

Sir, in other instances where bad work has been carried out, it has not been the original contractor who has been called upon to do the necessary repairs. Instead the National Housing Corporation has had to enter into the agreement in the final process to redo what was done by the original contractor, and at the taxpayers expense.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. As a matter of law, when a contract is entered into between a contractor, either as an individual or company, with the National Housing Corporation, the National Housing Corporation is the agency responsible for the project. Sir, at the end of the project or as part of the contractual relationship, the National Housing Corporation retains a portion of the contract sum which it withholds from the contractor. Therefore, if there were any corrective, remedial, or other works that have to be done, they could be done by the National Housing Corporation or by any an agent acting on the behalf of the National Housing Corporation, using those sums that have been withheld from the contractor, as part of the building contract.

Sir, this is a standard practice in commercial contracts, which is known as retention sum. Therefore, and anybody who has built property with a formal contractual relationship would be aware of that. Therefore there has been no instance, of which I am aware, where the National Housing Corporation, using taxpayers money, has had to pay for bad work, other than in the context of a retention sum.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the Honourable Member(s) explanation but certainly within the context of what could happen to houses built at Barbarees Hill, we have to know with clarity and certainty what would be the overall responsibility of the contractor, as opposed to the National Housing Corporation. In fact, not too long ago in this fair land, there was a major debate with respect to houses built in St. Joseph, just above the Grantley Adams Memorial School, with respect to the question as to who would be ultimately responsible in the event that the houses were not built adequately. This constituted a major debate and ran for quite a long time on the call-in programmes and in the newspapers of Barbados, with respect to the bad work that was done on that project. There was also certainty needed by the homeowners, as to who would be responsible for correcting the bad work that was done.

Mr. Speaker, I am, therefore, saying that notwithstanding the Honourable Member(s) explanation, there are concerns over these kinds of issues among the average Barbadian.

H:No80(6)1100 a.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Let me congratulate the contractors for having done the project at Barbarees Hill so

expeditiously, so efficiently and, hopefully, in the fullness of time, we would see that the work was not only expeditiously done but very well done. There must be concern as to whether or not in doing the work so efficiently, effectively and over a short period of time, whether any shortcuts might have been used by contractors and, therefore, the potential for any bad work to be exposed in the not too distant future. In the light of that it is, therefore, necessary for the homeowners to know who would ultimately be responsible, by way of any contract signed, for any bad work that has been done by the contractors.

Mr. Speaker, I say that because, again, there are certain restrictions being imposed with respect to the Resolution and there is certainly concern among other residents not too far away, with respect to the removal of asbestos roofs in that vicinity of Barbarees Hill.

Sir, without elaborating, I am saying that in this particular instance, we should let the homeowners know who would be ultimately responsible for any such bad work done.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, the Minister said that the Ministry would be responsible.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I have learnt in this Parliament and other places not to judge or believe the comments of a Minister. Sir, I have no good reason based on evidence to believe anything said to me by a Minister. Therefore, in light of all that has been said, I still have concerns which have been legitimately raised on behalf of the residents of Barbarees Hill. Sir, I cannot accept the word of any Minister. I was involved in a whole set of chaos because a Minister told individuals that they could go on and build the kiosk at Deacons Road, only to be told later that the Minister never gave such advice.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you

are getting out of order now. The Minister has assured this House about the policy, procedure and law involved.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I have made my point. I would simply say that in light of all that has been said, we will follow to see what may happen in the future and if, for once, we could take the word of the Minister because it could only be judged in the future. Sir, I have no reason to believe anything said by any person with respect to issues pertaining to the policy of Government. There is no evidence for me to do it so I can come here and say so.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be pushed into a position of acceptance. I have made my position very clearly with respect to these issues. Therefore, I am saying that in light of what has been going on, I am simply representing the interest of the good people of Kensington by asking questions, which they have put forward to the future representative for the City of Bridgetown only recently at a meeting held two nights ago on behalf of the residents of Kensington.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: the Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to see a few words in support of the Resolution to support this vesting without taking up too much of the time of the Honourable House. We listened to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, essentially repeating a submission which he offered when last we addressed this matter of the relocation of persons from Pickwick Gap to Barbarees Hill.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay to listen to a resubmission of a former speech. I would have hoped that during the course of his

presentation that the Honourable Member would have taken the opportunity to compliment the Minister for the success which has attended this project to date. He went as far as to compliment the contractors on a job apparently well-done but could not bring himself to commend and compliment the Minister who would have had overall oversight of this project.

Mr. Speaker, so often we are quick to offer criticism, sometimes justified, but perhaps we need to consider it as becoming of us that we offer compliments where they are deserved. I think in this case they are deserved and I want to commend the Minister. It is not the most major of projects but, nevertheless, it is important because we are dealing with the well-being and the lives of people. We are dealing with issues of dislocation and relocation and, therefore, these important matters would have to be handled prudently and as efficiently as possible. This seems to have been the case in this instance and, in that regard, I offer my compliments to the Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. James South.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the quality of the structures now sited at Barbarees Hill is worthy of mention. I have visited the location on three different occasions to observe what was going on, uninvited by the Minister but since I have the privilege of representing the constituency of St. Michael West, in which Barbarees Hill is located, then I thought it my duty, and considering that I had a vested, I visited the project to see what was going on. Sir, I think the quality of the structures now sited at Barbarees Hill is worthy of mention.

Mr. Speaker, I have visited the location on three different occasions to observe what was going on, uninvited by the Minister. Sir, since I have the privilege of representing the constituency of St. Michael West, in which Barbarees Hill is located, then of course, I

thought it my duty and considered I had a vested interest to visit the project to see what was ongoing. I think the apparent quality of the structures sited at Barbarees Hill is something worthy of mention.

Mr. Speaker, I have been to three funeral services recently at the St. Leonard(s Church and honestly, on each occasion, I either heard or overheard persons making reference to the apparent attractiveness of the new structures sited at Barbarees Hill. I think what is also to be commended is the pace at which the actual construction has been undergone and has been brought to this point of completeness. We have had several instances in our history with respect to construction, especially when entities of Government have been involved, in overlap in terms of time with respect to proposed completion dates of projects but this one seems to have been completed rather speedily which is again, something worthy of mention.

Mr. Speaker, I want to associate myself with view that it is quite evident that Government has within its bosom the expertise and technical skills to oversee and manage infrastructural projects and have them brought to a point of completion not only within time but within budget.

Mr. Speaker, this newly developed site at Barbarees Hill fits in very well with other improvements, which have taken place over the last five years or so.

H80/11:10

Sequence 7

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation.. Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Sir, it is part of the capital works thrust of government that this area is the subject of a

process of modernisation, which is taking place in several areas of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the widening of roads, modern roadways replacing the old existing road structures stretching from as far north and west, President Kennedy Drive and Lower Westbury Road and running as far south and east, through Roebuck Street, Passage Road, Westbury Road and Country Road.

Speaker, we have seen increased pavement areas for heavy pedestrian traffic volumes that are part and parcel of life in urban Barbados, especially this part of urban Barbados, bordered by heavily populated districts such as the Orleans and Westbury. Many persons wend their way from the bosom of St. Michael West into Bridgetown daily. Sir, the matter of the sufficiency of pavement space for pedestrian traffic is not to be understated. We have seen this as part of enhancing the infrastructural improvement of the area, the aesthetics of the area. We have seen lights installed at the bottom of Barbarees Hill and Passage Road, allowing for regular night time activities on that field. We plan, proposed and anticipated the enhancement of this type of activity and, of course, by extension, there will be the attendant increase in economic activity, which has always been associated with the junction of Baxters Road, Barbarees Hill and Passage Road.

Sir, we have seen a wholesale clearance of the area. A lot of the dilapidated housing, which existed along upper Passage Road has, now given way to substantially enhanced the atmosphere. Sir, the modernisation is readily sensed when one wends through the areas of Passage Road, Country Road, Baxters Road and Upper Westbury Road.

Mr. Speaker, residents of many of those dilapidated structures, which existed along Upper Westbury Road and Passage Road, have

been resited to the Corner of Country Road, now known as Country Park Towers, that was a process of relocation which went very smoothly. We would want to reflect to suggest that the process of relocation, although it will inevitably be accompanied by some degree of inconvenience, does not have to be painful or a matter which perplexes the public.

Sir, this area has been substantially enhanced, this new development at Barbarees Hill for residents from Pickwick Gap, will further the modernisation process and enhance the attractiveness and appeal of that area.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West repeated a point, which he made in his first submission on the issue. It is one of his principle points that it is unfortunate that this new development is relocated next door to a cemetery. I do not know why he so often wants, to dwell among the dead. The fact of the matter is, living in close proximity to a cemetery is not new for Barbados. The Westbury Cemetery, for many years, has been entirely surrounded by heavily populated areas.

Asides

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: There has always been a wall to demarcate the boundaries and area of the cemetery. It is not a wall that constitutes an obstacle to movement. In the year 2005, to believe that persons are severely inconvenience because they may live in close proximity to a cemetery is rather surprising as a view coming from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I would rather he would have said that the persons would not be relocated in close proximity to a cemetery, but he would have been possessed of a more positive view that persons were relocated in closer proximity to a church.

Asides

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: The St. Leonard(s Church is one of the most popular institutions in urban Barbados. These persons from Pickwick Gap already have some association with the St. Leonard(s Church.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you saying that there should not be a wall but a path to walk to the church?

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, personally, I see no need for the wall but if residents feel there is a need for a wall, well so be it. I do know that area is already being used as an informal access for people from Barbarees Hill who attend and are members of St. Leonards Church.

Sir, if persons are in close proximity to a church, then so be it. If this is an emotion that moves the Honourable Member to have residents living close to a cemetery there is nothing wrong with that. In the year 2005, that is nothing. Barbadians do not feel a sense of taboo about coming close to the dead, or living in close proximity to a cemetery.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, might be interested to hear that the Westbury Cemetery is a place where people go for relaxation and reflection. That is a fact. People go to Westbury Cemetery, sit in their cars, have lunch and reflect. I have done that. I invite the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, in these days of sore trial, to try it and find it a place of repose for sober reflection and, perhaps, healing.

Asides

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Speaker, we set up in our minds mechanical separations, different reactions among people from one

district in urban Barbados to another. Sir, you need to trust me when I say that people who now live at Pickwick Gap are part of the community, which is now Barbarees Hill, Westbury Road and the Orleans. It is all one urban community. These people are not plucked from some place of comfort, then transferred into some foreign land or alien situation where they will find discomfort and be ill at ease, but they are simply being relocated from one area of their existing community to a new area. This is my preference.

Sir, these mechanical separations, which we set up in our minds seem to exist only with certain people. Perhaps, we come with a political bias, we think in terms of St. Michael West, the City of Bridgetown and St. Michael North West, but this is urban Barbados and Barbadians will feel equally at ease, whether they live at Barbarees Hill or Pickwick Gap, so long as opportunities offered to them in one location are not denied them at an alternative location.

I look forward to welcoming these new residents to Barbarees Hill and the constituency of St. Michael West. I also look forward as part of the process, as I am allowed to be, to assist in making the transition as easy as possible. I see that as part of my responsibility as representative for the area and I am making myself available.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to other acquisitions of property and land in St. Michael West for further housing development, whether it is at Goodland, other areas at Barbarees Hill or Bank Hall. There are open tracts of vacant land in these parts of St. Michael West. Therefore, I look forward to further acquisitions as we seek to address the matter of housing demand and house spots in Barbados.

Sir, I close by asking the Honourable

Minister of Housing and Lands to communicate to us more clearly on the matter of a definitive position with reference to phase 2 of Country Park Towers.

H80:11.20 a.m.

Sequence 8

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 09, 11:20 a.m.

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

Phase 1 was completed very quickly and people relocated very smoothly with no problems whatsoever. Phase 2 has been on hold since then. I am simply asking for a definitive position with reference to Country Park Towers. I am sure the Minister at some point in time will speak quite clearly to Phase 2.

Mr. Speaker, with these few words I want to support the Resolution and offer my compliments to the Minister and all concerned with the successful completion of the project.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I listened to the Minister this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I am happy to know that the project at Barbarees Hill is almost finish. I congratulate the Minister, the members of staff of the Ministry of Housing of Lands and the National Housing Corporation, with the speed in which they executed this urgent project.

I know, Sir, that Cricket World Cup 2007 is a major project for Barbados and the Caribbean but I would like also to say that housing in

itself has become a major crisis in Barbados. I would hope, Mr. Speaker, that the other projects which this Government is embarking on are treated with the same amount of urgency. The Minister and her team have a launching pad in Barbarees Hill and this should be a feather in the cap and I believe that if these things are continued, they should help the housing situation in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister said that when the project is to be handed over, they will be having a ceremony and the press will be invited. This will go very well for the public relations that is needed for the National Housing Corporation.

I remember speaking to the Minister at one time, Mr. Speaker, and she told me about the houses that are being built by the National Housing Corporation for the people of Barbados. I said to the Minister at the time, that she could tell me that on a one-to-one basis but the wider Barbados needs to know what is happening. I believe that the National Housing Corporation should have a functioning PR arm that would tell people what is going on in the NHC.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are other projects in Barbados that seem to be on hold. I have a project at Grazettes Great House, Sir, where the Minister of Housing vested some land for housing. I remember when the land was available, I am the one who went to the Nazarene Church and spoke to people in charge, the attorney and the National Housing Corporation. The Honourable Member for St. George North was the Minister of Housing at the time and that land was vested in the National Housing Corporation for the building of houses.

At that time, Mr. Speaker, we expected that there would be some 81 lots but because of some problems in there, we only managed to

have some 40-odd lots. To date, Sir, nothing has happened. As you would know, I was a member of the Cabinet since 2003. Sir, every day I get constituents coming to me who hear about the housing programmes in Barbados and they want to know what is happening at the Grazzettes Great House.

Sir, I saw when the water was being installed and then I saw the roads started in but to this day, the roads have not been completed. I made my investigation and I understand there was a problem with the road builder getting a Certificate of Compliance from the Town Planning Department. I later understood that there were some hiccups with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the MPT, the Town Planning Department and the three Ministers responsible should have a more hands-on approach about these matters. As I said, we are into housing which is critical to the livelihood of people. I am hoping that we could have the niggling problems corrected and that the Certificate of Compliance could be given so that the whole project could get started.

Sir, people have been complaining to me about it. I saw in the newspaper that the Minister spoke to the Press and they were words attributed to her, where by Christmas, there will be a number of housing projects available to people in Barbados. One or two people from my area have been successful in getting houses.

I have already told my people they are coming for Christmas and before all the projects go, to go and get their fridge, stove, washing machine and furniture because when Christmas comes, they are going to have a new house. They are expecting to have houses by Christmas and I want to congratulate the

Minister and the National Housing Corporation again, on letting the people know that they will be having houses for Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, again, I go back to Barbarees Hill. I said that Barbarees Hill is not finished and I know that when the area is completed, it will enhance the conditions of those people from the Pickwick Gap area. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West talking about a wall but I believe, personally, that it would be more ideal to have a chain fence with some bougainvillea growing between it. I believe that over the years, the properties in that area would be enhanced.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I said I want to give my blessings to this project. As with housing in general, I know that there is a scarcity of land in Barbados and it is not a possibility that we can get all of this land going that way. I believe that in time we have to start building up in housing.

I see that in the Clairmont Gardens and the Crystal Heights areas, there are some high-rise buildings. There are many professional people in this country, Sir, middle class and upper middle class people who are in need of housing, along with what we call, our working class people.

I hope that the developers, not only Government, but the private developers would be looking at some kind of high rise living for those professional people, who would want to live in what people call, gated communities. There are those who do not believe that we should have gated communities. When I was a boy, I heard people talking about the Strathclyde but that was a racial problem in Barbados but there is more a social problem in Barbados and if people want to live in a gated community, where they want to pay for their own services, such as security, I believe they are entitled to that privilege.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I just want to say that I have made my contribution to this debate this morning.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

House 80, sequence 09, 11:3014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate to say that I stand by whatever I have said previously, and to add to those things that I have spoken about previously.

Sir, it is clear to me that these persons have been relocated and they have now been added to the dead of Barbados. That is, when they look out of their backyards they would find that their new neighbours would be the dead of Barbados. Sir, the people of this particular area are requesting that instead of getting wire fencing they want a stone wall so that when they look out there is a divide between themselves and the dead of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the Government of Barbados does not understand the beliefs of the people of Barbados nor the relationship between the living and the dead in Barbados. Sir, as you are aware, nobody wants to walk near to a church wall or a graveyard at night, yet this Government want these people to go and live next to a graveyard with wire fencing.

Sir, any noise the people hear they would believe that the dead is coming for them, so they want to have this guard wall to protect them so that they would know the difference between the dead and the living. However, this Government cannot understand the requests of

the people living in that particular area.

Sir, there is also another situation where persons who did not own their houses are having cupboards to the top and the ones who previously own their houses can only have bottom cupboards. Sir, it seems to me that you are in a better position with this Government if you did not previously own your property. Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time this has occurred under this Government.

Sir, in 1981 when the Arawak Cement Plant was being built, persons who did not own land ended up with land and persons who owned land did not get any and they had to go all through Barbados looking to own land. Sir, it is also clear that when you have land acquisitions in Barbados, it does not pay to own land, it is better for you to be a tenant because you end up being better off.

Sir, do not tell me that I am lying because I have hard and direct evidence...

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, why did you not bring it?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Why I did not bring it? I am here standing, Sir, it is here.

Mr. SPEAKER: I always tell Honourable Members that instead of coming to this Parliament and making so many wild statements, that if they have the proof to bring the proof, that is all I ask.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I have been in this House now for 11 years and you say, wild statements, Sir.

Sir, when I speak, I speak with authority. When I spoke about the Arawak Cement Plant, I spoke with intimate knowledge. I detest anybody telling me that I am being wild in this Parliament because it is unparliamentary to be

wild in Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: All I am suggesting to Honourable Members, including the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, is that if they are going to make certain allegations it would be very good if they have the proof. It is as simple as that.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I have the evidence. In 1981 when the Land Acquisition Act was put in place with the Arawak Cement Plant and the residents of St. Lucy, people who own land never had the opportunity, even today, to get back a piece of land when land was acquired to resite them, and I am a living example of that. I am not supposed to discuss my personal affairs in here but you have asked for it, Sir, and I am putting in on the table.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed please.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am talking about the land where the administrative building of the Arawak Cement plant now stands that was owned by my family, but I am not here to put a case for myself. I have never used this Parliament to put a case for myself but now that the Speaker has asked me to present...

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed please. The proof that you have presented does not relate to the Resolution that is before the House. That is all I am saying to you. Just proceed please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: That is not so, Sir. I am saying, Sir, that I am now witnessing what has happened in St. Lucy reoccurring in Barbarees Hill and it is not the first time that it has happened.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: That is personal. If you want to speak about personal land and personal assets let us all speak about personal land and personal assets in here.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member do not listen to asides, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I can tell you chapter and verse how I have received personal land and personal assets and they are all above board.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please just address the Chair and continue.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member wants me to speak about private property I own at Fryers Well, which has nothing to do with the debate and he wants me to tell the House how I got it. Sir, one thing for sure is that it did not come through finders(fee because unlike anybody else, I have never served in Government here. All of my political life I have served in Opposition and in one position.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, I going to have to ask you to take your seat if you do not continue speaking on the Resolution. Sir, continue please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Is that what you want, Sir? I will take my seat.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister will now wind up please.

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we are going to attempt to do five housing Resolutions today. Certainly, there seems to be a spirit of merriment and levity in Honourable Members on the other side so I would see how

the others go.

Sir, in winding up I want to respond to some of the substantive issues that were raised. Let me begin at the point at which the Honourable Member ended. Sir, though one cannot speak of substance being found in the Honourable Member(s) speech one could observe that he might have helped to create some degree of confusion by suggesting that when there is a compulsory acquisition, it is better to be a tenant than a landowner.

Sir, let me make it clear that as part of the acquisition process persons get a property replaced and in many instances they get a larger property than that which they had before. This is seen particularly in urban Barbados where the properties are small, invariably of wood, some in poor state of repairs and where the size of the rooms does not meet the regulations set by the Town Planning Office. In those instances all those property owners get a replacement with a house that is of masonry construction and the land attached, so they are in a better position than before.

Mr. Speaker, the tenant is not given a property. If you were a land tenant but owned the house in which you live, your house is also improved given the parameters which I indicated just now and you are given an option to purchase a parcel of land from the Government at \$2.50 a square foot on which your replacement wall house is built. So both sets of property owners, whether one owns an entire property, house and land, or whether one owns a house only, ends up with improved circumstances, in better financial circumstances, with a better asset base than they previously had and a better quality house.

Mr. Speaker, to move to the issue raised by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, residents who carry on businesses at Pickwick Gap will be compensated in

accordance with the provisions of the Act, which required that they are paid for disturbances and loss of any revenues from their business and such disruption of the business as is caused by the relocation.

House 80 Sequence 10

11:40 a.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, I believe there are four residents, one in particular who had commercial enterprises, who will be compensated. That compensation is in addition to the house and land which they will be getting as a replacement property for the one which they currently occupy. Therefore, in those circumstances, they will not only end up with a house and land but with cash in hand.

Mr. Speaker, negotiations are still underway and I believe that previously I had indicated to this Honourable House that the values of the properties at Pickwick were in the region of \$1 million.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the questions asked about the tendering process, there is a requirement for tendering by Central Government and by a statutory corporation. In the case of Central Government, the tenders must go before Cabinet, where the sum exceeds that which the Ministry can authorise. In the case of a statutory corporation, as in this instance, there is no requirement to go before the Cabinet, unless it goes to the Minister for approval and the Minister disagrees with the recommendation of the Board. Where a statutory corporation is involved, the Board of that statutory corporation will make the decision in respect of the award or selection of

a tender.

Mr. Speaker, there can be two processes for tendering. There is an open tender where advertisements are placed in the newspapers, where persons are invited to tender by a particular date, while setting out certain criteria such as the name of the company, a certificate of incorporation, proof of tax clearance, et cetera. The Board then makes the ultimate selection, after consideration by a Technical Committee within the corporation and I believe a Tenders Committee or the management of the corporation makes a recommendation to the Board and the Board makes the decision.

Mr. Speaker, there can be a selective tendering process, which is limited, as no public advertisement is done. In this process, tenders are invited from a group, which tends to happen in two or three circumstances, one being where the service to be provided or carried out is of a specialised nature which would require special expertise, experience or qualifications. Therefore, to used a ridiculous example, if Government wanted to paint the clouds and in a particular area there were only two companies in Barbados which were qualified to do it, Government would, rather than advertise, ask the companies to give a quotation.

The second circumstance where Government would go to selective tendering is where time is of the essence in the execution of the contract. Therefore, let us say the open tendering process may take two to three months to select the tender, you may then go to shorten that time by staying to a minimum of the three entities and requesting quotations.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of this project, the works were done by way of selective tendering. The road works were executed by C.O.W. Construction Company, at a cost of \$430 000. The houses were built by Apex Construction,

Steve(s Building Works, and GAP Group Construction at a cost of \$2.8 million. The landscaping was done by way of selective tender and the lowest bidder, whose name I cannot remember, was \$30 000. The point is that quotations were had and these were the persons selected.

At the end of the work, the project cost is \$40 000 over the initial projected budget cost because - and I want to make it clear - a number of individual property owners have asked to have specialised changes made to their houses. Therefore, were it not for these changes which had been requested by those homeowners whom we were trying to accommodate, facilitate and make comfortable in their new homes and new surroundings, we would have been perfectly within our budget. We are \$40 000 over, which, in the context of a \$3 million project, is not substantial.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the barrier, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has sought to suggest that if there was a guard-wall ghosts, (duppies(or dead, could not get into the units, but in the horror movies that I have seen, the ghosts usually come through the walls. Therefore, I do not know if it would made any substantial difference if a two-foot wall or a ten-foot wall was built at this development, to keep out the (duppies(or dead.

Mr. Speaker, it is a social reality in Barbados that there are certain areas that are heavily used as footpaths, walkways or shortcuts through villages, communities and when moving from one area to another.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to think this is a nation of prayer and that when we have the blessing done at Barbarees Hill for the opening of this development, that it would be done under the covering of the Church and and it would be that which would reside over the people at this development.

Mr. Speaker, we heard much talk about the graveyard but the residents know where they are going and are quite happy. Sir, some had indicated, prior to seeing the site and becoming familiar with the development and the way that it would have been done, that they did not want to live there but that they wanted to live elsewhere. After it was explained to them and they found out about the quality of housing, landscaping and the way it would have been beautifully developed, every resident, even those who did not want to go at first, then opted to go. Sir, therefore, in this matter, the Opposition is seeking to create an issue for the residents where none exists.

H:No80(11)1150 a.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON-McDOWALD:

There are certain areas which are used heavily as footpaths, walkways, shortcuts or, as we say in Barbados, near-cuts through villages, communities and when people are moving from one area to another. In the area of St. James, which I know best, there is a shortcut through a path in Haynesville which moves people from Thorpes and the surrounding district onto Holders Hill to link them up with the coast. Sir, at Barbarees Hill and Westbury Road, there is a footpath which takes people through the Westbury Cemetery and moves them from one part of Bridgetown, particularly western Bridgetown to the southern and northern parts of Bridgetown. In fact, as a result of this movement there has almost been a permanent hole in the part of the Westbury Cemetery for years because whenever there is an attempt to repair the hole, the residents open it up again in order for the foot travel to continue.

The only time the wall was repaired and allowed to remain intact was when Dame Nita Barrow, the late Governor-General was buried. We repaired the wall for the funeral so that the surroundings would be aesthetically pleasing and 24 hours after the funeral people open up the wall again in order that the footpath would continue. It also happens in communities where there are schools. Sir, at several schools throughout Barbados, fences are broken down in order to allow people to walk through the schools rather than around them, either to access the schools or surrounding communities. Mr. Speaker, the residents at Pickwich Gap who are moving to Barbarees Hill asked for a wall and in the construction of the wall, two difficulties were encountered. When we sought to get tenders for the wall, the tenders for the cost of construction of the wall ranged between \$500 000 to \$600 000, which was extremely high. Sir, they were asking us to put up a wall that would cost taxpayers in the region of \$0.5 million which we had no guarantee would remain in place.

The concern with the wall at that time was that the grave stones are embedded in the existing wall and we did not want to do any damage to them. Equally, we did not want to build a wall in such close proximity to the existing wall of the graveyard which has grave stones embedded which is of such antiquity that the new walls and its foundation would undermine the integrity and structure of the existing wall and cause it to collapse.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, a decision was taken that from the perspective of structure and cost, it would be better to use a fence at Barbarees and to use bougainvillea and other structures, which are hardy and people-resistance. There are people who would attempt to come over a fence but if you have bougainvillea, sweet lime or some interlocking shrubbery growing there, it creates a very effective barrier. This was the decision taken in respect of the wall and the

fence. Sir, in every regard, we have tried to honour the concerns and requests of the residents of Pickwich who will be relocated to Barbarees.

Mr. Speaker, other issues were raised and I want to allude and speak to them where the details are available. Another issue raised was the Grazettes Development. In respect of this, we are still awaiting a Certificate of Compliance from Town and Country Planning. There have been some concerns in respect of that development. The road has now been completed and approved by the Ministry of Public Works, which must give the specification and final approval for road construction into new residential developments. Sir, all the infrastructure has now been completed and we are awaiting permission from Town and Country Planning Department for the actual construction of the houses.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many people in the Chamber are aware that in doing residential developments that you have some times to get more than one permission from Town and Country Planning Department. You may go for an initial permission to do a development to subdivide a parcel of land from a wider parcel and to create lots. You may go for an initial application to take lands out of agricultural use and put it into housing which is the initial planning permission. Then, later on, when you are ready to construct your house, you must go back for specific permission which approves the construction of the houses of the kind which you want to put at that location. We are now at the stage where we are awaiting permission from Town & Country Planning for the construction of houses at Grazettes which would be constructed under the terms and provisions of the Joint Venture Programme as the project was initially conceptualised. I hope that answers and satisfies the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, who has been bearing this matter on his chest and in

heart. I wish to assure him that we are moving expeditiously to address the matter.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues of concerns in relation to housing development in Barbados, is the high volume of property development taking place at this time and the demands it is making on a limited industry. When I say limited, I mean in the context of those firms, which have the capability for doing infrastructural development. I think they may only be three of such firms and whenever construction is booming or at a peak, you will find that the demand of these three or four firms is so high and the competition is great. There is keen competition for concrete blocks, concrete and for those firms to do infrastructural development. It is a matter of concern to us at the National Housing Corporation because of the amount of time taken to do infrastructural development before you can start your housing construction and the extent to which that frustrates the delivery of housing construction and the implementation of a housing programme.

Mr. Speaker, while it is always the rush to quarrel with the Minister, we are very constrained by the fact that the existing building boom in Barbados has made access to those firms doing infrastructural development difficult and the number of projects which they are executing between both the public and private sector has resulted in a showdown of the pace of work being delivered at the level of the Government sector.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns which we now have to address at National Housing Corporation is the way in which we expedite this key process because where we are taking raw lands to put into housing, we need to move more quickly otherwise our housing planning and construction will become severely constrained and frustrated and people will begin to doubt the sincerity of our efforts and

our intention of implementation.

H80/12:00

Sequence 12

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation... Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I believe that I have covered the full ambit of all of the issues raised by colleagues. Mr. Speaker, with the House(s) permission, I will take a brief peek at a document which states the value of the properties at this stage. Sir, I have the individual figures but not a full sum.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the final figure was just over \$1 million, which was given to Parliament, on a previous occasion, at the time of the last debate. As I indicated, the replacement housing at Barbarees Hill is \$2.8 million. I believe that is a value almost doubled that which would have been ascribed to the property.

Asides

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: I am grateful for the economic skills and adding skills of my colleague, who advised me that the initial value ascribed by the Commissioner of Land Tax to the properties at Pickwick Gap was \$1.6 million and the properties at Barbarees Hill are valued at \$2.8 million. Sir, one can see immediately that there is an appreciation of the property values.

I am going to repeat that the residential properties at Pickwick Gap were valued in total \$1.6 million and the replacement properties at Barbaree Hill are valued \$2.8 million. That gives the Honourable House a clear indication of the kind of project, the expenditure, the extent to which we ensure that people(s)

circumstances were improved. During the course of my comments, I indicated how far we were over budget, along with the cost of landscaping and road works, so, by means of addition, we are able to arrive at the cost of the project.

The overruns are attributable to variations in the houses requested by residents and I believe that is a legitimate matter. Therefore, I am happy to close this particular debate indicating to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, who raised a number of questions, that on this matter we have nothing to hide. We tried to be transparent and have used a selective tendering process at this project because of the constraint of time. It was a requirement that, at the latest, the properties at Barbarees Hill had to be completed to facilitate World Cup by the end of October 2005. That was the absolute deadline which we were up against. If we had gone to an open tendering process, the process would have been considerably more protracted.

Sir, we used a selective tendering process, relying on contractors who had a proven track record, good skills and who were reputable, honest and whose quality of work we could rely on and be assured of. Sir, they have not let us down because we have brought the project in on time, well before the end of October 2005 deadline and within budget, except for the \$40 000 in changes, which the residents requested.

Mr. Speaker, having put the facts before this Honourable House and addressed all the concerns raised by Honourable Members, I trust that... though the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West said that I am incapable of satisfying him, I believe that he is in such a state of political fire at this time that he cannot be satisfied and, perhaps, will not be until the special conference takes place. I rather suspect that after it takes place that he will be extremely dissatisfied then.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 13

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP.225 THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT FAIRY VALLEY IN THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for

St. James South.

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution relates to the acquisition of land and its vesting in the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I apologise. I realised that some information I wanted to give the Honourable House is not in place.

Sir, this is land on which the National Housing Corporation is proposing housing development for primary homes of various types. A mixture of wood and wall, as well as to set aside a number of lots for occupation by persons who are seeking to purchase only lots.

Mr. Speaker, we had a concern at National Housing Corporation and within the Ministry. I believe it is true to say that 10 per cent of the land, which comprise Barbados is owned by Barbadians living outside of Barbados. I think it is in the region 8500 parcels. I am speaking now from memory without the benefit of the

notes. I believe that approximately 10 per cent of the land is owned by Barbadians who live outside of Barbados and who have left the lands vacant. This has prompted a concern with the Ministry and National Housing Corporation that we need to move to a number of developments where we are selling packages for first-time homeowners who are resident in Barbados and intend to occupy that property. Sir, I am not talking about people who are going away on short-term contracts and returning to Barbados, but Barbadians who live in the United Kingdom or United States of America and have foreign currency, which has a higher value, and a better purchasing capability than persons living in Barbados.

Sir, many of them are hoping to own land in Barbados and some of them never returned. They have children who were born overseas and who have no particular interest in living in Barbados. They buy lots and hold them indefinitely.

H80: 12.10 p.m.

Sequence 13

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 14, 12:10 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON:

Sir, one can go into residential developments all over Barbados and see vacant lots, which were sold as early as 30 years ago, whether Ruby Park or Wanstead, where these lots remain vacant in grass and bush. They are not being cleaned up frequently and residents complain about the fact that they harbour rodents and criminals, in some instances, so they create a nuisance but this land is owned by Barbadians living overseas in many instances.

Therefore, we deliberately embarked on a

policy that our market at the National Housing Corporation would be first-time homeowners. The first-time homeowner is looking for a property to occupy, a parcel of land on which they are going to build in a short space of time. Maybe by paying off the mortgage on the land first and then building, or buying a property that they can move into once and for all and that way, they eliminate having to pay two mortgages, such as a mortgage on the land and rent, or loan on the land and rent, while they remain in a rental accommodation, waiting until they pay off for the land.

It is also becoming apparent that we must do a slight shift because we now have to develop, parcels of land with sights and services and proper infrastructure for occupation by those persons who own a house and who are given notice to quit the land that they are renting, either from family members or from private persons in the marketplace who want their land for personal reasons, such as family returning because they want to get rid of that tenant for whatever reason.

Therefore, we get a high number of applications from persons who own a house but would want somewhere to move that house to, so what they really want is access to a lot that they will utilise immediately. There are two options therefore available to us. Set aside a few lots in every primary home development for such persons to get access to land, or create a development specifically for an individual to have access to land to move a house onto.

The truth is that it is our experience that when you give persons that initial help, they improve their houses and circumstances over time. The rents which we would charge for those lots would be reasonable. I believe that this is a shift in policy now from what we are doing in policy at the moment. All rents paid would then go toward the eventual purchase price.

Sir, from the day that they move onto the land, they are investing in a parcel of land, which they will eventually own. Although I must tell you that I was reviewing yesterday with the Ministry of Housing - and it is a review, which I would also want to do with National Housing - the numbers of parcels of land, rented by persons in the community from the Ministry of Housing, some of whom are renting lots at \$20 per annum and \$50 per annum, very reasonable rates, and still have their lots in substantial arrears. They just will not pay the rent. I even saw rents as low as \$8 per annum and the people were in arrears. One could have a social debate on what causes this phenomenon.

Sir, when Government is the agency involved, there always seems to be some reluctance to pay, even when the monies being asked by the Government for the good or service are entirely reasonable and far below market prices. It is not my function to have that debate today. I want to focus on what we intend to do at Fairy Valley.

I think, Sir, that when we look at the delivery of social services, this is an issue which we have to confront. What level of welfarism do we want in the society? To what extent do we want mendicancy to be encouraged? How do we move people to states of independence? How do we create an environment for them to become property owners and owners of businesses, so that they become independent and have a sense of their own self worth?

I am talking about able bodied people for whom we are casting the social safety net but who are taking full advantage and to some extent, even abuse of the services being provided by the Government. This is a different issue and I am not today speaking to the constituents of any particular individual. I am speaking to what appears to me to be a growing national phenomenon that we need to

confront as policymakers and which we have to address because it speaks to the whole social fabric of the country.

At Fairy Valley, we will seek to create a number of lots and houses. The lot sizes will be in the region of 3 500 square feet. The houses will be a mixture of wood and wall. Perhaps, I should elaborate because when one speaks of a house that is wood and wall, one thinks of a house made from two different types of material.

Sir, one will be able at Fairy Valley to purchase either a hard wood house or a stone house, so there will be two options. The houses will be built with one, two and three bedrooms and they will be within the price ranges indicated for the Primary Homes Programme. We are not deviating from the price initially put to the public, although there has been a substantial increase in market prices for goods and materials. What we have sought to do is to find a way to contain the price of the product which we are putting on the market and to find a number of contractors who have agreed to build at this price.

I will speak now to the selection process for the contractors at Fairy Valley. Sir, subsequent to the launch of the Primary Homes Programme, we did an advertisement which ran for sometime, inviting all contractors, particularly small contractors who wanted to be involved in this construction programme to put in a tender, give us information on their company and some idea of their past experience and track recording so that we could determine whether or not they could be involved in the programme.

One of the continuing problems in the construction industry and, certainly, for the National Housing Corporation has been the issue of quality assurance. When the product is delivered to the marketplace and the purchaser

moves in, will the back door really be made of material suitable for exterior use or did the person, to cut cost, put an interior door at an outside location? Will the windows leak? Will the roofs leak? Was the house properly snagged? Were the engineering specifications followed?

I believe, Sir, that while we are doing large scale projects, the quality of our management and the quality of our oversight and quality assurance, supervision and standards control, have to be critical to the development of National Housing Corporation projects. I believe, Sir, that at recent projects, we have improved our standards.

House 80, sequence 14, 12:2014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON:

We expect at this time that there will be a minimum of six one-bedroom houses, three in wood and three in stone, 15 two-bedroom houses in hardwood, 15 two-bedroom houses in wall, 20 three-bedroom houses in hardwood and 20 three-bedroom houses in wall. A minimum of four lots would be made available for sale so that people can buy the lots and erect their own houses, also in instances where persons have a house and have been given notice they can move the house onto these lots which could be made available for rental or sale.

Mr. Speaker, there will be some 80 lots at this site. As I have indicated, the lot sizes will vary between

3 000 and 3 500 square feet. We have opted to do a mixture of stone and wooden houses at the site because if one goes into a typical village or a community in Barbados that is

what one would see. We still continue to have a high number of applications for our wooden bungalows in the primary homes programme whether three-bedroom, two-bedroom or one-bedroom.

Sir, in order to satisfy the market demand and to provide people with what they are asking for, we are going to do a mix development rather than build in any single medium at this location. We are going to use multi-media construction at this site in the hope that later on people would expand their houses and go from one bedroom to two bedrooms, from two bedrooms to three bedrooms, build a two-storey house or change to suit themselves. We will, as consistent with the commitment made as part of the programme, give people a complete package with access to everything from solar water heaters, furniture or a finance package for outfitting their homes after it is constructed. Special insurance packages are also available. Mr. Speaker, many options are being made available.

Mr. Speaker, although it has been a long time in trying to get the land available, had we not gone on the summer break when we did, we would have been able to have a larger number of parcels before the House for approval to put into the programme. At this location we are now seeking to vest this land in the National Housing Corporation to facilitate the housing development and the construction of homes within the context of the Primary Homes Programme.

Mr. Speaker, the parcel of land to be transferred and vested is 5.34 acres or 21 605.9 square metres or just about 300 000 square feet. There are two sets of housing development which would take place at Fairy Valley. Part of the housing which we would take to this site, is under the Primary Homes Programme. There are other areas of Fairy Valley that are being vested in the National Housing Corporation to

also facilitate housing but this is in conjunction with the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, where that housing is intended to facilitate the relocation of residents from various locations under the Grantley Adams International Airport expansion project.

Mr. Speaker, persons who own property will get a replacement property. Those who own the house but not the land could rent the land and if they want to buy it, it would be sold to them at \$2.50 per square foot. There are at least 12 properties, which are squatting in the area, which now has to be cleared for the airport redevelopment. Outside of those there are 74 households which are to be relocated. Thirty-seven houses have been completed to date as part of the construction programme and the move. A number of contracts were issued or are about to be issued. We expect that there would be 46 masonry houses in all. Four model houses were initially constructed for the project.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you going to conclude soon?

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I have given all of the information in both sets of the development. I have indicated the types of housing, that the vesting is to be in the National Housing Corporation and that there are two projects being contemplated. There is a new project under the Primary Homes Programme of which I gave all the details and the continuation of a project, which has been ongoing for the airport expansion and relocation of which I have given the figures and the details.

Mr. Speaker, the land has to be vested in the National Housing Corporation to complete the legal formality and for the process to formally come to conclusion and to take place in the right way. That is what this Resolution before the House seeks to do today.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 145 p.m. today.

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

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

House 80 Sequence 15

12:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

RESUMPTION

MR. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. James South.

ORDER NO.13 (recommitted)

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I beg to move that this Resolution do now passed.

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

ORDER NO. 4

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225, THE LEASE TO THE BARBADOS NATIONAL TERMINAL COMPANY LIMITED, OF A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT

COVERLEY IN THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH IN THIS ISLAND, FOR THE PURPOSE OF DEVELOPING A PETROLEUM STORAGE AND TERMINAL FACILITY.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we are moving with some alacrity and I am grateful. We now move to the third of the sixth Resolution, which I am attempting to do today, to advance the work of the National Housing Corporation and the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I say the Government of Barbados because some of these Resolutions, which we are doing, are not just restricted to purposes for the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment but as in the case of cricket relocation, we had a national purpose. Similarly this Resolution before this Honourable House involving some 35 acres of land at the area of Coverley and inclusive of 0.101 hectares of road reserve.

Mr. Speaker, by way of this Resolution, we are seeking to transfer to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited, a lease for the occupation of this land, for some 25 years, for the purpose of developing a petroleum storage facility.

The terms of the lease are as follows:

(a) the initial rent is \$488 000 per annum;

(b) the rent is to be reviewed every five years;

(c) the tenant is responsible for

(i) all outgoings associated with the property, including land tax, utility charges and development cost; and

(ii) any such remediating of the site on the expiration of the lease and reinstating the land to its former state.

(d)the tenant shall comply with the Town and Country Planning Act, Cap. 240 and its Regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I am seeking to confirm, by way of the review of Parliament Papers, the period of the lease. This lease is intended to facilitate works being undertaken for this company(s development and in pursuit of an energy initiative and energy policy.

H:No80(16)150 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON-McDOWALD:

It is recognised that energy development is critical to national development and to development everywhere in a situation where there are rising fuel costs, the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited needs to look at its own development goals and make decisions which are in the long-term interest of the country(s own development targets and goals.

Sir, it is, therefore, critical that we must find ways as a country and as a Government to lead the process of ensuring that we have some oil reserves which are protected. It is also critical that we can secure the storage and movement of oils and fuels around the country to facilitate activities which require the use of energy and to facilitate those entities which are large consumers of energy.

Mr. Speaker, as we look across the globe, we are now seeing the volumes of oils and energies being consumed, for instance, by China in its thrust for greater national development and in pursuit of an industrialisation process which requires high energy use. Here in Barbados, we have been fortunate that we have some gas

and other reserves. The BNTCL has been, as part of its development focus, seeking to identify strategic goals and planning for such reserves as may exist over which they have control and issue relative to importation, storage, movement and use of oils and to see what better and more competitive approach they can bring to the marketplace so that we can find more fuel-efficient ways of doing business.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I did not, in wearing my hat as Minister of Environment, make the point that part of where we need to be going as a nation is considering not only the efficient use of fuel but looking at the reduction of our dependency on fossil fuels, by encouraging householders and other commercial enterprises to reduce their fuel consumption, by going to practices which are more environmentally friendly, products which are low energy and represent a low-energy alternative, seeking to identify alternative energy sources such as solar power. In some cases, for instance at the Harrison(s Cave, we have sought to rely on the use of solar energy for some of our fueling. Equally, there is now an ongoing project with the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited to look at the whole issue of wind energy. There is technology to which the Ministry of Environment has now been exposed, a system which would seek to use wave or water energy.

Sir, in a country which is poised as the major developing country in this hemisphere ranking third behind the United States and Canada and which the Prime Minister and the Honourable Member for St. Peter has indicated as a matter of course that our objective is to move from a developing country to a developed country and central to that development is going to be the issue of how we use fuel and energy. Sir, central to that is also the implementation of the price of energy the cost of doing business at every level and the extent to which we can

reduce our dependency on fossil fuels for the purpose of environmental protection and conservation as well as a strategic way of reducing our energy and fuel costs.

Sir, at the level of the householder there are things which the householder can do like using solar lights and not keeping all the lights on, use appliances which are energy efficient or have low energy consumption. There are such products available in the market in Barbados as well as other products which are helpful in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I think a broader educational programme is missing, which would seek to give the public information on how they can access the new technology and how they can get access to fuel-efficient, low-energy appliances and other goods whether air-conditioners refrigerators, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, there are still those for whom fossil fuel would be a requirement. The BNTCL has as its mandate and its particular orientation as a company, the involvement in energy and fossil fuels, therefore, their role is the management of that process and access to that resource. I know they are developing new strategic approaches to the development of their primary goals. This pipeline, which we are seeking to accommodate through this long lease, represents part of the approach that Government has now been pursuing with statutory corporation and private companies in which the Government is the principal shareholder but even in pursuit of our relationship with the private sector where we are not selling land outright but facilitating development by entering into long lease with these various entities so that we create what has come to be known in the marketplace as a win-win situation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Crown continues to hold on to the land for the exclusive ownership

of the taxpayers but the developers get access to land by way of a long lease, carry out their development and then the land reverts to the Crown on such terms and conditions as is determined by the parties after negotiation. In that way, the Government satisfies the interest of the taxpayer and the Barbadian by hold on to land and properties which are part of the general patronage of those who reside here, as well as at the same time allowing such development to take place as is necessary for social and economic growth. Sir, this gives access to critical land resources necessary for developers who either may not have the investment capital or who would wish to enter into partnership with Government in respect of joint ventures and various developments.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Honourable Member who has responsibility for energy will speak to the matter in greater detail but I wanted to set the framework as to why we are going the way of lease, the general strategic target of the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited and to indicate what the lease is for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I said that the lease was for 25 years but the lease is for a period of 50 years, with option to review for a further period of 25 years and the rent would be reviewed every five years. Sir, the rent is \$488 000 per annum. Those are the broad facts and having just created the canvas, I will let my colleague now give the brush-work details in relation to the energy policy.

H80/14:00Sequence 17

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I also sought to set it in the context of what I think the environmental imperatives need to be because these are also critical, in my view, for national development. People do not often

look to see the nexus between environment and economy, and environment and development. If we are to preserve our economic gains, we must also be protective of our physical environment, that is why it is a feature of this contract from the outset, that it will be incumbent on the tenant. It is a specific requirement of the lease that the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited (BNTCL) should reinstate the lands and perform any remediation and mitigation if there is damage or spoiling of the environment during the time they are in occupation, so that the land is returned to Government in a pristine condition for any future development works necessary at this particular location.

Sir, it is useful, as I indicated, from a lease perspective to handle it this way, because the land does not then become alienated or put into long-term use. It is returned to Government, after a reasonable period for the specific use has elapsed.

Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I would have normally exercised a preference of hearing the Honourable Minister of Energy speak more to this, but I realise it is a matter raised by the Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment, relative to the leasing of lands by the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited at Coverley. Even though I am somewhat familiar with the area, having utilised some of the sugar cane from the fields in the general area, I do not know now what is called Coverley or Fairy Valley, it might be one piece of land. Sir, I know that I am familiar with some storage tanks in what we used to called Fairly Valley. I do not know if this is another construction to be undertaken or if we are speaking of those tanks which were

constructed a while ago.

Mr. Speaker, nevertheless, if we are referring to the existing tanks or if new tanks are to be built, we are talking about the leasing of land to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. Obviously, there are some questions which would arise out of this particular activity. The Honourable Minister has spoken to the question of the environmental impact, wherever there is an oil storage facility or the movement of oil across a piece of land or space.

Sir, we are familiar with the difficulties, I believe at Needhams Point some years ago, relative to the presence of a processing facility there and the need to clean up that area for it to become habitable. I am not aware that has been done. I believe that the Honourable Minister would speak to issues such as this.

However, the environmental impact can sometimes be quite considerable. There are always issues of leakage, even with the best laid plans and the best construction equipment, et cetera, there could still be some spillage. Sir, I believe that this material also has to be transported by truck, because pipelines can be ruptured.

Sir, the Honourable Minister spoke about the land being returned in pristine condition. I am not aware that after petroleum and other refined products have seeped into the land that you could have it returned to pristine condition. One would believe that at the minimum, you would hope there would be no substantial spoilage of the particular property, diminishing its usefulness for some other purpose.

Asides

Mr. R.D. JONES: Substantial is the word that is operative rather than pristine. Maybe, the pristine conditions would be substantial

rehabilitation of the existing land, which is leased for fifty years to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited.

Sir, I believe that for the past two years we have seen the laying of pipelines to facilitate the movement of oil. We have seen the construction of storage tanks at what we used to call Fairy valley. If I am wrong, and it is called Coverley, the Honourable Minister would correct me. As I travel from Grantley Adams International Airport, to my left there are some storage tanks and we used to call that area Fairy Valley. I do not know if that is what you are talking about. These tanks have been constructed for the past two years and there are some questions, to be answered.

Sir, I am always interested in the outlaying of money by the taxpayers because the facility is ultimately owned by the taxpayers of Barbados. I am interested in the cost of what I call the pipeline project and the cost of the storage tank project. Are they part and parcel of the same project or if there were compartmentalised in their delivery? What were the estimated costs and the final delivery cost of the entire project, the pipeline and the development of the storage tanks?

Asides

Mr. R.D. JONES: What is the general relationship between Barbados National Terminal Company Limited and a company like the Barbados Light and Power Company, which uses a lot of fuel in Barbados? Sir, we are looking at energy consumption in the lease of this land.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical state in relation to fossil fuels in the world. I believe that when one reads the information as to when these terminal fuels will disappear, there is a fluctuation in the time lines between 25 and 35 years, because that is a sort of static

relationship. Let us say for argument sake we might find off the northeastern coast of Barbados billions of barrels of oil, that would change the picture somewhat as to the existing reserves across the world.

I am concerned that we are investing large amounts of money and time in a dying sector, that is the fossil fuel sector. It is a dying sector and one would hope that more research and development would be going into alternative energy sources.

Sir, we had an explosion of vehicles utilising gasoline in Barbados but one would also hope that some enterprising entrepreneur would look at hybrid vehicles which would use a combination of whatever fuels, synthetic and otherwise, existing within the wider marketplace. There seems to be a substantial investment in the fossil fuel industry.

Sir, as we move towards providing the lease of the land situated at Coverly to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited that at some point in time, we would make a diversion and take a look, may be in this Parliament or the Ministry of Energy, at what else we could do.

H80: 14.10 p.m.Sequence 18

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House 80, sequence 19, 2:10 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. R.D. JONES:

I know we have experimented with one or two regenerators for energy but we need now to make the investment that the Minister spoke about, in the future. She said that energy development is critical to national development. Those were her words, and we need to look at our own developmental goals, relative to that sector.

I believe that from our vantage point, we would need to look not at the dying fossil fuel industry but at alternative solutions to the generating of energy, and things of that ilk, within our land space and environment.

One cannot quarrel with providing BNTCL with a 50-year lease or whatever, to ensure that for the now period, where there is still some movement of this type of energy source into Barbados that we have some place to store that and to distribute that across the length and breadth of Barbados. The lease would get the support from This Side but the debate here in Parliament must be broader than just the mere granting of a lease to the BNTCL to satisfy their requirements, at least for the 50 years that have been identified.

I think that the Minister of Energy has to address some of the more critical concerns, in relation to the investment relative to a dying sector, unless we are able to find larger and larger sources of fossil fuel reserves across the world, which would help keep our economy going.

Sir, yes, our economy is dependent even now on this particularly dying sector. One hopes that we could put, as we said earlier, our research and development people on finding alternative sources of energy. We have a plentiful supply of sunlight. Yes, we have really developed our solar water heating system quite well. We have provided some foreign exchange to Barbados but how can we utilise that even more to generate electricity and other things relative to the use solar energy, and to the use of sunlight.

Therefore, one would hope that eventually the debate would be shifted in this Parliament or as I said in the Ministry of Energy towards the satisfaction of this.

With those brief comment, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to give my full support to the Resolution that is before this Honourable House. I listened to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who I am aware is the Shadow Minister of Energy and Public Utilities. He attempted to make some reasonable points and I applaud him for the first approach that he has actually made in speaking in this Honourable Chamber about matters pertaining to energy. I am certain that as he gets a little more familiar with the role and functioning of the BNTCL and the petroleum sector in Barbados and wider matters pertaining to the energy sector, he will speak with a little more conviction and confidence but it is a good start.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and, indeed, the Honourable Member for St. James South did allude to the fact that a country's development hinges crucially on its energy policy and, Barbados is no exception. Sir, what this administration is basically trying to do, in respect of the Petroleum Distribution Project is to make an anchor of the petroleum sector in Barbados even more secure.

Sir, when one looks back at the motivating factors for the establishment of BNTCL before the project came on stream, the expressed purpose at the time was to give a state agency the opportunity to take charge of a very important area, along what we call the transactional or the supply chain. This became even more important with the closure of the Mobil Refinery in Barbados in 1998.

At the time of the closure of the Mobil Refinery, it became extremely necessary for us to be importing substantially more of the refined products, and we have been doing that from Trinidad and Tobago. Therefore, storage capacity and the distribution of the imported project even assumed greater importance back then.

Sir, also in 1998, when the discussion centered on the establishment of a terminal, the majors at the time, Texaco, Esso and Shell were asked to consider among themselves, with support from the Government, establishing this facility which we are here discussing today. Those plans did not materialise as we had anticipated, then, it was left to the Government to move in and ensure that with the establishment of a storage facility, we would indeed boost our storage capacity. This was an extremely good decision the Government took back then.

Sir, when you realise what is happening today in respect of the high oil prices, one of the things that a Government could do if it has reasonable storage capacity is to deal to some extent with the highly escalating oil prices. That is, if you can store larger and larger amounts, it means that if the price continues to trend in the wrong direction, that to the extent we are able to store over a longer period, we are insulating the product from the impact of the higher prices, only for that period. I will give the House the details in respect of the storage capacity, which we now have with the new terminal, relative to what it was before this terminal was commissioned.

Mr. Speaker, what are we trying to do in respect of this Petroleum Distribution Project? Let me respond to the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who asked if it is one integrated project and where does the pipeline fit, in respect to the storage tanks at

Coverley.

Mr. Speaker, I should inform him that there is one large project and the components are as follows: The tank forms and facilities are at Fairy Valley. The administration block of BNTCL will be moving to Fairy Valley shortly on the commissioning of the facility there. The project also included new pipelines to accommodate the Woodbourne crude and the uptake of products from the new mooring at Oistins.

Therefore, you would find that the crude that is produced over at Woodbourne, will be moving to Fairy Valley through the new pipelines which were part of the Petroleum Distribution Project. Sir, at Holborn, Spring Garden area, the project included some work that was done over there which work focussed on the upgrade of the Esso Holborn facility and the building of a pipeline to move the fuel oil from the storage facility at Holborn over to the Spring Garden plant of the Barbados Light and Power. There would have been new pipelines from the Coverley facility over to the Oistins area as well.

Sir, what are we trying to do with the project?

We are aiming to transform petroleum distribution in Barbados. We are streamlining the distribution process of refined products by reducing the number of facilities that are in use now - and there are four of them - to just two. Therefore, on commissioning of the Petroleum Distribution Project, the two facilities that will be in operation, will be the one at Coverley, which the Resolution speaks to and the facility at Holborn.

It means that Needhams Point will no longer be in operation. The tanks there will be dismantled and that area will be cleaned up, as soon as we can put the new facilities at Fairy Valley into use. We will continue to use the

storage available at Esso.

House 80, sequence 19, 14:2015

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

The project will combine both the importation in storage of fuel oil, gasoline, diesel and jet fuel. The movement of our crew from Woodbourne to Coverley would handle the exportation of our crude oil, which goes to Petrotrin in Trinidad and Tobago, so we have an integrated project.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other benefits for us embarking on this petroleum distribution project, and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central alluded to it briefly, is that it will ease the movement of trucks and large vehicles on the road carrying the petroleum product, also greater use of pipelines will reduce the incidents of the large trucks having to traverse various areas in Barbados with the products, which will be to the betterment and the benefit of all of us as Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, at the moment the fuel oil that goes down to the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited facility at Spring Garden is trucked from Needhams Point and with the commissioning of the new facilities, the use of the pipelines from the Holborn facility that runs down to the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited would be in use, so those trucks that are on the road many times per week will no longer be required because we are going to run the fuel oil, using the dedicated pipelines, from Holborn over to Spring Garden.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at the enhanced storage capacity that is given by this facility. Mr. Speaker, when the eight tanks are fully utilised, the full storage capacity that would be given would be 80 000 barrels of gasoline, 70

000 barrels of fuel oil, 70 000 barrels of diesel and 80 000 barrel of jet fuel, which gives us a total of 300 000 barrels. When we add the storage space that is available in the Holborn, facility which we would lease from Esso, that would give us another 200 000 barrels of storage space for fuel oil.

Mr. Speaker, on average our daily consumption of gasoline is about 2 300 barrels; fuel oil, 4 500 barrels, most of which is utilised by the Barbados Light and Power Company Limited; diesel, 2 000 barrels and jet fuel, 3 000 barrels. When we look at the storage capacity relative to our daily consumption levels, we have 35 days supply of gasoline, 60 days supply of fuel oil that can be stored using the Holborn facility and the Coverley facility, 35 days supply of diesel and 27 days supply of jet fuel. When we compare what Fairy Valley and Coverley can give by way of storage capacity relative to what was there earlier, we would see that it was a very good move on the part of the Government to establish this facility.

Mr. Speaker, if we take the Esso facility for the moment out of the discussion, what Fairy Valley gives by way of storage capacity is virtually a doubling of what existed up to the point of putting those tanks in use.

Sir, a very important point that we need to look at, which I have not mentioned yet, is the turnaround time of the ships that bring these products to Barbados. With the coming on stream of this additional storage capacity, and we are getting 60 days, 35 days and 27 days supply depending on the type of product, the turnaround time for the ships bringing the product from Trinidad and Tobago into the main is about 15 days.

Mr. Speaker, with this enhanced storage capacity, which takes us in some cases in excess of two turnaround periods, it means that the country in this time of extremely high and

escalating prices could breathe with a little more comfort knowing that once the storage area is filled to capacity that we have in excess of two turnaround periods in all cases, and that is a fundamental point.

Mr. Speaker, I need to use this opportunity to commend not only the contractors for the project but also the team that handled the public relations work on this project. This Honourable House will recall that during the period of the construction of this project, which required considerable easements, we looked at the areas the pipelines would have to travel from Woodbourne to Fairly Valley, from Fairy Valley to Oistins and from Holborn to Spring Garden.

Mr. Speaker, the project was introduced in a very meticulous and professional way. Many town hall meetings were kept even before the project started and during the period of construction. When one drove around the Christ Church area and the Spring Garden area one would have noticed many signs, some of which were done in a manner that even blind people would understand that a project was going on. Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the fact that in some cases we were dealing with some very sensitive issues, I am comfortable that the team looking after the public relations exercise for this project did a very good job.

Mr. Speaker, in response to some of the issues raised by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and the Honourable Member for St. James South, I must remind this Honourable Chamber that this project, by its nature, would have been subjected to the most rigorous checks, also requests for information by the Town and Country Planning Development Office and the other Government agencies would have been very well made and the necessary environmental, social and marine impact assessments were done. Mr. Speaker, I can assure you that the product of those

exercises would have yielded the Coverley site as a site that could handle a project of this nature.

House 80 Sequence 20

2:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I would also want to give the assurance that when the work is going on at the Coverley site and other areas where the pipelines have crossed, that there are built-in mechanisms in the project, to ensure that a proper monitoring and evaluation job is done. I want to give the assurance in this process that early warning signals would be recognised and that the necessary responses would be given, so as to ensure that anything needed to be done, which would be a part of the monitoring and evaluation work, would be done in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, in that regard, the terminal project has a sophisticated fire-protection system. It has full containment features, emergency shut-down procedures, and extensive leak-detection system, which will ensure the safety of both workers and those who live within the environs of the project(s) infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados National Terminal Company will also be ensuring that there is adequate training for all individuals, so as to ensure premier and stellar performance in top quality standards, and to allow its personnel to deal adequately with any emergency situation. Sir, I said earlier that the necessary environmental, social and marine impact assessments would have had to be supplied to the Town Planning Department before we could have reached this stage in this project.

Mr. Speaker, the two Honourable Members who spoke expressed concerns about the investment in a storage facility to handle the products just mentioned. One Honourable Member went to some extent as to suggest that this is a dying sector and that we should pay some attention to alternative sources of energy.

Sir, I want to inform the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central that it certainly is this Government's intention - and that decision was taken prior to the time I have been at the Ministry - to accelerate the pace of the planning for an extended renewable energy programme. Sir, that is this Government's vision, which is reflected in the national target in respect of the contribution that alternative energy should play in the overall energy mix in Barbados. We are determined to move it from 15 per cent at present to 30 per cent by 2012, which was the original timeframe set for a larger role to be realised for alternative energy in the overall energy mix.

Sir, in light of what has been happening, in respect of the oil prices, it is incumbent upon any administration of , not only Barbados but other countries as well, at a time when the cost of fossil fuel is so high, for us to move with alacrity to bring on the alternative sources of energy. Basically, I am saying if it cannot be done now with success, unless the prices continue to trend in the wrong direction, it may not make financial and economic sense to do it then.

Mr. Speaker, when I became the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, the cost of a barrel of oil was less than US\$30. It was about US\$26 or US\$27 per barrel, with the production cost of that said barrel of oil being less than US\$26 or US\$27. Sir, within less than three years, the price of oil has reached its highest point at US\$70. It has now fallen but has stabilised in the region of US\$60 or US\$65 per barrel, with the cost of production being less than US\$30.

Mr. Speaker, it would, therefore, make sense that as part of our response by way of a mitigating plan to deal with the impact of high oil prices, that we do a number of things, the first obvious one is to boost our oil production. Sir, one can imagine from every additional barrel of oil that we can produce through local efforts, that we can do an expanded onshore drilling programme or resumption of an offshore drilling programme, or even seeking to own reserves abroad. Therefore, for every additional barrel we are able to produce, the effect on foreign exchange savings is in the tune of US\$40 per barrel. Sir, that is one of our solutions with which we are faced.

Mr. Speaker, what is also important is that we move with some alacrity on an expanded alternative energy programme, and that is before us. I have, therefore, challenged my officers to put me in a definitive position where the country could start to benefit in a meaningful way from an expanded energy programme. Sir, there are a number of programmes including, for example, the windfall project where, over the years, much planning has gone on. It is true that there was an experiment back in the 1980s but the most recent project does not lend itself anymore to any sophisticated planning. Sir, as a matter of fact, most of work has been completed, such as the commercial feasibility of the project, along with the fact that land has already been identified in St. Lucy. We want to bring the planning process to an effective conclusion, so that we can move to the next stage.

Mr. Speaker, as we seek to expand our alternative energy programme, what are the other projects in that regard? Sir, one such programme is that of the Fuel Cane Project, which is an extremely important, where I think everyone in this national economy should give it their support. This project not only has implications for us in finding a local solution to

the problems which the economy faces, which are being occasioned by the high oil prices, it also put us in a position to effect a transformation of the sugar industry and move it more to a sugar cane industry.

Mr. Speaker, the idea and reality of us having to continue with a sugar industry that is extremely costly, especially at a time when a decision has been taken within the European Agreements to reduce the price of sugar over the next three year by 39 per cent, that it is incumbent on us - recognising that the odds are moving further and further away from us, in our continuing the current mode of operation - that we seek to do something with the sugar industry, in order to make it beneficial for the economy to continue with it.

Sir, the Fuel Cane Project provides a wonderful opportunity and assumes greater import at a time when the price of fossil fuel is extremely high. Could you imagine if we were able to plant the fuel cane to help us with the generation of electricity and to help us improve our financial fortunes as a sugar-producing nation, what a lovely thing it would be for this country, at this time? Sir, that is what we are pursuing.

Mr. Speaker, I can inform this Honourable House that the feasibility study, which was commissioned by the Barbados Agricultural Management Company on the Fuel Cane Project, has been completed.

H:No80(21)240 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A.P. WOOD:

The officials at the Ministry of Agriculture were the beneficiaries of a presentation. I have been informed that the numbers look reasonably well and that the final report, which

is being finalised now is to be available in the not too distant future. We are hoping that we could get it by the end of October.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central and Honourable Member for St. James South also alluded to fact that country is at a stage where we need to make more effective use of the sun. Mr. Speaker, this country has distinguished itself in the area of solar technology. We had a pioneer in that area, Professor Headley, but it is true that he left us before the country could benefit in full from the expertise which resided in him. On behalf of the administration, I want to again congratulate him on the work done in putting Barbados on the map in respect of solar technology. Sir, there is still a lot of work to be done in this area and this is the time to do it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two more minutes to conclude.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Thank you, Sir. We intend to push out our efforts in the use of solar technology as one of the responses to what this economy has had to bear within the last few years occasioned by the high oil prices. Sir, there is a role for all of us, we do not have to be scientists or agriculturists but it is important that Barbados as a nation be more effective and efficient in the way it uses energy. We all have to commit to a very elaborate energy conservation programme and each citizen would have to understand that a role is there to be played by every Barbadian in order to ensure that we do the simple thing which, at the individual level might not seem significant but collectively as a nation, that the nation as a whole can benefit.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that if we look across the transactional chain that because of our limited oil production relative to the amount that we use, and because of our limited off-take and the way how prices are done at the

international level for petroleum products, that we are price-takers and will continue to be price-takers. Sir, coming across the transactional chain, there are some things we might be able to do to effect some savings to the betterment of the economy like shipping and freight costs. We are examining the pricing mechanism in its totality and focusing on things like the marketer(s) margin and the dealer(s) margin. We need to make sure that those things are still relevant in today(s) environment. We will also be looking at the distribution mechanisms internally for some of the customers so as to ensure that wherever and whenever savings can be effected along the transactional chain that we will deal with it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to close at the point where I started in giving my full support to this Resolution. The Barbados National Terminal Company (BNTCL) as part of BNOCL, its parent company, has done a wonderful job in the few years it has been in existence. It has proven its worth to the point that I am comfortable asking this House to support the lease of this land for the continuation of the work of BNTCL. I am certain they would continue to do the good work in ensuring that a necessary anchor within the petroleum sector in Barbados is strengthened and with the additional source capacity, I think that Government is on the right track.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Minister for publicly admitting that the new energy policy in Barbados is to build increased storage capacity when the oil reserves are down and when the increased purchasing power has been called up by this new oil company.

Sir, I want to explain what I am saying. It is rather interesting that the storage capacity came about when the oil prices were at the highest, and the Minister cannot deny this. It is also interesting that the Minister has admitted that they are now buying more oil when the price is much higher. One would have thought that the Minister would have been telling the House that instead of holding reserves of oil purchase from outside, that they would have had terminal tanks in place when the price of oil was down and instead of exporting the reserves of Barbados, that they would have been held in these tanks to offset the increased external costs incurred by buying fuel from outside.

Sir, the Minister is bragging about buying fuel at higher cost for Barbados but he has not been able to tell this House that he has been able to use the storage capacity to store the fuel generated in Barbados and hold it until prices increase.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member came to this House and said that the Barbados National Terminal Company was broke, that it had no money and that it needed money to many things. Sir, the excuse given to this House was that fuel cost across the world was high and that he needed a massive increase because of external costs but today, without saying, the Minister has now admitted to this House that they have been able to exact enough money from the taxpayers and oil users of this country to carry out an elaborate public relations campaign to educate the public of Barbados as to what was going on. They have been able to finance the whole project on a short-term basis not on a long-term basis. They did not have to go to the capital market for the true amount of the capital cost of these projects but have been able to do it from the increases extracted from the people of Barbados.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy

is attempting to mislead this House in a form and on a scale that this House does not know about. No way in my discourse did I make mention of the manner or the source of financing for this project. I do not know if it is a fiction of the Honourable Member(s) imagination. He is so far off the mark that those remarks should be struck from the record. I did not come close in contact with the manner or source of financing for the project.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Honourable Member for making that particular point. I am glad it is his Point of Order and not mine and I agree with him. He has been able to tell the House about the amount of money this new company has been able to spend without coming to this House for any substantial amount to finance the capital works incurred on this project. I am grateful to the Minister for making that particular point.

Mr. Speaker, on top of this, the company which was broke has been able to help World Cup 2000 put on a show at Kensington Oval. Sir, I want to Minister to get up and deny this.

H80/14:50Sequence 22

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, this company is the best company in Barbados. This company is now associated with anything that is going on in Barbados. Previously, we were told that this company was broke and needed increases to help them. As soon as they got the increase, the capital works programme that they had delayed for many years proceeded.

Sir, I said in this Honourable House that the price increase of oil and gasoline was to assist with the construction of Kensington Oval. Do you remember that comment I made until the Minister of Finance comes to this Parliament

with a tax for the surplus, I was not changing my tune? I said that in this Honourable House.

Sir, I want to know from the Minister what is the total capital project of this new company? I want to know the advertising budget, which includes sponsorship. The Honourable Member said that they were now sitting pretty. They said that they were broke before but I want to know what is the holding reserves. I am not talking about oil reserves. I am talking about cash reserves because it is the most liquid company in Barbados. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South came to the consumers of Barbados and exact the right prices from them.

Sir, fuel oil, gasoline, diesel, bottled gas, kerosine and everything went up under this Honourable Minister and he comes in here bragging about what a lucrative company it is.

Sir, it is regrettable that when oil prices worldwide have been high, according to the Honourable Minister, the cost was so burdensome that one would have thought that they would hardly squeeze out anything to offer sponsorship. On top of that, not only did they offer sponsorship, they have been able to complete a capital project without going to the bank in a substantial way.

I want to thank the Honourable Minister and the taxpayers of Barbados, who happened to be the traveling public, for being able to come...

Mr. SPEAKER: On what do you rise, Sir?

Hon. A.P. WOOD: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member continues to engross in his normal approach. I was going to use a word but you would say that it is unparliamentary.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South were ordered

expunged from the records by Mr. SPEAKER.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please withdraw that statement and be struck from the records.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I withdraw it, Sir. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the Honourable House by suggesting that the petroleum distribution project was not done through valuable institutional finance. I can tell this Honourable Chamber that to pass the cost to the consumers, be it diesel, gasoline, kerosine or liquid petroleum gas, those increases were as a direct result of an escalation of the price of the buying price of the product to us.

Sir, I said on several occasions that Government uses its best efforts to forestall passing those increases. For the period that had elapsed, those increases not being passed through, the company on the front line was the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. Sir, for the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to come into this Parliament and give the impression that those increases that the company had to bear did not in anyway erode their financial position over the last two-and-a-half year is malicious and disrespectful to this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, I want to remind the Honourable Member that the petroleum distribution project got where it is with valuable institutional finance and not what he is saying, not by the takings from the increases in the petroleum products.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House and he should stop.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member must tell me who is telling the truth. I heard on a radio station in Barbados called VOB, a Government Minister

saying that one cent increase in gasoline means \$1 million. Do you understand what I am saying, Sir? Every time gasoline is increased, by a litre, or one cent it is \$1 million for the Government.

Sir, if it is one cent for the Government, you can understand how much it is for the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited.

I am saying that the Honourable Minister spoke on a point of order for almost ten minutes and the Honourable Member has not told this Honourable House the cost of the capital expansion that has incurred and the borrowings that substantiated or matched it.

Sir, the impression received from the Honourable Minister, was that the increases had nothing to do with the capital works. If that is so, I am saying that the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited will have to be operating on a very large overdraft account.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister knows that what he is saying cannot be substantiated by the facts. I warned the Honourable Minister that when he is speaking, remember I am in the Honourable House. He understood what I was saying to him because what he was saying was not adding up to the facts.

Sir, I have been accused that prior to this increase the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited was losing money. The Honourable Minister said it. I never disputed it, I agreed. I am saying that if they were in red, add the red to the capital expansion, the increase in the cost of buying the product and tell me what is the end result.

The Honourable Member believes that he can come to this Honourable House and throw out figures for me to swallow. The Honourable Minister must understand that it will not work

like that. He misunderstood the position of this Parliament and the understanding of this Parliament.

I want to know why is the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited holding on to money that would normally come to the Government of Barbados? I have already asked when the Minister of Finance will come to this Honourable House with the Order to get the surplus funds that would normally go into the Treasury. If the Honourable Minister is telling me that the Minister of Finance does not need any of the money and it is remaining with the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited to finance long-term capital projects, then I will accept but do not come to this Honourable House, giving the impression that what they ask for was just a recovery of the expenses incurred in buying more expensive fuel.

Sir, I am saying that is not true. The Honourable Minister came to this Honourable House for the increases that were passed on, because of the increase in world prices, and money to finance a capital project. There is nothing wrong with that, once the Honourable Minister tells the public, that is what he was seeking. It is most regrettable that a minister is coming to finance a project that should be financed on a long-term basis or a short-term basis. That is exactly what happened.

H80: 15.00Sequence 23

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House 80, sequence 24, 3:00 p.m.

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

Sir, a project that should have been financed over the years, based on the high increases, they have been able to finance on a short term basis. This means that the taxpayers or the oil users have been taken for a ride by this new

company. I am saying that there is no need for substantial borrowings.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy appears not to understanding simple events. First, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy appears not to know how the operation of BNTCL is financed.

Mr. Speaker, there is such a thing called a terminal fee.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please. That is not a point of order, that is a point of elucidation.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation. Sir, the BNTCL raises its finances to deal with this operation and I just want to tell him that the Petroleum Distribution Project was financed in its entirety from institutional finance provided by the Barbados National Bank.

Sir, let me also say that the terminal fee is set and has always been set to ensure that the BNTCL could cover its operations and if it has any loans to service, to service those loans.

We are saying that with incurring the cost for the Petroleum Distribution Project, we obviously will be aiming for a terminal fee, an effective pricing mechanism which will allow the BNTCL to meet its operating cost and pay its debts.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy continues to mislead this Chamber by suggesting that funds from the terminal fee would have been set aside to deal with the Petroleum Distribution Project.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please. The Honourable Member, it is not Parliamentary to say that about another Member. You have to withdraw that, Sir.

The statement must be struck from the record.

Certain remarks were ordered to be struck from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw and the statement must be struck from the record by your ruling, but he continues to misrepresent the facts because he does not know them.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on the Floor of this House I have asked the Minister for certain information and anybody watching the Minister today would know that the Minister is in full command of his energy ministry. He was able to speak today without looking at documents and gave us all the figures that we did not ask for but when I asked the Minister for figures, he did not deliver them.

This Minister, as Minister of Energy knows of the problems that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has with some farmers that are suffering environmental problems for years because of the behaviour of certain oil distributors. Sir, we are now hearing that we have a new terminal company running oil mains all over Barbados to impact on these same farmers, without us as a Parliament hearing how this particular issue is going to be solved.

Mr. Speaker, do you understand what I am saying? We have not solved the previous problem but we have now compounded the problem. Sir, you know where these oil mains now run, and I want a guarantee from the Minister of Energy, that the same thing which occurred in Christ Church will not occur in the Bridgetown area. I would not like to hear any night of any mysterious fires going on in Bridgetown because of leakage of fuel, as occurred in the Christ Church area.

He asked me if I heard of any oil leakages. Fairy Valley, Gibbons and Chancery Lane...

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: If you have leakages, there is a possibility of fires. You only need a spark.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, order please.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, with all of these facts now given by the Minister, the Minister must come with an energy policy to this Parliament to tell this Parliament how the Honourable Member is going to correct the problem for his conrad, who sits next to him. He stretched out his hand, and was able to solve the problem for him on other matters so I want him to stretch out his hand now and solve the problem for the farmers in Christ Church, who have been suffering for years and they have not heard one word from this Ministry on how this particular problem will be solved.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that before we get a serious environmental problem in Barbados, I want to hear the energy plan and the environmental plan to solve this particular problem. I do not want to hear how much money the oil company has been making, since the Minister has been able to come and increase every possible thing in Barbados. It is not only in terms of fuel.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I understand that the Honourable Member has been given a sticky wicket and somebody has to perform the job. I admire him for being able to put these increases on his constituents with a smile and not needing to have a word...

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Once again, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy's exuberance has misled this Honourable Chamber by suggesting that this Honourable Minister was responsible for any adjustments in the telephone rates. I think he should take that back. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy should know by now that the Fair Trading Commission was established to deal with such matters.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please withdraw the statement.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Minister is only responsible for the Ministry but whatever happens within the Ministry, the Minister is not aware.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, did you not earlier say that the Minister was really in charge of his Ministry?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, not me. The Honourable Member is now admitting that he is not responsible for what happened under the Fair Trading Commission, which is under his mandate.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please. Honourable Member, let me hear you withdraw the statement, properly, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am saying that if the Minister is saying I am wrong, I accept your judgement and I will withdraw the statement but I will have tomorrow to check and see on the outside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, please, you made a statement which you should not have made anyhow because it was totally irrelevant to the debate. I am asking you to withdraw the

statement.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, that is judgmental.

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that this is the first Minister of Transport, who has been the Minister of Energy, that has allowed my constituents to go on excursions and increase the number of cars they are now in possession of, Sir.

House 80, sequence 24, 15:1014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

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

Do you know, Sir, that because of the energy policy of this Minister that nearly everybody to the North of Barbados now wants a car. The Transport Board is impacting negatively on the energy policy of Barbados, by encouraging the buses to use more fuel and at the same time the constituents of the North to buy more cars, which are impacting in a negative way on the foreign reserves of the country.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, you cannot hear those asides, I can hear them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Well.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, we must hear from this Minister what environmental plan he has in place to correct the environmental problems in Chancery Lane, Gibbons Bogg and all of those areas that have impacted on the people and also what would be the compensation that his Ministry will put in place or the new avenues that will be used to compensate those farmers for the losses they

have incurred over the years. Sir, I want to know if any contention liability would be picked up. I also want to know if any provision is made for any environmental problems that this terminal company might create for Barbadians in the near future.

Mr. SPEAKER: As you conclude, what about the lease?

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am very grateful to you. Sir, this Minister through you has been able to tell this Parliament the reason why the lease should not be signed.

I thank you.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the Resolution regarding the lease of Crown Lands situate, according to Order No. 4, at Coverley, Christ Church to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited. Of course, we in that area refer to that part of the land as Fairy Valley. Mr. Speaker, I am not questioning the technical issue here but that area is an area in which Seawell Plantation, Fairy Valley Plantation and Coverley Plantation met.

Mr. Speaker, given the typical zigzagged nature of plantations boundaries, you would find that sometimes lands go into one another. In fact, sometimes you would find that a plantation, though generally in one area, may own a discreet piece of land in the heart of another plantation. Mr. Speaker, it is going to take me some getting used to refer to this project as being at Coverley, so if you hear me speaking of Fairy Valley you would understand that I am speaking out of traditional knowledge and not out of any disagreement with or disrespect for the Resolution at hand.

Sir, in that area, which happens to be in the

constituency of Christ Church East, which I have the honour to represent, there are a number of national facilities. There is this important investment in new petroleum storage capacity for our island. There is as well the Grantley Adams International Airport, the Regional Police Training Centre, the Barbados Defence Force facilities and indeed, of late, the Barbados Youth Service.

Sir, what this requires is a need for balance because clearly at the national level, we need to do a number of things for the good of all, but these national projects also have their community implications. Sir, it is incumbent, on us as we give approval of this lease of land to the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited, to ensure that as we meet this important national energy security imperative that we satisfy ourselves that everything is in place to protect community interest, and I am satisfied that is indeed the case.

Sir, we have heard the Honourable Member for St. Lucy attempting to be the assistant to the Member of Parliament for Christ Church East, by raising my constituency concerns, but it is quite true that over the past decade there were a number of leaks by the last company, Shell company, which operated the pipelines from Oistins Bay to the Airport for the transfer and storage of aviation fuel, and this is well documented. Indeed, legal action is continuing between the farmers in the Gibbons Boggs/Chancery Lane area, with respect to seeking compensation for damage which has been caused.

Sir, as we put this pipeline from Oistins to the airport but via an alternative route, we have learnt from that sad experience. Indeed, Sir, I want to commend the Ministry of Public Utilities, the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited and indeed the Town Planning Department, which in its Environmental Impact Assessment and

Environmental Guidelines, has insisted on a number of sophisticated controls and monitoring devices to eliminate the possibility of leaks and also in the unfortunate event of such to be able to detect an unfortunate possibility at an early stage.

Sir, this is fundamental. Again it speaks to the question of balance because we have, as I said, these national resources, the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited, the airport, et cetera. We also have within this same area significant natural resources. The pipeline terminates or starts, depending on which end you are moving from, at a mooring facility in Oistins Bay. That mooring facility has been around almost forever. Indeed, it was one of the great sites as I stood on the hill at the Foundation School and ran down through the back hill to Oistins to catch the bus.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: You go through Scarborough to get the black sugar cakes but you would go through the back down past the pasture to get Mrs. Skeete turnovers from Skeete(s Bakery. Sir, that is what made the Honourable Member and I the men that we are today, I obviously had more turnovers than he did.

Mr. Speaker, for decades boats have moored in the Oistins Bay to discharge their fuel and to move it to the airport. In this new arrangement, we obviously benefited from improvements in technology but there is still the need to be ever vigilant because we certainly do not need the livelihood of our fishermen in Oistins to be disrupted by any leaks or any other mishaps.

Sir, we have on the route that is traversed by the pipelines one of the few areas in Barbados where agricultural land has irrigation water available to it. In fact, so key is this area to agriculture, the Pegwell Bogg, Sayers Court,

Gibbons Bogg and Chancery Lane areas, that there are town planning restrictions on the development for purposes other than agriculture. It is part of the rural integrated development programme going back to the 1970s. The Government, at its expense, developed the water wells facilities, put pipelines in for the distribution of irrigation water and has allowed the farmers to tap into that water by paying a fee to the Barbados Agricultural Development and Management Corporation. Unfortunately, a number of those wells were polluted by the previous operator of the pipeline. Sir, that is a documented fact, there is no speculation. As I said there is litigation concerning the nature and the quantum of compensation.

House 80 Sequence 25

3:20 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to say from the Floor of this Parliament that this matter has dragged on for too long and that it is time Shell, the large multinational corporation that it is, must recognise that while it can wait; while it can go through all of the elegance of a long, legal process; while it can go through all of the analyses and studies, to come to an elaborate and perhaps technically-perfect solution, the farmers are suffering. Sir, what is needed is that having already admitted liability, they would move swiftly to preserve the viability of the farming business in the area.

Sir, many of us sometimes forget that those persons who do farming have a love for it, but that love can only carry them so far. People sometimes forget that like the supermarkets, nightclubs owners, minibuses operators, or mall operators, they need to be able to prepare and to sell their products and get their money in.

Therefore, on these persons behalf, I make a call for conclusion of discussions and negotiations in this matter, so that our farmers who are committed, who are interested but who are under intense pressure because of the protracted nature of the discussion with multi-nationals, that this David and Goliath situation could be brought to a swift and happy conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that this administration and the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities specifically, having recognised and having learnt from that fact in putting this new terminal together at Coverley and dealing with the issues of pipelines, have sought to avoid any possibility of there being a new problem being created by performing this essential national service, but with community responsibility. Sir, that is the issue of balance, national service but with community responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that in this area there are other situations in which a greater sense of community responsibility by the corporate entities in the area must be displayed. All too often I have had to call the officials at the Grantley Adams International Airport, to remind them that they need to do simple things, such as to cut the grass, shrubbery and bush that grow on the outside of the airport fence. Sir, what is at the back of the airport for perhaps passengers, airport staff and persons using our brand new airport, is the front entrance for persons living in Fairy Valley, Wilcox Hill, on the eastern end of Gibbons Terrace and Holbourn Terrace, and for persons who may be working the north and east of the island, who may be traveling the areas of Chancery Lane and Inch Marlow.

Sir, notwithstanding the vast number of cars we have in Barbados, we still have a significant amount of pedestrian traffic in our country. Therefore, it cannot be allowed or be left to be

needing a call from an Honourable Member of Parliament, in order to get someone to remember that they have a corporate responsibility, as this enhances that business image and the image of the community in which they occupy. Sir, I wish that this new neighbour in our community would start right and would continue on the right path.

Mr. Speaker, I note that this Resolution is in the name of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment. This is an area as well which not only has a strong residential base but also a heritage base as in the Chancery Lane wetlands. Sir, therefore, Government has embarked on a major project, not only to comply with Civil Aviation Regulations by way of the relocation of residents out of the flight path of aircrafts which will be served by this terminal but also to enhance the living conditions of the residents.

Mr. Speaker, I must salute the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment and the National Housing Corporation for the quality of the work that has been done on those houses which have been so far completed in the Airport Relocation Programme. There is still a number of houses left to be completed, and on the behalf of the residents, I would certainly urge a swift and speedy conclusion of the construction of those houses in the area of Coverley and Fairy Valley.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to say that once again the question of balance arises. There is, unfortunately, a situation which will fall to the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, for that Ministry to address and to correct. There is a situation where lands owned by the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment are occupied currently by a business entity which, by way of the nature of its operation, is not being done in the best possible way. It is creating problems of nuisance, whether it is in the burning of

carcasses in the neighbourhood, the free roaming of horses, sheep and goats or dogs roaming in packs. This clearly is out of character with what we expect from a perspective of community responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, if we are holding the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited to this high principle of community responsibility, if we are holding the Grantley Adams International Airport to this high principle of corporate and social responsibility, then we must hold this badly-run farming operation to the principles of corporate social responsibility. In this case, I, therefore, have a duty to express, on the behalf of the residents of Holbourne Terrace, Fairy Valley, Wilcox, their utter concern, disgust and annoyance, and we could use several more adjectives. As an English expert, Sir, I am sure you got the point, they are not able as yet, and certainly with the help of the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, they will, in the near future, be able to contemplate having a neighbourhood which would be free of roaming animals.

Sir, I would want not only to stand with them in demanding relief from this nuisance but also to urge and to castigate some of our agencies that have responsibility for relieving some of these problems and to say that these agencies do not move with the speed or alacrity as they should, to get on with the work with which they have been assigned. For instance, there is legislation dealing with animal control. There is also a unit which is designed to capture and impound animals that are found roaming, where, on the payment of a fine, the animals would be released to the owner. Unfortunately, sometimes the gap between the call to advise that the animals are out roaming and the response from the unit is so long, as to make it meaningless.

Sir, with the development, improvement and plans which the Ministry of Housing, Lands

and the Environment has for the lands in question, which is for the development of further residential housing, this matter will be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the proposals, which I know the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment has for the lands, which accounts for several acres, include the provision of some 64 housing lots for low income persons. Sir, we would all agree that there is and continues to be a good and strong demand for low income housing solutions.

H:No80(26)330 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R. R. FARLEY:

They may not build them all at once but they are able to build over the process of time. Sir, there are others who would be interested in the Primary Care Programme of the National Housing Corporation and who would opt to have a well-constructed house suitable for a family at the start of their life together with the capacity for them to expand later as the need and circumstances permit.

Sir, I look forward to the transformation of that part of the neighbourhood of this terminal from the situation where a particular area of land is used to produce a nuisance to one where that same land would be used to produce a solution to the need for housing in the area.

Mr. Speaker, let no one fool you, some people say that they would never want to live near an airport because of the sounds of the planes and so on but there are people in these communities who do not want to leave around the airport. I must tell you that the lands in question on either side of the airport provide

some of the most comfortable, congenial, generally good living. In fact, on the Fairy Valley end of it, there are wonderful views of Long Beach and excellent breezes from the ocean. On the other side, near to this terminal on the Pond Hill/Pilgrim Place side is a view overlooking the airport and the ocean. There is tremendous scope for planned, balanced growth and development of this area where we would be able to use the unique characteristics of this part of Barbados to provide a national solution.

Sir, we are not like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy who seems to have something against St. Lucy being used to help with the national effort because we are not so insular. We are saying that where we are giving our land and infrastructure to the national need - whether in energy, aviation or security - that we want something too, that corporate responsibility on the part of the BNTCL, GAIA and other would greatly enhance the quality of life in the area.

Sir, I welcome this new terminal to the community of Coverley, Fairy Valley, Pilgrim Place and the surrounding area. I am satisfied based on my close following of this project that they have done everything from physical planning, environmental protection, community involvement and a long-term planning perspective including work with the marine environment that we would be proud of this facility.

In fact, Sir, I would dare to say that whilst former petroleum storage facilities were owned by multinational, we all know that they are generally interested only in the bottom line. They could not care whether they are in Barbados, The Bahamas or Bahrain as long as the unit contributes to the bottom line. Sir, we have an opportunity with an indigenous investment to chart a new path for this kind of operation.

Certainly, if the multinational operating previously were not responsive to concern or did not address leakage and pollution, our own company will do that and be an example of best practice of technical, corporate and social responsibility. Sir, for those reasons, I give strong support to this Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate trying to seek to truly understand whether the building of this terminal redounds to the benefit or the good people of Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South indicated how much more storage capacity we would have for fuel, gas, diesel and other such products but he never told us how it would benefit the consuming public of Barbados would benefit from the additional storage space which Government is putting at Coverley in Christ Church. Sir, to my mind, this should constitute the focal point of the debate. If you are going to increase your storage capacity and reduce the amount of trips made by oil ship to Barbados and store double what you have been storing, how would it benefit the consuming public particularly in the case of the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited? Sir, if the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited is now going to be in a position where there is going to be direct distribution of the fuel oil to its plant, how would it benefit the consuming public.

Mr. Speaker, to answer those questions, we need to be in possession of the cost of the terminal. I know in his presentation that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South skillfully avoided what the project would cost us as taxpayers. I see that the Minister is returning to the Chamber and I expect that he would be able to say precisely what the original

cost was and more specifically what the more recent cost should be to the taxpayers of Barbados. It is as a result of that information that we would be in a position to truly assess and analyse this venture.

Mr. Speaker, it also has to be recognised that there are quite a few Barbadians who currently engage in the distribution of transportation of fuel oil. In fact, I know of one gentleman in my constituency who is very much involved in such trade and as a result of what would happen, he may in fact lose out as a consequence of the project.

Mr. Speaker, I need to be able to assess whether this move is going to mean lower prices for Barbadians. Sir, like the Barbados Light & Power Company Limited that would invest in a lumpy way initially in some form of technology with the expectation that over time it would reduce the average cost of doing business and, therefore, would hope to recoup on its investment, not immediately but over time, we could also look at the building of such a plant in similar ways. There would be an initial large investment for such an entity with the expectation that, over time, there would be a reduced cost of doing business and, therefore, it would ultimately benefit the consuming public.

Mr. Speaker, I am still asking what would have been the nature of the loan from Barbados National Bank to the Barbados National Terminal Oil Company. How large would be the nature of the loan? Sir, only as a result of that information would we be able to then truly assess the impact for the consuming public.

Mr. Speaker, no matter what we feel, decisions and policy positions taken ought to have a specific objective. In most cases, people are at the centre of any objective which we have as a Government in terms of any policy

we pursue.

H80/15:40

Sequence 27

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Therefore, I am looking forward because it is a very critical thing to know in this entire debate.

Sir, let me look at the other side of the coin. Over the years, as oil prices increase, there is no doubt that Government would have benefited from such increases. Anyone who wants to find out whether this is so, would simply have to look at what is called the Excise Tax. It is simply an imposition of the tax on the quality not the quantity. They are things like whisky and rum that attract excise taxes. We call it an ad valorem tax.

Sir, over time, as oil prices increase, governments would benefit because that constitutes the base upon which the tax is imposed. This would have permitted successive Governments to adjust what was called the consumption tax. They can do that because of the increase prices.

Sir, it is fact that the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for energy in a recent call-in programme said that one cent increase constitutes almost \$1 million to Government. So, you can understand the magnitude of Government(s) revenue derived from the increasing cost of oil over the last year-and-a-half.

Mr. Speaker, what is more important, is the analysis of the ad hoc approach of this Government to energy. Recently, we were told that Government is embarking in collaboration with some oil company from overseas on an

exploratory drilling off the south coast of Barbados. Those of us who understand or have studied something about the industry, would respect Barbados(problem is the high cost of production. It has been known for the last several years that Barbados, which satisfies only 25 per cent of the demand by the oil wells around the country, should always position itself to take advantage of any increases in oil prices that would occur, because of the high cost of production, it only makes sense to increase production cost when there is an opportunity to derive benefit. Sir, that only occurs when oil prices are going up, and they have skyrocketed in the last year-and-a-half worldwide.

Sir, as said by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, when he came into the Ministry oil prices were less than US\$30 per barrel. There are now almost US\$63 per barrel. Therefore, I am saying that a proper approach to an energy policy over the last ten years would have positioned Barbados to benefit from any such increase which occurred over the last year in oil prices.

Sir, how will Barbados position itself to be in a position to respond immediately to the increase prices on the world market given its very high cost of production? I am saying that Barbados is therefore not in a position.

Therefore, we are expecting that the ability to have higher storage capacity is in fact a short-term alternative to our increased production, that should have been occurring as a result of the prevailing high prices in the world market as a benefit, from the point of view of profitability, but we have been unable to take advantage of it. Sir, over the last ten years we have not embarked on any energy policy that would position us to take such advantage.

Mr. Speaker, you do not have to be Einstein to plan for any such eventuality. If you

observed over the course of the life of the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited that it may be able to respond effectively and efficiently to high oil prices on the world market, then part of your energy policy ought to have been preparing for any such eventuality. I am suggesting that this Government has not done so within the last decade and it would have had opportunity to do so, as was said before.

Therefore, the question of its capacity to finance any capital works has to become part of the discussion because even though we may want to deny it, the oil company has had to benefit over the last year-and-a-half as a result of high oil prices.

It is very clear. You do not need to have information to know that the Barbados National Terminal Company Limited would have benefited over the last year-and-a-half by way of revenue. Therefore, to some extent, it has had to absorb the impact on some of the high oil prices on the world market. However, it is now in a position where it can still go to the market, on the basis of what its revenue capacity is, and secure a loan to build increased storage capacity in Christ Church.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I am suggesting to this Honourable House that we need to be in possession of such information to make a critical analysis and assessment of the overall usefulness of leasing the land at Coverley, to build additional storage capacity.

In light of that additional storage capacity, one needs to look at the overall energy policy and the more recent concerns about whether we can take advantage of the arrangement that Venezuela is offering Barbados.

Sir, therefore, if you are in fact increasing your storage capacity, if there is an opportunity to benefit from any such agreement, then I

think it is the right of Barbadians to so benefit. Therefore, Government needs to look at the extent to which part of its energy policy may incorporate the PetroCaribe Agreement and not neglect the agreement.

Sir, I am saying this because there are alternative approaches that can, in fact, derive benefit for Barbados. I listened to the debate in public, I understand the concerns expressed by the Honourable Minister with respect to the increased burden of debt but I do not appreciate as a result of that factor alone, Government could not have entered into such an agreement, therefore, enhancing its overall energy policy to take increasing advantage of the additional storage space, which it now seeks to build at Coverley, Christ Church.

Mr. Speaker, the question whether there will be increased costs as a consequence of importing crude from outside the CARICOM region cannot be an issue and should never become an issue. If what I am hearing is a response, I must confess that it is a brilliant response to some of the issues that were raised as obstacles to signing the agreement.

Sir, if Trinidad is going to refine crude that comes from Venezuela, then there will be no consideration of a common external tariff of 20 per cent, because raw crude coming from Venezuela, given that it is not the refined final product, does not attract any common external tariff. The raw crude out of Venezuela that goes to Trinidad will redound to the benefit of Barbadians, that is, it can be refined in Trinidad, a CARICOM country, without the imposition of any common external tariff.

Mr. Speaker, if it were the case that you could only transport oil out of Venezuela in super tankers, then the fact that an agreement could be reached to allow Trinidad to refine the crude oil, means that it is not a problem, because out of Trinidad, as is currently the

case, oil can come to Barbados without the use of super tankers and without the problem of not being able to port when it comes to the Bridgetown Harbour.

H80:15.50 p.m.

Sequence 28

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 29, 3:50 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. C.A. MASCOLL:

Therefore, this can be addressed by way of such an arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be an issue either with respect to whether any private sector company will not be able to benefit from the distribution or transportation of the oil, because currently, there is a private sector company involved that gets commission from the transportation of the oil out of Trinidad and Tobago and therefore that will not be an issue.

In fact, I see it as an opportunity to enhance trade and business for any private sector entity in Barbados that currently enjoys the benefit of distributing or transporting the oil from Trinidad and Tobago to Barbados.

In short, Mr. Speaker, when we see opportunities like the one provided by PetroCaribe, we cannot allow geopolitical considerations to determine whether we accept or do not accept. We cannot use arguments that are spurious to suggest that the agreement is not favourable. Sir, any individual who had been called upon to pay only 60 per cent of the cost of a product and receives a 40 per cent benefit to be paid 20 or 25 years later at 1 per cent or 2 per cent, has to benefit.

What you do, with respect to getting that

benefit has to do with your ability to respond to the offer but do not condemn the offer on grounds of finance or economics because the offer cannot be condemned on such grounds.

I am therefore suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that in light of any policy that this Government has...

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is misleading this House. He is suggesting that the PetroCaribe Agreement in its strictest form does admit a continuing role for the private sector, along the transaction achieved. He is misleading this House in a very deliberate way.

Mr. Speaker, there are two facts. Trinidad and Tobago at this current time is a net importer of crude and up to this point, imports some of its crude from Venezuela. If he does not know this, I am informing him now.

Sir, the second fact is that if the PetroCaribe Agreement is to be implemented in its strictest sense, there is no role for any private sector to be involved in the movement of any product from Petratrin into Barbados or any country into the OECS, because the PetroCaribe Agreement states explicitly that one of its objectives is the cut out the middle men, the private sector, along the transactional chain.

Therefore, when he comes in here and seeks to give the wrong impression to those outside, who are not sufficiently familiar about the PetroCaribe Agreement - and I hope that the others from This Side and I, would have made them sufficiently aware of the PetroCaribe Agreement - he is misleading the House in suggesting that there is an enhanced role for the private sector in moving product from Trinidad and Tobago to Barbados or, indeed, in the distribution of product internally in the respective territories. He is misrepresenting the

facts. He probably does not even know them.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, on the first point of issue, all that would happen is that Trinidad and Tobago will become a larger net importer of oil. This cannot be an issue because Trinidad and Tobago must benefit substantially from refining raw crude to making it final crude and adding substantial local value added. Therefore, Trinidad and Tobago will be in a position to profit and expand its plant.

On the second issue as to the private sector involvement, Mr. Speaker, will a group of countries called CARICOM that started an arrangement in 1967, under CARIFTA, improved its conditions under CARICOM in 1973, which is now moving towards CSME, permit a country to determine whether or not there can be involvement of the private sector in the distribution of oil?

Sir, no country in the region, within CARICOM, no Government has access to any super tankers. No Government is going to be in a position to be able to transport oil out of Venezuela. No Government, Mr. Speaker, would be crazy enough to get involved in such an operation because the evidence is clear that whenever Government gets involved in such entities or such operations, it creates a problem.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is quite unaware of what he speaks. As I said earlier, the PetroCaribe Agreement states explicitly that Venezuela will be providing a number of things. If the Agreement is to be implemented in its strictest sense, Venezuela, in addition to the provision of storage capacities in their respective territories will be providing the freighting facilities. It states explicitly that the product will be moved in ships provided by Venezuela.

The issue is that the quantities are so

minuscule, relative to what Venezuela is involved in at the moment that they will have to build new ships in order to do the freighting. There is no role for the private sector in the agreement. I do not understand why he continues to say it, Sir.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: I have moved beyond that point.

I am suggesting that if Venezuela...

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: I am talking about the St. Lucians and an agreement that can benefit the region and therefore should be pursued. If Trinidad and Tobago can receive raw crude from Venezuela and refine the raw crude in Trinidad and Tobago and then have it transported from Trinidad and Tobago to the benefit of the region, that is what should happen.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the Honourable Member continues to mislead this House. I think he is doing it because he is not aware of the facts and it is probably not a deliberate act on his part.

Mr. Speaker, the PetroCaribe Agreement, as I know it, does not admit a role for Trinidad and Tobago. Bilateral agreements have been signed and those Agreements will ensure that up to this point, the countries deal directly with Venezuela to get the refined crude, and they get it in ships that are provided by Venezuela.

What he is saying or hinting to, without even knowing the facts, is a discussion which was conducted in Barbados quite recently and in that context, if a role is to be given to Trinidad and Tobago, it has been made patently clear that Trinidad and Tobago will not be the owners of any product.

All Trinidad and Tobago will want to do is to make its refinery available. It is not providing any shipping. It is not responsible for the ownership of any product. Trinidad and Tobago will get a process fee, as we call it, so the movement of the product does not rest with any responsibility of Trinidad and Tobago. It stays with Venezuela and in that context, there is no role for the private sector in moving any product. Sir, I do not understand why he is manufacturing these things.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, in all fairness, you have to see this as part of any future energy policy of any Government of Barbados. I am saying that if it is, I could be in possession of the facts, without having being present, than perhaps what I am suggesting is worthy.

Mr. Speaker, there is no way in which Venezuela can tell any sovereign state that it has to use state transportation to distribute oil across the region. I have passed that stage.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, in his own strong-headed way, continues to ascribe things that do not appear in any bilateral agreement. It is a series of bilateral agreements signed between the Caribbean states and Venezuela.

House 80, sequence 24, 16:0014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A. P. WOOD:

The PetroCaribe Agreement says that Venezuela would establish the shipping arrangements and the product would be moved at cost in ships provided by Venezuela. I do not understand why all of a sudden the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is seeking to suggest that he can come in

here and turn the PetroCaribe Agreement on its head, the content of which is there for anybody to read and a series of bilateral agreement that flow from the draft agreement.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I am not talking about any sovereign state like Venezuela coming to tell CARICOM governments what to do. I am saying that in the same way that we spoke to issues in relation to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Shiprider Agreement that in this particular instance, I cannot see how an entire region like CARICOM cannot tell a sovereign state like Venezuela that it has no right to determine what kind of transportation mode would be used in the distribution voyage throughout the region.

Mr. Speaker, I am further suggesting that as a response Trinidad should be allowed to refine raw crude out of Venezuela, then allow for that raw crude to be transported, not by any state enterprise because that would not make sense. How would Venezuela come to Trinidad, bring super tankers to Trinidad...

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that one cannot dismiss the fact that the PetroCaribe Agreement, with respect to the delayed payment is a method that can be employed. All it requires is for negotiation at another level.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Stay cool, stay cool.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, does not recognise that within the Cartel arrangement in OPEC that Venezuela could not offer a price adjustment because it is contrary to oligopolistic behaviour. Venezuela is saying, I am going to invite you to benefit from the income payment side.

Sir, the very basic elements of economics decompose a price effect into a substitution income effect. What you are saying in that regard is that if I went to a supermarket to purchase two items and the price of one item fell, I am entitled to purchase more of the item that has fallen in price or I can use the benefits from the reduced price to purchase an alternative good.

Sir, what Venezuela is saying is that given that it cannot give a price reduction because it goes contrary to the Cartel arrangement with OPEC, it is giving an opportunity to get an income effect by way of the price arrangement, which in essence is where the benefit will come from for Barbados because once they change the payment method you have effectively gained a price effect and you can then take the additional money that you would have spent in oil and allocate it to other areas of the economy or the society.

Asides.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Yes, that is what they are suggesting. It just needs negotiation. Venezuela is only seeking to identify its own geopolitical space within the region. Therefore, if Venezuela wants to use the region to fight a case against the United States of America then the region ought to be in a position to negotiate for the best terms and conditions to suit the CARICOM Region. That is as simple as John 316.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is a little mystify. First he seeks to input things in an agreement that are not there, so he has been dismissed on that point. Sir, notwithstanding the fact that there are conditionalities in the agreement that will not

suit us, he is suggesting that there might be something in there and we should go for it. However, he has not come and tell us that in aiming to go for that, that we have to take all the other things because you cannot drop them.

Mr. Speaker, let me also speak to this business about the deferred payments. Mr. Speaker, in the context of that deferred payment, and that is what make it a loan facility, as in any other loan arrangement, which I know about and which the Honourable Member should know about, the provider of the finance will make a determination on how that money is to be used. If I go down to the Bank of Nova Scotia, I have to carry a definite proposal to them because they are not going to release the institutional finance unless they think that they are in a position to monitor and evaluate how I am spending this money. Sir, for him to give the impression that it could be done in a unilateral way and that you could access institutional finance, because that is what it is, from the country and then you make a determination on your own on how you can get rid of this money, nothing is further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I attended the summit in Jamaica and the Montego Bay Declaration spoke explicitly to the establishment of a fund. Those deferred payments are what would go into that fund. All funds have administrators and there are parameters for the use of the fund and the Venezuelans would have a strong say in how those funds are to be utilised, so I do mind him coming in here and seeking to mislead the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Honourable Member in the last minute you have I would like you to at least make a connection to the lease that we...

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: We have already done that.

Mr. Speaker, if what the Minister is saying should be followed, then all the other CARICOM states, except two, would have been prepared to give up the ability or the right to be sovereign states. You cannot dismiss the contents of the agreement with respect to the potential benefits. I understand the side trappings that you could negotiate yourself around but do not tell me that the initial agreement to defer 40 per cent of the payment cannot derive benefit for any Caribbean states. Sir, it cannot be denied.

Mr. Speaker, what they are speaking to, are other issues of whether private sector involvement would be allowed in the distribution, which can be negotiated. If he is speaking to the question of a Common External Tariff being imposed on the final commodity, they can get around that by going to Trinidad to refine. If he is speaking to the issue of whether the tankers would be too large to come to Barbados, by the very fact that the oil would be refined in Trinidad and can be transported out of Trinidad to Barbados is not an issue of super tankers alone.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am saying that he can say whatever he likes but there cannot be any loopholes in the agreement in that you cannot exploit in the interest of the people of this country and the wider Caribbean. In fact, I am suggesting the other side of it, that the agreement in an economic financial sense is sound but you are talking about obstacles to the agreement with respect to transportation requirements and other such things. We must not allow those things to prevent the region as a whole from benefiting from such an agreement because of the other issues that had been raised.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member has just made a very unfortunate statement and I am not going to sit idly by and let him get away with it. I have

spoken on behalf of the Cabinet of Barbados. The Government and people of Barbados in the main have supported the position that this Government has taken and in no way am I seeking to tell any other sovereign state in the region what they should do in respect of the PetroCaribe Agreement. Mr. Speaker, facts would show that the others have gone ahead and have signed the framework agreement and pursuant to that a number of them have signed the bilateral agreements.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member should be asked to withdraw those remarks about us seeking to prevent others in the Caribbean from benefiting from the agreement, that is not my job. I have spoken on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just conclude please.

House 80 Sequence 30

4:10 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I would say that there is need for an explicit energy policy, which seeks to incorporate two elements, one being the ability of this Government to take care or to take charge of any opportunities presented to it by way of high oil prices worldwide, where there can be quick responses to production increases to the benefit of the people or as is being done, another element which would increase the storage capacity but not in a way that would deny us the opportunity to fill those storage tanks at a more preferred price, one that would be in the interest of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Honourable Member must ignore all of the geopolitical

issues in which he seems to be wrapped up and get to the issue that would benefit the people of Barbados as a whole.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, your time has expired.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James North.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, originally I had proposed to remain silent during the course of this debate. Indeed, I had proposed to be somewhat taciturn but the histrionics of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy have impelled me into this business.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I must say there is a minimum level of fairness in any debate in which Honourable Members, in their replies to other Honourable Members, should not go. Therefore, I think the Honourable Member for St. Philip South has been the innocent victim of a number of unfair utterances coming from the other side. In this regard, I want to create distance between the wonderful contribution of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who spoke with a sense of patriotism, where his every word pointed to the future of energy policy and mainly from the point of view of alternative sources of energy.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central did not seek to cheapen the debate by trying to score political points. Sir, I do not recall the Honourable Member making any reference to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South as being effectively the Minister of the cost of living, nor did the Honourable Member say or impute to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South that any increases in our cost of living directly flowed from the activities of the distinguished and Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Mr. Speaker, in the context of what transpires on the Floor of this Honourable House, even when an Honourable Member is in Opposition, it is always a good thing that his or her contribution should be at a level and with a quality that shows that he or she is interested in the country. However, the dichotomy came when the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke and purported to deliver of himself some remarks that have been demonstrably unfair.

Mr. Speaker, Wendell McClean, may Light Eternal continue to shine upon him, Terry Somersaul, Ronald Bonnet, Andrew Downes and other distinguished economists attached to the University of the West Indies, have always made it an issue that small vulnerable economies such as Barbados, are subject to external shocks. Sir, there is something that transcends theory, when we say in the context of the Barbadian experience with an open economy and a high percentage of imports, that much of the price increases which Barbados has experienced over time, are as a direct result from imported inflation.

Sir, Wendell McClean, Ronald Bonnet, Dr. Frank Alleyne and a young economist, who is not entirely unknown to us and who is sitting in this Parliament now, would have advised Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford that these economies are subject to external shocks. Sir Lloyd used to say that concerning the structure of our economy such as importing food, clothes and technology, that a level of economic difficulty can be experienced, where our dependence on external sources can very often see inflationary tendencies as a result.

Mr. Speaker, I remember Sir Lloyd making this statement repeatedly, sometimes at the urgings of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. He often said that we are the innocent victims of what transpires overseas. Therefore, it cannot be fair that in a

situation of international complexity, when it comes to the business called the production of petroleum, for anyone to say that in a situation where we have no say in setting price levels for our imports of fuel, that any one person in Barbados can be responsible.

Mr. Speaker, I will now look at the question of the existing terminal and then to the one, which we expect to service us so well in the future. Sir, everyone should know that when oil product comes to our terminal, it has the responsibility to distribute. There have been a number of occasions, as every Honourable Member ought to know, when there have been changes in international prices, where the terminal has never immediately responded by passing those increases on to consumers. The terminal has repeatedly borne a burden, sometimes for weeks, while risking losses in the process, so as not to injure the rights of the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, in the event where the international price of oil should drop, the stated policy of this Barbados Labour Party administration is that price decreases will be so administered, so as to benefit the consumers, but the situation in the international oil industry is extremely complex.

Mr. Speaker, the stated policy of this Government is that if prices go up, Government will explore ways and means of trying to soften the impact of price increases on the consumer. Sir, I vividly recall that this enlightened administration has, in the past, made adjustments to the Excise Tax on fuel, so that the full impact of inflation should not have struck the final consumer. Sir, I would want the Honourable Member for St. Lucy to know this.

Mr. Speaker, in a situation where the terminal, like every business institution, should see its integrity protected, there is an effective limit to which it can go, in relation to absorbing

prices on the behalf of the consumer. Therefore, even though the terminal has not signaled price increases for a while, there will come a time when it would be faced with such grand losses and, therefore, would have to make some in the prices.

Mr. Speaker, I was recently engaged in a debate with an American gentlemen, who could not understand the ultimate impact of heavy increases in oil prices and that this has a cyclical effect. I told him that if one were to assume that those who produce oil have nothing more but oil to produce and they were to raise the prices, ultimately the very rise in prices would come back to them because when they import food, garments, machinery and technology, those imports would reflect the very increases that they had triggered. Therefore, those in OPEC who triggered the price increases, eventually are affected by those very prices when they import.

Sir, my thesis is that many countries import inflation. No country would deliberately go out of its way to import inflation but dependent on the structure of a given economy, one can have difficulties of a structural nature where economic occurrences often flow, whether or not one would want them to flow.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, in recent weeks, has distinguished himself as a clear and lucid thinker and not as a mere intellectual, either operating from any ivory towers or from lofty citadels built by the citizens of this world. He has also distinguished himself as a man, who is in touch with reality. Sir, the Honourable Member cannot be blamed at all for any consequential price increases, that would have resulted from an escalation in international oil prices.

H:No80(31)420 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

but a man in touch with reality cannot be blamed at all for any consequential price increases that have resulted from and escalation in international oil prices. He was very correct when he said that when he took the portfolio that a barrel of oil cost between \$26 and \$28 dollars.

Mr. Speaker, this time two years ago, nobody would have forecast that a barrel of oil would have gone up the way it has. Sir, When these oil prices go up to that extent, the impact is very grave. It brings me to the whole question of the position of Barbados in this. We are a minor producer of oil products. We would have been rejected if we applied for membership in OPEC because in their eyes we are so minuscule and infinitesimally insignificant as oil producers that they would not take us seriously. However, Venezuela is a member of OPEC and much as Venezuela may have some flexibility in launching out on bilateral or multinational arrangements with others, ultimately, it still owes an allegiance to OPEC that there is no Venezuelan or allied of Venezuela that can tell this Honourable humble servant from St. James North, that the final price at the pump coming out the Venezuelan deal, would be lower than it is presently. Sir, until I can be satisfied that a Venezuelan deal would give the Barbadian consumer a lower price at the pump or the Barbadian producer a lower price in his operations, I cannot support it.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me as though ideologically speaking that there are ideologues who feel that on the basic of ideology and paternalistic allegiance that we should deal with Venezuela either because of geographical proximity or because Venezuela's recent collectivist ideology is particular attractive to particular people.

Mr. Speaker, one has always to look at the reality of what we have here. There is nothing in Barbados that suggests that the typical Barbadian wants to see a number of state agencies established whether in distribution or any kind of production, including non-petroleum production. Sir, in circumstances where we have had a culture of private sector, middle men involved in our oil working in collaboration with the terminal, if we are going to be required to dismantle existing relationships, business and distributors in Barbados in favour of dealing with a number of state agencies, it cannot be that ultimately we can say it is congruent with the type of commercial culture that we have known.

Mr. Speaker, I am so closely juxtaposed to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South and some times close in thinking to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, that I have used the word congruent. Sir, in law we would say consistent with, but economists often give me licence to copy them especially when they are economists speaking the truth like the Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that a further complication in this matter is the absence of solidarity within that entity, which men and women call CARICOM. There is absence of cohesiveness within CARICOM to such a degree that it is patently and manifestly ... that those CARICOM states as individual countries that have decided to embark on a business relationship with Venezuela have done so, generally speaking, through bilateral arrangements as opposed to a general CARICOM to Venezuela deal.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me as though it is in conformity with the interest of given Caribbean countries that they think that the attractive part of the whole deal would be medium and long-

term credit and secondly, particular systems that the Venezuelans usually put in place when they do things like PetroCarib and when they go back to the famous San Jose.

Sir, under San Jose some years ago, Barbados did in fact have a relationship with Venezuela. I do not want to trespass on historical territory and go back to the days of visionary Tom Adams, who always spoke about (reformat(from Venezuela and such like. Suffice it to say, Sir, traditionally the Venezuelan ethic has been one that where they deal with you, it is not a simple straightforward deal on one issue but they like to involve multiple issues. So years ago, under San Jose when we dealt with them, one of the planks in the agreement was a project, which we in Barbados nicknamed the Venezuela Project and which is now evident in a place called Husbands Gardens in the constituency of the fair lady on my right, the Honourable Member for St. James South. There was then one in the constituency ably represented by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. Sir, we had two housing projects as part of the deal with Venezuela.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, the Venezuelan project was conceived at Husbands Gardens and Cane Garden. We found that housing was the issue, that they were constructed and that relations between the Venezuelan builders and ourselves brokedown over things like specifications, design, structural factors and a whole host of other factors. Sir, historians would not be unmindful of the fact that after the breakdown in those two Venezuelan projects in St. James and St. Thomas, that able, local contractors had to dismantle some of the things that went wrong and, today, at Cane Gardens and Husbands, there are many Barbadians who had been made to wait while the Venezuelans were working on these houses, who now occupy houses built by local contractors. Sir, one such contractor comes to my mind a man call Mohammed Nassa and

others who had to put right problems with houses.

Mr. Speaker, the typical person now listening to this debate for the first time tuning into his radio for the last ten seconds would wonder what relationship there is between housing and oil. Sir, today, if we embark on PetroCaribe, we have to read every line of the proposed to see what ancillary things are to be built in or what things necessary flow from the deal with Venezuela but do not necessary flow from the deal with oil.

Mr. Speaker, dealing in oil requires prudence. If we are not prudent and careful in our petroleum deals, the ship might find it difficult to be steered on oily and potentially perilous waters.

Mr. Speaker, I stand in solidarity with the distinguished Honourable Member for St. Philip South. Sir, all arguments were designed to bring him to fault but either fall to the ground or be rejected with scorn. He has repeatedly put our position, has been able to articulate it and has brought it here. It is true that there is a temptation to wonder whether he had to be so erudite and detailed on a matter that is merely a lease. However, in that the lease is for the business of petroleum and oil and, in that out of his sense of nationalism and patriotism he felt he owed a duty to this Honourable House and to the public to explain the issues, he essayed to provide detail even at the risk of defeat in debate.

H80/16:30

Sequence 32

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, there was risk in defeat of the debate. Very often the risk does not materialise to bring that which is uncomfortable. Very often the risk brings return. Sir, in this debate, the return accompanying the excellent contributions of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South... I must say contributions because his points of elucidation and points of order were basically speeches made under the guise of replies to the other side. There were excellent speeches.

Mr. Speaker, it is for Barbadians to judge the wisdom of this administration. Sir, Brandford Taitt, who reads the newspapers every day and who cannot be accused in anyway in being partisan to the Barbados Labour Party, has said more than once that this Government was right to pursue a path of caution and prudence.

Sir, I think that in the context of all that is facing us, I must say how attracted I was to the very able contribution by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central. In all this, ultimately, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, also hit a point when he said that we need a national energy policy, but have no fear, such a policy is being worked on. The vagaries of the international petroleum business being what they are, as soon as you fashion one energy policy, in the middle of the night new international developments occur and you have to dismantle that policy. That is the reality.

Sir, I too mourn the loss of Professor Oliver Headley, who spent much time educating this country about the negative impact of the excessive use of fossil fuels, contribution and may he too rest under divine providential light.

Sir, I must also say that even though we might be tempted here to think that the odd tree might threaten our chattel house, we in this world have to be very careful about cutting down trees. Mr. Speaker, linked into the whole

thing of global warming, which results from the excessive use of fossil fuels and excessive exposure of the stratosphere to heat and such like, is the argument by Germany, Sweden and all right thinkers, that the time has clearly come when we have to find alternative sources of energy.

Sir, there are countries in this world that use natural gas as a clean source of energy. Natural gas could be some relative of the typical fossil fuels but it might be a type of unorthodox relative. Even though gasoline, petroleum and kerosine will tend to be classified as fossil fuels, that can impact and cause global warming, nobody in their right mind thinks that natural gas is as inimical to the environment and future of mankind as the heavier fossil fuels.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that the quality of oil produced in Barbados cannot match the quality of oil produced in Nigeria. Sir, when oil is mined and brought to surface in Nigeria, it needs little refining. Nigeria, a typical western African country with a proud tradition of Africanism, has an oil of tremendous quality, which requires very little refining.

Sir, our oil here is crude, absolutely crude. In a different situation, compared with Nigerian oil, our oil demonstrates the category of a thug. It is raw and crude. It is a good heavyweight oil. It could be used in the operations of electrical companies. To tell the truth, even though we sell it abroad under an arrangement, by which we have a trading arrangement with those who buy, we do not know for sure at this stage how committed the Venezuelans would be to taking it at this stage, nor do we know that everybody would want to take this oil. Sir, in any case, since it has a specialise use and flows in such small quantities, it means that Barbados will remain for a long time an importer of oil and oil products.

Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence that this generation of Parliamentarians, certainly this generation of Parliamentarians on this side, will work towards finding an energy. In the meantime, I expect the Honourable Members on the other side would be looking at the whole question of energy and its economic impact.

Sir, for those OPEC countries who think that the escalation of oil prices brings a lot of money in the short-term, eventually when they export oil at a high price and those high costs go into different products that they have to by importing, they import the very inflation that they are exporting. In the meantime, in all of this, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South is innocent and the Government of Barbados. As Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford would have said, we are now again prone to external shocks.

Mr. Speaker, the lease is intended to enhance our method of storage and the activities of the terminal. Sir, ultimately, this lease assumes a particular significance because it stands as a step in the climb that Barbados has embarked on to ensure a sensible system of the distribution of oil.

Sir, there was a time in this country when there was a system where a great multinational company had been guaranteed a fixed and definitive rate of return of whatever was going on in the marketplace and this Government found that to be entirely unacceptable, and today the terminal stands in its place.

Sir, I stand, not in my usual place on the left of the Honourable Member for St. George North, but I stand between the Honourable Member for St. James South, who can tell you about the Venezuelan project at Husbands.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you wind up please?

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: I stand on the left side of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, who has been truthful to this Parliament and long may his contributions last.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister will now wind up.

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the terms of the lease have been provided to Parliament. There are just one or two things of note. I do not think that we specifically indicated as we should have that the terminal will be used to store diesel, crude oil and gasoline. It is designed to incorporate future jet fuel storage.

In addition, for those who have concerns, I would wish, if it is at all possible, to put the public's mind at rest, by indicating that Barbados National Terminal Company Limited, prior to the implementation of this particular project, carried on a number of consultancies and testing at the site to determine its suitability. There were a number of Town Hall meetings with residents of the area and people likely to be affected. They conduct, as required by the Town and Country Planning Department, an environmental impact assessment, which would have included a social and traffic impact assessment, as consistent with an EIA, to have a regulatory regime and a framework on which the development rests and which will lay the groundwork for the litigation of any problems, should they occur.

H80: 16.40

Sequence 33

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House 80, sequence 34, 4:40 p.m.

Continuation of Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON:

...will lay the ground work for the mitigation of any problem, should they occur.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip South indicated that the plant has been built with a number of safety mechanisms so as to reduce the level of risk. I ask the Parliament to endorse this lease which is entered into under section 5(C) of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act chapter 225, which authorises the Minister with the approval of Parliament to sell, lease, exchange, grant, assign or surrender any land owned by the Crown.

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

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

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

ORDER NO. 20 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT CHAPTER 225, THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE AT HOPE LAND NEAR RICES IN THE PARISH OF ST. PHILIP IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member before you speak, please, it is a bit late for me to say this but in all the years, there used to be a pattern when it came to vesting and disposal

where - you can take my advice - it will be clearly stated the purpose of the vesting, what was being vested, the area of the land, the amount of land, and in this case here, the number of lots which would result. It has nothing whatsoever to do the contractors, nor does it have anything to do with the much discussion we have been having today.

I have permitted that but I am not going to permit that now for sure. This is a simple, straightforward vesting.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: The Resolution before the House seeks to vest land situate at Hopeland near Rices in the National Housing Corporation for housing development. The area to be vested comprises 12.3 acres and is expected, Sir, to provide a number of lots and houses. It is intended that this site will carry a middle income development, work for which is underway. I think the infrastructural development has started and is scheduled to be finished in February of 2006.

There will be 18 middle income houses and 40 middle income lots. The National Housing Corporation is expected to derive a revenue of \$3 863 560 from this development. The lots will be an average size of 3 500 to 4 500 square feet. They will be sold at \$10 per square foot and house and land will range from approximately \$200 000 to \$260 000.

The parcel has been divided between two developers by way of an open public tendering process. In pursuit of this development, some of the prospective purchasers have been selected from the National Housing Corporation's waiting list and have started to pay deposits on the lots which they intend to purchase.

To date, the NHC has realised \$114 744. It is anticipated that as soon as the infrastructural works are completed, construction of the

houses will start and they will be completed sometime during the course of 2007.

This particular site has been selected for middle income development because of its location and the type of development that exists around it but other sites at St. Philip, specifically Marchfield and Workhall have been identified for 75 primary houses.

Therefore, in St. Philip there will be both middle income development and low income development or primary homes development, consistent with the Government's housing policy to provide houses in every price range within our scope, provided, of course, that they meet the requirement always of first time home purchases.

It is anticipated that the infrastructural work at this time is 70 per cent completed, with excavation 95 per cent completed, compaction 95 per cent, the drainage 80 per cent and water main installation at 50 per cent to date. Accumulatively, that is 70 per cent completed and we anticipate, as I indicated earlier, that the construction will start probably in March 2006, when the infrastructural development is completed.

These 12.3 acres were purchased by the Crown and are now being vested in the NHC, pursuant to a decision of the Cabinet. Again, Sir, authority here is being exercised under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act Chapter 225.

Those, Sir, if I am to follow your guidelines, would be the salient facts, if we are to keep the discussion tight, without straying into wider policy matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: As Minister, you are free to make a comment on it, as we have always done on the particular area, the vesting and the lots. Your comment is not to be a discourse of

housing policy.

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

In keeping with that comment, Sir, I would continue to make the point, and it would be interesting to note that St. Philip, continues to develop as a new town centre off Six Roads and a place where increasingly, people are opting to live.

Therefore, what was considered to be very much rural Barbados, is now becoming part of the urban corridor. These particular houses will join a lot of other new middle income developments, some of which was done through Government and much of which was done, particularly around the Six Roads area by private developers.

This location at Rices will not only enjoy a proximity close to a main road with good access to sights and services but with the Six Roads complex within easy reach, whether by bus or car, the community will have the benefit of having nearby the Rices Methodist Church.

NHC's mandate is to provide housing to first-time homeowners. Sir, we are attempting here to do two things, sell a complete package of house and land to those who want an immediate housing option and to give land to those who prefer to build a house of their own design but who want access to land, at prices that are still way below those in the market.

Our land prices at NHC are still lower than those in the private sector and this development continues to be consistent with that policy thrust.

House 80, sequence 34, 16:5014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON:

In fact, we have had a very heavy subscription from a large number of people from St. Philip and the wider Barbados for housing at this location. Mr. Speaker, we can only accommodate the number of lots we have. We are in fact looking at other areas in St. Philip such as River and so on that are now under the control of the Barbados Agricultural Development and Management Corporation to develop further housing projects.

Mr. Speaker, outside of middle income developments, primary homes will also be provided in St. Philip. A large number of people are opting to live in St. Philip and what we are trying to do is to develop a range of housing options. These houses at Rices would be two and three bedrooms of wall construction only. When we go into the Primary Homes Programme at Marchfield and Workhall, we will have houses, some of which would be in masonry and some of wooden construction. We will also make a number of lots available at Workhall and at Marchfield consistent with what I indicated earlier in the day, has to be our new property thrust.

Sir, that is to give the framework for our incursion into St. Philip on how the National Housing Corporation is going to be developing land at St. Philip. We would have to bring the vesting for Workhall and Marchfield here because they may still be Crown lands not yet vested in the National Housing Corporation. Sir, this land now would ensure that the National Housing Corporation does have the authority to convey the lands on to prospective purchasers because at this stage there are still lands owned by the Crown, which we have given the National Housing Corporation permission to develop prior to the formulation and completion of the vesting process.

Sir, essentially that is the framework for what we are doing today and the rationale for why this particular Resolution is before the Chamber. Sir, this is yet another one that would have come onto the parliamentary agenda during the period of the recess.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate obviously to stay within the parameters that have been outlined, but I am always amazed how the National Housing Corporation, that has incurred so much debt and that is so unprofitable when last I checked the annual reports, which are about five years behind time, and would have had in excess of 30 million in losses, is able to get involved in these kinds of arrangements.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, from your experience you would know that while you may say what you like, that sometimes you can say it and it is totally out of place. What we are here debating is a Resolution for vesting in the National Housing Corporation of parcels of land at Hopefield. It has nothing to do with what the National Housing Corporation has or who they owe, it is a simple vesting Resolution, so I really do not know where you are going.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: It is very difficult, Mr. Speaker, to respond to that kind of interpretation that is so narrow because if we are vesting land in the National Housing Corporation for the building of houses, which by the way will cost between \$200 000 and \$260 000, then one would have to ask the question about the capacity of the National Housing Corporation to deliver on the houses that are being proposed. That is all I am asking. The ability would have to bear relation to the financial status of the corporation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Sir, I am not saying that you cannot ask it but you cannot ask it now because

as I said it is a simple vesting Resolution. What you speak to must relate to the vesting. You could have said what you have said and relate it to the vesting.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Precisely, but you have not given me the chance, which is typical. Sir, I made one statement about the financial condition of the National Housing Corporation and its ability to deliver houses having had this land vested in it, and you found it fit to suggest that I am outside the parameters.

Mr. SPEAKER: And I told you that you were out of place, and I would say to you again that you are out of place.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Well, I know you would say that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, you are out of place again.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: That is how it is in here.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, right.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, all I am suggesting is that the land that is currently being vested in the National Housing Corporation is going to be used for a particular purpose, which is to build houses valued between \$200 000 and \$260 000.

Mr. SPEAKER: You are now doing it right.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the National Housing Corporation ought to revisit what is its real purpose and function within the housing policy of the Government. Therefore, I am suggesting that the National Housing Corporation needs to take a look at who it is supposed to be catering to in the housing market and whether or not the original objectives of the National Housing

Corporation are being met.

Sir, to come every time and tell me that you are building houses for middle income persons but that there is a plan to come for low income persons is not the way to do it. It is about time that average ordinary Barbadians who work for less than \$2 000 per month, be given an opportunity to qualify for housing and land in Barbados. That is what I am saying with respect to this vesting.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is that we are being told that 10 per cent of land and housing is now being put aside for persons living abroad.

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I made it clear in my comments earlier today that the National Housing Corporation does not sell land to people living abroad unless it is a Barbadian who has only gone overseas on a short term contract, but that 10 per cent of the total land parcels in Barbados are owned by Barbadians living outside of Barbados. The National Housing Corporation is not selling it to them, they can buy it through the private sector. I made a point that as a result of that those lands held by persons living overseas remains vacant. The National Housing Corporation was ensuring that it build for first time homeowners who were living in Barbados.

The Honourable Member in his confusion is misleading the House but that is as a result of the constant pressure that he is now under until next month.

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, the more important thing is whether or not what we are doing redounds to the benefit of the average Barbadian. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that the mandate of the National Housing Corporation, which was clearly established to allow for low income individuals to own land

and housing, and ought to be the case even if it is not currently the case, is not being followed.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have much to say in this debate as it is supposed to be a vesting but certainly land is vested for a reason. If it is that you are going to vest land and permit such building of houses at only that kind of level, then it must be a major area of concern for persons involved in the housing market and people who do not seem to have access to the kinds of housing that they require in today(s Barbados.

House 80 Sequence 35

5:00 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Therefore, with that in mind, I am suggesting to the National Housing Corporation that it needs to relook the issue of the provision of housing for Barbadians. Sir, when it is looked at, one cannot simply take into consideration the cost of the houses but also consider the fact that those persons now have to get mortgages and that the actual cost at which the houses would now be sold, would not be the actual cost to the potential homeowner or landowner. Sir, I am, therefore, saying that ought to be something at which the National Housing Corporation needs to look.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at what could happen for a potential homeowner, if he goes to Rices, St. Philip, to purchase piece of land for a house. Sir, in the not too distant future, that homeowner might find his mortgage interest rates are up. Initially, he would have arranged to have a particular level of payment that is affordable, only to find that additional pressure would be added with respect to that mortgage transaction.

Sir, no commercial bank is going to commit too much of its portfolio to fixed rate mortgages, they make adjustments in accordance with their profitability expectations. Therefore, if they are going to be required to pay more on deposits, they are going to make adjustments to their loan rates. Therefore, let us not be fooled that is going to happen as a matter of course. On the other hand, a commercial bank might commit some of its portfolio to fixed rate mortgages for a few privileged individuals who would be acquiring mortgages but as a whole, we would not get fixed rate mortgages on that scale in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to look at the overall role which the National Housing Corporation is playing in the provision for housing for Barbadians. We need to look at a more solid housing policy which would allow those at the lower end, to be able to gain greater access to housing in Barbados. Sir, the ability to access housing is a major concern in this country and therefore it is the duty of this Government to ensure that it provides for those persons who are not able to enter a market which has become outrageous, in terms of price expectations, in terms of what has happened, and in terms of appreciation of land and property values. Therefore, it cannot be suggested that lots of Barbadian, who originally might have been within the income range required to own a two-bedroom or three-bedroom home, are no longer in such a position. Sir, this has to be a concern.

Mr. Speaker, you represent the constituency of St. Michael Central and would know that the greatest requirement after a job in Barbados is that of housing. You would also know that even to get access to housing for rental is extremely difficult. I, therefore, feel that, to some extent, that it is such a great concern for Barbadians and that we definitely need to look more seriously at exactly who we are catering to in the marketplace, to see whether or not we have

not lost sight as to whom we should be addressing with respect to housing needs in Barbados.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. A. P. WOOD: Mr. Speaker, like all Honourable Members, I recognised the hour is getting late but it would be very remiss of me if I did not make a contribution with regards to this Rices Development Project, which is very prominently located in my constituency. Sir, I, therefore, have a compulsion and a duty to rise in this Honourable Chamber and to support the vesting of this land in the National Housing Corporation, so that the work which has started, could be advanced in the time frame mentioned by the Honourable Member for St. James South and certainly sooner than 2007, where we hope that the project could be brought to a conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is correct when he said that if we were to identify a pecking order of requests to ourselves, we would find jobs and housing as the two main priorities. Therefore, my constituency is by no means an exception.

Mr. Speaker, it is within that context that I want to thank both the Honourable Member for St. George North and the Honourable Member for St. James South, for the work that the officers at the National Housing Corporation and in other Government agencies have been doing, to ensure that this project which was conceptualised sometime ago, could reach this stage. Indeed, we are eagerly looking forward for an advancement on the process.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to focus on a point made by the Honourable Member for St. James South because it is very significant in the context of the execution of Government(s) housing programme, at a time when the demand for housing solutions is extremely

high. Sir, in dealing with officials from the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing, I am convinced and heartened by the meticulous way in which they have gone about their work, in respect of the screening of the applicants, to ensure that only first-time homeowners are those who get the opportunity to be part of this development. Sir, we know the premium that is placed on land and property and those who own will want to use Government(s) approach to finding solutions to own again.

Mr. Speaker, I have realised that through their professional and very thorough screening processes, officials from the National Housing Corporation have been able to identify a number of such persons who already own housing and land and have informed these persons that it was not possible to accommodate their requests because the screening process has highlighted the fact that they already own properties elsewhere. Sir, that is a good job these officials are doing I want to congratulate them. I also want to encourage them to continue on that path, ensuring that housing solutions being provided by Government agencies, go only to first time owners.

Mr. Speaker, this particular project in Rices, which the Honourable Member for St. James South said includes 40 lots and 80 houses, is another success story of this Ministry, as it relates to the Government realising its objective in part and intervening in the housing market, to ensure that the cost of land is kept within a reasonable band.

Sir, I well remember sometime ago, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy came into this Honourable Chamber and lambasted this Government for playing an interventionist role in the housing market, in respect of the provision of housing and land, and was seeking to suggest that this was not our role, that we

should not be placing land in the land bank for whenever we can get around to selling it. The Honourable Member also said that we should let the private sector get on with the business of acquiring land and allowing the market forces to dictate what happens in respect to the price of housing, lands and housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, we said no. We started with projects in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and this Rices project fits into that. Sir, had we followed the suggestion of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, could you imagine what would have happened to the price of land in the general area of Rices, where there is a middle income development that is contiguous to it? This area is particularly close to the coastline on that side of Barbados, with the Crane Beach Hotel and Foul Bay, St. Philip. Therefore, as it would now be, those persons who got the opportunity to be living there, would be getting good breezes coming off the sea.

H:No80(36)510 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. A.P. WOOD:

Sir, the land which will go to the 40 owners is to be sold at \$10 a square foot. Some people may say that the price is high but I am convinced that without this intervention by the Government in seeking to acquire this land, which I recommended - the Honourable Member for St. James South accepted my recommendation and the Honourable Member for St. James South instituted the project - that without an intervention by the Government in respect of this parcel of land that land selling in that area by the private sector would be more expensive because it is prime land.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage leaders of the Government housing programme to

continue with their role and in so doing, constrain the price of land for Barbadians. Sir, the private sector will always get the opportunity to procure parcel of lands in Barbados because they have the financial wherewithal to do such but Government has an important role to continue playing in respect of securing lands and releasing them at prices that are within the reach of Barbadians. Sir, I give the Government my fullest support on this.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James South did not lose the opportunity to tell this Honourable Chamber that there is a particular reason why the development at Rices is to be a middle income one. We all share the sentiments expressed by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West in respect of the provision of houses for the lower income section of the society. The fact of the matter is, whereas in the original stages I might have advanced a case for a development of a different character even at Rices, the officials in the Ministry explained to me at the time that this one would be used for middle income so as to maintain the character of the housing in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I have said earlier that it is contiguous to the Crane Development and we have other nice structures in the vicinity of this land. Of course, those structures are houses, which have been improved on over the years as the folk in my constituency became more affluent, especially in the last 11 years.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member also indicated that the parish is not lost to the provision of housing solutions for the lower income sections of society. The Honourable Member is well-aware of the anxiety which I have for the provision of such housing. When this development was first spoken about, it was heavily oversubscribed but when the true details about the project were revealed then some folk did not qualify for inclusion in the

project. We have asked them to find alternative areas close by, which would keep the family within close proximity to each other and they have responded. Sir, mention was made of Marchfield and Workhall for the establishment of the Primary Homes Programme. They have also started ten houses at Six Cross Roads in that programme as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am very comfortable knowing that the National Housing Corporation and the Minister have started responding by building on work started by the Honourable Member for St. George North. They are responding in the sense of not staying with this middle income project for St. Philip but have recognised that the demand for housing by the lower income section of society are excessive as well. I am looking forward to projects in Marchfield and Workhall so that the needs of the lower income persons can also be satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, I close by saying that I am in favour of the vesting of this land in Rices, which is going to satisfy the need for housing for some of my constituents and for people living elsewhere in Barbados. We have to be willing to accommodate a nice mix of persons in respect of where are their starting points.

Mr. Speaker, I also look forward to approach taken in respect of the satisfaction of the housing needs in the parish with the mix of the middle income houses and the project for low income earners which is now on its way, that is the way for the National Housing Corporation to continue its work.

Sir, the provision of housing solutions could be a costly exercise. Notwithstanding what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West is encouraging, a concentration on low income projects, the fact of the matter is that low income projects, call for substantial subsidy and the National Housing Corporation also has the responsibility to engage in projects

through which they can generate funds, which would allow them on their own speed to take on low income projects which may not be as financial rewarding for the corporation as some of the others. They must continue on the correct path, with the right mix of projects and spread these projects around.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to contribute to this Resolution which, would see the vesting of two parcels of land into the National Housing Corporation for purposes of housing development. Sir, quite naturally it is good to see two sizable lots of land being put into providing some more (housing solution), which is the term being bandied around now. We are happy to see that something is being done to deal with a situation, which I think by any estimation has reached crisis proportion in Barbados. There is no doubt that the situation in housing and what this vestment is driving at is one that requires serious and urgent attention from the entire country and Government, as it is supposed to, should lead in this effort.

Mr. Speaker, following on from what the Honourable Member for St. Philip South was saying, Government must recognise its role in terms of providing housing opportunities for low-income and middle-income Barbadians. Sir, recognising that fact, we would have to say, notwithstanding the efforts here at Rices and what was done earlier at Fairy Valley, Government has fallen woefully short of what is really needed in the housing sector in Barbados.

We cannot rely on private development because we understand the reality of the market situation, not the least of all, the cost of land. We are now hearing that the market value of

land is affecting what private developers are offering. We also heard in here today that the National Housing Corporation, in terms of its decision with respect to Rices, is making a decision on the basis of the value of the land and what type of housing solution it is going to offer.

H80/17:20

Sequence 37

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Mr. R.L. SEALY: It is felt that because of the location of the land, it makes more sense to have middle income earners residing there than lower income owners.

Sir, I recognise there is a problem for all Barbadians to find housing opportunities. I heard the Honourable Member for St. James South, but as far as I know, the initial mandate of the National Housing Corporation and its precursor was to provide housing opportunities for persons who could least afford for houses. We would not necessary want Government continuing along the path of adjusting its housing policy, because of the market situation with respect to the cost of land in Barbados, but rather that Government does exactly what the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, the representative for the area where the investment is taking place, said and recognised that it has to play an interventionist role.

Sir, the Honourable Member to some extent misrepresented what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy had been consistently saying all along. He never said anything about letting the private sector do what they want to do. He has always maintained that you give people lots and let them develop them on their own, obviously coming from that culture that exists in rural Barbados, and as the Member of

Parliament for St. Lucy where a lot of that takes place. Sir, the (weekend warriors) gradually develop their properties at their own pace. Mr. Speaker, Government still has a role to play in terms of developing housing opportunities for income Barbadians.

Sir, having had ten years, I think it is fair to say to some extent this is an area where Government has failed. Both Parties recognise, and we heard it today in this debate, that Government has to play a leading role. If we recognise that housing is one of the basic needs after food and clothing, then we have to say that sufficient emphasis has been placed on providing dwellings for the citizens of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, when you consider that we have been in here time and time again dealing with compulsory acquisitions and vesting of large tracts of Barbados into the National Housing Corporation, yet we are seeing so little has been being delivered, it would explain why there is so much skepticism out there from the public with regard to the Government providing housing.

I think it is time, once and for all, for this Government ... I am not prepared to totally blame the current Minister because the Honourable Member only took over the Ministry two years ago. I am saying to blame the Government that has been in power for eleven years. It is true that she has talked more than some of the other Ministers and may be that means that she is the most effective of them all, but all the others did was talk as well because we have not had much delivery. We had a lot of talk. Sir, to that extent, I think that the whole planning process needs to be looked at. We have become very good at talking and vesting but we are not so good at delivering.

Sir, I have a very real example and I have spoken about it in here at least on half a dozen

occasions. In May 2003, a billboard was posted, which said that units are coming in Tweedside Road, here it is, the billboard is woodant infested, and it is rotting and they could not put a piece of two-by-four to prop up the same billboard. Sir, nothing has been done on that project.

Asides

Mr. R.L. SEALY: maybe the result did not go as was planned in May 2003. I do not know. As I have said, it is not about me. It is about those persons who are looking for housing solutions. I do not make much heavy weather over that because I recognise that some of the Honourable Members on that side, who helped form this Government, are also having a hard time getting housing opportunities for their constituents and have been moved to even speak publicly in very strong terms.

Sir, I would like to think that we could reach the stage where we see something meaningful happening in terms of delivering on housing. It is a basic need. I do not buy into this notion, which I heard the Honourable Member for St. Philip with, that there is (prosperity in Barbados) that is the reason there is a demand for housing. That is nonsense, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you cannot refer to what anybody says as nonsense.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, it is a terminological in exactitude.

Sir, it does not follow. Shelter is a basic need and the real measure of how a government deals with housing for its nation, is not the answers or solutions it has for those who can most afford it, but rather for those who could least afford it. Therefore, I think that we can comfortably give the Government a failing grade for the way they have handled housing, and call on them to abandon this patchwork

approach for something meaningful, because the situation is going from bad to worse.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me, I have no empirical evidence, but as active as I am in my constituency, a lot of the existing housing stock in Barbados are actually, in many cases, depreciating and are being generally rundown. A lot of the properties rented are not maintained properly, yet landlords are demanding top rent. Sir, in other words, your options, if they are not available, they are usually not affordable.

We do not want to get into the impact which migration to Barbados has had recently on our situation here, but there is no doubt that people are dividing properties and renting rooms. People are renting rundown properties for exorbitant and colossal rents, having serious negative impact on the capacity of ordinary Barbadians to basically find a place to live.

Sir, the Primary Homes Programme that was much vaunted, has really not yet been delivered. We are hearing, that apparently has to do with a lack of land. It is a bit baffling to me how a comprehensive programme that is going to seriously dent the problems of low income housing in Barbados did not anticipate the issue of land. Sir, this Government has acquired more land than any other Government but nonetheless that is the situation that we are in.

Sir, I hope that, it may not happen during my political life, we would reach the point where Members of Parliament would not have to carry a begging bowl to the National Housing Corporation to see about housing opportunities for their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to beg in here for resources for the Hastings Police Station, to deal with law and order issues in my constituency, because we recognise that is a

role that is important for the State. I do not have to beg for bulbs for the street lights in Collymore Rock, which happened to be in St. Michael South Central, because we recognise that with roads we need to have street lighting.

I would like to think that I should not have to beg a minister or a General Manager of the National Housing Corporation for opportunities for housing for my constituents, because I believe that the State recognises, and both political Parties recognise, that they play a role. However, I think at the same time it is a little worrying when a government can beat up its chest and suggest that here is another accomplishment, when really and truly I see a lot of failure on the part of the Government in executing its housing programme.

H80: 17.30 p.m.

Sequence 38

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 39, 5:30 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. R.L. SEALY:

I look forward to seeing a more comprehensive approach taken by this Government to deal with housing and the acute shortage of housing. I welcome what is happening at Rices and I would hope that constituencies like St. Michael Central and St. Michael South Central, where there is a limit to open expenses of land, which can accommodate developments such as this, that the residents from those constituencies would certainly be considered for opportunities at the same Rices and Fairy Valley.

Perhaps we could see some continuity where, for example, persons who live in housing estates that they have been renting for a while, would be given an opportunity to become

homeowners, and that this would open up other opportunities for persons looking to get their lives going, to take those vacancies up. It is an issue that we cannot get away from. It is one that all of us in here as MPs have to deal with and one in which I would sincerely hope that the Government would look at in a different way.

Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat, I just reiterate the point I made that the success of a Government(s housing policy cannot be determined by how well it is catering to those who are enjoying prosperity. It has to be looked at and accessed by how it is treating those who are most in need. This is an area where I think that notwithstanding what is planned for Rices, when you look at the overall policy, the Government has fallen short.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a few words on this particular vesting of land at Hopeland near Rices in St. Philip. I must say from the outset, Sir, that the NHC, continues to provide housing solutions, not only for the middle income earners, as members are suggesting, but NHC continues to provide solutions for the poor, low income earners and persons who are really in need of housing, especially first time homeowners.

Sir, if you read the various reports that came out of National Housing Corporation over the years, you would see that they cater to a whole cross section of the society. It is not fair really to say that they only provided middle income housing. It is true that this particular development at Hopeland will mostly catering to the needs of the middle income because of the area in which it is located.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I believe that one has to look at the programme of the National

Housing Corporation. I would like to say that it is difficult at this time to really control the price of land in this environment. The price of land in the area of Rices range from \$15 to \$20 per square foot and to sell this land at \$10 per square foot is indeed remarkable for the NHC.

In fact I must say, Mr. Speaker, that NHC has never made substantial profit in the sale of land. The cost of development is very high. When you look at the fact that NHC, has to put in the water, lights, and the other utilities, the cost is substantive, sometimes over \$6 or \$7 a square foot and NHC, only barely covers the cost.

I must compliment the Minister. I know in this present environment, the need for housing is paramount. Everybody must have a house and everybody wants a house, especially if they are working. I believe though, Mr. Speaker, that NHC must continue to acquire more land for the poor, in certain areas, abutting and abounding certain developments, especially in rural Barbados.

A couple of months ago, I pointed out land in the Lower Burnie area that can be acquired for housing. I believe that this can be sold and developed at a reasonable cost. I also believe, Mr. Speaker, that in the St. Michael area, for example, we have identified over 1 800 derelict properties that could be taken by the Government and put into the pool for either rental, or as our Manifesto speaks, for long term lease where persons can obtain title. Sir, it is not only really possible for everyone at this stage to get their hands on land or to purchase the land outright, so a long term lease for 10 or 15 years can suffice.

Sir, in your constituency and most of the constituencies in St. Michael, you will find a number of properties that can be redeveloped. These owners have either died or gone away, so these derelict properties can be

taken up by the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation and renewed, whereby persons who are seeking housing can obtain a house spot to build their houses.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we could assist the Minister by identifying a number of other areas in our constituencies which would be more suited for the lower income earners. I feel that working hand-in-hand with the Town Planning Department and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, we could identify the house spots that could be turned into housing as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I think the development takes too long. For example, the one at Hopeland was acquired since 1999 and is now being vested. I know members have been complaining for years. When I was the Minister of Housing people were complaining as well. In the previous administration they were complaining. Housing is important and the development stages take too long from acquisition to vesting to the realisation of the property.

I also think that it has a lot to do with how we go about putting in the application in the Town Planning Department and how it is then finally subdivided. I think we have to look at new ways of doing these things but, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the time has come for the Government, the Opposition and MPs working with the Ministry of Housing and Lands to find the solution.

We cannot continue to criticise the Minister or the Ministry because, in the final analysis, Mr. Speaker, the Minister is one person but we collectively can help the Ministry of Housing and Lands to acquire solutions and solve the problem, which all of us must live with, Sir.

There are substantive methods and the cost of housing is not coming down at this time. It

continues to skyrocket because of not only the oil prices but the cost of labour. Sir, as the cost of labour increases, the cost of building will also continue to increase.

Mr. Speaker, there is not a fast fix to this whole question of housing. It is going to take some time but as I said, we must work together to get the solution right.

House 80, sequence 39, 17:4014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. G. A. CLARKE:

Mr. Speaker, we can come in here and quarrel every time there is a housing debate, but we must offer solutions. I also think that we need to look at other solutions like lease-holding, to accommodate those persons who cannot afford to purchase the property. In some countries, for example, Great Britain, there is a leasehold arrangement where people can lease the land for 25 years and get title to it and the bank would give them a loan to develop their homes. I am confident that something like this will help in Barbados.

Sir, people come and say that they want land at \$2.50 a square foot or \$3.00 a square foot, but the cost of the land and the cost of development is higher than that. Mr. Speaker, the Government must continue to look after those persons who cannot afford to purchase property. That is why the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment must explore this policy position of lease-holding because if this is done, I am sure it will help Honourable Members and their constituents to realise their dream.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Mr. Speaker vacated the Chair and Mr. Deputy Speaker assumed the Chair.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things which you judge a society by is how it is able to cater to the basic or fundamental needs of the citizens within that society. Therefore, a society such as Barbados, would have developed a way of seeking to feed its people and also a method of how to house its people. Therefore, you could almost determine that the society of Barbados might not be as developed as it could be because we are still searching to find adequate housing solutions to take care of the needs of our people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Resolution to vest lands at Hopefield near Rices in the Parish of St. Philip in the National Housing Corporation is but a tiny step. To some extent, if you want to coin a phrase, you could say that it represents (a sneeze in a high wind) but it is still an important step relative to providing some measure of housing for the people of Barbados. I say the people of Barbados because I do not know who would be housed there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if one follows the kinds of patterns that have developed over time one would see the emergence of peculiarities among those who are allocated these 80 middle income houses and these 40 lots, which brings me to the expression of a particular concern. I have always believed that Barbados, particularly in the village format that we knew or that we know because there are still some villages in Barbados where persons of nearly every economic strata, the school teacher, the policeman, the civil servant in one of the various branches of the bureaucracy, the agricultural worker, the small farmer, the lady who sold her comforts and nuts under the trees at school, reside in the same space and relating and interfacing in a very passionate and a very diverse kind of manner.

We have moved away from that kind of

village construction into now these housing solutions called low income, middle income, upper middle income and gated communities. What we are actually doing is compartmentalising our society in a very rigid and inflexible way and this is allowing us not to greet each other with a high level of anger even in our tones and behaviours, which are totally inimical to the fullest development of the wider society, so I really do not have much beef for the type of housing that we call middle income and lower income. I like people as who they are to exist within a comfortable space. However, I know and recognise that when you are speaking of houses in the range of \$200 000 to \$260 000 and if you look to gain a mortgage out in the financial marketplace that you have to have a salary at a particular level, and if it is still established that many of our citizens work for less than \$1 500 a per month, it means that we are challenged to have these persons unless two or three of a family combine to gain one of these particular houses to satisfy their housing needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister, the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment and the National Housing Corporation have recognised that there is a dire need, and it cannot be overemphasised, to meet this very foundational need of the citizens of Barbados. Therefore, when one hears of those persons who have been elected by the citizenry of Barbados to represent their interest, speaking loudly sometimes almost with a screaming tone as to what they want, one can only but empathise with those who are called to represent their interest either at the constituency level, in the wider Barbadian level or here within Parliament.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as representatives of the people, you have to interface with them each and every day either via the telephone or as you meet them in your offices or on the street, and as the Honourable Member for St. Philip South

has stated, the two things they emphasise are housing and jobs. Of course, they emphasise jobs as number one because without the job they have no access to the housing because it calls for resources in order to access the housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the need is real. However, I know that in urging for greater alacrity in bringing more and more housing solutions that it might not necessarily be met because it takes resources. Here at Rices, we are having 80 middle income houses and 40 lots for middle income development. This is going to be an area in which there are going to be all masonry houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that some of the residents of Christ Church East Central, who come to me from time to time, might have access to one or two of these houses. They too have a strong desire for housing just like the residents of Christ Church West Central, Christ Church West, Christ Church East and Christ Church South. Some of this strong desire does not only arise out of what you call satisfying the need because you have money. When you look at families where they might be eight or ten persons within a small house, they might want to move out to have more freedom of movement to share the things that they consider to be their own with themselves and their small immediate family, they want to move away from many of the dysfunctional family units that you might find dotted across the Barbadian landscape or they might be frustrated with a spouse so they want to develop something of their own. So you are getting pressures as well from the kind of social relationships which exist within the wider Barbadian society, within our neighbourhood and our community.

House 80 Sequence 40

51:50 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Mr. R. D. JONES: Therefore, any legitimate effort to accelerate this process is extremely welcomed.

The Honourable Member stated that this land, which is vested in a holistic way, is 70 per cent completed with its various infrastructure such roads, water, lighting, et cetera. This is a positive when the Honourable Member for St. James South spoke about the period some time in 2007, when these things will be completed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is known that I am not a friend of the National Housing Corporation, and until I have experienced some changes in the kind of attitudes of some of the persons who exist within that institution, I will not be a friend. Sir, even though one is not a friend, occasionally one can step back from one(s) moment of anger and frustration, especially in an instance such as this, where the Honourable Member has stated that work is moving apace, that persons have applied and many have been granted housing solution, along with the fact that to date, they have collected \$114 744.

Sir, this is but a small part but at least it demonstrates some effort on their part and maybe my voice along with that of others, such as the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, have gotten through to what one might call the mental density of some persons at the National Housing Corporation, causing them to respond in a professional and deliberate manner of delivery, relative to the people of Barbados, in relation to housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, will obtain some \$3.86 million in revenue or net profit out of this exercise. It is an institution which makes or should make money for reinvestment into other housing solutions for Barbadians. Therefore, I have no difficulty with

the National Housing Corporation turning a profit of \$3.86 million.

Sir, when one understands what is happening in the largest parish of Barbados, that being the parish of St. Philip, where there are several private developments going up in areas of Kirtons and Bottom Bay, \$10 per square foot of land is an excellent price to be delivered by the National Housing Corporation. Therefore, for that, they must be complimented.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also an area called Kent, located in St. Michael South East, but from reading the prescriptions of the National Housing Corporation, the question has to be asked, when is Kent going to be delivered to the people of Barbados. Sir, I recognise that it would be more expensive than those at Hopeland, near Rices, St. Philip but I know that there are persons from Christ Church East Central, who, because of their financial resources or access to the financial marketplace, would be able to own one of these properties at Kent, but I have not heard anything in a long time in relation to what is happening there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also recognise that over the weekend, there was a call for housing solutions for Christ Church West Central. Again Christ Church West Central is next door to Christ Church East Central. Sir, I would like to say that as Honourable Members, nobody brings us gifts or deliver any of them to our constituencies. Therefore, I recognise the heartfelt call from one of Government(s) Backbenchers for housing solutions in Christ Church West Central, and I applaud that individual. What I am doing now is having the courage or the intestinal fortunate to stand, in a brazen fashion, and to say that I need something for the people of Christ Church West Central. Sir for me to do that is suggesting that I must enjoin whoever the speaker was in that call, in the hope that as a good beggar on the behalf of

the people of Christ Church East Central, we too would have housing solutions developed in the Christ Church West Central, as the people in Christ Church East Central might be fortunate in having some of those housing solutions.

Sir, I am, therefore, in a begging and congratulating mode. My congratulating is not being done tongue-in-cheek because when you drive a person to their knees, the only direction for them is to stand. Therefore, I am standing today and appealing to the Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment, under whom the National Housing Corporation falls, for the Honourable Member to look around.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to stress that I have no difficulty at all walking, cycling, tri-cycling, skating, scooting, driving or whatever means necessary, with the Honourable Member, through the constituency of Christ Church East Central, in identifying other pieces of land that can be acquired or vested, to ensure that the people get somewhere to live, to ensure that the violence that is part and parcel of crowded conditions in many of our homes, can be relieved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking directly at the Honourable Minister of Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment and appealing to her. The Honourable Member can bring most of the people from her Ministry, including among others, Permanent Secretaries and personnel from the National Housing Corporation.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: I will be uncomfortable walking with some of those persons, and if you want me to tell you those persons with whom I would feel uncomfortable, I could.

H:No80(41)600 p.m.

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Continuation of Mr. R.D. JONES:

I will tell you and let us make a journey. I will tell you who to bring. Give me the preference as one of your colleagues in this Chamber so that I will not feel as though my time in this place for the last two and a half years have been wasted. We stand in Opposition which is only a terminology used in the delivery of democratic Government but, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not Opposition but parliamentarians, looking, searching, beseeching, cajoling, manipulating for some opportunity to truly serve the people, who, in the dark of the morning walked on the street to go to some polling stations to say what they want. Therefore, give us that opportunity to serve those people in the best way that we possible can.

Mr. Speaker, I have said from the outset that I support the vesting and I want the opportunity to speak like this at another time. If as I look across the borders, move around and as people call me and my colleagues, we are stunted and not given the opportunity to deliver anything, my tone would change again. I would have to go into a vexatious tone and voice and rather than congratulating, I would have to condemn the Minister and all the others in the bureaucracy. Sir, it is not the Minister alone but others in the bureaucracy who are not delivering on behalf of the people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I take my seat, I beg on behalf of the people of Christ Church East Central and also on behalf of the people for Christ Church West Central for an opportunity that some day coming soon, we can take a backhoe, fork, knife or hoe and go and pick on the land and say that it is being developed on behalf of the people of Barbados. Of course, with some reference to those persons who

exists within those communities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you were speaking so well that I was planning to give you another 30 minutes.

Mr. R.D. JONES: If I knew that I would have taken it, Sir.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to make a brief intervention in this matter and to begin by complimenting the Minister of Housing for demonstrating a sincere commitment to making a significant dent in the housing problems facing this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always like to say at the outset in debates relating to housing is that it does not lie in mouths of any one of the Democratic Labour Party to be critical of this Government, this Minister or anyone on this side for the problems facing this country today in the area of housing.

The Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central, was honest enough to point out that he did not know a lot of history in relation to housing. If he did, he would know that while today he stands purporting to condemn this side for what he says is a failure in the area of housing, that it was his Party, which had a chance over a period of two terms in 1980s and 1990s, to play a role and make a dent in the problems facing this country. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all they could show at the end of their tenure was 50-odd houses built over the course of nine years and one single development in St. Philip,

of 50-odd houses, leaving a significant waiting list at the National Housing

Corporation of several thousand people who wanted houses. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when this Government started its term in office that is what it started with. We started with a waiting list of several thousand people.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a lot of work has been done by successive Ministers of Housing on this side since 1994. Sir, the fact of the matter is that even before the capital work is done that house spots are being (sucked up) by a large number of waiting applicants at the National Housing Corporation. While work is being done, we are constantly having to deal with the albatross around our necks, left by the Democratic Labour Party and they must not be allowed to forget this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I compliment the Minister for the serious work being done and for demonstrating her commitment to housing. Today we were able to hear in this Chamber, three or four sound initiatives to further deal with the issue of housing in this country. I believe the Minister is to be congratulated. She is not to be daunted by the sound, wind and fury of those members on the other side who, as the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central was honest enough to admit, do not have any connection with the history of housing development in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to compliment the Minister for a job she is doing well. I have, however, to confess that I have in my constituency, as you have in your constituency, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of persons in areas, which are sometimes called government estates or housing areas. This is another area in which, I am sure that this Government will go on to distinguish itself in of housing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Government has managed to give to a large number of tenants across Barbados the assurance that they will, one day, become homeowners because of the

property-owning democracy in this country. Sir, for the last four elections, it was in our Manifestoes that these persons would become owners of these Government housing units. We were pleased when it appeared that all obstacles had been satisfactorily removed and that nothing was in the way to the effective conveying or transferring of the ownership of these units to the tenants who have, in some cases, occupied them for a large number of years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to ask what is the real status of these Government units to the tenants. We have gone on record for at least four consecutive elections having been given this assurance. There were large numbers of town-hall meetings with residents of these housing estates across Barbados and in some cases, people have paid in significant amounts of money and some tenants have fully paid up for the purchase of these Government units but, Sir, it is sad that I have to say that in my constituency there are far too few people saying that to date they do not own any of the units they occupy and for which they have been given the assurance for some years they would have owned by now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to know what is the hold-up in relation to the selling of these units to tenants. My information based on what I have read in the newspapers is that a major obstacle has been the Town & Country Planning Department. Sir, the Town & Country Planning Department cannot be allowed to hold up positive development in this country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had many instances of constituents coming to me over the years about situations they had before the town planner awaiting decisions for a long period of time. I have had to intervene and enquire on their behalf and some time after that they would get a response. Sir, yesterday we had a

situation where an entire policy of Government is being held up by the Town & Country Department and this is not satisfactory.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a situation where you have to be honest, you go into the Government estates and see some evidence that people have made some expansion to their units.

H80/18:10Sequence 42

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Continuation Mr. R.St.C. TOPPIN:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality and truth have been that what you see in the Government(s estate, is perhaps, more than any other part of the housing problem in Barbados, because these units are often overcrowded and people need housing. The reality is, Governments over the years have not been able to satisfy the demand for housing.

Sir, if tenants take it upon themselves to make a little improvement to the units, to provide more room for their growing children, I do not understand the need for Town and Country Planner, in the context of a stated Government policy, that people should own units... Sir, I am not singling out the Chief Town Planner, because I honestly believe that his heart is in the right place, but I do not understand why the department should be allowed to frustrate a Government policy.

Sir, I have to speak on this issue because I have a constituency where I encounter the problem on a daily basis, and I am calling upon the Honourable Minister, for she too has a large government housing estate, and I am sure that she would wish, as much as I do, to have these units conveyed into the names and ownership of tenants, who have occupied them for so many years and would have paid a significant

amount of rent.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central touched on the point, but he did not hit it bang on as he normally would. Perhaps, his problem is not as difficult as mine.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that there is a sincere commitment for this policy to be implemented; as I also participated in a number of meetings where there was a clear commitment to champion the hurdle that would take us to the point, where we could convey these units to tenants. Sir, we thought that we were on the homestretch, but we hear now that a department of Government wants us to start over and frustrate an entire nation. Sir, that must not happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that the Honourable Minister is hearing and I am also sure that I speak on behalf of every Honourable Member of Parliament, who has any housing estates in their constituency, and, perhaps, those who do not have any government housing estates in their constituency, but want to see an expansion in those properties in Barbados.

Sir, I want that problem solved so I can report significant progress to my constituents when I have to go back to them on the next occasion.

Sir, I want to know what is the policy in relation to arrears of rents. I am not standing to encourage any tenant not to pay his or her rent. Once they can afford it, they should pay up. On the one hand we have a situation where tenants are served with eviction notices for arrears of rents, after having submitted a response to a letter that they intend to purchase the unit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the meetings I attended, which were to explain to tenants the policy in relation to purchasing the units, it was expressly said that arrears were going to be

added to the purchase price at the time of transferring the properties to the tenants. I want to know what is the policy. How do you reconcile the two positions? Therefore, if the arrears of rent could be added to the purchase price in the absence of some clear (wutlessness(on the part of a tenant, I want to say that it is inconsistent. Sir, on the one hand to tell tenants that arrears could be added onto the purchase price and on the other hand that they are being evicted for of arrears outstanding to the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, the question also arises in relation to repairs. It seems that tenants stating they wish to purchase the units suffer the discontinuation of repairs to the units.

I have been trying to console my constituents, who raised issues with me, by telling them not to lose heart and faith because if the units are not repaired now, when it is time to purchase, the repair cost would be deducted. That is the best I can do. However, at the same time, the repairs should be continued when necessary. If units need repairs now, there is no real justification to tell someone to hold on, especially when no end seems to be in sight. Unless you can get pass the Town and Country Planning Department, no end seems to be in sight for the purchasing of the units.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are some of the issues which I wanted to raise on this occasion. I believe that the Honourable Minister knows that she has my full support and she is doing as good a job as any Minister of Housing and better than most could do at anytime in the area of housing, or, indeed, in any ministry in which she may ever be or has ever been.

Sir, I support fully the Resolution brought by the Honourable Minister today but I thought that I would raise those few points.

I thank you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, I too represent a part of the Grazettes Housing Area. I do have some concerns, which I would like to raise as they pertain to persons who live in these rental units. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North mention some concerns. The constituency St. Michael North is contiguous to St. Michael West Central and at one time the Honourable Member for St. Michael North was the representative of the whole Grazettes area. However, before the last election in 2003, part of the Grazettes area came over to the St. Michael West Central, hence, I am the representative responsible for that part of Grazettes.

Sir, I have always some concerns with the National Housing Corporation. I always say that I will defend them when I have to, but when I have to raise concerns as they pertain to my constituents, I will say what I have to say.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I always said that those people who live in the National Housing Corporation units are tenants and as long as they are working, they should pay their rent. It is as simple as that. If you are not working, that is a problem. Where there is a problem of poverty, there is the Ministry of Social Transformation where you can explain the hardship and your need for some assistance. Sir, as long as you are working, you must to pay your rent.

Sir, I heard some people talk about poor people, what must they do, but at the same time it is unfair for people to live in the National Housing Corporation units and not pay rent, while tenants who pay their rent monthly experience problems with repairs to their

homes. I have brought this to the attention of the people of the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I defend the National Housing Corporation when I have to, but I represent people and I am going to speak on their behalf. Some people get vex when I speak about fair and unfairness in these units. I believe if you are living in a unit you should pay your rent.

Sir, it would be unfair that people could live in a unit without paying their rent, accumulating massive arrears, and those who are paying their rent monthly cannot get repairs done to their units. Those, in my opinion, who are paying their rent, should have their units promptly repaired by the National Housing Corporation. Those tenants who cannot pay because of hardship, should seek assistance from the Poverty Alleviation Fund but those who refuse to pay their rent, the word which the Honourable Member for St. Michael North used, are (wutless(and disgusting for refusing to pay rent.

H80:18.20 p.m.

Sequence 43

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House 80, sequence 44, 6:20 p.m.

Continuation of Mr. R.D. MARSHALL:

Asides.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, he could change it to all kinds of words, it means the same thing. People who can afford to pay their rents and do not pay, the National Housing Corporation, should not repair the house. It is as simple as that because the NHC does not have any money to repair the house. This is what I say all the time.

The whole thing about it is that people hide behind a cloak and say that they are going to lose votes and gain votes. I do not go for that foolish talk. If you pay your rent, we are going to repair your house. If you do not pay your rent we cannot repair your house because there is no money to repair your house.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I do not want to interrupt my colleague and friend. I think I do, however, have a responsibility to make it clear that there is no policy under this administration, not to do repairs where people are in arrears. This was pursued as a deliberate policy approach of the last administration during structural adjustments.

One of the problems was that the quality of the terrace units considerably deteriorated through an absence of repairs. The reality is that in the absence of getting rent, you are cash strapped and cannot fulfill your obligation to maintain, so it is consequential but not a deliberate policy pursuit.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister very much for the clarification but I never said it was a policy of the Government. I want the public to know how I feel. I personally represent the people and I believe that if you are paying your rent, NHC should repair your houses. The other point is that if you decide that you are not paying the rent, MHC should not repair the house. I go straight and plain.

You live in a Government unit. The rent is x amount. Pay your rent. It is unfair to the ones who are paying their rent every week and every month and others are getting away freely without paying. Sir, if you cannot afford to pay, you can seek help through the Poverty Alleviation Fund.

Mr. Speaker, Sunday, October 16, I went to part of my constituency in Grazettes and I spoke to some people. These are people that were at the Town Hall meeting at Ellerslie School about the sale of the units that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North spoke about and they are concerned because they have not heard anything since then.

I believe that if you are having a problem with whatever agency, be it Town Planning to have the permission to do certain things, you should stay in good public relations. Go back and tell the people what you are experiencing. Do not leave people blinded.

As I said earlier today, a good PR programme is needed for the National Housing Corporation to talk to people. When you talk to people, they feel better about themselves and that people care about them. People told me two weeks ago that they applied to get a door or plumbing done and nobody came back to them. They said they called through the customer services.

Sir, there are officers in the workshops in the areas and I am asking the Corporation to take the officers that work in different estates and shift them around, so that they do not become too familiar with the people. Sir, certain people get too friendly and they get certain things and other persons do not get anything done.

As I said, I spent time over there with those persons and they are very upset. Sir, I saw that there was no paint on the walls, no door for two years, I see wood infested with wood ants, so that if you put your hands on it, your hands go right through the wood.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that if there is no money, the Corporation should go back to the people and tell them that they are experiencing a cash flow problem but they will

get the repairs done. Do not let people think that you just rent the unit, you pay the rent and if you do not pay the rent, you will be put out. I think people should be treated in a better way than that; so get your PR programme working in the National Housing Corporation.

There are persons who are living in units and paying the rent in a deceased person(s name. The persons cannot get the tenancy in their name. There seems to be a problem. There is one particular case where a lady was trying to get it over in another persons name and has accumulated over \$7 000 in rent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot go out there every Sunday afternoon and speak to the people but there are some people for whom you have to put a case but the people need attention.

Sir, there are constituencies where a unit was burnt out for 15 years and the land is just there sitting idly, when house spots are needed for people. Fifteen years is a long time to have two house spots where the houses are burnt out. There are also cracked houses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are things we have to look at in the Corporation and I am asking the Minister responsible to use her good offices to make sure she can sit with those at the National Housing Corporation and explain to people, that we care more about them.

All of us are in business in here because we came here for the love of people. We came here to represent people and we have to show people that we care about them, and not only at election time. We have to make sure we do more of the things that people like and less of what they do not like because a day of reckoning will come.

As I said earlier today, it has become a problem in Barbados. We are at cross roads. There is a crisis in Barbados where housing is

concerned and it is time we (get up and smell the coffee(. A lot of people have those feelings but they do not want to say anything. I am going to say it because I represent the people.

Sir, I have been in politics from 1994. I have always represented the interest of the people and I am going to continue to represent the interest of those people as long as I am in here. I do not know how long I have in here but I have to represent the people and I will do that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, I have to protect the corporation and I will defend them if I have to defend them. I said that there are those who believe that because you represent people, you can do as you like. I for sure will tell the corporation that I will not sit or stand at any time and hear people taking advantage of the corporation, especially politicians.

I know we have to represent people but a time comes when you have to tell the people to hold off that we cannot do everything you want us to do. As I said there are some politicians, who believe that they can run the affairs of the corporation, that is putting people in units. I believe, Sir, that it is the function of the National Housing Corporation to give people units and to take away units from people.

I do not believe that Members of Parliament should be telling people to bring the keys to them. I believe that if a person leaves a unit, they should carry the key into the corporation because they are still responsible for that unit.

There is a tenancy agreement, as far as I know, and if I rent an apartment to someone, and they leave the apartment without giving me the key, they are still responsible for the rent of that apartment. I believe the same thing exists or obtains with the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I will represent the National Housing

Corporation when it is necessary to and when I have to ask them in harsh tones to do things for the people in St. Michael West Central, or any part of Barbados. I will, because I am elected to represent people in Barbados, particularly those people in St. Michael West Central. I will have to say what I have to say. Sometimes, you may step on one or two of your colleagues toes but we came in here to represent people and we have to behave like we are representing people.

Sir, another thing I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North mentioned and I touched on earlier in the day, is the Town Planning Department.

House 80, sequence 44, 19:3028

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Mr. R. D. MARSHALL:

We know it has a function. As the Minister said earlier, a lot of housing construction is going on in Barbados and hence, it would put more strain on the Town Planning Department.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is the function of a Government to provide housing for people. The Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment is responsible for the housing department and if one is getting problems with departments in the Town Planning Department one could go to (the head of the spring(and sit down as big people, who are elected to represent people, and try to get the problem solved. When things go on too long, they fester and then you have this big sore. I believe that it is time that Ministers come together and look at the problems that the people are experiencing and if the Town Planning Department has a problem, that Minister should be able to go forth and say they have a problem at such a place and ask what are they doing about it. We cannot sit back and say it is a process that we

have to go through or we are waiting on the Town Planning Department; one has to be more hands-on than that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I went to Ministry of Public Works and Transport to work as a Minister, I remember asking for a file. I was told that the file was coming from 10:00 a.m., at 230 p.m. it was still coming and the next morning it was still coming. I asked where the file is coming from and was told the Registry, I asked where was the Registry and I was told around the corner. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I walked around the corner and signed for the file myself because I wanted the file to work with. I came from a background of working in the private sector where time is money. In Government although I would say that you are not in business to make money you are in business to give service to people, you still have to make sure that time is money because people are waiting on you to get things done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, sometimes you have to make shortcuts within the Government departments, I did not say anything illegal, to make sure that you get the services for the people. We talked about people having to wait but the people in the units are the ones who are suffering. If you are paying your rent and you cannot get repairs done to your unit you will suffer. When your house is in a bad state of disrepair, there are rodents around your house or the house is leaking, you need the services. Mr. Speaker, those are just a few of the matters that I want to touch on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said earlier today, I do support the Minister in her venture with the National Housing Corporation but as I mentioned to her earlier it has come to the crossroads now where housing is in crisis and we have to do everything we can in order to make sure that those people who need these things would have them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I have said enough here on this topic. As I said I do support the Minister and I would hope that the people in these Government units, particularly the people in St. Michael West Central in the Grazettes area, would be able to get some attention from the National Housing Corporation in a very short time so that we could look at correcting some of these ills. I would hope that the Minister could say to this House this afternoon how they are going to go about looking at some kind of fund and so on to make sure that these repairs are done.

I thank you.

Hon. Miss. H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have two pages of notes of issues which were raised by Honourable Members and I would hope to speak at some length.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been praise and criticisms, and I accept both. I will start with the Honourable Member who just sat. I do not accept that there is a crisis in housing. What we have in Barbados is a very interesting phenomenon. As a result of low unemployment a larger number of people are now looking for houses than were before. The housing demand at this time is far outstripping the projections of housing planners, to the extent that the occupancy levels of households, even in low income districts, which used to be very heavy, is now lowering considerably. What is therefore happening is that a number of young people who would have previously live at home are looking for their own home or for properties to rent or to buy. We have the launch of the Primary Homes Programme, targeting a different sector of the market and transforming national housing policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I heard a lot of criticism focussed on me but the reality is that we have to look at the structure of our housing policy. When I came to the Ministry of Housing, Lands

and the Environment, two years ago, I was deeply concerned that what was being called a low income house was being sold for \$105 000 and recognised that if we really wanted to reach low income earners we had to develop a product that was lower in price and affordable by a majority of Barbadians.

Sir, after some effort and working with the National Housing Corporation we conceptualised the Primary Homes Programme, which I truly believe is the answer to our housing problems. However, I concede, and it is a matter of great consternation for me that the implementation of that policy has been so slow. That is the reality and I confess it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East asked why. When the policy was conceptualised, I asked the National Housing Corporation to give me a time frame for implementation, the National Housing Corporation indicated that they would have been able to start building by November of last year. It is now November of the following year and very little construction has been done. They are really now getting off the ground.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is more than one reason for that. Part of it, I cannot explain at all because it still remains a mystery to me and this is perhaps not a good confession to make. However, part of the challenge has been that they were not lands with infrastructural work and services already in place that could be made available to the programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I told the National Housing Corporation that they had to have known that at the time and should therefore have never given November of last year as the starting date. We are now going through the process of getting lands vested in the National Housing Corporation for the construction. Mr. Deputy Speaker, even on lands that were

already vested in the National Housing Corporation, they did not start the implementation of the programme within the time frame that they gave and in a manner which would have persuaded the public that they could have confidence in us that we were serious about this policy and that it was not (politricks) as usual. The public is saying that, (oh you come and launch this programme, everybody get excited and look what happened.) So a certain level of frustration is now being felt at the level of the public because people are not seeing the delivery of what they felt was a programme, which would answer their concerns, realise their aspirations and alleviate the housing programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the programme was developed in a way that the brunt of the construction would not fall on the National Housing Corporation. I recognised in conceptualising it that they had a limited delivery capacity and I insisted very early that we should go to an open tendering process and get expressions of interest from every contractor in Barbados who wanted to build or to provide houses of this type to the programme. We have a long list of such contractors, so the awards that have gone out to these people are for areas that are vested in us and infrastructural work should have started.

House 80 Sequence 45

6:40 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON:

Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of great concern to me and as a Government, we, therefore, have to ask ourselves to what extent, whether inadvertently or deliberately, is Government's policy being frustrated by the bureaucracy.

Sir, there is a culture now developing in this country where, as a Minister, one is not supposed to make criticisms of any Government department or of any civil servant. On the other hand, is it expected that Ministers should carry all the blame but should not express any concerns about the way in which persons who are responsible for the implementation of any such projects, are responding to that responsibility. Sir, it is worrisome.

Sir, it is also a matter about which this Parliament should be united because it is the same civil servants who serve this Party, who are going to be serving the Opposition. It is the same Barbadian public who would be frustrated, irrespective of whichever Government is in office. It is, therefore, a great concern that people who are challenged with such responsibility, have not seen it fit to implement at a faster rate, even where their reputation as professionals and the reputation of the organisation would be enhanced by the implementation of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, it is a reality that when this programme was launched, there was a buzz of excitement amongst staff members. When one walked into the corporation, there was a sense of hope; people were smiling; people were busy. Now there has been almost a falling flat, both on the part of the policymaker and the public, from the height that we all felt when the programme was first launched.

Sir, the programme was launched September 2004. It is now 13 months. Personnel from the National Housing Corporation have given me a schedule where it is said that houses would be finished by December. I recently heard a senior member of staff saying the schedule is now January, so they are changing the delivery date.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, have grave concerns about it. When I first came to the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment, I thought long and hard about how our housing policy needed to be changed and what was the kind of product that would be put on the market. I sought to work with the National Housing Corporation, to understand what are the timeframes for delivery and how they were going to go about doing it. I asked them to design and to price the product, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the National Housing Corporation Primary Homes Programme, this is a matter which we are going to have to deal with as a Government. Therefore, I have been frank with the Honourable Chamber today in relation to what my own concerns are and where we are with the policy.

Mr. Speaker, I was making the point that there is not a crisis in Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment. The second point in relation to that, is that since this Government came to office, it has put more houses and lands on the market. There are approximately 2600 lots that have been made available, while between 1200 houses and 1500 houses have been made available. This is the largest amount ever delivered by an administration, in the history of the country.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, there have been a number of creative financial structures from entities such as the Housing Credit Fund and the General Workers(Loan Scheme, where 100 per cent mortgages have been made available to facilitate construction of houses or housing improvement. Therefore, there has been massive construction and a building boom over the course of the past 11 years. Therefore, we must not mistake unsatisfied demand and shortchange ourselves as a Government, in

relation to what our achievements have been because the housing demand is very high but yet it bears no relationship with the formulae that planners use to predict housing demand. What we are now suffering is being the victims of our own success for having created so many jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we are seeing the same thing happening in the transport system in Barbados. Since 1999, the number of vehicles in Barbados has increased between 60 per cent and 66 per cent. Therefore, as a result of that increase, people are now complaining about traffic congestion. Here again, we are victims of our success because the majority of people who wanted cars before, because of the influx of reconditioned cars, along with the influx of imported cars on the market, are now able to afford cars.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the rental market or the sale of the terrace units, there are Honourable Members on the other side, who have sought to encourage people not to invest in the sale of these terrace units. The reality is that those houses are still some of the cheapest units available on the marketplace and represent some of the best value for money.

We have to determine, as a matter of policy, what number of houses we are going to build every year and what we want to be happening in that sector of the market. Is it our intention that we will move people into subsidised homes, which are the terrace units, and let them stay there indefinitely, irrespectively of the improvement in their financial, social or economic circumstances, or will we implement and practice a graduation policy, where, as people circumstances improve, we will require them either to buy the units or to move out of them, into other accommodations that they can then own themselves, where we can allow other people who are truly in need, to have access to these subsidised homes.

Mr. Speaker, in some instances, we have found there are people whose circumstances have improved considerably, such as people at the level of senior civil servants; doctors fighting to remain in their units, with Honourable Members of Parliament fighting to make a case why they should remain; senior people with large salaries, who should not be living in subsidised homes; and small entrepreneurs such as taxi drivers, shop owners, et cetera, whose circumstances have improved considerably and who should be moving onto different housing, rather than taking advantage of subsidised housing. The reality is that there are a lot of able-bodied persons who are working and are not paying their rents, and I am not going to support a situation where able-bodied persons are living well and are refusing to pay rents.

Mr. Speaker, part of the National Housing Corporation financial circumstances arise out of the fact that 60 per cent of our tenants are in arrears because even where people can afford to pay, they are not paying. Sir, the National Housing Corporation has also to be blamed because when they can see a tenant having arrears of

\$10 000, with that person having to pay \$30 weekly, that represents approximately seven years.

Sir, no organisation should be developing a culture where people can be allowed to owe them rent for over a year, without that organisation making any serious attempt to collect those rents. That is utterly ridiculous. Therefore, I am not supporting the tardiness of the National Housing Corporation but at the same time, I am saying that we have an obligation where we have high arrears, for us to try to collect those rents.

Mr. Speaker, when people see the National

Housing Corporation trying to evict tenants, that only happens where serious efforts have been made to collect the arrears, in a situation where we know for a fact that people are working or have access to income but where those persons have made commitments to pay but have reneged on those commitments. It is only in those circumstances, that the National Housing Corporation put people out of those units.

H:No80(46)650 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON:

On the issue of repair and sale of the terrace unit, each Honourable Member in this House who has terrace units in his/her constituency received a document outlining the policy. If you have determined that you are buying your unit, National Housing Corporation will do the structural repairs, cracked walls, changing asbestos roofs, footpaths, major electrical work et cetera but if you have a toilet cover or washer that needs changing that becomes your responsibility. You are getting a rebate off the price to allow you to effect those repairs. This has been clearly stated over and over as the way in which the policy will work.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to move to some of the other issues. I do not propose to comment today on the matter relating to the sale of the terrace units and the role of the Town Planning Department because we now have a Cabinet Paper on this matter to put the matter before Cabinet for decision. However, I have to concede that the reality is that the programme has been partly stalled not by an absence of people who want to purchase property but by Town & Country Planning refusing to give a Certificate of Compliance to the Ministry of Housing in respect of the sale

and release of property because of the high number of illegal constructions on these various properties. This is the reality of what we are faced and the matter is now going to be looked at by the Cabinet.

Asides.

Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON: I am hearing a number of comments about four years and so on but that is not an accurate reading of the law. If you are selling the property or going to do new development and there has been illegal development, the oversight of the Chief Town immediately kicks in again. Sir, that is my memory and understanding of the law.

Hon. Mrs. H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, once again National Housing Corporation should be looking at its role because, as property owner, you have a responsibility not to have illegal construction done on your property. Sir, this is part of the difficulty we have had.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to have the opportunity to talk about housing planning and housing philosophy and to have a debate on the conceptual framework of what is needed for housing in Barbados. What level of terrace units do we have to build to satisfy public demand. Sir, earlier, I spoke about a graduation policy and turnover of the units. We get 900 applications a year for roughly 75 available units so there will always be people who would say that they have applied years ago and that National Housing Corporation is not considering them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, wherever there is a fire, eviction and homeless people, we have to intervene. It is like the man seeking to go to the pool at Bethesda. When the waters are stirred, somebody steps down before him even though he had been waiting for a long time. Sir, depending on the circumstances, you may be next in line, but something may happen like

a fire, which makes 10 people homeless and somebody jumps the queue ahead of you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 75 available units and 900 applications a year so you can begin to see the nature of the challenge which the National Housing Corporation has. Do we allow people to remain in subsidised housing where they can do better and afford to buy property outside of the National Housing Corporation? In fact, they might have bought property, which they have rented out or they intend to build on it, while they continue to hold and have their existence subsidised, when people who truly need these units cannot get into them. Sir, these are issue with which we have to grapple.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central raised the issue of the construction at Carrington Village. I have a meeting with National Housing Corporation on Friday and the matter is on the agenda. The project as originally conceptualised is being redefined and I want to be able to shortly announce what the new project would look like and when we will start construction.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can say to you that rather than all terrace units, it is likely that some primary homes are going to be put on that site to allow people the opportunity for home ownership. There will be a mixture of terrace units and detached housing rather than create a high density development, which would have to happen if we were to put four blocks of terrace units in the area because it is small area with a narrow entry. Sir, in addition to that, it allows us to realise some long-term revenues rather than just rental income, at a time when people are clearly not paying rent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, having covered the broader issue, I turn to a number of issues which were raised relating to the St. Philip

development. Sir, some confusion seems to exist over the role of the National Housing Corporation. It was suggested by Honourable Members on the other side, particularly the Leader of the Opposition, now in his final days, that the role of the National Housing Corporation has originally been to build only low-income housing and that somehow the role is being corrupted by present policy. The reality is that National Housing Corporation has always built a mixture of low and middle income housing and used its middle-income housing to subsidise to help to subsidise the low-income housing and that is exactly what we are doing.

Sir, at Section 9 of the Housing Act, Cap. 226 says:

(The function of the Corporation shall be:

(a)to acquire, hold and manage land and other property of any kind whatsoever and sell, let, lease or otherwise dispose of land or other property on such terms and conditions as the Minister determines;

(b)to carry out development, maintenance, building, repair, improvement and other operation;

(c)provide water, gas, electricity, sewage and other services;

(d)to carry on any business or undertaking in, or for the purposes of, housing development.

(e)to make advances to persons to act as security for the following purposes:

(i)Acquiring houses and land or constructing houses,

(ii)Acquiring buildings to be converted into houses,

(iii)Converting into housing building already acquired,

(iv)Altering, enlarging, repairing or improving houses;

(f)to execute plans for slum clearing and redevelopment,

(g)generally carrying out the provisions of the Act,

together with such other functions as may be conferred upon it by the Minister for the purposes of this Act or by any other enactment(.

Sir, the powers of the National Housing Corporation are very wide and, in law, it can do all types of development, middle income and low income and we have indicated that we are doing a mixture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lands at Rices are being sold \$10.00 square a foot, this is to be contrasted with \$15.00 and \$20.00 per square foot at which the private sector was selling land. The development would be suitable for middle income earners, police, teachers, nurses, middle level civil servants, people in middle management of the private sector, middle to senior level journalists and so on. This is the market at which this particular development is targeted. We expect them to do the primary homes or low income project at other locations so that there would be a mix of development.

H80/18:60

Sequence 47

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON:
Sir, I wish to thank all Honourable Members

speaking in this debate for making generally useful, informative and incisive comments. Much progress was made, particularly in the absence of the Honourable Members for St. Philip West, St. Philip North and St. Lucy. Sir, with those Honourable Members absent, we maintained a most constructive and useful debate.

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

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 14

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF THE PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT BOURNE(S LAND, ST. CHRISTOPHER IN THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING A ROAD TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN THE AREA.

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I believe that this is our fifth Resolution today. This matter is not a complicated one. Sir, you will recall that before the Honourable House rose for its summer recess, I had indicated that as a matter of policy, wherever there is housing development with residual lands, we would construct houses where the parcels were large enough and on smaller parcels we would green and landscape the area; also, where there were developments in urban and rural Barbados that had no or proper accesses, the lands acquired and available to the Crown would be used to

develop such accesses.

Sir, sometimes lands developed for playing fields, et cetera, can alienate some of the houses in the development creating what has come to be known as landlocked houses; houses that abut and abound with one another but have no access onto a road or footpath of any sort. This land, 4 949.2 square feet or 459.8 square metres of land at Bourne(s Land, St. Christopher, Christ Church, is vested in the National Housing Corporation specifically, pursuant to the purposes, which I outlined in my introductory comments.

Sir, a larger parcel of land was acquired to provide an access road to six houses, which have been resited to the southwestern end of the St. Christopher School(s playing field, to make room for the expansion of the playing field.

Sir, let me repeat that in language that is more simple. There were houses located at a particular site at Bourne(s Land, Christ Church. The St. Christopher School(s playing field was to be expanded to give the students more room. To do that while creating an adequate buffer, we had to remove those houses, resiting them to another location in the same general area. When they were resited they became landlocked, without any proper access road. This Resolution before the Honourable House today, seeks Parliament(s approval for the vesting of that land in the National Housing Corporation, to provide a road access to these houses, which were disadvantaged as a result of their relocation. Those are the challenges. I do not believe anybody would want to challenge that.

Sir, the Resolution has been certified as being in order by the Attorney-General and I, therefore, beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 18

TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE GRANT OF A LEASE UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP.225 TO THE TRUSTEES OF THE BARBADOS RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION OF THE PARCEL OF LAND, PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT THE GARRISON IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND.

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

Hon. Mrs. H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, under the Crown Lands Vesting and Disposal Act, the Minister of Housing has authority to deal with land on behalf of the Crown and the Minister is authorised to lease, sell, exchange, grant, assign or surrender any land owned by the Crown. In order to do that, the permission of Parliament must be sought. This Resolution today which seeks to lease 305.1 square metre, approximately 3 500 square feet, of Crown land to the Barbados Rugby Football Union, at the Garrison, St. Michael, is being leased to the Trustees of the Barbados Rugby Union for a period of twenty-five years, with the lease to take effect from December 1, 2002. Several sports agencies are the tenants of the Crown at the Garrison. One which readily comes to mind for most individuals is the Barbados Turf Club, because of the history of racing associated with the Garrison. Sir, there are other tenants of the Crown who have leases and access to Crown lands at the Garrison.

Sir, the Barbados Rugby Football Union is one of those agencies. They had access to lands at the Garrison since 1972, when they were first

paying \$100 per annum for the land and at which they had a club house erected. It has been agreed by the Cabinet that they will continue to rent lands and it was decided that the parcel of land rented to them should be increased in size to satisfy their sporting needs. They were using more land than they have been renting. They in fact built a pavement on part of the lands which was not theirs.

Sir, we are seeking to regularise that situation. They are not a club with which we have any difficulty. We are trying to give support to sports and other agencies by giving them access to Crown property to develop their sport and other skills. Therefore, at this time, this lease represents the size of the parcel that they are actually using.

H0: 19.10 p.m.

Sequence 48

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

House 80, sequence 49, 7:10 a.m.

Continuation of Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON:

The BFRU is not a corporate entity but it is governed by a Constitution which came into force in March 1995 and that Constitution provides for the appointment of three trustees in whose name all investments and real property of the football union should be vested.

Those persons have been identified to us and it is in their names on behalf of the Barbados Rugby Football Union that the lease will be contracted. They will continue to pay a rent of \$100 per annum which is really a peppercorn rent. This is so that we continue to exercise some degree of ownership, while giving support to the organisation.

The Attorney-General has certified that the

Resolution is in order for introduction into Parliament and the Parliament(s) approval is being sought so that the Crown can give effect to the statutory requirement for entering into this lease.

I beg to move therefore, Sir, that this Resolution do now pass.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my intention to make a short intervention on this Resolution. Sir, not only is the Garrison abutting the constituency to Christ Church West but the Rugby Football Union is a club that I was a member of for many years in my youth.

Indeed, I represented Barbados playing Rugby at that club on several occasions and I obviously would like to give my full support to this Resolution. I think it is absolutely necessary that we as a people must provide adequate sporting facilities for our people. The Rugby football union in Barbados sees many teams from abroad visiting Barbados. We have regularly, five, six, seven, sometimes ten teams come down from England, Scotland or Ireland to engage in Rugby at the Garrison.

I would like to use this opportunity to ask that we go a little further and that the Sports Council gives the Rugby Football Union or certainly that area, some light. I think there is a desperate need for lights, not only around the Rugby pitch but also lights in the whole walk area that goes around the Garrison. We see lights on the cricket pitches. We see lights on the basketball courts but yet, still we are not seeing the lights at the Rugby field.

I have written to the Ministry of Sports asking that they look into the possibility of putting lights at the Rugby field. It is something that the members constantly ask me about and I will again ask that the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports looks into

the possibility of having lights put, certainly for the Rugby field, and even the possibility of lights around the wider walking track within the Garrison, because it would give more people an opportunity to walk. I have walked around the Garrison many times but whenever the night falls and you do not have the lighting, you have to vacate the area.

We are hearing more and more of moving to a 24-hour society. If we move to a 24-hour, it means that there will be people who will be looking for leisure activities later in the night. If we are going to move to 24-hour society where more people will be working longer hours and later, then we have to provide better recreational facilities for our people with lighting as necessary. These are absolutely important to continue to provide a better society and a healthier society in this country.

I again would like to support the Resolution. We also need to look at the infrastructural aspects to this.

Thank you.

Hon. Ms. H.E. THOMPSON: I beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 16 - BILL ENTITLED AN ACT TO AMEND THE CORONERS ACT, CAP. 113

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Sir, there are some who could be forgiven for thinking that this particular amendment to the Coroners Act, Chapter 113 is of little importance. The fact, however, is that this Amendment to the

Coroners Act will have far-reaching consequences for the administration of justice in Barbados.

As I peruse the relevant file, Sir, and I notice that in 1992, there were 688 coroners cases outstanding, I would like to reflect very briefly on the effect that having so much Coroners cases outstanding can cause in our society. There are about three or four examples that I would like to give to this Honourable House.

Consider a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where an individual may have disappeared, and there are some individuals in Barbados who have gone missing, but in the absence of a body, it is impossible to say whether or not an individual is dead. In law, Sir, we have something called a presumption of death which (kicks in) after seven years.

If you would imagine an individual who goes missing, and no body is found and his family, for example, is waiting on the proceeds of his insurance policies. The family might be waiting for the opportunity, Sir, to settle the estate, to pay bills for example, or a wife might be anxiously waiting to find a new spouse. In these circumstances, Sir, it is impossible to proceed to any conclusion to any of these situations that I have just outlined, except you either apply their presumption of death after seven years, or except, Sir, there is a coroner(s) inquest into your death.

A coroner(s) inquest, Sir, would look into the circumstances, in this case, surrounding the disappearance and try to find a conclusion as to whether that individual is in fact dead or alive. You would agree, Sir, that to wait seven years before you can settle matters relating to a person who has disappeared, that individual(s) property can cause a significant hardship on his family, friends or beneficiaries. You certainly could not probate any Will that the individual might have left.

Sir, in a situation where there would have been 688 cases of unnatural death or disappearances pending, one could well imagine the kind of hardship that would be caused.

Another example, Sir, is the case of an individual who might be thought to have committed suicide. An insurance company in those circumstances will not make a payment for an individual who is thought to have committed suicide within two years of the commencement of the policy. Sir, let us bring that into practical terms. An individual may take out a policy today but may die in circumstances suspicious in another 18 months. Within that too, because that death would have occurred within two years, if it is a suicide, the insurance company would only refund you your premium.

House 80, sequence 49, 19:2014

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Hon. D. D. MARSHALL:

Sir, a coroner(s) inquest would establish whether or not the death was a suicide. If the Coroner found that it was not a suicide, then the insurance company would be obligated to make good the full payment under the insurance policy.

Sir, another instance would be an accidental death, where under an insurance policy you would get double indemnity. Mr. Speaker, those 688 inquests that were outstanding as at 1992, would have had many instances of this kind where the insurance company would say that unless it is ruled to be an accidental death, they are not going to pay twice the value of the policy, the double indemnity.

Sir, some years ago, there were corpses of

babies at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in the morgue, which had to remain there for in excess of a year pending a coroner(s) inquest.

Sir, while the work of the Coroner(s) Court largely goes unnoticed in Barbados, the Coroner has a significant role to play in permitting families, friends and estates to reach a conclusion.

Sir, as it stands, most of the backlog that existed before 2001 have been cleared as a result of the assignment of Magistrate Faith Marshall-Harris to serve as the Coroner for all of Barbados. Sir, under the existing Coroners Act, a magistrate serves as coroner for their magisterial district, but because of the huge backlog, the Honourable Chief Justice was moved to appoint a single magistrate as coroner with jurisdiction for all of Barbados.

Sir, I believe that members of the public would have seen over the last year or two a large number of reports being covered in the newspapers, which sometimes brought up some fairly awful memories for us. However, those families are now able to bring to rest outstanding insurance settlements and to reach some kind of conclusion, and we hope some kind of peace of mind in being able to put those matters behind them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am advised that there are now in the region of about 260 coroner(s) inquests which dates between 2001 and today that are waiting now to be done. The Coroner, having cleared up pretty much all of that backlog that existed over the last decade and a half, will shortly be in a position to proceed to deal with the outstanding coroner(s) inquests of over the last few years.

Sir, this amendment therefore is simply to permit, under the Coroners Act, for the appointment of a magistrate to serve as coroner with jurisdiction throughout the island of

Barbados. The actual provision is quite succinct. The Coroners Act is being amended by inserting two new clauses, 2A and 2B. Clause 2A reads: The Chief Justice shall assign a magistrate to be the Coroner for Barbados.(So we are moving away from a situation where a coroner is a magistrate who serves his magisterial district to having a single coroner who is a magistrate to be appointed as coroner for Barbados.

Sir, essentially what we are doing is bringing within the Coroners Act the legislative framework to allow for a full-time coroner, which is the essence of this Bill, who would be the coroner for all of the magisterial districts.

Sir, the old arrangement of having the magistrate in a particular area serving as the coroner could now be considered to be an anachronism. Certainly 30, 40 or even 60 years ago when there were challenges in terms of people getting to town and so on, it was important to have these kinds of things dealt with by the magistrate in the particular geographical area. Certainly, it is still important in terms of the magistrate other jurisdictions, but insofar as the coroner jurisdiction is concerned, it is easily dispatched with by having one coroner covering all of Barbados.

Sir, the coroner has done an amazing job over the last year or two. I support the call to publicly congratulate Coroner, Faith Marshall-Harris, whose mandate was to clear up the backlog as at the middle of 2001, for serving to reduce the backlog from a figure of 688 to about 30 or 40, which are still pending. Therefore, I would like formally to offer this entire House(s) congratulation to her for the outstanding job that she has done in that capacity.

Sir, the amendment may seem to be of little import, but it is quite important. I think that having a full- time coroner is going to be

welcomed. I look forward to the day when coroners(inquests can be held perhaps within a matter of weeks, if not months, of the unfortunate and unnatural death occurring.

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

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

Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support the amendment to this Bill and ask for there to be some look at modernising part of the legal system. No one who is in possession of the evidence can deny the work that has been done by the coroner to date.

Mr. Deputy, I would think that sooner rather than later that some consideration be given to the extent to which perhaps there can be a different kind of remuneration or additional compensation given as an incentive for a person executing this kind of work, in which basically you are saying that this individual uses the law to determine the type of death and how it happened and that in doing so the work goes a very far way in determining the overall potential of victims or families or whoever to benefit from such work. I am simply saying that persons of such legal skill who are going to be doing such good work for the entire legal system could in some ways benefit from the additional work or the kind of work being done to carry forward the process of the legal system in Barbados.

Therefore, in light of everything that is happening and in light of the requirements of training that are to be put forward by these individuals in the circumstances in which we are seeking to allow the market to determine everything, there is really need now to consider whether additional incentives cannot be provided for a department of the type that is being suggested to execute the legal work much

more expeditiously in Barbados.

House 80 Sequence 50

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 25, 2005

Continuation of Mr. C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is just a thought that perhaps could be applied to looking at seeing how we could modernise the legal system in some instances and remove ourselves from the archaic days where we believe that if you are part of a public sector, you have to be confined to a wage or an income that is constrained by the systems within the public service.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, here is a perfect opportunity for it to be looked at in the other way, that is if you are in a profession where the potential to earn is significant, if you do not confine yourself to the public service... Sir, I am not extending this to the rest of the judiciary, I am just saying that in this particular instance, where there is an obvious connection between the works of the coroner and the benefits that could be derived by an offended party or family, then there is also need to look at modernising the system of remuneration for these individuals. It is simply called an incentive package.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I support the efforts of Government in bringing some permanence to the legality of what has transpired during the past few years in clearing this backlog with respect to unnatural deaths, I am not so sure that this amendment changes anything.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that what transpired before, gave the Chief Justice the permission to assign a magistrate for a particular jurisdiction. Where a magistrate was not available for that particular jurisdiction, the Chief Justice could then assign a magistrate from another jurisdiction. Sir, this means that this amendment, in my view, has not gone far enough in bringing some permanency to the position of the coroner.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have thought that this would have been an excellent opportunity for us to bring some permanence to the position of coroner, especially taking into consideration what the Honourable Member for St. Joseph said with respect to the work of the Coroner, Magistrate Mrs. Faith Marshall-Harris, during the first few years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we are moving away from the present situation, to one where a certain degree of permanency is being brought to the office, then one should be able to distinguish what we have now, with what is being enforced. In this regard, I cannot see any difference at all.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting to note there is nothing that has been done with respect to the position of the Coroner during the past few years, that needs ratification by Government. This tends to suggest that everything the Coroner has done during the past few years, was within the ambit of existing legislation. Sir, I say this because sometimes we have to protect people from themselves, a point which the Honourable Member for the City often makes. We have a situation with respect to this legislation, whereby the Chief Justice is assigning magistrates to the position of coroner, and as I understand from the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, we want to move away from that position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the pressures on the

Chief Justice at this particular point in time is very great. Sir, though the brief recognises the need for a coroner(s) court, in the same way we have an Ombudsman who is appointed by the Governor-General, on the advice of the Prime Minister, in the same way we have magistrates appointed in a similar fashion, I would have thought that we would have moved to a situation where we have a coroner being appointed by the Governor-General or the Prime Minister in this same manner, where there would not be a situation which puts pressure on a Chief Justice, in circumstances where an unnatural death might occur.

We cannot speak to the present situation, neither can we speak to the present Chief Justice. We do not know what would happen where an investigation might be impeded because of the fact that a particular magistrate, who has been assigned by the Chief Justice, might be stopped from carrying out his duties.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a very serious situation. We are moving to a situation where accountability is very important. We want to ensure that a person holding a particular office is not being labeled in anyway as to hinder any prosecution or investigation in the judicial process.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was an excellent opportunity for us to establish a separate court, for us to have a coroner or coroners with some permanency, who cannot be removed by another officer. As it now stands, there is nothing to stop an investigation being hindered by removing a magistrate, if we feel that magistrate would not carry out his or her function in a particular manner. Therefore, I am a little puzzled as to the purpose of this amendment because it has not changed anything. All this amendment states is that a coroner would be appointed for the jurisdiction of Barbados, but that coroner is being appointed from among magistrates, and by the

Chief Justice. Therefore, there is no change from the previous position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we had a coroner appointed with some degree of permanency, that coroner would be able to conduct his or her business without threats from any particular individual, as to how he or she should proceed with his or her duty. Sir, that is why I am puzzled. I was hoping that the substantive Minister was here and that maybe this provision could have been withdrawn, that further consultation could have taken place and a proper amendment could have been presented to Parliament, whereby a coroner could be appointed with some degree of permanency. Sir, nothing has changed, the Chief Justice can appoint and he can disappoint. According to this amendment, the Chief Justice has to appoint from the same pool from which he has appointed in the first place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have serious difficulties with this amendment, and I thought that I should make that intervention. Sir, while I support the efforts of Government, I do not think this amendment has brought any permanency to the position of coroner, and I do not think that it has gone far enough. In addition, I do not believe it is too late to withdraw the provision. I thank you.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as much as the two Honourable Members have hinted that there is some need for a reform, originally coroners derive their jurisdiction under the Coroners Act, Cap. 113. By Section 2 of that Act, coroners were actually assigned to magisterial districts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, experience has shown that even though over time, specific coroners were assigned to magisterial jurisdictions, the backlog has so built up over time, that a number of years ago this Government decided that in order to fast-track matters and to have

investigations done, that we should assign one particular coroner to carry out investigations, to ensure that those investigations were done, with speed and dispatch.

H:No80(51)740 p.m.

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Continuation of Hon. R.C. EASTMOND:

Sir, at that time, we had foreseen a situation where the positions of that particular individual would have been legislated for the time being. One purpose of the law is to enable things to be done the right way. There is an old-fashioned saying that all things are presumed to be done solemnly and correctly, but even at the level of action by the Chief Justice, under the law, that must be written into law that the Chief Justice has power to appoint. However, to allay the fears of the Honourable Member who just spoke, even though it is fashionable for some people to think in an ill-advised and misguided way that magistrates are so junior in the hierarchy that they are civil servants, certainly, I adhere to the view that the same independence that the higher judiciary is blessed with, it ought to apply to magistrates.

Sir, even when a magistrate is appointed, much as they may be a thinking that the magistrate is a civil servant, I would think that the ordinary provisions to do with security of tenure of appointed public servants could be invoked. In other words, if the young man on my right side became a magistrate to carry out the task of a coroner and was appointed by Chief Justice and performed professionally and diligently during time, then the normal security of tenure that public officer and judicial officers get during good behaviour and subject to fitness and competent ought to apply. I would think that even though an individual can appoint that the inbuilt mechanisms in our system can so work to ensure security of

tenure.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West talked about reform. This was also implied in the words of the distinguished Honourable Member from St. Andrew. I am beginning to sense that Honourable Members might be thinking that this old-fashioned thing about magisterial divisions or jurisdictions can be a thing of the past in a small country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is the thinking out there that rather than have a magistrate for each district that there should be a number of magistrates to serve the whole Barbados. Sir, some of our parish boundaries are not well-known and if a magistrate is assigned to border between St. Andrew and St. Peter, then something happens, it is alleged that it happened in St. Andrew but is on the border more to the side of St. Peter, then there can be complications. These jurisdictions originated years ago when police stations had jurisdiction and magistrates were called police magistrates. There were times in history when police stations served a given jurisdiction and there were entities called police magistrates, who could not be independent because they could specifically be on the side of the police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to try to work out whether we should not review this whole thing about jurisdiction. I also believe there are also anomalies. In addition to the problem with parish boundaries, I believe that the area of Christ Church between where you function, Mr. Deputy Speaker, coming right down towards the Garrison Savannah is physically in Christ Church but is within the jurisdiction of the magistrate of District A which, Sir, is closer to Oistins.

Mr. G.A. PAYNE: Sir, Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I believe that it has nothing to do with magisterial districts. I believe that

coroners should be appointed without reference to them being magistrates. I do not think that a person should have to be a magistrate in order to be a coroner and that the coroner(s) court should be completely separate from that of the Magistrates Court. Sir, that is the point I was making.

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, the Honourable Member is crystal clear now. I was not addressing what the Honourable Member just spoke to but I was addressing these anomalies and old-fashioned things about magisterial jurisdiction. If we had eight or nine able persons to serve Barbados, what is the point of saying that one can only function at Boarded Hall, that another one can only function at Hometown and things like that.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew just raised an interested point. Do you have to be a magistrate to be a coroner? In our process of further law reform, we could think about people in some jurisdictions who are lawyers with some knowledge of medicine who are coroners. In some jurisdictions there is a sort of medico-legal entity, who is made into the coroner because of the combined experience of law and medicine in the same person and the person is perceived to do a better investigation than a pure lawyer or doctor. Sir, I think that Honourable Members recognise that what we are doing here today is providing the legal mechanism by which the action of him who appoints a coroner is validated by law so that no one can say the coroner is functioning with the person who appointed the coroner but not with the blessing of statute. If a coroner is going to be in the identical position of a magistrate, then the coroner could only function under provision of statute. Sir, coroners and magistrates do not walk around with inherent, automatic jurisdiction s because they have to be conferred upon them by statute. The Honourable Member for St. Joseph has performed skillfully. The Honourable Member

for St. Andrew is supportive of both a system that would fast-track things and also of a system that is so flexible that one needs not be a magistrate to be a coroner. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West has lent his view to the strong opinion that we should look to further reform the Magistracy Coroners Act.

Sir, I am supportive of the view that we have to rethink these magisterial districts to see if they are really functioning and if they really needed now because magistrates are independent judicial officer. Sir, police magistrates were around to serve the jurisdiction of police station but do we need these jurisdictions now. I do not know if the police for the purpose of their own administration would want to continue having jurisdiction but even then, police would tell you that in jurisdictions like St. Joseph and St. Andrew that police work is nothing compared with....

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Continuation Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: ...the jurisdiction of those police officers who serve in District A. Sir, those police officers at District A have to work hard. It is a huge jurisdiction and there is pressure and stress on the officers. Some other jurisdictions like St. Joseph and St. Andrew, have tranquil law-abiding places, which are small. However, some police officers would rather function at District A and other jurisdictions where the pressure on officers is great.

Sir, I do not like the idea of people who are the the protectors of law and order operating under stress. They should always be in a state

of health and a frame of mind where they can look at things dispassionately.

Sir, I did not propose to do anything other than to stand and suspend today(s Sitting but, however, we are not yet at the end of the people(s business. I just wanted to lend my support to the explanation and to put a few a opinions that are by no means irrelevant.

I thank you.

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

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Member for St. James North for so skillfully wrapping up for me. I really appreciate his comments. Sir, I certainly understand the view of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, where he posits that under the existing situation by the combination of two Acts, the magistrates Jurisdiction and Procedure Act, which gives the power to the Chief Justice to assign jurisdiction to a magistrate, and under the Coroners Act, which establishes that a Magistrate should be the Coroner. Essentially, his argument is that there is no structural shift.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while that may be so, I think it is eminently sensible, as the Honourable Member for St. James North might have said, to make allusively clear, that the role of the Coroner and his/her jurisdiction and matters relating to his/her appointment should be established firmly in the Coroners Act, rather than using an amalgam of the jurisdiction of the Chief Justice, found in the Magistrates Jurisdiction and Procedures Act, and somehow tagged to the Coroners Act, so as to achieve our happy ending.

Sir, as I said, it makes perfectly good sense to ground this status of a coroner as a magistrate, who has Coroner(s jurisdiction across Barbados

in the Coroners Act. I think it is essentially what we are trying, to establish for all time a full-time coroner.

Sir, the time may come when we may so cover the backlog of coroner(s case, that the Coroner might not have a lot of immediate work to do and might therefore revert to performing magisterial work. There was also good sense, in my view, if you think about it, if the Coroner has been able to clear up such a huge backlog in less than two years, then one could argue that in the ordinary course of things, he or she should remain current when that particular stage is reached. Once the Coroner is current, I do not imagine that we have one hundred unnatural deaths in a year, so it should be quite possible for the individual to stay current. If that happens, we may find that we need to have other work to engage the attention of the Coroner. So it is good that we are not establishing a Coroner(s Court, which might simply say that we do not have enough work to sustain it.

Sir, with those few words I am thanking my colleagues for contributing to this legislation, small but important, I now move that this Bill be read a second time.

Sir, at this point I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. Miss C.Y. FORDE, the House resolved into Committee on this Bill, Mr. R.D. MARSHALL in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 were called and passed.

The Schedule became the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. R.C. EASTMOND Mr. Chairman reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D.D. MARSHALL, seconded by Hon. R.C. EASTMOND, the Bill was read a second and third time, passed and cited as the Coroners (Amendment) Act, 2005.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings us to formal end of Government Business for today. In the circumstances, I beg that this Honourable House do now adjourn to Tuesday, November 8, 2005 at 10.00 a.m.

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

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

H80: 19.59 p.m.

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