THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

Pursuant to the meeting of the House of Assembly at the Parliament Buildings on the November 25,2008, pursuant to the adjournment.

PRESENT

HIS HONOUR M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B., (Speaker)

HIS HONOUR K. St.C. BEST, LL.B.(Hons), L.E.C. (Deputy Speaker) Rt. Hon. O.S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.)

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, Labour, Civil Service and Energy)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., LL.M (Leic.), LL.B (Hons.)(Lond.), B.A. (Hons.) Dip. Ed., Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed. Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN, LL.B.(Hons.) His Excellency. D. St. E. KELLMAN Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.

Hon. R. D. JONES, M.A. Ed., B.A., (Hons.), J.P. (Minister of Education and Human Resource Development), (Leader of the House)

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Housing and Lands)

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

Hon. R.L. SEALY, M.B.A., B.Sc. (Minister of Tourism)

Hon. F. J. STUART, LL.M, B.A., (Deputy Prime Minister, Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, MRAC., (Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport)

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, FCCA, CA, (Minister of International Business and International Transport)

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Community Development and Culture)

Dr. The Hon. D.S. Lowe, Ed.D., M.Ed., B.A., Dip, Theology, (Minister of Environment Water Resources and Drainage) Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B.(Hons.) L.E.C. (Chairman of Committees),

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc., (Minister of State, Ministry of Edcuation and Human Resources Development)

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc., (Minister of Health)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A., (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment, Urban and Rural, Urban Development)

Prayers were taken by Reverend Cannon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of Tuesday, November 18, 2008.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of Tuesday, November 18, 2008 be confirmed subject to any omissions, observations and/or corrections.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Bill be read a first time:

Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

Hon. F.J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Bill be read a first time:

Transport Board (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Standing Orders Nos. 6, 8,16,18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 5 – 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 A PARCEL OF LAND, THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT SIX ROADS IN THE PARISH OF SAINT PHILIP IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

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

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Resolution before this Honourable House seeks permission to vest 4 827 square metres of Crown lands at Six Roads, St. Philip in the National Housing Corporation for housing development. Sir, the background to this Resolution is, the former Cabinet, at its meeting on January 24, 1980, concluded that an area of land at Six Roads, in the parish of St. Philip, should be acquired for the purpose of housing development. The Ministry of Housing and Lands, at the time, agreed to allocate a portion of that said land to the Ministry of Legal Affairs for the purpose of erecting a Fire Station, which was promised by the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

10.20 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, such a station was considered necessary to provide fire protection for the southeastern area of the island. However, that offer was never taken up.

Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation has since utilised the said 4 827 square metres of land at Six Roads, St. Philip to construct 10 masonry low income homes, under the so-called Primary Homes Programme. As a result, the Ministry of Housing and Lands recommended that the parcel of land should be vested in the National Housing Corporation. The purpose is to provide clear title to the land so that the 10 households who reside at Six Roads would now have clear title to the land.

Sir, this vesting is to facilitate the proper transfer of title and, obviously, to establish full legal ownership of the property by the owners. This property is owned by the Crown. I said that the Law states for land to be sold at exchange, parliamentary approval must be sought, under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Chapter 225.

Sir, this only manifests the state of affairs that existed at the time at the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Lands. It is amazing that these houses were constructed on Crown Lands by the National Housing Corporation, under the watch of the former Honourable Member for Christ Church East, who was the Minister of Housing at the time.

Sir, since 2005 until now, those residents at Six Roads in St. Philip are paying occupancy rents to the National Housing Corporation. The Minister at the time knew full well that in order to own property, and they always mention it over there, you must have a conveyance in your hands. Sir, from 2005 until now, the residents at Six Roads are waiting to get that title deed in their hands.

Sir, do you know what happened? The former Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. James South and the Honourable Member for Christ Church East - I would not call the Honourable Member for St. George North because he would not do that - had the opportunity but they sat idly by and waited, wasted time, knowing full well that they had the opportunity to bring this Resolution to Parliament to give those residents at St. Philip full title, an Infants A matter, and a simple matter that one would see at primary school.

Sir, the evidence was clear that the National Housing Corporation did not legally own the land and the persons residing in the houses, were not the legal owners of the houses. Mr. Speaker, I respectfully submit, that for a Minister to sit idly by, is gross incompetence, gross negligence and is recklessness.

Sir, it is not a surprise to me because when I was on the Opposition Bench, the former Minister of Housing was

known for thumping his chest for producing nothing, and a Resolution as simple as this, bypassed him. I can say to the 10 residents in Six Roads, St. Philip, that relief is coming your way.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, some time after today, you will have your conveyance in your hands, as a result of this Administration's commitment to provide proper titled houses and land to all Barbadians. Sir, if there are any stumbling blocks in their way, we will remove those stumbling blocks, so they can have clear title.

Sir, in this Resolution, we speak about primary homes and today, I can report to this Honourable House that we have now found 10 houses under the Primary Homes Programme. In fact, I do not know how they were classified because it is not my business. I do not know if they were butterfly houses, sparrow houses, hummingbird houses or bumblebee houses.

Sir, with respect to other homes, 18 houses were built under the Primary Homes Programme in St. Lucy. Therefore, there was a total of 28 houses built. In relation to persons who owned land, 67 houses were built and this Programme started in September 2004. This is the proud record of the former Administration. The facts must now be revealed that from 2004 until December 2007, we had some 95 houses being built. This is a poor record for the Ministry of Housing under the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Sir, we had rapid inaction at the Ministry of Housing under the former Minister of Housing. The one thing that was rapid about the Minister, at the time, was his inaction. Sir, his rapid inaction denied the residents or those living in Six Roads, the right to a conveyance. The opportunity that they could take that conveyance to a mortgage company and use it as security to further develop themselves, as well as the opportunity to say to Barbados that I am now a proud owner of a piece of the rock.

10.30 a.m.

Sir, that only speaks to the fact that at the time the former Administration's interest lied in developing and fast-tracking properties for the wealthy non-nationals on the West Coast.

Sir, the pace that the former Administration had to make sure that certain procedures were followed and certain applications were approved in relation to the non-nationals on the West Coast far outstripped the pace they had when it came to projects for low income earners in this country. That is the stark reality. Sir, when it came to developing houses for the low income earners, they moved at snail pace, and when it came to housing developments for non-nationals on the West Coast they moved at lightning speed.

Sir, this Resolution would manifest the tardiness, the neglect and the "don't carish" attitude. Sir, it was only last week or two weeks ago that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West referred to them as bunglers, but I will not use that term today to describe them. Sir, all I will say in describing their approach is that it was tardy, very neglectful and "don't carish".

Mr. Speaker, I will exclude the Honourable Member for St. George North from that grouping and I will tell you why, the facts would reveal themselves.

Sir, I am coming back to St. Philip. Sir, there was a Senator and a Minister of Education. Sir, I cannot believe that the Minister sat in Cabinet for 14 years and only 10 houses were built in St. Philip by the National Housing Corporation. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South would support me on that, the evidence is there.

Sir, that is not surprising to me. One would say that the former Minister slept on the job. The former Minister had control of St. Philip South and for him to sit in a Cabinet and allow an Administration to build only 10 houses in St. Philip is a crying shame. Sir, that would not happen to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. Sir, in less than one full year.

The former Honourable Member for St. Philip South is walking about St. Philip boasting, with his head in the clouds. Sir, he slept on the job nationally and he slept on the job internationally besides Fidel Castro.

Sir, this is the first example of tardiness. I will also reveal to the House today, that under the watch of two Ministers of Housing, the then Honourable Member for St. James South and the then Honourable Member for Christ Church East, the National Housing Corporation constructed houses at the corner of Westbury Road without Town Planning permission.

Sir, they went and built houses at Six Roads. They did not vest the land in the National Housing Corporation and have the people paying occupancy rent.

Sir, I do not know if the reason for this delay was because the other Minister of Housing and Lands under the former Administration was ashamed to come to Parliament. Sir, all he had to do was to come and sit and tell the people at Six Roads that he is sorry for the delay, beg for mercy and apologise nationally for keeping them out of title for so long.

Sir, it goes back to the fact that we had a primary homes programme launched on September 4, 2004 that was supposed to satisfy house-hunting Barbadians. Sir, I do recall that Barbadians from all walks of life journeyed to the National Housing Corporation after that wonderful PR exercise by the then Minister who said that houses would be delivered in seven days. They said that houses would be built fast and cheap and asked people who had land to come and they would provide the houses for them. Sir, in the space of four weeks, 5 000 Barbadians applied and to this day as I announce to you, they built only 10 houses at Six Roads, 18 at Mount Poyer and 67 spread across the island. These are the cold hard facts.

Mr. Speaker, I am submitting to this House that the exercise launched on September 4, 2004, as the lawyers would say, was the locus classicus on political fraud in this country. It was the leading case committed by the then Administration.

Sir, they do not like to hear that 14 years went by and you could count only one Minister of Housing and Lands over there that really tried. Sir, all the rest are total failures.

Sir, I will give you another prime example of how low income earners were treated by the former Administration. Sir, against the background that some time in February 2004, there was a meeting with the Environmental Department, the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the former Government established a site at Lower Burney after having knowledge that it was a former dump site - I now have to deal with the problem - and placed poor Barbadians in jeopardy. I believe that after I revealed it, there would be a certain confession from That Side.

10.40 a.m.

Further, they agreed that the National Housing Corporation would write to prospective purchasers, informing them that when purchasing their lots, they would be doing so at their own risk. Sir, that came out at the meeting. They sent letters to prospective purchasers, warning them about the deep soil in that area, that they were not liable, and that people would be buying them at their own risk.

Mr. Speaker, that is how they treated poor people. They took Barbadians and placed them on a dump site and told them that if they bought those lots, they would be buying them at their own risk. Mr. Speaker, further, they took the housing project and placed it in a group, the Pinelands Creative Workshop, a group that has never yet built a dog pen. Sir, that group does not have any track record for building houses in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, for a Government to have knowledge that a particular site was a dump site, then to say to Barbadians that they must purchase these lots at their own risk, that there was deep soil, again that is gross negligence, recklessness and disrespect to the poor. They had no mercy on the poor, the low income earners, who wanted to own a piece of this rock.

Mr. Speaker, I will go further, but the facts will soon reveal themselves because I have with me a structural engineer's report on Buckeley Meadows, which is another project that was started by that Administration, which I now have to clean up, where I am meeting with the residents tomorrow.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I will speak to the issue of Buckeley Meadows in the fullness of time. There will come another time that will also reveal more on Lower Burney, but that is how the former Administration treated the poor in this country. Mr. Speaker, the reality is, this Government has started construction of housing projects at Marchfield and Workhall, St. Philip; Four Hill, St. Peter; at Greens, St. George, and we will start one project in Constant, St. George, by December 15, 2008.

Mr. Speaker, I went to the Ministry of Housing and Lands and found a file sitting on the desk. A file that was conceptualised by the Honourable Member for St. George North. Sir, that file went through two Ministers and they pushed it aside. That file contained a piece of land that could give approximately 75 house lots.

Sir, I made the decision that we would take up this proposal and bring it to Parliament and now work has started at Constant. The road is cut and on December 15, we will launch that housing project. Sir, I will invite the Honourable Member for St. George North to come.

Mr. Speaker, we hope to launch a housing project at French Village, St. Peter, by the first week of December, to construct housing for Barbadians. Sir, there was also Coverley Phase 2, which was lying on the desk of a former Minister, a man who believes that rapid inaction is the order of the day. Sir, lying on his desk was Coverley, which offered 900 housing solutions, yet the Honourable Member for St. George North was up and down Barbados doing line dancing.

Sir, I would submit that the Honourable Member did not care. He was negligent and reckless. Sir, I respectfully believe that the Honourable Member should be placed in the political dock. In fact, the Honourable Member for St. George North was placed in the political dock in January and was sentenced. The Honourable Member is now out of here, never to return.

Mr. Speaker, how could a Minister of Housing and Lands, having 900 housing solutions on his desk and could turn a blind eye to them, when constituents of the Honourable Members for St. George North, St. George South, St. Philip North, St. Philip South, St. John, St. James North, St. Joseph, St. Michael South, Christ Church, St. Lucy and the City, were all asking for housing solutions? Sir, how could the Honourable Member have sat there and done nothing? Sir, it is a shameless act - in times of plenty - accordingly said by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Mr. Speaker, we have engaged in meetings with the Chief Town Planner and asked that Coverley Phase 2 be started beginning with 225 lots. Sir, the Chief Town Planner has agreed that we could go ahead and we hope that by January we would start the building of 225 lots at Coverley, Phase 2.

Mr. Speaker, I go now to the 500 lots programme. We promised in our Manifesto that we would provide 500 lots, at $5 per square foot to first-time homeowners. We said we will provide land to people to build. People who are constantly evicted by the Courts will now have the opportunity to purchase lots at that price, so that they could become proud owners of a piece of this rock.

Mr. Speaker, what is so simple about this is that we have land in existing tenantries, where the land is already serviced, where a committee was set up. Sir, it is so simple a matter that areas, for example, in Woodbourne Development, St. Philip, the Barbados Water Authority has already given us the authority to proceed.

Permission has also been given to proceed at Pool, St. John; Todds, St. George; Easy Hall, St. Joseph; Henley, St. John; Forty Acres, St. Thomas; Coconut Hall, St. Lucy, and Cherry Grove, St. John. Those lots can be conveyed immediately, once all legal transactions are finished.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, the other areas that we have looked at as part of this 500 lots programme are the areas of Branchberry, St. Joseph; Todds, St. George, Cherry Grove in St. John, Vineyard in St. Philip, Guinea in St. John and Clifton in St. Philip.

Mr. Speaker, an additional parcel of land at Fustic, St. Lucy has been identified for the provision of lots in this programme. Sir, it will be included in a Cabinet Paper very shortly for approval by Cabinet so that we can move ahead with this 500-lot programme. Further, Sir, Sedge Pond in St. Andrew, which is Crown land and Coconut Hall, St. Lucy.

Mr. Speaker, other areas we are looking at, in relation to acquisition are Applewhaite in St. George, which is a tenantry, is Crown land - I see that the Honourable Member for St. George North is shaking his head - Roach Village in St. George, and there is remaining land for future development; Brighton, St. George; near Ellerton and Brighton, St. George, near Melverton will also form part of this programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have been working as a Government and I must state to this Parliament that offers of compensation were made to landowners and the said landowners have given permission in writing to the Chief Surveyor to undertake the necessary work, so that this programme can move ahead. Sir, I would say that we have done a fair amount of work and that we will continue to do this work. We are looking at the fastest way of doing this. We are looking at the process of private treaty so that we can move ahead in a swift manner.

Mr. Speaker, again, the fact that we have also started the process of acquisition of Bushy Park, which obviously, can provide us with 2 000 housing solutions. We are also about to start the process of acquiring land in St. Andrew and we have already got an indirect approval from the Town Planner and, hopefully, in the new year, we will start the building of houses in St. Andrew.

Mr. Speaker, we have started on a rapid programme with rapid action to house Barbadians, who need land and Barbadians who need homes. Sir, I am asking how come that in one fell swoop we can journey to the Pine and recognise that there are vacant lots in the estate. Sir, there are vacant lots in the Pine Housing Areas that could provide housing solutions. There are vacant lands in Deacons Housing Area that could provide housing solutions for Barbados. We have just discovered in the Honourable Member for St. James South's Constituency, land that would give him additional housing solutions for low-income earners.

Mr. Speaker, we have now started negotiations with the land owners who own property at Mason Hall Street in the City where we would start next year the building of high-rise units for the people in the City. Again, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, hopefully in the new year, he will journey with me to Valery, where there are Crown lands that could provide housing solutions for the people in the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central's constituency. Sir, he does not know this.

Mr. Speaker, I ask this question. What was happening for the last 14 years if we can find these vacant lots? Sir, what is also surprising is that very recently, we journeyed to Rices in St. Philip and recognised that the National Housing Corporation owns lands in Rices which could provide housing solutions for the people in Rices.

Mr. Speaker, we have all these vacant lots and we must accommodate the person who cannot purchase land. We must provide land for those who can only rent. We must develop the concept where people can rent to own and over time, their rent would allow them to own the same property.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the performance of the past Administration, if in the space of about six months we can start the construction of about 80 houses in St. Philip and in 14 years they can build 10 houses, the evidence is clear that the people of Barbados made the correct decision in January.

Mr. Speaker, I say to colleagues on This Side and I also take the opportunity to say it to colleagues on the Other Side that we would be visiting the constituencies, where we can locate vacant land and, Sir, once that land is owned by the Crown, we will proceed to provide housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I know that a lot more will be said today but I am saying again to this Honourable Chamber that we will move forward. We have started Country Park Terrace, a project that was abandoned by the former Administration. Sir, what is also amazing is that the Minister knows there was land at Tweedside Road with planning permission. Sir, all he had to do was to mobilise the staff at National Housing Corporation and let them get up and do some work. Sir, by next year we will be ready to start the project at Tweedside Road to provide housing solutions for Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, this Resolution today is twofold: first, it manifests the inaction, the negligence and the recklessness of the former Administration in its approach to housing for low-income earners and secondly, it gives this Government the opportunity to tell the public that we are ready.

11:10

This Government is serious about the housing programme. That is why in one fell swoop we bring this Resolution to Parliament, so that the 10 residents at Six Roads can have their conveyances in their hands, while we move away from the gross negligence and incompetence displayed by the former Administration in the provision of housing for low income earners in this country.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak in this debate. I must congratulate the Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, for introducing this vesting of land at Six Roads, St. Philip. It is a very simple Resolution, but the Minister has taken his time to present a housing programme of the Government. Therefore, I want to spend some time looking at the housing programme of the former Administration and also the programme of the present Administration.

I also want to congratulate the Minister for retaining his position as Minister of Housing and Lands. I also want to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister who has seen fit to retain the Minister. I have said to him over and over that I can see patterns of the former Government's programme in the work of the present Minister.

In fact, I must say that when I look at all of these housing solutions, I know they were acquired under the Barbados Labour Party's regime, up to 2002. There were acquired when I spent some time at that institution and I speak about Marchfield, St. Philip, and Mount Poyer, St. Lucy. All of these are housing solutions that we can identify with.

Sir, I want to say that the vesting process is important because it allows the National Housing Corporation, or another Government entity to undertake a programme of development, for which that institution would be able to provide solutions, not only to tenants, or Barbadians who want houses, but also to carry on their programme. For example, the vesting process in Barbados Tourism Investment Inc allows that entity to undertake a developmental programme for the Government. Whereas, the vesting process in the National Housing Corporation allows them not only to release title, because the National Housing Corporation can give good title, once it is vested in Parliament, the title is good and the National Housing Corporation can get on with their programme by providing conveyances to the persons who really need them.

Sir, the vesting process takes some time as the Minister will soon find out. I do not think it takes 3 or 4 years, but the vesting process takes time. Therefore, I am calling on the Government, with its wide housing programme, to strengthen the capacity at National Housing Corporation. I have seen the National Housing Corporation in its present environment remain the same. Therefore, the resources there need to be strengthened and the technological capacity needs to be upgraded.

Sir, when I first came to the National Housing Corporation it was just a small derelict building at Country Road. It was a building which had numerous problems when we inherited it. Between 1994 and 2000, we were able to construct a nice building, not only to house the workers at the National Housing Corporation, but to deliver housing solutions. Sir, when the Minister looks at the record of the Barbados Labour Party he will see it started in

1994 and it did not end in 2002. It ended in 2008. Therefore, you have to look at the total picture.

Sir, when you look at the record of the National Housing Corporation during those years, the total housing solution - I am speaking of loan deliveries and housing solutions. Sir, one would find that 1994 to 2007 was the most active period of housing ever in this country. Sir, we are talking about innovation.

Sir, I think I have spoken at length that a housing solution is not only finding land and giving title, but it must have proper financing as well. During those years we were able to revolutionise the General Workers' Loan Fund in such a way that millions of dollars - in fact, the period between 1994 to 2000, one found that millions of dollars were loaned to poor persons, not only to build homes, but to repair homes. In one year, 1996, we gave over $14 million in loans, the Honourable Minister can check. During that time loans more than doubled the period before 1994, at the National Housing Corporation. It was an active period.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member knows that it was not during 1996 that loans increased at that rate. It was actually in the year 1998. The Honourable Member is well aware of that fact, but for convenience he has refused to inform this Honourable House of the correct year. Sir, he tells you the spike, you would see a pattern to the increases of those loans.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I believe that if he said 1996 and it is in fact 1998, I am sure it would have been a mistake, since he would not deliberately mislead this House.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants me to speak about 1998 and I will speak about 1998 as well. He also wants me to tell the Honourable House that in 1996 we started to look carefully at a big jump in housing, because it did not start in 1996. Sir, one found that in 1994/1995 very little was done because of the period of adjustment under the then Democratic Labour Party, nothing was done. We came to power at the time where we had to acquire land.

In the early years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration, we found that land had to be acquired for housing solutions. We took the initiative of planning in the very first years. That is why I say to this Parliament. over and over, that any developmental process will take two to three years for new acquisitions. The Minister will discover that if you want to bring housing solutions, they must be brought from the inception, the planning, the Town and Country Planning, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture's permission. All of these things take time, and it will take two or three years to get a housing programme off the ground, from its inception.

11.10 a.m.

Sir, that is why I make the point that between 1994 and 1999, the very first two years, we had to plan a housing programme. Sir, a delivery of housing started in its rapid state, after 1996; so that by 1998, when we got into the housing programme, we found that we were lending a lot of money in those years for simple solutions and people were able to get their houses repaired at Christmas time.

For example, I remember one year that we were able to give out on promissory notes, loans from $1 000 to $5 000, where Barbadians were able to repair their homes. It is not happening today. How much money do you have in the General Workers' Loan Fund to lend out? Sir, that is what we have to do. There are constituents across Barbados, who want simple solutions, such as to put on a roof, stop a leakage, replace a floor and these are the things that the National Housing Corporation was established to do.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that when you look at housing under the Barbados Labour Party, we were able to create an atmosphere to provide housing solutions. Sir, in the very first term, we acquired more than 1 000 acres of land and we were able to boast in those years that those lands were acquired.

Sir, when the Minister talks about Marchfield, St. Philip; Rices; Mount Poyer; Work Hall; all these lands were identified in my time, as well as Four Hill, all Government land.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because when one listens to the Honourable Member, one would get the impression that the Honourable Member was the Minister in charge at that time and I cannot allow the Honourable Member to mislead this House. The person that would have been in charge at the time, was the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and the Honourable Member would have been in the Ministry with him at that point in time.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am not stating claim to anything. I was just saying what we were able to acquire under the Barbados Labour Party. The truth of the matter is that a lot of first lands were acquired. The Honourable Member for St. John, the Prime Member is asking me if it was the custom at the time, to just acquire land and keep it there.

Sir, that was not the practice but we found that the process took time. The Honourable Member for St. John

knows that Gall Hill development took almost 10 years to be completed. I want to remind the Honourable Member for St. Philip North that there were problems at all developments. When you look at the development in St. John, which is beside a grave yard there were problems.

We had problems in St. Lucy. We had problems at Mount Poyer, where there was a small strip of land and we were supposed to acquire a bigger section of the land belonging to the Crown. These were the problems. The present Honourable Member for St. Michael South East identified the problem at Lower Burney and he begged the Ministry of Housing and Lands for the solution.

Sir, in our haste to develop it, solutions were found. I know that we were able to provide more than 200 housing solutions there. It is true that some of the land is low lying. The Ministry of Health and the Attorney-General must know this. The Ministry of Health gave planning permission in the early years for that, so if they reversed their decision in 2004, they were the technocrats within the Ministry of Health who gave permission.

The Town Planning Department said yes and it was never overruled. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that all of these developments, if they had problems, were given permission by the Town Planning Department and by the Ministry of Health. There is a process to Town Planning development. We do not wake up one morning and acquire land and go through the development process.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that what took place in the Ministry of Housing in the period 2004 to 2008 may be unfortunate, but a lot of work went on in other areas, such as in the relocation process. For example, a lot of work took place in the relocation of persons from Church Village by the Central Bank to Lower Burney. We were also able to relocate persons to Barbarees Hill from Passage Road and Pickwick Gap in the City. All these were programmes that were done.

Sir, above all, the Ministry of Housing was concentrating on the Neighbourhood Upgrade programme, which the Government now has. The Inter-American Development Bank programme started in 1999 under my watch, but it is now ripe for development. The Inter-American Development Bank will provide large sums of money for the Capital Works programme of the Government.

I am saying to you that these things took time. I know that the Inter-American Development Bank which is a neighbourhood upgrade programme, started under the Barbados Labour Party's Government to upgrade Cats Castle, Greenfield and other areas, for poor people across Barbados. Therefore, work commenced under this Administration.

The Democratic Labour Party must now show their programme. The present Government has applauded the Minister for carrying out these programmes, not necessarily of his Government, but they have started. Only this weekend a lady met me in the street and told me that I must remind the Government that these programmes, especially the neighbourhood programme, started under the Barbados Labour Party. The Government and the people of Barbados will benefit from that programme. Sir, it took us more than 10 years to get through to the Inter-American Development Bank, because it takes time for the international agencies like the Inter-American Development Bank, especially at a time when they said that Barbados had graduated from the funds coming from the Inter-American Development Bank. Mr. Speaker, in those years, we were able to convince that institution that funds needed to be given to Barbados for low income earners, and to relocate and upgrade housing solutions across Barbados. Therefore, work was done.

Mr. Speaker, I am also saying that when you look at the Tenantries Programme, which started in 1981-1982 by the Barbados Labour Party Government. Persons across Barbados were able to get their lands at 10 cents per square foot. Sir, that was a piece of revolutionary legislation which allowed a Government to provide land at 10 cents per square foot. This was never done before in the history of Barbados.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party Government is now talking about selling tenantry lands at $5 a square foot. Sir, I heard that they are going to develop lands at Pool. I must caution the Minister that if he is going to any tenantry, the people deserve the land at 10 cents per square foot.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is clearly misleading the House. The Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act only entitled persons, who resided in scheduled plantation tenantries to benefit from the 10 cents per square foot price. Sir, all of the tenantries in St. Michael that were not scheduled, the people had to pay the market price. As well as the tenantries like the beaches in Barbados, Fitts Village and so on, people had to pay the market price. They specifically excluded all of those Barbadians.

11:20:08

The persons who purchased the plantation tenantries are people who were often the descendants of people who worked on the plantations for hundreds of years, that is why they were sold it at 10 cents a square foot, and I agree with that.

This is a totally new programme. It may benefit people who never lived on a plantation in their lives. It is not only for the people who live on plantation tenantries.

Therefore, the Honourable Member is misleading the House to give the impression that in every tenantry across the country people were allowed to buy land at 10 cents a square foot. Sir, that is absolutely wrong.

Sir, that was never the intention of the previous Administration because the Act went through several amendments and they had to come up with all kinds of creative solutions which caused more problems. The Honourable Member for St. George North is one of the progenitors of a piece of legislation that caused even more problems than the original legislation.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sure the Honourable Member accepts the additional information.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I accept the intervention of the Honourable Member for St. John because the point I was making is that on scheduled Plantation Tenantries like Pool, St. John. He used those words, which is important. Sir, if you develop land in a tenantry that is schedule, what should the new homeowner pay for that land?

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because, in essence, it is no longer a tenantry now. For example, in Pool all of the persons who would have qualified by virtue of the scheduling have already purchased. What we said is that where physical development has taken place, like putting in roads, water and electricity on those areas, not in the tenantry, either leading to the tenantry or on one part of the land, which was not previously the tenantry, we will survey them.

Sir, most of them were, in fact, under active cultivation of canes. The area in Pool that the Honourable Member is speaking about is currently under cultivation, it is not part of the existing tenantry. It so happened that the road was put in and there were only houses on one side of the road. We are saying that Government can save money by surveying the land, putting in a buffer zone and have some additional lots. That is all it is.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well, Honourable Member.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I am not opposed to that development.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. SPEAKER: On what point of order, Honourable Member? There was a point of order that was ruled on. The Honourable Member has hardly said anything so I cannot see what you could possibly be rising about, Honourable Member.

Asides.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am in agreement with what the Prime Minister is saying. If you go on a scheduled tenantry and put in a ribbon development, which is where you have existing roads on one side, and land exists where housing solutions can take place, and a person wants to get a lot on that land, can the person who applies to Pool Plantation or the Government decide to keep that land for five years?

Sir, under the existing Law, tenants in a tenantry, especially a scheduled tenantry, must have that lot for five years. I am asking if the tenant cannot rent that land at peppercorn rent and then acquire it at 10 cents a square foot after five years because it is a scheduled tenantry.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that if there is a portion of land at Pool, or at any scheduled tenantry across Barbados, that the planter can apply for permission, get that parcel of land developed and then sell it at the developed cost. Sir, that does not mean it is a tenantry. Sir, we held the view between 1994 and 2007 that wherever lands existed on plantations and it was not suitable for crops, that the planter could apply to get the land subdivided and sell it at the price that would cover the development cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure this is what is happening, because I am hearing about $5 a square foot. Is the Government sure that $5 a square foot would cover the cost of development for the planter, or is Government going to subsidise the land they are talking about? Sir, something is not clear to me. Is the Government acquiring the land from the planters at Pool, Easy Hall, Guinea, Cottage and in St. Lucy to sell to people, or is Government allowing the planters to develop the land and then sell it?

Mr. Speaker, under previous Governments, whether they were the Barbados Labour Party Government or the Democratic Labour Party Government, from 1981, the Ministry of Transport and Works had to put in all the roads in tenantries all across Barbados and persons were able to get the land at 10 cents a square foot.

Mr. Speaker, it is a good programme, but we have to watch the cost. Sir, it is my opinion that persons who are buying land in these ribbon developments across Barbados are entitled to it at the 10 cents a square foot. Sir, they must hold the land for five years and test the Government, if Government wants to throw them off. Sir, I am saying that they are entitled to the land at 10 cents a square foot.

Similarly, it was always the intention of the present Government as well as the past Government that lands

owned by the Church at the Glebe in St. Philip, St. George and St. Thomas, were to be sold to persons at 10 cents a square foot as well. So far, even though the lands have been surveyed, and it has taken a long time, every time we look around you hear that somebody lost their conveyance for the Glebe, either the Church or some technocrat within the Ministry of Housing and Lands. It has nothing to do with the Minister, so I am not blaming the Minister for this. We have constantly asked the Church to give the title to the people at the Glebe.

Mr. Speaker, at one time I was hearing that it was some technocrat at the Ministry of Housing and Lands that was keeping back the process. When I speak to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, I am hearing it is something in the Church that is keeping back the process. Mr. Speaker, we have to get on with the job.

There is also the Parish Lands at St. Philip and St. George. Lands exist for poor people. This is nothing new. Parish Land in St. George was acquired during the Vestry system. I heard the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow talked about this in the 1960s. He said that lands were acquired by the Vestry system, and people paid less than 10 cents a year and they cannot get title. Mr. Speaker, it has to come to Parliament where a proper title can be conveyed to the people. Sir, sometimes you cannot find the title or the conveyance, and this is the problem. Mr. Speaker, we did a test case for the one in St. Thomas where persons at District "D" were able to get the land. Sir, the Attorney-General must advise the Government that the people in the Parish Lands, whether it is the Carpenter Trust in St. Philip or the one in St. George, are entitled to the land at peppercorn cost as well.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, what we are saying is that those problems existed and continue to exist, not because of the Administration but because of the technocrats and the bureaucracy within Government circles. Sir, these things are keeping this process from going forward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make another observation. It is true that Government has promised 500 lots at $5 a square foot. This is good and we applaud it, but we want to see more development taking place across the island. Sir, 500 house spots were supposed to come in 100 days but it is almost a year now.

Therefore, while I applaud the action of the Ministry of Housing and Lands, I believe that to have such an ambitious programme in 100 days, could not have taken place in the first place. Therefore, one would find that it would take between one to three years to start this housing programme.

Sir, even though we have identified this number of housing solutions, I know it would take time. Therefore, whether you identify lots at Easy Hall, Forty Acres, Cherry Grove, or lots across Barbados, one would find it would take some time to have these housing solutions developed. Therefore, I would want to say that it would be better for the Ministry of Housing and Lands to plan a programme, rather than to set a time-frame in which to deliver these housing solutions. Sir, the development of a housing solution cannot take place overnight, therefore, for a Government to say it is going to provide 500 lots in 100 days would be a very ambitious programme, which cannot take place in that period.

Mr. Speaker, I have said before that our Neighbourhood Programme has taken 10 years and that even at this point in time, we cannot access funds to have it completed. Sir, I heard Government admitting today that to acquire lands they need funds. Therefore, where is Government going to get the funds from to match the Inter-American Development Bank programme? I have not seen anything coming to Parliament, only talk so far. I know Government has signed on to the Inter-American Development Bank programme but from where are the matching funds going to come?

Mr. Speaker, while I applaud the Ministry, I cannot agree with the Honourable Member when he says there was total inaction taking place in the Ministry of Housing and Lands, under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. Sir, I believe a lot of work had started. I also believe that in this present period, the Minister, the Government and the people of Barbados, would enjoy an active period, so long as the present Government continues with its programmes.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that in this present economic climate, all Government's capital works programme must continue apace. Sir, that is why I could not understand why this Government has abandoned some of the capital works programme of the Barbados Labour Party.

This Government would soon find that when 300 construction workers are laid off, there are going to be problems in relation to unemployment in this country. Sir, capital works programme must continue in the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, and in the Ministry of Public Works.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I have seen some initiative from the Prime Minister, in separating the Drainage Unit from the Ministry of Public Works.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it is not a bad idea, neither is it new. It was an idea that has been floating around for a long time. Sir, I believe that in the Ministry of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, there is an opportunity for a capital works programme to start in earnest.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to say that this Government cannot abandon a programme because it came from the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, that is what is happening.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we completed Headley's Land Phase 1, while Phase2 needed to be completed. Sir, like the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Minister of the Environment, Water Resources and Drainage, needs to become active and continue with Phase 2, in order to keep the climate going. Sir, I see a situation where, if Government does not keep its capital works programmes in Housing and in Public Works. Sir, already this Government has abandoned the Highway Rehabilitation Project, which I say is a mistake because the Minister of Public Works would find that his programme would soon dry up.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House in every respect. There is a difference between abandoning capital works and abandoning crooked contractors. I want to make it abundantly clear that the Highway Rehabilitation Project is continuing, the only aspect of it that has not proceeded is the fly-overs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, in correction to the manner in which the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, there are Barbadians contractors in this country who for centuries have been building roads, and I see no need to bring in anybody from outside, least of all persons who are challenged by all kinds of court cases.

Sir, it is so with the prison too, that is why I said there is a difference between abandoning the project and abandoning crooked contractors. Sir, you are going to see later when we deal with the Local Loans Bill that almost every capital works project that has been in train, has been brought to book by this Government and is being completed. We have not abandoned any capital works programme of the previous Government.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, if this Government truly wants to have Barbadians employed, Government must continue with those programmes. Sir, Government must continue with the programme in housing. It must also give the National Housing Corporation proper financing and the technical capacity.

Government must also allow the other Ministries to have their capital works programmes continue, in order to continue construction in this country. Sir, I am saying that Government has abandoned building the fly-overs at a time when they are really needed.

Mr. Speaker, whether or not the Prime Minister is saying there were crooked contractors, I want to say that I was not aware of that. I know the projects we implemented were good, and that the Highway Rehabilitation Project was employing subcontractors who were all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, by abandoning this project, I know that a number of these contractors do not have work to carry them into 2009 or 20l0. I am saying and will continue to say that it was a mistake by this Government. Sir, this Government has not continued the drainage programme at Headleys Land Phase 2. I am saying that funds have been left to have that completed. I am saying it is a mistake that the present Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport is abandoning the building of bridges and culverts across Barbados. Sir, these things must continue....

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member continues to mislead this Honourable House with this question of abandonment. Sir, abandonment of what? Sir, no bridge works have been abandoned by the Ministry of Transport, Works and International Transport. As a matter of fact, we have even started work on the foot bridge which the Honourable Member wanted to have constructed in St. George. Therefore, I do not know what nonsense the Honourable Member is talking about, when he continues to suggest that we have abandoned projects.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to withdraw that remark. You cannot accuse a member of talking nonsense.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, I withdraw my reference to nonsense. The member is being highly inaccurate and is deliberately misleading the Chamber...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, again you are not permitted to accuse a member of deliberately misleading this Chamber and you ought to withdraw that remark as well.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the statement. The point I want to make is again, Sir, on a point

of order. There has been no abandonment of the bridge project. There is no abandonment of public works and the Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. Sir, he must be stopped.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am not misleading this House. It is a fact that the Minister of Public Works found a foot bridge at Belair, St. George. A foot bridge that was started and the Minister intervened and told the workers to go somewhere else. Is the Minister saying that he did not do that?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I normally hesitate to intervene in these matters but we are dealing with a housing Resolution. A Resolution to vest land for the purpose of housing and maybe, you need to narrow the scope of your discussion a bit to deal with that.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am talking about this because it leads to housing districts and Belair is in the middle of a housing district and, Sir, it helps the residents.

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member continues to mislead the House. There was no foot bridge at Belairs, just like there were no houses. The Honourable Minister of Housing has indicated to this Chamber that there were no houses. There were no foot bridges, these were contemplative issues. They were merely contemplative by the former Administration.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member must understand that in 1991, when I first became Executive Assistant to the Leader of the Opposition in those days, I was told that you could find everything in the Estimates of Expenditure in any given year. If you look at this year's Estimates and last year's Estimates, you will find money allocated for the foot bridge at Belair, St. George and that work has started. Sir, I am making the point that the Government's housing programme and the Government's capital works programme must continue apace into next year in order to save the 14 000 construction workers that now exist.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I applaud the 500 houses that are going to be built. Sir, I am saying that Government needs to do much more than 500 houses. The Government must not work on one cylinder. Sir, right now the Government is only working on one cylinder.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John must know that the public has spoken in January and that he is the Prime Minister. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John has now woken up and found that he is the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Honourable Member for St. John for retaining the Honourable Member for St. Philip North as the Minister of Housing because he is a good man.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I made this point last week and the Prime Minister listened very carefully to what I said last week. I said that the Minister of Housing has undertaken a heavy programme. I applaud him because it is a programme I can identify with because it was started under the Barbados Labour Party Government. It needs a little fine-tuning here or there but, Sir, it is working.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that you have your capital works programme cut out but that the Ministry of Housing and Lands must continue the tenantries' programme. They must tell us where we are on the housing programme in the tenantries. Sir, for example, there used to be information coming to the House as to where we are with the tenantries' programme but I have not seen that as yet.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say in conclusion that it is a challenging time for the Government. It is challenging because housing is still in demand and the Government has inherited a situation where employment is being created in this country. The unemployment level is not very high at this time and, therefore, the demand for housing will continue and the Government has to recognise this.

We do not have problems in the mortgage market like other countries and Barbadians are still borrowing money to build houses and Government must, of necessity encourage the building of houses in Barbados. Therefore, I am saying that more has to be done with institutions like the Housing Credit Fund.

Sir, that institution needs to be looked at carefully. It was started in 2002 when we moved the Housing Credit Fund to the Central Bank of Barbados. Sir, more money needs to be put in that institution in order to on-lend to low-income housing. Sir, more has to be done with that type of arrangement where the Housing Credit Fund was started between 1983 and 1985 out of $10 million that has now on-lend millions of dollars to low-income earners in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that Fund needs recapitalisation at this time and the Government needs to start similar funds like revolving funds where you could help low-income Barbadians to lend to achieve their dreams.

Mr. Speaker, I am aware that in my Constituency, for example, that several people have to wait too long at the National Housing Corporation for loans. They have to wait too long at the credit unions and in the commercial banks for loans. We know there is a problem, following the trend, that there is a problem and that the commercial banks in Barbados, sometimes, ask for too much when a person has to pay the legal fees of three attorneys, it is a wrong thing.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: I have said that over and over again and we need to look at it. I think the Government needs to look at the whole conveyance system. I have said it over and over again, when I was in Government that we need to look at the way properties are conveyed in this country. Sir, until we do this, we are going to have a problem.

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that if we want to satisfy the low-income earners that we need to remove some of these stumbling blocks and do not ever take it for granted that all is well as far as low-income housing is concerned. There are still a lot of challenges facing the poor that prevent them from acquiring their dreams. They still have to go through too much red tape in the banking institutions. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am confident that if this Government continues with the programme that was left by the Barbados Labour Party with the adjustment I see being made, that we will be for a long time.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I make the point that once we continue the housing programme of the Barbados Labour Party with your adjustments, you will have a situation where Barbadians will achieve their dreams. Sir, at the same time, I am not going to allow the Government to claim a programme that was designed, that I had a hand in - they are executing it - to claim that they own it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I support the vesting and that Government can bring other vesting to this House. Sir, I thank you.

11.50 a.m.

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

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, at this stage I do not propose an elaborate contribution. I would hold that until next year but there are some observations, questions and words of encouragement which I should offer and tender during this modest contribution. Time was when this Honourable House would hear of something called a land bank. I, as a Member for a constituency where there was no land band, in fact a constituency hard hit by Zone 1 regulations, had never quite got to the bottom of the allegation that there was this substantial land bank.

I heard a lot about it. Based on what the Honourable Member for St. George is saying, it could have been a land bank but the question is was it a deposit bank or a withdrawal bank, or did it hold things over a period of time with particular promises to follow?

I join however with the Honourable Member for St. George North on the matter of the Housing Credit Fund. The traditional Barbadian used to be interested in a piece of land and a house on a piece of land but economic reality has shown that the last 20 years a number of Barbadians who would normally try to own their own house are actually depending on rental units and some of these are not people who are poor. The economic reality of the situation therefore requires the National Housing Corporation to review all its systems and try to work out mechanisms by which there can be quality housing at low cost.

I apprehend that the Government and people of China have a special place in their heart for the Government and people of Barbados. I am wondering aloud to you whether China cannot be approached with the view not to operate here as a profit but through offering us certain concessions to aid our housing programme.

I am not unaware of the fact that in recent times the Government has established an Embassy with China under a distinguished son from the constituency I have the honour to represent, and such a choice is indeed a good choice especially since China has always meant a lot to the person who was selected. Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford actually ran a Chinese restaurant years ago on the coast of St. James. I want the Honourable Member to take this in good faith.

Sir, one concern that the public has is that over time there have been a lot of registered judgements against the National Housing Corporation. What does that mean? It means that where the National Housing Corporation is about to convey land there are judgements against the land, the process of conveying is frustrated.

I would like to urge the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for whom I have the highest regard and who, like the Honourable Members for St. Lucy and St. Michael North West, would have sat at my feet, I would like to urge him to do his best. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy was the most quiet and charming student who sat at the back, did his homework and spent a lot of time, even then, reading about Errol Barrow.

Sir, the other thing I want to raise is the whole question of staff morale. Individual Members of Parliament

have complained not only that there is a low staff morale and not only that particular members of the National Housing Corporation have taken the public for a ride, but particular Members of Parliament are concerned that a lot of correspondence from MPs just cannot be found in the National Housing Corporation. I am not saying that this is a recent thing. I am not saying at all this is a recent thing. I am being fair in my comment. I want the Honourable Minister to investigate and to consider the matter of staff morale and also where there can be any sabotage to root it out.

Sir, we have here a challenge in this country as far as the cost of housing is concerned and that explains why a lot of middle income people are seeking rental units. The cost of housing generally has to be addressed and has to be brought down and there can be no question that with the enthusiasm and exuberance of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and his colleagues, and those many well-wishers he has in the community, that can be tackled. This is perhaps where China or other countries of goodwill can come in.

I want too an assessment of unconveyed lots. There are lots in the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Programme that remain unconveyed. I would like to encourage the Minister to look there. Trents, St. James has, from the time of Joseph Josiah Payne, former MP, being a tenantry where little conveyancing has occurred and where the will to convey simply was not there. Speaking of Trents, St. James, and drainage, Trents has an endemic fundamental drainage problem which requires the assessment of a new Drainage Unit and which, I daresay, is a challenge and where I would like to see that drainage problem dealt with.

Sir, I think that the time has come where we look at the Schedule to Chapter 2, 39B, with the view to including some plantations that are not yet in the Schedule. We need to review it. There are several plantation tenantries that need to be included in the Schedule to Chapter 2, 39B.

Sir, as this is being done, there must be ongoing review of the finances of the National Housing Corporation from the point of view of the capitalisation and also from the point of view of the management of current liabilities and current assets, and certainly, an aggressive debt collection programme must accompany Government's efforts to reform and rebuild the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I also want to urge the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to do an inventory of all Government property, including an inventory of abandoned schools and abandoned Government buildings with the aim to see what can be done in a situation where as at St. Boniface, one can take an abandoned school and with a minimum of financing and good creative energetic contractors work convert disused buildings into useful buildings.

Mr. Speaker, I conclude with this one. We live in a highly technological world. We live in a world where there have been significant advances in science and technology. Against that background I wonder if this policy known as the Zone 1 policy which touches and concerns the water table is a policy that cannot be changed. Is there no science, is there no engineering on the face of this earth that can do something about this Zone 1 problem? Mr. Speaker, half of my constituency is Zone 1 and I want housing. I am sure that the people of St. James, St. Peter, St. Lucy and even the people of St. Michael want housing.

12 00 noon.

Sir, when half of a constituency is Zone 1, where you cannot build, it frustrates Government building.

There are also concerns outside of St. James North, where parts of the constituency of St. Michael North East are in Zone 1, and where parts of other areas in rural Barbados also fall into the Zone 1 catchment area. I wonder and I urge my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to do his utmost to make sure that he gets proper advice, as the extent to which Zone 1 can be engineered, re-engineered or something done about it, and the extent to which our water resources crave care, and then balance the interest between the need for housing and the need to preserve quality water.

I have a place in my constituency known as the Whim. Sir, land was compulsorily acquired for sporting purposes.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: The Whim for the development of sporting facilities at the level of a pasture. There is not yet a pavilion. There are not yet lights but the Whim is in Zone 1. There have been about three or four private individuals, who want to extend their properties at their own expense, but cannot do so because the office of the Chief Town Planner and the Barbados Water Authority insists that because they are in Zone 1, there can be no development.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the observations I make at this stage but I propose to make fuller and more detailed submissions on housing in the coming year, 2009, having given the Honourable Member one full year of grace and one full year to be able to proceed with his intentions and his plans.

Thank you very much, Sir.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Thank you very much, Sir.

I rise to support this Resolution but to do what both of the former speakers did, in offering congratulations to my friend and colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for doing a fantastic job, as the Minister of Housing.

Indeed, this is one of my happiest days in this House to hear that, finally, the work in Tweedside Road is going to start. The Honourable Member for St. George North is smiling because he will remember erecting a sign in Tweedside Road in April of 2003, but when the result in May 2003 did not go in the direction they wanted it to go, that sign became food for the wood ants, because it decayed.

Aside.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because the plans were devised and approved in my time, and construction was to have started in July. I left the Ministry of Housing and I do not know what happened. Therefore, it has nothing to do with me.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, please continue.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, it is always good when Members can have a moment of intellectual purity and honesty can come out. What happened was the result of the Election in May 2003. Therefore, Stewart's Lodge was put on the back burner.

In fact, it was in the Estimates for, maybe two years but they finally dropped it altogether out of the Estimates because they were only fooling the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central that we were going to get these houses, and they did not occur.

Sir, those were the days when, particularly in the early part, every single housing Resolution was a housing debate, and we would have a long, extensive debate. The then Minister of Housing would come with about six files. I used to get up, dutifully, and ask each time: "When will Stewart's Lodge start?" I heard that it is coming, and when the end of the financial year came, I heard that it is coming the next financial year.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, it is good to actually hear a Minister of Housing, for a change who, in making a presentation to this House, is able to talk to projects that are in train. Four Hill, Constant, Marchfield, Greens, Work Hall, Country Park Towers, I am going to get back to that, so you have a series of projects.

Therefore, that gives me a little more confidence, this time around that when I hear that Stewart's Lodge will finally be developed, and Valery will be properly subdivided, I have confidence that these things are actually going to occur.

The Honourable Member for St. George North would say that if they did not remove him, maybe, they would have happened but, nevertheless, I have to go on the basis of the evidence in front of me, so I think it is good to see what is happening from the Ministry of Housing, at long last.

Sir, if I could also speak specifically on the Country Park Towers, I think it was a good decision the Government made to revamp the plans and to go further up in the air to provide more solutions.

Asides.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Sir, we focus a lot on the situation in rural Barbados, and the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act, but urban Barbados has serious significant housing problems. If we are going to solve them, I think, we are going to have more dense solutions, in terms of our housing.

The views are mixed on the whole idea of high rise housing. They are some who do not like them, aesthetically. Some suggest that they may cause other problems. For sure, some of our town planners, both in the private and public sectors simply have strong views on the impact it has on our street scape and so on.

I think that given the importance of housing and the fact that we have reached crisis proportions, we have to go that route in urban Barbados. Sir, where Stewart's Lodge is concerned, I have no difficulty at all with going to high-rise building on that site, to provide us with even more solutions for urban Barbados.

Sir, as far as Valery is concerned, also in my constituency in Britton's Hill, I have already given the Minister my views. I think that Valerie is a very unique area with the playing field. There is some green field as well. It is not only existing abandoned properties. An area can be redeveloped to enhance the amenities, such as the playing field, hard court and play park. You can still provide some high rise housing solutions at the same time.

I know that the Inter-American Development Bank has funded this Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme.

While that is not necessarily on the list, I think there is an opportunity to have a neighbourhood upgrade, and it need not be very expensive. Mr. Speaker, I think that the move to do something about Valery is good and the Ministry of Housing has an excellent opportunity to provide those housing solutions. To provide them in a way that those qualities of life issues: a play park, a hard court and so on can still be provided for. You can have a community building effort as well and not just about bricks and mortar. I think that is important.

12.10 p.m.

The Inter-American Development Bank Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme for Cat's Castle, Greenfield and some areas in St. Thomas is the right direction to go.

I also believe that the heavy focus on our housing programme, given what is happening economically, makes sense. Sir, clearly the public sector has to now lead much of the economic activity. By putting money into constructing housing, we are going to create jobs and also provide greater spend in the economy which would be good as we approach what could be a potential downturn. Mr. Speaker, at the macroeconomic level, I think it makes absolute sense.

Mr. Speaker, I also believe that the decision that the Government has taken to try to encourage the private sector to get involved in a serious way in providing affordable housing solutions is also a very good move. Unfortunately, in recent years, we find that the private sector developers tended to go more towards the higher end properties that presumably have greater opportunities for profit.

The fact that we have been actively engaged in and is encouraging the private sector to go with affordable housing solutions is important. There is no way that the National Housing Corporation can solve the housing crisis in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, the private sector has to be engaged, but they need to be directed. Therefore, I think that the Government is doing the correct thing in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak about the private sector, I do not only mean the developers. I know that the Honourable Member for St. George North spoke about the need to recapitalise the various housing funds that are providing loan opportunities for persons to acquire housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, while that is good, I also believe that there is enough liquidity in the financial system and we should try to encourage the banks and the other financial intermediaries to also put their monies into providing housing solutions. I know that at one stage there was a suggestion that even the National Insurance Scheme should also look at getting into mortgages.

Mr. Speaker, I see no reason why those pools of funds cannot be deployed as we seek to tackle what, in my view, is a sincere crisis we have in Barbados because housing has reached crisis proportion, there is no doubt about it. Mr. Speaker, anyone who has been a representative for even a month would tell you that the largest requests you get from your constituents is for land, or for house and land. The only way that we are going to solve the problem is by taking some deliberate actions.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also assure the Honourable Member for St. James North that there is an effort on the part of the Government - I know because I have been approached as a Parliamentary Representative - to do an audit of abandoned properties in urban Barbados. It is already happening in urban Barbados. It might not have started to happen in St. James North, but I would like to think that the plan is to take it there. The idea is that we will look for abandoned properties and go through the Land Acquisition Act which allows us to acquire the land for private purposes to provide housing solutions for people. I think that we need to be just aware that effort is on.

Mr. Speaker, I also hope that the Transfer of Title Programme under the Urban Development Commission can also be given a serious shot in the arm and that we can get on with it. I understand that much of it is legal entanglements. There is the process of the surveying of the lots that takes time.

Sir, there are many tenantries in my Constituency where persons who have met the criteria as set out through the Urban Development Commission are still awaiting the necessary paper work. There has been much improvement in the Hall's Road Tenantry situation but there is still Scott Gap in Britton's Hill, Bannister Land and Campaign Land off Martindale's Road. However, Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that certainly with the thinking of this Government, and with the idea that we would put some focus on providing hard housing solutions, that we are going in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, it is very gratifying to be part of a Government that has actually come to Government and in a short space of time has been able to get so many projects off the ground where housing and affordable housing is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we did not have any windfall from VAT, on the contrary. We have had to deal with strictures of these times. However, in spite of that, we have lived up to our pledge from the campaign to put people first. Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to see what is finally happening in my own constituency of St. Michael South Central and I

am equally as happy to see that there is a serious national effort to deal with this problem of housing.

Once again, I laud the efforts of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and totally support this Resolution.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this matter before this Honourable Chamber and to join with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central in congratulating the Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, in demonstrating to the public that this new Democratic Labour Party Government is serious about providing tangible housing solutions for the people of Barbados.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Minister of Housing and Lands, made the point that this Government is committed to presenting housing solutions in the form of the construction of possibly high-rise terraced units in the Mason Hall Street area to cater to the people of the City and indeed wider Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support this initiative. Mr. Speaker, I say to this Honourable Chamber and the country that this is yet another example of the visionary focus of this new Government in providing serious solutions to housing, which the last Government did not provide.

Mr. Speaker, I support the idea of high-rise housing in these terraced units because certainly in urban Barbados, there is a very limited area of land available for housing solutions. St. Michael is the most densely populated parish in our country to the extent that we have 11 constituencies within that single parish. Sir, we have thousands of people who are on the waiting list at the National Housing Corporation for rental unit,s or house lots, or house and land, and so a caring Government must be aggressive in terms of the provision of these housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, although I support high-rise terraced units, I would humbly suggest that we owe it to the people who would reside in these units, especially on the higher floors, for example, if you go up four storeys, to seriously consider providing simple elevators. Sir, even if we put younger persons to occupy the upper floors, they would get old. Sir, their parents or grandparents may even come to live with them.

Therefore, I would urge Government not to follow the bad example of the Barbados Labour Party's approach to this issue when for example they constructed London Bourne Towers without elevators and now even the postmen no longer go upstairs to deliver mail. Sir, the residents there have expressed concerns that they have to go several flights up on foot.

12.20 p.m.

Notwithstanding the fact it is good exercise, but with life expectancy increasing in our country, with greater access to modern medication and health solutions, we would realise that as people get older, they would get arthritis and would therefore need that elevator to be able to reach their units on the higher floors. Mr. Speaker, I totally support the idea of increasing the height of these terrace units, so that we could provide more housing solutions on this limited land space available to us.

Mr. Speaker, in talking about the track record of the Barbados Labour Party, when you look at the City and indeed urban Barbados, you would see that thousands of Barbadians today, under the l4 years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration, still have to suffer the indignity of using pit toilets and live in rotting wooden houses. Many of these people are working class people, who do not have the funds to get the mortgage or to build suitable houses themselves and are depending on Government to provide these housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I have been invited to tour with the Minister of Housing and Lands, to identify areas within the City where we could provide housing. I have identified some land in New Orleans where I could see a number of rental high-rise units being located there. I am confident that the Minister of Housing and Lands would facilitate such.

I have also visited several vacant lots in Bayville, Baxters Road area, Hunte Street and other surrounding areas, where we could intermittently see a number of vacant lots. Sir, certainly I would support the Government and the Minister of Housing and Lands in seeking to access these lots for persons who need urgent housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, let me turn to the issue of housing and the Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, to which the Honourable Member for St. George North alluded. Sir, the Honourable Member has admitted to the public that the Barbados Labour Party's approach to this programme was rather slothful. The Honourable Member has admitted that it has taken more than l0 years for the Barbados Labour Party to make any headway into this programme, therefore, the Democratic Labour Party has come to the rescue and is ensuring that this project is fully executed.

Mr. Speaker, I know you are very interested in this project, since, as part of this pilot project, Cats Castle and Greenfield, located in the City; Garden Land, located in

your constituency; as well as Allen View, St. Thomas, have all been identified as catchment areas to be fully upgraded, in terms of the provision of water-bourne toilet and bath facilities for all households within these catchment areas, as well as improved drainage, lighting and widened streets, so that emergency vehicles could easily access these areas. There will also be the provision of green spaces. In other words, there will be a kind of a far-reaching upgrading of the neighbourhood, rather than a piece-by-piece approach to neighbourhood upgrading.

Mr. Speaker, both you and I have a vested interest in this, as well as the general working-class population. Sir, you and I know that the Barbados Labour Party, through their own admission, was rather slothful, that they were taking painstakingly long in the execution of this project. This is demonstrated by the fact that in the dying days of the Barbados Labour Party Administration, when they held town hall meetings to explain this project to the residents of these neighbourhoods, they did not even have a ministerial presence.

I remember attending a number of these Town Hall meetings, at the Salvation Church, Reed Street, at the St. Mary's School, and in the National Housing Corporation car park. Sir, on no occasion did I see the then Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, neither did I see the then Minister of Housing and Lands. Indeed, on no occasion did we see the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Housing and Lands attending any of those meetings. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party Government showed little interest in this Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme. In fact, on some occasions, they kept it from the Press, they hid it from the public and slid it through.

Mr. Speaker, I am a resident of Reed Street and so they could not have kept me out. I remember attending one town hall meeting at St. Mary's Primary School, and on subsequent town hall meetings I learned that the Barbados Labour Party Administration's approach to this housing and neighbourhood upgrading programme, under the Inter-American Development Bank, according to those officials at those meetings, was that they were actively to alter the Town and Country Planning Act, to allow the Barbados Labour Party Administration, to build smaller than the exiting minimal size that is allowed under the Act to construct housing.

The Barbados Labour Party Government was seeking to build matchbox houses for those persons in Greenfield, Cats Castle and Allen View. Sir, shame on them, and this Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North stepped in, on assumption of office, and put a stop to that.

Sir, this is the approach of the Barbados Labour Party Government. That is their track record, treating poor people like second-class citizens. Sir, for example, the Barbados Labour Party Government executed the relocation of persons from Church Village, Bridgetown, next to the Central Bank, to the same Lower Burney we are now hearing so much about. We are hearing it was a dump and an area that is prone to flooding.

The Barbados Labour Party took the good people of the City, up to Lower Burney, and those residents complained that the replacement houses were woefully inadequate. They were so inadequate to such an extent that their living room and dining room furniture that fitted comfortably in their wooden houses in Church Village, could not fit in those replacement houses at Lower Burney. Mr. Speaker, I visited those house and so I speak from an informed perspective. The living room/dining room area was one room space, and the residents had a choice whether to put in either the living room or the dining room set. Further, the refrigerator door could not open completely, it butted against the stove, because the kitchen was so small.

There was also inadequate ventilation. There was no back door, which was a greater security risk. In some cases, the toilet was right next to the kitchen. Sir, this is the track record of the Barbados Labour Party, in terms of their approach to housing solutions for poor people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, it goes further, with regards to the residents who were relocated from Pickwick Gap, to Barbarees Garden. Sir, some of those persons who were relocated from Emmerton, near the Sewerage Treatment Plant, to Barbarees Garden, have complained about the same issue of the replacement houses being too small.

In fact, it was at a town hall meeting at Emmerton that this Honourable Member was able to intervene, when the then Minister of Housing and Lands, the former Honourable Member for St. James South, publicly and boldly told the residents at Emmerton that the Barbados Labour Party Government was going to give them a mixture of board/wall houses, in terms of replacement houses.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member said "no". Those people demanded the same wall houses that the residents of Church Village got. Sir, a precedent was set to give those people wall. Why then would the Barbados Labour Party want to give people from Emmerton board/wall houses? The Barbados Labour Party then backtracked, after being publicly embarrassed, and that is how those people from Emmerton were finally able to get stone structures at Barbarees Gardens, but the Barbados Labour Party Government had no intention of giving them

wall houses, they were going to give them a mixture of wood-and-wall.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member visited the Lower Burney site and saw that some of those houses that had been built by the Barbados Labour Party were in flood-prone areas. Sir, water was springing from under the cellar of some of these houses, and this threatened the safety and health of some of those occupants.

12.30 p.m.

We saw new houses built in that area cracking at the seams due to poor construction and inadequate foundation. Sir, that is the track record of the Barbados Labour Party Government. Mr. Speaker, do not be fooled that the Barbados Labour Party has any great track record in terms of providing housing solutions because nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of a land bank. The Honourable Member for St. James North is agreeing with This Side that the issue of a land bank was ludicrous.

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker,

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, he said he wanted to get to the bottom of this issue of a land bank. I am not going to play with words but the public will judge. It is clear that the Honourable Member was wondering if it was an offshore bank because the land was yet to be seen on this little rock.

Mr. Speaker, what this Government is doing is that we are making sure there is an aggressive approach to the provision of housing solutions. I agree with the Honourable Member for St. George North that it is important to escalate the capital works project to stimulate the economy. Sir, this is precisely what this Democratic Labour Party Government is doing, unlike the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, for example, at Country Park Towers, as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central mentioned, you and I know, when we pass the corner of Whitepark Road/Country Road/Passage Road, the public would have seen the steel at that site rusting for years under the Barbados Labour Party regime, while thousands of people were lining up at the National Housing Corporation looking for housing solutions, people without toilets and baths, their houses leaking hurricane season after hurricane season, their lives in peril and the Barbados Labour Party negligently allowing that project at Country Park Towers to be at a standstill for years.

Mr. Speaker, what did the Democratic Labour Party Government do? Sir, within days, literally of assuming office, we committed to initiating the restoration of that project and, I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for going forward with great haste to ensure now that as we pass that area, we can see the project well on the way.

Sir, talking about that, Mr. Speaker, to demonstrate that the Barbados Labour Party really was very slothful in the execution of the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, could you believe, Mr. Speaker, that as part of this Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, since it is a comprehensive programme that residents at Greenfield and Cat's Castle, in particular, according to the Barbados Labour Party Government's plans, would have been moved temporarily to the same Country Park Towers location while the work was being done at Greenfield and Cat's Castle areas?

Sir, you understand that when the Barbados Labour Party left the Country Towers programme at a standstill, clearly, understand the Barbados Labour Party Government it would have taken forever to execute that Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme. Sir, the members of the public should not be fooled that the Barbados Labour Party Government was serious about providing these housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, under the Democratic Labour Party Government, when Country Park Towers will be completed within a few months, then clearly, it will provide the framework to execute the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, so that those residents from Greenfield and Cat's Castle would be able to move temporarily to Country Park Towers, the houses improved at the original site and then afterwards they will return to Greenfield and Cat's Castle anaerobic degeneration then other Barbadians can access Country Park Towers.

Sir, that is the comprehensive approach of the Democratic Labour Party Government. Sir, within the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, we will access IADB funding so that there will be an increase in the institutional capacity of the National Housing Corporation structure so that more staff would be better trained so that more housing solutions could be provided to the public in terms of that technical support. You would have heard publicly the National Housing Corporation announcing that under this programme hundreds of Barbadians would be able to access thousands of dollars in being able to complete renovations or construction of their homes. Sir, we in the Democratic Labour Party are confident about housing.

Mr. Speaker, I know it is close to lunch so I will not delay the House very much longer. I support the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central in his call for the completion of the transfer of title to the Urban

Development Commission programme because, as we assumed office, we found that this whole process had stagnated under the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Sir, within the City, for example, the Ribbetts Land area, Nelson Land, Spruce Street, Vine Street and the Beckwith Street area, the Baxter's Road area, Hunte's Street, Chapman Street, Mahagony Lane and Lightfoot Lane; there are many urban tenantries here. These persons are looking forward to being able to access their lots at concessionary rates and this Democratic Labour Party is committed to executing this project so that they can get title deeds to their properties that they have occupied for decades.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to go into the issue of drainage. We will deal with that on another occasion but just to say that we have no problem in saying that we are serious about drainage and that is why the Prime Minister was so visionary to ensure that this is within a Ministry that would have a statutory board to ensure that drainage solutions are provided so that the serious flooding that occurred under the Barbados Labour Party in Murphy's Pasture in the City; in Chapman Lane; in Vine Street; in Reed Street and Mason Hall Street would be a thing of the past.

Mr. Speaker, when I took the media on tour of the area, you would have seen drains caved in east of the Salvation Army connecting Reed Street and Crumpton Street so that if there is a heavy down pour this afternoon, I would need a boat to access my house at Reed Street.

Mr. Speaker, St. Mary's Primary School is a Category I hurricane shelter and those children would have to be rescued by boat because Mason Hill Street would be flooded. The drains caved in all along Murphy's Pasture and down north of the Sewerage Treatment Plant at Emmerton. I am confident that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East will stop at nothing to ensure that these issues are seriously addressed.

Mr. Speaker, we have the NEAT Programme, where we are putting hundreds of Barbadians to work to improve drainage; to ensure that the drains are cleared of bush to reduce flooding; where we are providing bobcats and trailer trucks to ensure that heavy machinery is provided to ensure that drainage is seriously addressed.

Mr. Speaker, I remember a few days after we assumed office, I took a team of Ministry of Housing officials from the Drainage Unit to clear the drains west of the Westbury School pasture. The Ministry of Health's officials were so embarrassed because a few workers had gloves and they said it was the first time they had seen gloves. The Ministry of Transport and Works has assured us that these issues would be things of the past because provision is being made for gloves, equipment and so on for these NEAT workers.

Mr. Speaker, back then, the Drainage Unit complained because they were using elongated hoes and shovels to clear drains running underneath streets. They need high powered hoses to flush those drains and these could not be found in the Drainage Unit. Sir, that is why, under this Democratic Labour Party Administration those facilities will be provided to the new Minister, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

12:40

Sir, this Honourable Member will deal with that in more detail on other occasions, but just to say that I congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North in demonstrating to the public that the Democratic Labour Party is serious about housing in our country.

I thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.50 p.m. today.

Hon. R.L. SEALY: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 1.50 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.40 p.m.

1.52 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate on the vesting of lands at Six Roads in St. Philip for the purpose of confirming and consolidating the ownership of those properties in the hands of good Barbadians.

Sir, at this time of Independence, I can think of no more fitting way in which we, the Democratic Labour Party, the Government of Barbados, can show our commitment to satisfying the urgent needs of Barbadians, like we are today, than by confirming to them, our programme in housing, which was so well enunciated in our Manifesto of January this year, when the people spoke.

Sir, I want to truly join in congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Minister of Housing for his presentation, which was fully supported by the Members on This Side and the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is not now in his seat. It was grudgingly supported by the Honourable Member for St. George North, who was going along very well in praising the achievements of the Honourable Minister, but when he saw the shadow of his former master, turn the door, shifted gear, Sir, and reversed on all that he had said previously.

Sir, I know what Barbadians are talking about when they talk about housing. I know what they speak to, when they speak to the change in the climate of Barbados, in terms of hope. Sir, what we used to hear in the glory days of money, in the days of Value Added Tax windfalls in 1986 to 2007, was a myriad of promises, and a myriad of public relation gestures would have been foisted on to Barbadians.

I remember well, being part of that group who feverishly and anxiously toured the grounds of the National Housing Corporation to lay eyes on this wonder, which was referred to as the Bumblebee House, the Utopia House and all these other houses that were, of course, mere shells because they never manifested themselves into anything that Barbadians could put a grip on.

Sir, what we heard this morning from the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, in actual fact, was the level of confusion which reigned in the housing programme of the Barbados Labour Party, so much so that the Honourable Member for St. James North was not sure whether the Government in which he was a member, was engaging in the development of a land bank for use by Barbadians, non Barbadians, or if it was a deposit bank.

However, we on This Side are convinced that it was an offshore bank and it was nothing to do with satisfying the needs of Barbadians at all.

Sir, the problem that they on that Side have, is living with their consciences when they stand. Sir, when one could hear the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, recite his programme and not only a programme of what he plans to do, but what he has actually been able to get started.

I want to refer to an encounter I had with a constituent. This was about two months ago now. We were talking and she talked about her needs in housing. When I had finished speaking to her about the plans which we would have discussed at Parliamentary groups, in a caucus as a political party and what I had determined from the Honourable Member for St. Philip North's position on solving the housing problem, she said:

"You know, Mr. Boyce, I am leaving this room full of hope and full of expectancy. I am cheered, Sir, by what you have told me."

Sir, I did not tell this lady that she would have a house in Constant, Lower Burney or Coverley, but I told her that there was a programme in the works, which would manifest itself in actual, real solutions for Barbadians and she could rest assured that the record of the Barbados Labour Party would not prevent us from bringing about housing solutions in Barbados.

I believe that as we gather momentum in our housing programme, more and more Barbadians are beginning to recognise why they had to make the choice they made in January of this year. Sir, in spite of the utterances, flowery language and the organisational strength to which they revert from time to time, the actual fact is delivery. This is only about housing today because that is the topic, but delivery has been totally absent, in the programme of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, as been said in here today, they were concentrating on programmes, which were not so much as improving the lives of Barbadians whom they were supposed to serve, but they were improving the lives of their friends and their associates, to the detriment of wider Barbados.

We are delighted, as we said, to have been able to go into the nooks and crannies of our constituencies because that is from whence we gain our strength, and examine the lay of the land; examine the lots that are open and usable, those that available, those that may have to be acquired, an exercise which, Mr. Speaker, requires a presence on the ground in the constituency.

Therefore, we can identify lands in the City. We can identify lands in the suburbs of St. Michael. We can identify lands in the hills and fields of Barbados, and that is exactly the programme we are talking about. Sir, that is why the Honourable Minister can speak about Constant, Coverley, French Village, Todds, Vineyard, Clifton, Guinea, Fustic and Sedge Pond, Coconut Hall, Applewhaites and Bushy Park as potential solutions.

2.00 p.m.

These amount to thousands of solutions following on the heels of an Administration, who by their own admission, was absolutely stagnant and void of any idea how to carry forward the housing programme for Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, these programmes are in place and working. The demand is there. Sir, we believe we would find solutions for Barbadians, which would include access to banking arrangements and to favourable rents and purchase arrangements that they can take advantage of so that we can enter into private/public sector partnerships

with Barbadians in need of housing solutions. We can extend that down from the ethereal levels to which the Barbados Labour Party took it to actually involve Barbados in purchase programmes that can benefit them and so reduce the cost.

Mr. Speaker, we are working wherever possible to reduce the cost to Barbadians. Our Prime Minister has made it clear that he is not yet satisfied that the persons who moved so quickly to raise prices for freighting, distribution and other materials when there is an increase in basic requirements like fuel, do not necessarily move with the same alacrity to bring down the prices.

Mr. Speaker, just like how we have structured our programme to respond to the prices, I believe that the merchants of Bridgetown should also structure a programme which reflects reductions in fuel prices when they occur and other important materials. This is a necessary requirement going forward.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the Barbados Labour Party left costs in Barbados. We know where the Barbados Labour Party left the cost of construction and of land. Sir, it was their position that land in Barbados should take its highest value. It was not about its most effective utilisation, it was about the highest value. Sir, there was this uncontrolled and relentless emphasis on the building of these super structures for foreign use and this lack of attention to the basic needs of Barbadians and the satisfaction of that urgent first need of all young Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, we are happy on This Side today to pilot this kind of programme and to support it as Members of Cabinet and Members of Parliament and to encourage Barbadians at this very important time of our Independence that our programme includes them.

Sir, there is no greater gift a young Barbadian family can look forward to than actually owning that piece of the rock for themselves so that they can then use it as a developmental tool going forward into the vagaries of this adulthood life and raising a family on a secure foundation and a real foundation including a home.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the Democratic Labour Party would concentrate on. This is where our energies would lie. This is where we would focus unforgivingly, despite the protestations on That Side and the idle claim that they thought of this first.

Sir, they can think of anything. I can think that I am a magician. I can think that I am a millionaire. I can think that I am anything in the world but the reality is that I am simple plain old John Boyce. Sir, we have to therefore work within this framework. Sir, this idea that we thought of Constant, Coverley and Lower Burney...

Sir, the only person who has a comfortable house in Lower Burney is the Honourable Member for St. George North. He is the only person I am aware of in Barbados who lives comfortably in Lower Burney. Everybody else in Lower Burney has problems with foundations, roads, and everything, but he and his Mercedes is comfortable.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: In what way, please?

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: He is saying that I reside in a house in Lower Burney.

Mr. SPEAKER: He has not said so.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South, please continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: The Mercedes is comfortable there in Lower Burney. I see it whenever I pass there.

Mr. Speaker, the point we made, which the Honourable Member just supported, is that there is this distinct difference how we think. Sir, there is this distinct difference because instead of just thinking about it, or dreaming about it, we want to put it in place and make sure it work for Barbadians.

Sir, we are serious about this programme and we are committed to it, that is why Barbadians can rest comfortable in the knowledge at this 42nd Anniversary of Independence. Sir, when we celebrate again on Saturday evening, I want Barbadians to recognise how much this Democratic Labour Party is committed to their progress and development in Barbados. Sir, we will not be distracted by the utterances of the Barbados Labour Party as they come to grips with the reality of their less than successful tenure as a Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we have a job to do which we have accepted and under the leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister and the Members of this team we will make sure that Barbadians are better off whenever we demit office in the future.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give full support to this measure before us. I have always argued that the issue of housing is one that clearly exemplifies the differences between this Democratic Labour Party Administration and the former one.

I have always said that one must have some kind of philosophical mooring from which to operate. It is to the cause of our commitment as a political party and as individuals to the cause that we were able so quickly to find affordable housing solutions for Barbadians. It was no magic wand per se. It is unbelievable that in a few short months we could have brought so many housing solutions to Barbadians that could not be found by the former Administration.

Sir, to me, that speaks volumes in respect of the commitment one has to the cause when you recognise that housing ought to be a priority, and that in a society like Barbados, each man and woman likes to know they can push a key in their own door. When you recognise that in this society your manhood is oftentimes determined by your ability to have a roof over your head, then one cannot help but cry shame on the last Administration in respect of their housing failures.

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that my colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, was able this morning to stand up in this Honourable Chamber and speak so eloquently to the successes of this new Administration in respect of housing solutions and lands in Barbados in the last 10 months.

Mr. Speaker, we made a commitment in our Manifesto in the last Election that we would provide 500 house spots and we have done a lot more than that. What happened before is that you had promises of a land bank. You had all the glitz and glamour and all the PR about Bumble Bee houses, Lady Bird houses, Grass Snake houses and all sorts of names. Sir, one cannot make jokes about these things. The annoying thing is that these names were...

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: What was annoying is where these names were derived from. I am told they were nicknames for Members of the Cabinet at the time. You cannot make mockery of the serious problems that we have in this country. Sir, you had all of this glitz and glamour and a PR exercise and not one Barbadian was housed.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West would know well about that name.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: You have a situation when housing has always been a measure of success for Barbadians. We all know the struggle that our fore parents went through to own a piece of the rock.

2.10 p.m.

As you reflect on this our 42nd Year of Independence and what the Right Excellent Errol Barrow and others would have done to build this country up, at a time when we should be transforming and moving this nation to the next level of development, we were in a situation where it was still a matter of personal issues in respect to housing solutions.

We came to power in a situation where housing solutions were the number one concern for Barbadians. In my constituency, St. James South, which is predominately middle class, I have a situation where children of these Barbadians who struggled: Teachers, firemen, civil servants, police officers, who the former Democratic Labour Party Administration was able to provide housing solutions for in Wanstead, West Terrace, Husband's Gardens and such like, their children, now reaching the age of maturity where they feel they should be stepping on to owning a piece of the rock, have to face a situation where they are forced to rent, or to remain at home for an inordinate length of time. That, to our minds, was totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, our successes to date in our housing programme is based on our commitment to solving that problem that we recognised had been growing out of hand during the last l0 years. Mr. Speaker, it is not just the issue of providing house spots or houses and land in the various parts of this island but I want to commend my colleague, who, with the stroke of a pen, has provided housing to tenants of the National Housing Corporation, who have been in those units for more than 20 years.

In my constituency, l57 families to date can now claim that they own a piece of the rock. Sir, that is something for which this Administration must be commended. It was unacceptable that individuals could have been living in these units for such a long time and living in fear, never knowing if they would ever own a piece of the rock.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North went into Haynesville with me and we have both shared in that joy. Sir, we saw people crying tears of joy, now that they were able to own a piece of the rock.

Mr. Speaker, it goes further, as we have asked many of them, what does it mean to them? It means now that they

own a piece of real property that they could take to the bank as security, to secure funding to help their own children move to the next level, for example. There is tremendous transformation that can take place in this society, as a result of the innovative housing programmes and policies by this Democratic Labour Party administration.

When I reflect in respect to what we have done, for example, and ensuring that school children no longer have to pay bus fares, in many respects, that has translated into some families saving $200 to $300 per month. This is money they could now put towards owning a piece of the rock. We have thought all these things through and I hope you could see the connection between them, because this is an Administration that cares about the average person.

Mr. Speaker, the former Administration, to my mind , whose views are well-espoused by the Honourable Member for St. Peter, who I thought was going to be in this Honourable Chamber today, had a view that land should be put to its highest use. They had a housing policy that was far more attractive to the high network investor than it was for the average man and woman who tilled in the hot sun; those who worked as maids and gardeners for a lot of these individuals. Sir, those individuals have a right to own a piece of this rock. As a matter of fact, I would say they have a right to own a piece of this rock.

Mr. Speaker, the housing programme of the former Administration was one that did not lend support to what we are seeing today, which is to transform this nation. Mr. Speaker, if you talk about the cost of housing, for example, I well remember, in l994, the cost per square foot for the average three-bedroom/two-bathroom wall house was about $l05 per square foot. By 2005, that escalated to almost $225 per square foot. I felt that any enlightened Government, at that point in time, who was serious about providing affordable housing to Barbadians, would have sought to do things to help control that cost, such as, for example, removing VAT on the first $l50 000 input cost for construction.

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Chairman, we do not need to be guided by the Other Side. We know clearly what needs to be done and we have certainly started the process. As a matter of fact, we perhaps are way ahead of what they were expecting us to do at this point in time. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, when you are committed to the cause, when you understand the importance of owning your own home, of pushing your key in your own door, then we know that you are committed to moving this island forward.

Sir, there are more things that will come. When I say, for example, that we are working on restructuring within the Barbados Water Authority, Town Planning Department, and the number of agencies that impact upon developmental costs to real estate in Barbados. Once you have improved those efficiencies. Once you have brought the cost down or at least neutralised them, these things ought to be transferrable to developers who in turn would transfer them to the home owners. Sir, that is what this Government is committed to.

Mr. Speaker, we have certainly looked at all the aspects of housing challenges in Barbados, for example, the cost of real estate, and therefore we have set it at $5 per square foot. It is not only that in excess of 500 Barbadians will now own a piece of the rock at that price. We have been able to get it at that price because, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North alluded to, these are plots of land where sites and services, by and large, were already done. Therefore, that developmental cost is not there.

Mr. Speaker, it is not that we are simply providing families with land at that price, Government is also subtly influencing the market conditions because as a result of that, you should now expect that developers should not be jacking their prices up. In respect to land cost, we expect that once these lots were on the market, developers would certainly recognise that their share of the market is not as great as it used to be and so the cost will also be contained.

Mr. Speaker, we also looked at other issues that will have to come to the fore, in respect to the mortgage markets, in respect to banks and their role in respect to development. I have heard bankers and other quarters speak of their role being not developmental. Mr. Speaker, I hold the view that banks in Barbados have to play a more pivotal role in providing affordable housing solutions to Barbadians.

I do not think enough of that is being done. As a Government perhaps, we might have to use moral suasion in the first instance but certainly I would like to see banks providing more affordable mortgage and better rates to the average Barbadian, in respect to helping with housing solutions in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I truly commend the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, in particular, for the drive, the determination, enthusiasm and commitment shown to providing affordable housing solutions in Barbados. I say that as a Government we are not just committed to low income housing alone, I have argued in my constituency, which is predominately middle income, housing solutions have to be found there.

Sir, I commend the Minister and his Staff for identifying almost 80 house lots in St. James South, which

I believe would go to members of my constituency and others in particular. Of course, we have also been able to identify land that could go towards terraced units, because there will always be that segment of that society who will have to rent until they could own. Therefore, with a Right To Own Programme this Government is working on, I am sure that will come to bear. Mr. Speaker, in St. James South, we are looking forward to having more terraced units that could provide housing solutions to the very low and economically-challenged in our society.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would want to say I believe this Administration is clearly on the right path. We are still steadfast in our commitment in our Manifesto, and I know that in their very quiet moments, the Honourable Members on the Other Side have given their support to this measure. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

2.20 p.m.

Mr. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate on housing with some excitement because of where we are heading, the direction I see that we are moving in terms of providing housing solutions for Barbadians after practically a drought that ensued over the past, I cannot say 14 years, because from January 15, this Administration had demonstrated the commitment of ensuring that housing, as a priority for Barbadians is again put on the front burner.

Sir, in that regard, I want to join with my colleagues in congratulating the Honourable Minister of Housing, my name sake, for seriously showing that drive and inclination which is necessary. I believe what has come out of this debate so far is that all it really needed at the level of the Minister of Housing, is the kind of determination, the level of efficient and, of course, backed up by a plan of action to deliver on this, what I consider to be the No. 1 problem that is faced across Barbados, certainly in my constituency. Sir, on a weekly basis, I would say that about 90 per cent of those persons who come to me have been challenged over the past 15 years and 20 years, joining in a queue to either find a house spot or to find some means of housing.

Mr. Speaker, certainly the challenge for us has been immense, given the pressure that has built up over the years in the system. I believe that the database in the National Housing Corporation is significant. It is so huge based on the backlog of persons who have been waiting in line for housing. Mr. Speaker, that is why I am excited because listening to the Minister of Housing and certainly moving around the constituency of Christ Church West Central with him, already we can see that there is light on the horizon.

I have journeyed with him in several parts of Christ Church West Central, looking at available house spots. In fact, there are constituents who I have actually brought into the team to scout for house spots and with a certain amount of determination. We are getting information coming in and passing that on to the Minister of Housing and the National Housing Corporation. I understand that we are looking at the area of land in Kendal to also provide housing solutions particularly for persons in the constituency of Christ Church West Central.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is one of the examples that Barbadians are proud of in relation to the programme, which we have so far outlined and, Sir, it speaks volumes to really and truly what has always been necessary in relation to housing. Sir, we have heard so much talk from the Other Side on the presence of a land bank. A bank that we heard now is offshore - very well put by my colleagues, the Minister of Public Works. Sir, essentially, persons have practically had enough frustration.

Mr. Speaker, from my own perspective and I believe why housing has been given such a high priority in this Administration is that we recognise that housing holds the key to the solution to so many of the social problems that we face whether it be dislocation in the family unit or whether it be insecurity in providing for one's family. These are key issues, Mr. Speaker, which, unless we grapple with them quickly, they are capable of creating social dislocation.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly support the prominence we have given to housing. I believe that, as a team, within this Government we have sensed and I believe that long before January 15, we sensed the passion and the need based on the feedback from Barbadians that housing must be given a high priority in any Government that was seeking their votes. If you review and look at our Manifesto, in terms of the housing initiatives and the housing solutions, we have started a programme of action. A programme designed to not talk about housing; not talk about fancy names but to talk about delivering meaningful and affordable solutions to persons.

Mr. Speaker, we can talk about housing until the cows come home, unless we are able to deliver housing solutions that are affordable to Barbadians, then we would not be fulfilling our mission. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I support the concept of rent to own because many Barbadians, many persons from within my constituency and other areas, at this particular point might not be able to afford to purchase land or a house. This is why we felt we needed to have housing solutions that are multi-purposed; housing solutions that are flexible and housing solutions that would be affordable to Barbadians.

We have many, not only single parents, but we have many couples. Sir, I have come across in my constituency a number of young couples who are working and who have had their names at National Housing Corporation for the past 10 years, standing in line. Sir, they are anxious because they are thinking of starting a family. They are thinking about getting on in life but over the past 10 years they have basically been frustrated in that effort. I have had to counsel them and encourage them and basically give them some hope that now that we are huddling together and looking for solutions, that we are determined to find solutions for them.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, I am excited by the energy I am seeing. Already, we have begun to find the kind of purpose and focus that housing has been lacking for so many years. There is a need to ensure that our database of names within the National Housing Corporation is reviewed on a continuous basis because I believe that database is so long and outdated that we still have the situation of persons who are following-up on their housing applications, who are told to apply again.

I believe if we can modernise the data-gathering process at the National Housing Corporation that we can, at a glance, both in terms of numbers and gender, gather a significant database and have an accurate analysis at any one point in time, as it relates to persons in need of housing. I believe we would reduce the amount of persons who are not adhering to the requirements of the National Housing Corporation. I believe the requirement is that you ought not to have previously owned property to qualify for National Housing Corporation housing. Mr. Speaker, I feel that is an area that could be tightened up in relation to our approach to housing.

Mr. Speaker, I see a proactive approach to housing. I believe that where we have to probably focus a bit more is linking that proactivity to the movement of populations across Barbados. A number of people are moving from various areas in Barbados and, certainly, the impact on the community and the ability of that community to generate sufficient housing will be an issue that is worthy of study.

2.30 p.m.

I recognise that other persons would want to join in this debate, however, I could not help but to echo not only my support but to tell Barbadians that we are serious about providing housing solutions, and essentially we have only been in office for 11 months. The signal of pro-activity is intended to bring hope to not only my constituents but hope those Barbadians who have been waiting in line for housing for so many years, who had to wait behind a policy espoused by the Other Side from which the rich and famous and persons who have money alone can afford housing. That is our difference from the Other Side, and the policies we are determined to follow.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I certainly would wish to support this Resolution and to signal my support for the Minister in relation to the pro-activity which he has recognised, and which is so necessary as we move quickly to satisfy the tremendous demand for housing across Barbados.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I rise also to join in this debate on this Resolution and, like my other colleagues, applaud the Honourable Minister of Housing for the kind of outstanding job that he has been doing relative to the whole matter of housing.

I suppose when one thinks of housing, one has to understand the connection between a society's perception of progress, where persons who equate their success with the capacity to own their own homes find that reality in the policy of the Government. If one wants to measure the progress of a country, one must understand the link between housing the nation and assisting persons to actualise relative to their housing needs.

Therefore, a housing programme must start from a position of social consciousness, where those who are responsible for the development and administration of national policy recognises that at the end of the day the real progress of any society, is measured in the success of that society in making them comfortable through housing, feeding their people and other types of indicators, where you can measure the journey of people from one stage of development to another.

Mr. Speaker, it is known that shelter is one of the most basic human needs, and a Government that fails on creating the kind of housing programme that provides shelter for its people across all social bands, a Government that fails to create an environment, where housing not only becomes affordable, becomes accessible and becomes available, a Government that fails to achieve those kinds of social benchmarks is a Government that has lost its social conscience.

I am pleased to say that under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, clearly housing our people has become one of the central planks of the Government's social policy. The whole matter of access, ownership and partnership between the people and their Government becomes especially important as we strive to achieve the

kind of social progress that puts our small island developing State ahead of its cohorts.

I am pleased today to recognise that we have a Minister of Housing who is not simply trying to tick off accomplishments but who is possessed by a desire to ensure that every last Barbadian has the opportunity to have access to shelter.

Mr. Speaker, unless people understand the journey of those who struggle to find a place to call their own, unless persons understand the importance of the journey of those who struggled to be able to own a piece of this rock, chances are you would not be able to give the kind of fervour, the kind of passion, the kind of commitment that we have seen in our Honourable Minister of Housing, as he continues to plough forward to assist this Government in achieving this important social mandate.

Sir, when a person who needs housing is able to achieve the successful meeting of that need, that in of itself infuses that individual with a certain kind of hope, a certain kind of justice, loyalty, a certain kind of belonging, if you will, in his or her own society. Therefore, a Government must become fixated on the work of achieving that level of success, as it relates to housing the people of this nation.

Sir, all of us in this Place sit week after week, and hear the cries of ordinary Barbadians who are in search of a place to call their own. Sir, day in and day out ordinary young ambitious Barbadians come to the place where they believe that they can be a message of hope, that these persons will be able to get a piece of this rock, that has eluded some people for 14 years.

It has eluded some people for 10 years. There are young people out there, some of them who have been recently married, building their families and want to have a house of their own. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that it creates an environment where those ambitions can be realised and where the partnerships between the people and their Government result in the kind of social progress that is so vital and so important.

Sir, in order for a Government to press forward on this mandate, that Government must hold in the highest esteem, the human dignity of every single citizen, and no individual should be seen or recognised as not significant enough, where the full effort and the energies of the Government are barred from assisting them in achieving this important social or psych.-social need. Therefore, this Government prides itself in recognising the dignity and worth of every citizen, regardless of their circumstances of life and through the Minister of Housing, this Government is committed and under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, this Government is committed to ensuring that housing does not become a thing of promise, but it becomes a thing of reality, for those persons who continue to work towards achieving their goals.

Sir, Government must use its instruments to benefit not only those who govern, but to benefit those who are governed.

2.40 p.m.

Sir, in the past, very often we have seen, where the symbols of success in this society was resident only with those who governed. Those who elected them to govern, struggled on the edges and fringes of social distress. This Government takes a whole different view.

The view of this Government is that the actions of this Government must be propelled by a careful understanding of the needs of the people of this country, and that whatsoever we do, what moves us to act, Mr. Speaker, is a continuous awareness of the needs of all Barbadians, regardless of where they may reside in this country.

I could talk about my constituents in Christ Church East, many of them who have come and said: "Here is my tracking number. I had it since 1995." Those who came and said: "You know Mr. MP, I called to ask if it was still there. They cannot find it, so I will go and register again." What I try to say to them is that this Government is committed to ensuring that those needs are met, but please understand that there is a long list of persons who have been waiting.

The interesting thing about all of this is that some of those who were elected to govern the people and to make a path for the people, came into office and were able to own plantations, plantation houses, great houses, and many of the constituents that they were supposed to be representing were left behind.

This Government intends to ensure that no Barbadian is left behind, in its attempt to ensure that the needs of our honest, hardworking Barbadians are met on a consistent basis. Therefore, the Government must see, as the key driver of its action, the needs of those persons who, outside of the assistance of Government, may never be able to realise their dream.

Mr. Speaker, it is all right to dream that every house should have a car. It is all right to dream that everyone should be able to own land and have these possessions. There is another story when the Government puts its hands to the plough and ensures that the very basic needs that signify human progress are being met in our society.

We must understand that it is not only important to house our people. We understand that the process of shelter

becomes an important element in human development. It is a basic need and that is why the Government of the day has been able to come up with a housing solution programme, called, HELP (housing every last person).

I remember another programme called HEART that was a most heartless programme because many persons marched to see a model house and it is still a model house, because no one has been able to benefit from that programme called HEART.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, it is about time that we explain what this HELP Programme means. Sir, in order to be able to house every last Barbadian, first of all, we must make housing affordable. I am concerned and I am sure that the Honourable Minister of Housing, also registers the same concern where there are many Barbadians out there who are still unable to purchase a piece of land but has a house sitting on someone's property and they are forced to move that house and they are looking for a spot to rent.

I hope that as a Government as we continue to pursue our programme, that remains an option for those persons who are in dire need of protecting their small investment and that they would have the opportunity to place that house on a piece of land, owned by the Government, with the intention that they use the rental route to eventually own the same spot of land that they want to own.

Affordability is important and that is why the Government has put together a package, where there is a careful blend between the land, the house and the cost, and where the Government seeks to make it as easy as possible for persons to be able to work their way through the process of owning that piece of land and that house.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Government has a good track record so far. The National Housing Corporation has been able to take those units, where people have lived for 20 years or more and pay the economic cost for those units, and rather than offering them for $14 000, as was proposed by the other Administration, we are now able to pass them on to those persons free of cost, except for the legal cost.

Mr. Speaker, this is what you really call social engineering. This is what you really call moving from a promise and a hope to ownership. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the many news items on the television how persons were moved to a point of tears, when they realised that finally they can say: "I am able to live in a place I can truly call my own." Mr. Speaker, that is the hope of every single Barbadian.

We do not want the lack of ability to own your own home to become a generational thing. We want to be able to break that cycle and I believe that our Government is on the right track in achieving that particular endeavour. Therefore, we must house every last person, beginning with accessibility, affordability and availability.

I believe that it will take this Government a continuous quest to be able to achieve that objective, because of the thousands of persons that have been waiting for so very long. I am hopeful that as we continue to press on, Mr. Speaker, we will be able to accelerate our programme even faster, so that those persons who have been waiting and languishing in the corridors of wait, will finally be able to turn their own key to their own house on their own land, because that is important.

Sir, when we speak of housing every last person, it does not matter what your family legacy may have been. As long as the opportunity has been created for you to be able to take possession of your life and to move forward on a productive path, this Government will create the facility where you will be accommodated in its housing plan. Sir, that is the passion about this Government; that is the passion about our Honourable Prime Minister, and that is the passion coming from our Minister of Housing.

Mr. Speaker, we have to put people in their own homes. It is becoming exorbitant now, Mr. Speaker, to rent a house. There are ordinary Barbadians paying more than $1 000 per month to stay in a place that is halfway decent. Many of them will come to me and say, "Minister, I can pay for my land and my house. I am paying more than $1 000 for rent and I will never own the place that I am renting. Could you all please hurry up and give me a chance to own my own place?"

This Government is committed and I want all Barbadians of all walks of life to know that as long as you are moving on that productive path, this Government has a moral responsibility and a duty to ensure that you get your fair share in this society.

Therefore, it does not matter who you are, it does not matter where you are from, it does not matter what your history has been, what is really important and what really matters is that the Government cares. This is why we are in office. We are here because we demonstrated that we care and we are not going to use the instruments of Government to fatten ourselves at the expense of ordinary Barbadians, who need the help of the Government. 14:50:14

Therefore, you would not find a case where hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent and you cannot find houses in Barbados that should be owned by the Government, or that you have cases where people are struggling every single day and then when they knock on

the doors of Government, they cannot get assistance. Those days are coming to an end because this Government will ensure that those opportunities are there.

Mr. Speaker, we are housing every single Barbadian with affordable housing, it does not matter who you are or where you are from. Every last person in our society must benefit.

Mr. Speaker, I join with my colleagues and applaud the work of the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands. I also join them in applauding the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister in ensuring that all of the systems necessary to help the Minister to achieve these objectives are in place. Most importantly, I join with Barbadians all over this country that applaud the Government for its effort to ensure that in the fastest possible time housing solutions are accessible and affordable and are there in place for our citizens.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

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

His Honour K. St.C BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise at this point to support this Resolution. I must congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for the wonderful work he is doing in respect of his housing programme.

Mr. Speaker, what has existed under the last Administration is a crying shame. Mr. Speaker, one recognises that in Barbados there is a scarcity of land but by the imaginative and visionary powers of this Government, we have taken housing to another step. Sir, because of the cost and the scarcity of land, we have decided to build high-rise houses, which means that more families will be housed.

Mr. Speaker, only this morning I had the opportunity to pass Coverley and I saw that work has commenced there, which would provide at least 220 housing solutions for Barbadians. Sir, while we are on that point, one must recognise that if the Government of the day is doing its part, then the financial institutions must also play their part.

Sir, as the world is on the brink of inflation, one recognises that the Government has taken the visionary power to make sure that their capital projects are well on stream. Sir, the housing solutions placed the Government in top marks in respect of that.

Mr. Speaker, in providing the housing solutions, the Minister of Environment, Water Resources and Drainage must play his part in that regard as well. It is great to have all these houses placed all over Barbados, but it is most disturbing to Barbadians living in these wonderful homes to have problems with water. I will urge the Minister of Environment, Water Resources and Drainage to ensure that he works with the Minister of Housing and Lands to ensure that the occupants of those houses have an adequate supply of water.

Mr. Speaker, there must be a collaborative approach to make sure that all of these things work hand in hand. Sir, each and every Member of Parliament should work hand in hand to ensure that these problems that were left by the last Administration are solved and in the quickest time possible.

Mr. Speaker, while we are on the question of housing and land, I would like to see the Rent Restriction Act come before this House very soon because that piece of legislation would help us provide proper housing solutions for Barbadians and will ensure that the landlords make their properties habitable for the tenants. Mr. Speaker, we understand every day that Barbadians and non-Barbadians are living in substandard conditions at these landlord's properties. Mr. Speaker, with the housing solution programme in place, I am sure that some of these problems would be solved.

In addition, the programme of housing that is undertaken by the National Housing Corporation will in the near future solve some of the squatting problems that we have in Barbados. Sir, when you provide a home for a family, they would no longer have to squat because they would have some place to call their own and our water resource would not be threatened.

In addition, it is well-known that squatting is a problem in my constituency. I have discussed it with the Minister of Housing and Lands and the Minister of Environment, Water Resources and Drainage and I have had the assurance that the problem of squatting and the other problems within that area will be solved within the next financial year. I am sure that the people of St. Michael East would be extremely happy.

Mr. Speaker, Barkers Road would soon have a high-rise development where some of the people within the constituency would be housed. I would want to urge the Minister of Housing and Lands to ensure that the residents of the housing area who receive those letters in the first 100 days will receive the conveyances for those properties on the anniversary of our first year. Mr. Speaker, that would go a long way to letting the people understand that this is a caring Government and that we are working for their betterment.

Mr. Speaker, the people are concerned and they are asking questions when they are going to get their conveyance. Sir, I have informed them that I have spoken

to the Minister of Housing and Lands and he assured me that before the first anniversary is reached, they would receive the necessary documentation so that they can commence the repairs and extensions to their properties so that these properties will be of assistance to them to help educate their family because they can use the property as collateral.

Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to hear that sooner or later we would have house spots because we know for sure that some Barbadians prefer to build their own homes. Sir, I have been given the assurance that very soon in the new year house spots would become available for Barbadians to build their own homes at their leisure.

Mr. Speaker, as it stands now, the programme is to ensure that properties are available so that Barbadians who were on the waiting list of the National Housing Corporation for houses will be in a position to access those houses. Sir, we have Coverley, Constant and Marchfield. Sir, the price tag that is placed on these properties would be in the reach of the average Barbadian. Sir, we on This Side must compliment the Minister and the staff at the National Housing Corporation for the wonderful work.

Mr. Speaker, it is only but strange that the Honourable Member for St. James North would indicate and urge the Minister to pay particular attention to persons who would want to sabotage his work because he is well aware of the creatures that exist within the last Administration.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Minister of Housing and Lands, please take note of those kind words and advice coming from the Other Side, to ensure that your work would not be sabotaged or that problems that are supposed to reach you would not be thrown in the wastepaper basket.

I must also thank the Honourable Member for St. George North, who comes here every Tuesday and supports this Government on its programmes. Mr. Speaker, I could understand his hurt because he had two Ministers of Housing who came after him. I could understand his feelings towards the one who replaced him because there was no goodwill between them. That is why all of the programmes the Honourable Member said he had in motion went the other way.

Mr. Speaker, there was also the other Minister who refused to sign one common Notice of Intention to Purchase. Sir, I would want to say that within a space of two days, the new Minister of Housing and Lands was able to make those people in those tenantries happy, by signing those documents to give them legal right.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member is unfamiliar with the provisions of the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act. There is no provision under that Act for a Minister to sign a Notice of Intention to Purchase. Sir, a Notice of Intention to Purchase, under the statute, is to be signed by the tenant only. If the Honourable Member would look at the First Schedule to the Act, I believe the Honourable Member would see there is reference for the tenant to sign it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House by saying that the Minister has failed, neglected or refused, to sign a notice, which, in Law, is not his to sign.

MR. SPEAKER: Please continue, Honourable Member.

His Honour KENNETH St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Form One Notice, but the problem with the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is that when you check his track record in all the Ministries for which he held responsibility: the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Industry, and the Ministry of International Business, there was a catastrophe in all of them. When the Honourable Member was in charge of the building at Newton Industrial Park, the Honourable Member created all sorts of problems. Those problems extended into the National Housing Corporation, because the very contractors who the Barbados Investment Development Corporation had to fire, were into bed with the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, the housing project in St. James could not be concluded because there was a judgment against that particular organisation, and they were begging the National Housing Corporation for draw-downs but the Minister within the National Housing Corporation said no. If they were given that money the project would still not have begun. This all happened under the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was the Chairman of the National Housing Corporation when the catastrophe occurred at Warrens and at Country Road. If you look at what is happening at Country Road now....

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am listening to the Honourable Member with rapt attention but I am only asking that the Honourable Member would get his facts straight. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this House. Sir, I ceased to be Chairman of the National Housing Corporation in 1997, at which time the contract for the building at Warrens had not been awarded. I do not even think they

were even tendered. Sir, I do not know why the Honourable Member is wilfully misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue, Honourable Member.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, when we get to debate the Special Loans Bill today, we will understand why, so far, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph had nothing to say. Why he was so quiet? Sir, the only reason the Honourable Member for St. Joseph would get up in here this afternoon, would be to rise on a point of order but the facts are there. That is why we would be asking this Honourable Chamber later this afternoon to amend the overspending which occurred under the watch of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, an overspending in which the Honourable Member would have assisted.

Sir, I am sure that if prudent management had existed, we in this country would have had better housing for the people of Barbados. Sir, the problems of drainage and flooding that we are having in this country would not exist. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North should not even utter one word, when in comes to the question of drainage or when it comes to the question of representation of the people in this country.

Asides.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, the people in St. Michael North have reposed their confidence in the Honourable Member, yet every week the Honourable Member comes here, when he is not on his cellular....

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Asides.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North should explain to his constituents who placed him here, the reason he was asked to leave. Sir, there was conflict between himself and the Fair Trading Commission (FTC), where the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) prevailed and he took his exit.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member must not mislead this Honourable House. Sir, I left Cabinet when I did, a place although the Honourable Member wants to go, he will never get to go.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, a margin of more than 2 900 persons in the constituency of St. Michael East have given me the right to speak in this House. The Honourable Prime Minister of this country has a right to choose his Cabinet. The former Prime Minister had a right to fire the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, and he was right in that regard.

Asides.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Sir, I was never even frowned upon, unlike what happened last Saturday night when a number of them were demoted, made Ministers of Drainage and all sorts of things...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, he never said that. There is no Point of Order. Honourable Member, please continue.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, that is the level of incompetency that existed under the last Administration.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute, let us get some order so that the Honourable Member can make his contribution uninterrupted. Please, Honourable Members.

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, in these short 10 months, when we look at the performance of this Government, it far outweighs the performance of the last Administration, within the last 14 years. Sir, what is ironic is that every time there is a crisis in the world, the Democratic Labour Party comes to power and we always have astute leaders and a good Government to carry the people of Barbados forward. Sir, that is why today, we are debating the vesting of land for the benefit of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, with these brief remarks, I want to say that I wholeheartedly support this Resolution and, Sir, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. S.D. BLACKETT: Mr. Speaker, I too would want to add my voice to the support of this Resolution and also to continue to shower the encomia that have been showered on the Minister of Housing for the stellar work he is doing in his Ministry. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, he is

one of the youngest members of the Cabinet but, certainly, if he continues to perform in his private life the way he is doing in his public life, I am sure he will make one hell of a man, so my encomia continue to be showered on him.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make a brief presentation this afternoon against the background that I believe that after coming to office since January 15, this year, this Democratic Labour Party Administration has brought about a certain social re-engineering in this country of ours. We have grown used to elaborate pieces of infrastructure; large buildings, inanimate things that contribute to the normal life and living of the average Barbadian but certainly what we were lacking in the last 10 years or so was social re-engineering.

Sir, since we have assumed office in this country, we have attempted to bring about this social change. We have eliminated bus fares like most Honourable Members have said in this debate. Sir, that in itself has caused better attendances at assembly, most if not all principals have commented on the positive change that has brought to assembly on mornings. It brings a better prepared student, one that is better prepared for learning. Sir, what it is doing most of all is preparing a next generation in Barbados. A better Barbadian. A better young man and better young woman and we will see the benefits of this one generation from now.

Mr. Speaker, we also are looking at bringing a new property ownership class, enabling Barbadians, who would never in their natural life be able to own anything in this country, 20 years is all that you need to be a property owner in this country. Sir, that in itself, despite the fact that it is only a terraced unit; despite the fact that you have limited land space, the point remains that at the end of the day, you can say, "I own a piece of this country."

Mr. Speaker, we went to the country prior to January 15 and we promised them, in our Manifesto, it is written in clear terms and I am sure this document is already a document of the House. We have said to them that access to decent affordable housing and land; owing a piece of the rock remains one of the major concerns of Barbadians from all strata of the society, especially those now starting out on life's journey.

The plight of pensioners in maintaining a roof over their head is also of major concern and any caring Government must make housing a priority. Indeed, we believe that decent housing is the key to good family life, educational success, productivity at work and that every citizen has the right to decent affordable living. Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that the fact that any person could go to work knowing that they are owners of property, that in itself provides a better employee and a better Barbadian.

Mr. Speaker, we are entering a phase where we are aggressively pursuing making Barbadians feel that they are, again, owners of this country. We are going to curtail the nomadic situations that have created themselves over the last number of years, where I have seen people coming to them on a daily basis that they have no fixed place of abode or no fixed place to rest their head.

Mr. Speaker, squatting is another area of major concern. I have, in my constituency, and I am sure that the Honourable Member, who just took his seat, would have also experienced this in the Belle View and the Belle area, where there are a number of squatters. Certainly, they are squatting, not because they are deliberate law breakers but when Government, through its social policy does not supply the answers for the average citizen; the average citizen, trust me, Mr. Speaker, will find the solution for themselves. Certainly, we do not want to condone or encourage a lawless society but if we back people against a wall, they will have no other alternative but to find solutions for themselves. Sir, sometimes those solutions are not grounded within the four corners of the Law.

Therefore, as a Government with a conscience, we must provide the necessary conditions where they will see themselves as pursuing their lawful goals within the four corners of the Law and within the parameters of the law.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about the residents of Belle View, they are first, second and third generation families, who live on that spot of land. They have suffered at the hands of the last Administration. They have experienced what I term "political terrorism", where they were almost, on a weekly basis, confronted by either heavy-duty equipment moving into their area, terrorizing them for one reason or the other and I would hope that very shortly, we, as a caring Government, would move to the position, where we would find some accommodation for them and also for their neighbours in the Belle in the neighbouring constituency.

Mr. Speaker, also another problem that is presenting itself is the question of bringing a speedy conclusion to many of the residents, who are recipients of the freehold purchase agreement.

3.20 p.m.

I have a number of complaints from the residents especially in the Water Hall Land, who have been experiencing some problems. The final closing of the deal has been causing some problems with them, either through the agency that is responsible or from their personal lawyers. I am sure that we as a Government, and in particular the Ministry of Housing, and the agencies such as Urban and Rural Commissions would find some

accommodation where these freehold purchase agreements are brought to a speedy resolution.

Sir, I think generally speaking, we are moving in the right direction as a Government. We have set our housing policy, clearly, for every one to see. The Honourable Minister earlier in this debate spelt out exactly where we are going with our housing policy, and also spelt out exactly all of the projects that we have undertaken and we plan to undertake.

Therefore, Barbadians are clear in their minds exactly where we are going with our housing policy. I am sure that within the next year or two we will see rolled out before us a number of housing solutions that would certainly alleviate the problems confronting our constituents on a daily basis and can rest assured that this Government has their welfare in mind.

Sir, several of them approached us with false hopes from the past Administration, a letter with a number. What does that mean? It brings no hope to the average citizen in Barbados, for we have to move beyond the number to transform that number into a real housing solution. That is where we have to go. I am sure that us working as a Government, hand in hand with the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands, we will solve the problems for average Barbadians to become property owners in this fair land of ours.

Mr. Speaker, I have absolutely no reservations in supporting this Resolution and I am sure that very shortly on the horizon we will see a better housed and satisfied Barbadian.

I thank you.

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

Hon. E .G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate in this Honourable House to support the Resolution before it. I want to make one observation this afternoon while making a comparison with an observation from last week. Last week when we debated the whole issue of the registration of trade persons and self-employed persons in this country, Members on the Other Side were jumping all over themselves to get up to speak.

I noticed today that there is little or no interest in terms of defending their record. Housing is an important social problem in this country, probably the major problem before this country. However, they had 14 years of talking about land banks, making promises but no one this afternoon is prepared to defend the record of the Barbados Labour Party Government of 1994 through 2007.

Mr. Speaker, we have come to expect that in this Chamber, in every significant subject matter that has been discussed in this Chamber over the past 10 months, there has been a daring lack of silence, even in terms of senior Members on That Side. Their very absence from the Chamber gives credence to the lack of emphasis and interest, placed on the part of the Barbados Labour Party, with regard to the social problems within our country.

Sir, on the question of housing, this afternoon I want to go on record as supporting the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and Minister of Housing. The Democratic Labour Party, when we went to the people 11 months ago and, indeed, throughout the whole of 2007, the public of Barbados would be aware that the Democratic Labour Party, for some time prior to the last Election had been taking their programme on the road throughout Barbados, from the North to the South.

Sir, I must join in support of our colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. He has embarked on what is indeed an ambitious programme of housing for the first four years of Government of the Democratic Labour Party. As my learned colleague who spoke just before me indicated, we have promised over

2 000 housing solutions per year in this first term to the people. So the Honourable Member for St. Philip North is well on the way to achieving that objective.

Sir, however, I want to draw to his attention that besides the whole construction of houses, we also need to look at the repairs and maintenance of some of the housing units. Certainly, within my constituency, St. James Central, we have had situations where a number of the housing units owned by the National Housing Corporation are in need of repairs.

Certainly in terms of the removal of some asbestos roofs, the replacement of a number of doors that are exposed to the weather, and particularly, in the area of Redman's Village, an area that traditionally has supported the Barbados Labour Party, an area that in the late 1990s, I believe, when there was a by-election in St. Thomas, several promises had been made by the then Minister of Housing and the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party, to have these asbestos roofs repaired.

Sir, as is consistent with the practice of the Barbados Labour Party, while in Government, the promises were made immediately before the Election and after the Election the promises seemed to be forgotten. Sir, this Democratic Labour Party Government will honour its commitments and we have seen that in progress by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Sir, I want to draw another problem to the Minister's attention and that is the question of zoning. St. James Central is an area where and I believe a substantial part of St. James falls within the whole question of zone 1, and several challenges we are experiencing in areas like Seaview where there are open areas allocated for residential development some time in the past. We found that several of the applications to the Town and Country Planning Department have been rejected because of the question of Zone 1.

Sir, I have a difficulty with those rulings because some upper income housing has been constructed in the area over recent years but still we are getting rejections from the Town and Country Planning Department, in respect to some of the lower income housing and so on. Sir, the area requires the need of septic tanks and the rules for that area should be reviewed, particularly Seaview.

15.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I believe as well that there is need to strengthen the Government's Surveying Department, Ministry of Housing and Lands, given the ambitious programme that we have in housing. There are many issues in terms of encroaching of housing.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, as all of us in here know, people in the 1950s and 1960s, and even before that time, were able to put houses on lands that were previously owned by small landowners. Sir, many houses were put down without any plan. In some cases, people put the houses very close to each other and they have encroached on other people's land.

I want to recommend to the Minister responsible for housing that he looks at the strengthening of the department responsible for surveys with an aim to addressing these issues during this first term, as well as his substantive programme for our seeking some 2 000 solutions a year, over the next four years.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to make a brief comment, in respect of the whole question of the land acquisition and the timely payment of those fees. I have had several requests made of me to see what I could do to try to have the payments for land acquisitions settled. Although I believe the Government eventually will pay interest on it, at the same time in many cases, people need to put that particular problem to bed, by having the repayment on a timely basis.

Certainly, in terms of future land acquisitions, we would want to make sure that there is a timely solution to that particular problem.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I want to draw to the Minister's attention as well that there is land available at Lancaster. I believe there is National Housing Corporation land in that area and I hope that the Minister will turn his attention very shortly to the area of Lancaster, so that we can have some development and I can have some housing solutions to offer to my own constituents in St. James Central.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing for the excellent job that he is doing so far and encourage him to continue.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this vesting and to say that I am very happy to see that it is the Democratic Labour Party that has now stopped the National Housing Corporation from squatting. Mr. Speaker, we speak a lot about squatting, as it relates to private individuals, but based on what I have heard here today, Sir, there is a clear case of squatting, and you can now see the history of squatting in this country.

I also want to make the point that I found it rather interesting that a Party which brags so much about its housing policy from 1994 to 2007, one would have thought that Party would have a lot to say on a matter like this. Mr. Speaker, there are matters where you can quote statistics and make people believe that by quoting statistics you are achieving something, but one thing you cannot do is quote statistics as it relates to housing and do not perform and then feel proud about it.

Sir, as I have always said in this House, it is one thing to come to this House and quote statistics but a year after, you must be able to back up those statistics with actuals. Sir, that is why I have always said that I am not a believer in those who go for assumptions or estimates. I am one who believes in actuals.

Sir, it is clear that for 14 years we got assumptions, projections and everything but today, the day of reckoning, we cannot find the actuals to accommodate the people of Barbados and the same housing problems that were left since 1994, we are now back in 2008 having to solve them, That has always been the history of the Democratic Labour Party. The Democratic Labour Party has always been the Party to solve the problems for the people of Barbados. I am not surprised, because on many occasions in this House, and I was very happy to hear an Honourable Member making the point that at one stage, this House was known for land acquisitions.

Sir, that is why I made a point of order earlier in this House which I know very well now to do because the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, you could not come to this Parliament on a particular day, when the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was the Minister of Housing, without having to do about three land acquisitions.

Sir, at one stage - and I was very happy again - when I heard the Honourable Member for St. James North coining something I have said in this House on many occasions, that it is the only land bank I know that never produced interest, because it had 1 000 acres of land in it, and I have been hearing about 1 000 acres of land, and even though it was in a bank, it never increased. I said that and I am very happy that my teacher finally was able to accept something from his student.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is only one sorry point, that they did not acquire more land, because had they acquired more land, Sir, we would have more land to give to the people of Barbados. Sir, the difference that separates the two political parties, whereas they understood the importance of acquiring land, and creating a land scarcity in this country, which pushed up the price of land, this Government understands a policy of parallel land solutions.

Sir, that is why the private sector is out there trying to push land up to get the highest price on the market. This Government has been able to intervene on the land market, with a parallel land policy and able to put land on the market to cushion the prices.

Therefore, what you had for 14 years, was one Government creating a scarcity and pushing the prices up and, presently, you have another Government making the supply and reducing the scarcity, and bringing down the prices by a dynamic Minister of Housing, who understands, listens well and can take good advice.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, this is unlike the Other Side, because the same advice that has been proffered now, has been proffered to the others on the Other Side, which they have not accepted. Sir, I have always said in this House that if it is one thing about the Barbados Labour Party you do not have to worry about, is that you can give them the best idea in the world, you could come here and tell them anything, and one sure thing is that they will mess it up. Sir, even though every Tuesday I came to this Parliament and I debated, and gave them good ideas how to solve the land problem in this country, they still messed up.

I told them that the people in rural Barbados did not need houses. They went to Mount Poyer and instead of giving the people house spots, they went and created something, I do not know what to call them but I have to call them houses, because I have to respect the wishes of my constituents, but I can assure you, that if you were to go to Mount Poyer and see what was built there, you would see a lot of waste space, which cannot be properly used. If the people were given the right to built those houses, Sir, I can assure you that there will be two storey buildings on that property, because of the split.

Sir, when you look from St. Swithens Church, it is something that you do not like to see. All you can see are some ugly stairs.

3.40 p.m.

The masses of the people of Barbados would never have built anything like that for themselves, but so hungry were they to get houses, they were forced to accept things they did not want.

Sir, what is also regrettable is that we brag about having a cement plant in this country and they could come to a place like St. Lucy at a time when they were talking about concrete roads and give people chattel houses. Do you imagine that, Sir? We have a cement plant for making concrete blocks and cement and they were offering the people chattel houses.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that they do not even understand the message that the people in the tenantries sent them because while they were offering and building chattel houses for the people, the people in the tenantries were converting their chattel houses that they bought the land at 10 cents a square foot to stone structures, which shows that the Government was lagging behind in a housing policy with the people they claim they wanted to help in the tenantries.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot continue to stifle the people of Barbados. That is exactly what occurred with the Barbados Labour Party. They stifled the people of Barbados by forcing them to take what they did not want. Sir, what is the most disgraceful thing about the housing policy is that you would see someone buy a chattel house and two weeks after buying the chattel house, they are taking it down to put up a stone structure, which tells me that the problem, as I have been saying all the time in this Parliament, is not the house but the land.

Mr. Speaker, any smart Minister of Housing and Lands, and any successful Minister of Housing and Lands would understand that it is easier to rotate land. Sir, once you are selling the land, the people would get the money, put it back in the National Housing Corporation, and they

will have more money to buy more land, and then the National Housing Corporation would have more money to help more people.

Mr. Speaker, instead of doing that, the Barbados Labour Party held the policy where the interest of contractors came first instead of giving people the land. Mr. Speaker, if they want to dispute this, you could look in Hansard and see where I said it. Sir, you had a situation where the National Housing Corporation was giving the contractor a piece off the land and a piece off the house. We are talking about housing poor people. How could you house poor people when people are getting four cuts plus the others?

Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation must understand that their duty is to provide the land and allow culture to come back to rural Barbados. Sir, all that occurred is that they went and built houses, gave units and nobody in the villages had an opportunity to get work on the houses. Sir, as soon as the owners had a problem, they then had to go to the mason, the electrician, the plumber and the labourers to assist them. The labourers and so on were telling them that they were too busy because when they wanted a house they did not know them so they have no time for them.

Mr. Speaker, we have to bring the community culture back to the communities. We need to give the people the land and allow that community friendship to continue where the person who purchased the land could go and look for the mason, the carpenter, the plumber and the electrician and build that community spirit again.

Sir, on top of that, there are many properties in this country that are built on weekends by friends where people are prepared to help each other to build homes. Mr. Speaker, that spirit was also taken away from Barbadians, so when people said that Barbadians were becoming selfish they had no choice.

Sir, we grew up in a society where if you had a lime, a breadfruit, a sugar apple or anything like that, you would exchange it with your neighbour, but in the last 14 years, we were taught to sell everything we have and buy everything we want. Sir, we need to change this policy and bring back the community spirit.

Sir, prior to 1994, the Honourable Member for St. James North never had to buy a breadfruit, a sugar apple or anything like that. Sir, I know he has to buy them now unless he comes to St. Lucy walking to get his fruits.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: At least the Honourable Member for St. James North understands the community spirit. I am hoping that we can see a new approach to housing instead of the one we had where in 14 years 28 houses were built by the Government and 67 were provided by somebody else.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing and Lands for his aggressiveness. Sir, I have said to him already that if he needs land not to take up agricultural land as has occurred previously. Sir, there is enough rab land in Barbados that we do not have to touch agricultural land. Sir, it would be foolhardy for any progressive Government, especially at a time like now when food is in short supply in the world, to go and take up agricultural land when there is rab land that can be taken.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the Minister of Housing and Lands that any plantation owner who comes to him who has good agricultural land that he wants to cut up, that he and the Minister should go and look for a man who has a plantation that can be regarded as rab land but who wants to continue to farm and encourage the Minister of Finance not to charge any transfer taxes and so on on the land so that the man who is living in St. Lucy who wants a farm, and a man who owns a plantation in St. George, can swap so that you can have the two achieving their goals without interfering with the good agricultural land of Barbados. Sir, with those ideas we can continue to feed Barbados and also have some goods to export.

Sir, at the end of the day there must be a realisation that people want land. Sir, I know of many persons who, after converting their chattel houses to stone structures, cannot find anybody to give that chattel house to so that it would not become a burden to them because persons cannot find the land.

Sir, I am telling the Minister of Housing and Lands that it is his mandate to ensure that house spots are available so that we can save foreign exchange instead of spending double foreign exchange on one house. Sir, it does not make sense for a man to buy a chattel house when he wants a stone house, but he has to buy the chattel house so that he can get the land to build a stone house. Sir, that should be finished.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to make a point of order today on something that was said by the Honourable Member for St. George North who gave the impression that once land is on a plantation that it should be sold at 10 cents a square foot. All of us in this House heard the Honourable Member on that point.

Mr. Speaker, if that is true, I am asking the Minister of Housing and Lands to go to the previous Government and tell them to refund everybody living at Six Men's and Colleton Gardens on lands previously owned by Colleton Plantation and those in Hope Road that were previously

owned by the Hope's and refund them the money that they paid greater than 10 cents a square foot because those were tenantry lands too. Sir, the only thing is that they must find the money, not this present Government because what the Honourable Member said in here today is that they deliberately charged persons higher than what he interpreted the Law to mean.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I did not say what the Law was. I said what the Honourable Member interpreted the Law to mean.

Sir, if we are to take his point, it means that everybody in Six Men's Development, Hope Road Development and all other developments that came out of plantations that were done by the National Housing Corporation were overcharged by the previous Government for 14 years.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member wants to make that point, the Honourable Member would have to understand, when he was Minister of Housing and Lands, that he would have been part of a charge that was not fair to persons, based on his point and not based on the Law of the day.

Sir, it is right to come here and say what you want to say but people have to remember that there are others who have good memories. Sir, persons must understand, when they want to make cheap political points, that there are some of us who understand the system, and would correct you about the system.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North would know this is not a place where you could come and make sport. The Honourable Member should know that this is a serious place and that some of us will ensure that we follow what should be followed and that we correct what should be corrected in this place.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member came to this Parliament in 1994 and should, therefore, know better. The Honourable Member should know the Rules of this Honourable House. He should know that he cannot come here and make these statements, when the Law says something quite different to what the Honourable Member was saying. Sir, here is not a place for grandstanding, after l4 years in here the Honourable Member should know that he has to abide by the Rules of this Honourable House. Sir, the Honourable Member knew that what he was saying was not correct.

Mr. Speaker, I am simply saying that tenantry land is tenantry land and that there is a definition for tenantry land. Having land or buying land on a plantation tenantry does not mean that the land is what we regard by Law as tenantry land, it might be plantation land that has been converted to development land.

Sir, as a former Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member should know that. Sir, do you know why I would not forgive the Honourable Member for that? Sir, the Honourable Member came up under a land lawyer, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who is well-known for conveyances. Therefore, at least the Honourable Member for St. George North should have learned something, unless there was a dispute between the two of them, of which I do not know, so I cannot speak of.

Sir, I am saying that the Honourable Member must understand that squatting has been corrected today. This Government has stopped the previous Government from squatting. This Government has ensured, by this vesting, that squatting will be stopped at the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, now that we are speaking about the National Housing Corporation, there is another matter. Sir, the Honourable Member should tell this Honourable House how come they awarded so many contracts to private contractors to build houses in Barbados, when there were so many workers at the National Housing Corporation who had nothing to do?

Mr. Speaker, while the former Administration was awarding contracts and joint venture projects, there were workers at the National Housing Corporation, who could have been building those houses. Instead, they refused to do so and had those workers doing nothing. What I want to say to the present Minister of Housing and Lands is that the National Housing Corporation has a lot of very good workers and that they do not want to be paid for not working.

I am saying to the Minister of Housing and Lands, and I know he understands this quite well, that Government policy is to help the masses of people of Barbados. That policy is also to ensure that persons, especially those who cannot help themselves, who have worked hard for Barbados, who now have wood under their cellars, the Minister of Housing and Lands needs to ensure that wood comes out from under those cellars and that the workers at the National Housing Corporation could help those poor people to build.

Sir, if these people could have found the lumber, blocks, cement or material, then at least the National Housing Corporation knows where to find the workers to

help these poor people to build. We cannot have our old people working twice.

Mr. Speaker, if after working so hard and after reaching the age of 65, they could still accumulate lumber to build, instead of having to ask the Urban Development Commission or Rural Development Commission to come and fix their houses, therefore, if they are prepared to meet us halfway, then we should be prepared to meet them too. Sir, instead of having a policy where you are walking around bulldozing every house that looks old, and sometimes you do not even respect whether or not someone is living in the house...

Mr. Speaker, this reminds me that I have to write you on a very serious matter. I have already said what is a derelict house, which is one in which nobody lives. Therefore, any time anybody lives in a house, though derelict it might look, you cannot bulldoze a house in which someone is living and say that it was derelict.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I know the Attorney-General does not agree, even though he knows better, but this is political convenience now.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: He still believes he is the Attorney-General, do you not realise that? When I spoke, all of a sudden he is speaking as though he is the present Attorney-General, so I will continue. Sir, the former Attorney-General knows when that Law was passed, that it was passed for those houses where people were not living in them. I thought he knew and I want to apologise to this Honourable House for making the assumption that the Honourable Member knew because based on what he is saying, he is now telling me that he is not aware of the Law, even though he was the overseer of the Law.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that it was not passed for persons living in those houses because if that were true, I could show you a number of houses where the same course of action should have been taken. Mr. Speaker, I will have to write the Minister of Housing and Lands shortly in defence of my constituents on this particular matter because where an error is made, it should be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say that we have to recognise that this programme of Government is being welcomed by the masses of people in Barbados. As I said, when one considers what has happened with the private sector of Barbados, this programme cannot be a piece-meal programme, it must be continuous. Sir, based on what I am seeing, there is a large demand for land in Barbados and therefore we have to ensure that we be the catalyst there, to keep land prices in check, so that the masses of people could own a piece of Barbados.

Sir, if we do not do that, we would find ourselves having to see all of our lands being owned by those persons from whom we would have previously purchased them. We would then have to go to other Caribbean countries and ask them to rent us a piece of land. Already they offered that under the Barbados Labour Party because, at least, the President of Guyana understood the housing policy of Barbados, under the Barbados Labour Party, and proffered to rent Barbadians land.

What this Democratic Labour Party is now doing is correcting that problem and ensuring that the masses of people in Barbados still have a say and a right to purchase a piece of this rock.

Mr. Speaker, can you quarrel with a Government for doing that? No wonder the Other Side cannot speak to this because if they have to speak, they could only speak to the number of land acquisitions that were made in this Parliament, of which they would have a proud record, because there were many land acquisitions.

Sir, I do not want to hear the present Minister of Housing and Lands speaking to land acquisition. I want to hear him speaking to the number of house spots that he has so far delivered, those which he is in the process of delivering, and those he would be delivering in the future. As I said, there is some land at Lamberts that is owned by the Crown. There is also some in Spring Garden, Coconut Hall, and throughout St. Lucy, but one thing for sure is that once we get our fair share, we are also prepared to share.

We do not want all, but we have suffered too long for l4 long years. We have suffered in that part of the barren, so much so that in that vineyard, sometimes you cannot find a proper road on which to travel to get to reach one’s house. Sir, if you were to hear the others speaking, you would believe that the roads in St. Lucy have only gotten bad during the last l0 months.

Sir, Mount Poyer is one of those areas that has house spots and to get from Mount Poyer, you have to come from Nesfield or from Colleton and come up. Sir, I invite you to come with me on a tour of those roads You would not believe there are highways in Barbados and that those roads lead to house spots in Barbados. You would not believe that the National Housing Corporation has land in those areas. You would not believe that we have acquired land to be vested in the National Housing Corporation in this area, but the roads are bad.

Sir, yet all over Barbados, we hear of this wonderful programme where Government was entering into contracts with contractors for $35 million, $l00 million, et cetera, and apparently the only female parish in the country was neglected. Sir, they would then tell me that they had a housing solution for women in this country, yet they neglected Lucy, the only genuine lady to be found.

4.00 p.m.

Sir, as you know there are many genuine ladies and good ladies of Barbados so do not let it be said that I have only identified one.

Asides.

His Excellency Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I was hoping would have been continued by the Barbados Labour Party and they did not continue. If you go to Six Men's, you would recognise that when we put Six Men's in place as a development, we ensured it had a church and, Sir, likewise in Hope Road.

Mr. Speaker, if you check, prior to 1994, all the developments that were done by the Democratic Labour Party had a church in it but, Sir, all of a sudden, we have all these developments and no churches. I do not want to link anything to that, but I would only say that the Minister, in large developments, make room for a church and some type of commercial activity.

Sir, with those fews words, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak and to remind the Barbados Labour Party that it is not the amount of land acquired, it is the number of house spots that have been surveyed, conveyed and given to the people of Barbados. It is true that you had a land bank and your land bank is like the investment of the American banks, they all came tumbling down but, Sir, we will pick them up and expand on them.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am obliged. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. F.J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, everything that needed to be said on this subject, I believe has already been said. I just rise to make a brief intervention in the debate. Sir, today is November 25 and exactly 47 years ago on this day, there was the General Election campaign going on in Barbados for an Election, which was going to be held on the 3rd day of December. Sir, that Election would bring the Democratic Labour Party to office and was fought on a Manifesto, which on page 13, under the heading "Housing", stated as follows:

"It is central to the social philosophy of the Party that as many citizens as possible should be encouraged to own their own homes."

It went on to say that tenants of the Housing Authority, which of course, is the predecessor to the National Housing Corporation, will, therefore, be given the opportunity to purchase the houses which they occupy and, to this end, all future payments of the rent would be credited towards the purchase of these houses for those who may not be in a position to pay for their homes immediately.

Mr. Speaker, that was 47 years ago, and it is in that philosophical tradition and that policy tradition that the present Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has located himself; a very distinguished tradition of trying to push the issue of ownership of both land and houses for the masses of people of Barbados.

Sir, it is in that context that I want to join my colleagues in congratulating him for the sense of urgency and for the very businesslike approach, which he has brought to the Ministry of Housing. Sir, it contrasts sharply with the busy inertia, which characterised his predecessors, as they neared the end of their term of office last year. In fact, when I look at the Barbados Economic and Social Report for 2007, on the issue of residential construction the Report states on page 62:

"During 2007, residential construction activity declined by 7.8 per cent. The construction of wooden units fell by 11.5 per cent; masonry units by 24.6 per cent and mixed wood and wall by 34.5 per cent."

Sir, that is what the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has inherited from the Barbados Labour Party and that is the context within this debate is taking place.

Mr. Speaker, a lot has been said about the record of the Barbados Labour Party in housing. Of course, whenever there is a housing debate, you can trust the Barbados Labour Party to go back to the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act of 1980, to give the impression that was the beginning of all creation in the area of housing.

Mr. Speaker, I have said on the Floor of this House before that I do not get into debate about who did this first, or who did not do this or that first because those debates are reserved for Adam and Eve because they are the only persons who can boast about who did anything first.

Sir, to go back to the same 1961 Manifesto, 47 years ago, at page 5 of that Manifesto in 1961 the Democratic Labour Party committed itself to the taking over with issues of 6 per cent land bonds by the Government of

plantation tenantries and the resale of the land by Government to the tenant occupiers.

Sir, that was 47 years ago, so this idea that the Barbados Labour Party woke up one morning and suddenly realise that plantation tenantries were being neglected and that they came up with this plan to sell plantation lands to tenants simply does not square with the facts. The record shows that the Democratic Labour Party did embark on trying to get that programme pushed through but ran into the very serious problem of having to deal with an acute shortage in 1962/1963 of land surveyors in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2008, we still complain about an acute shortage of land surveyors. If we are complaining in 2008, 47 years later about an acute shortage, one can just imagine how acute the shortage would have been in 1962/1963.

Mr. Speaker, while we accept that they introduced the policy, the impression must not be given that it was the beginning of creation with the Barbados Labour Party. In any event, and this is where the Minister of Housing's problem really matured, that piece of legislation created something called - Plantation Tenantries which were not in dispute but, as the Honourable Member for St. John said today, on a point of order in this Chamber, there were private tenantries created as well on the basis of private citizens renting out just two house spots, that created a tenantry under the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act, passed in 1980 in Barbados by the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, private citizens, therefore, found themselves in a situation where the good neighbourliness, which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy just spoke, led them into the impasse, where having rented out their house spots to do their neighbours and good friends a favour, they ended up losing the house spots because the legislation said that they had to sell it to the tenants as long as the tenants were there for the statutory period, which I believe was about five years.

Hon. F.J. STUART: It took the Democratic Labour Party coming to office in 1986 to amend that legislation and to enlarge the definition of private tenantries, to areas made up of more than five house spots rented to tenants.

That softened the impact on private landowners and, of course, did no injustice to tenants, but the damage had already been done, because the faith of private landowners had already been undermined and they stopped renting out land. That led to a rush on the National Housing Corporation which was not able to meet the demand. Sir, we are dealing with that crisis in Barbados.

Sir, the economists say when supply is good, prices will fall, and when demand is great, prices will increase. Well the price of low income houses is not good in Barbados. In fact, the demand for low income houses is very great, and as a result, as I have to say elsewhere, a number of unscrupulous landlords are taking advantage of the fact, that there is this acute shortage of low income housing in Barbados and charging criminally high rents to poor defenceless citizens.

It would soften or extenuate their blame worthiness if some of the rents they were getting they were using to spend on these dwellings to make them more habitable and more respectable. That has not been happening. We therefore find a situation where people have been forced to live in horrible conditions at the low income level in this country, in order to have somewhere to rest their heads at night.

This is the challenge facing the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, as he grapples with the problem of low income housing in Barbados.Sir, he has to be applauded for he has taken the issue by the scruff of its neck, and the list he has read out in this Chamber today of the various locations across Barbados, where housing construction will begin to take place very shortly or has already taken place is to be commended.

Sir, the Honourable Member mentioned the parish of St. Philip to which this Resolution relates, and he told the chilling story of 14 years of the Barbados Labour Party's rule, during which 10 houses were constructed across the parish of St. Philip, 10 houses in 14 years, that is fewer than one house per year.

Sir, thereby hangs the tale. Between 1994 and 1999, in this Chamber, while the Democratic Labour Party was in Opposition, we were told by the then Government to go into our constituencies, I was then the Member of Parliament for St. Philip South, and look around for land which we could recommend to the Government for the purposes of low incoming construction.

Dutifully, we all did it. The Honourable Member for St. John did it. I did it. We all did it. I identified a parcel of land at Rices, St. Philip, about 13 acres of land which had already been approved by the Chief Town Planner for housing development. I wrote the then Minister of Housing, the now Honourable Member for St. Andrew, and indicated to him that this land existed.

I had already discussed with the landowner, who is still alive, the use by the Government of this land for housing. I wrote and invited him to do a tour to meet the landowner so that we could get some serious housing solutions in the parish of St. Philip. The tour never took place because the Honourable Member for St. Andrew made it clear to me, then, that if the people of St. Philip South, because St. Philip North was at that time in the

hands of the Barbados Labour Party, wanted houses they have to vote for the Barbados Labour Party, that he was going to do nothing in the constituency of St. Philip South to make the incumbent Member of Parliament look good, because his Government was not going to benefit from it.

They would have to vote for the Barbados Labour Party in order to get houses. Well, they voted for the Barbados Labour Party and still got no houses. That goes to show what kind of Government we had in this country over the last 14 years.

Sir, I am very glad that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North does not adopt the same attitude, that he understands that right across Barbados people, including Easy Hall, St. Joseph and Four Hill, St. Peter, they are people entitled to get housing solutions whether they support the Democratic Labour Party or not. That recommends people like the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to me, because he has risen above this narrow partisanship and recognises the importance of solving the problems of the poor people. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to put that in the records.

I fully support this Resolution. I wish the Honourable Minister well. I think he is doing an excellent job. Barbadians can see he is doing an excellent job and he is on the way to becoming one of the best Ministers of Housing this Parliament would have seen in post Independence Barbados.

I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I propose to make a brief intervention. I am glad that the Honourable Members of the Government have seen it fit to mention in their many presentations, the record of the Barbados Labour Party over the last 14 years. It occurs to me that they have not painted an accurate picture, and that is more from a point of view of their political convenience.

I would like o ask any of the Honourable Members on That Side how many houses you could build for $1 billion?

Sir, in 1999, when we came to Government, the total value of residential mortgages was only $94 million. In 2007, our last year of Administration, the value of residential mortgages had climbed to $1.2 billion. Let us not fool ourselves.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, by giving the impression that the National Housing Corporation, under their rule, provided $1 billion in mortgages for the masses of people in this country. We are today discussing the vesting of land in the National Housing Corporation, and we are discussing what has been done by them.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member, I find no point of order.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Sir, over a hundred fold increase. Let us try to sweep under the carpet that those are residential mortgages. Sir, residential mortgages were not used to buy air. They were used for the purposes of enhancing and proving housing opportunities for Barbadians. 16.20 p.m.

Sir, if Honourable Members want to fool themselves that it is for people in Sandy Lane, I would like to tell the Honourable Member that included in that $1.2 billion are the 120 individuals who, in the last four years, now have homes in Blackmans in St. Joseph. I would like to tell the Honourable Member that included in that are the many Barbadians, middle-class perhaps, who own houses in Bakers. Included in that number, Sir, are those many Barbadians who have already bought at Four Hill and those many Barbadians who now own lands in Apes Hill and have houses on them.

Mr. Speaker, we came to Government in 1994 and we inherited a dismal housing situation. The Democratic Labour Party had not built a single terraced unit in years. They had not provided a single freehold dwelling for any Barbadian in years. There were about 8 000 people who were still waiting for housing loans. Sir, what we have today is an environment where, notwithstanding that there is definitely an unsatisfied demand, the fact of the matter, Sir, this Government has been able, in 14 years to significantly provide housing opportunities for Barbadians, your brothers and sisters and my brothers and sisters.

Sir, the Minister of Housing has read off a long list. I am happy that St. Joseph will get a little look in. I am happy that everybody will get a little look in, including St. Andrew. Sir, when the Honourable Member talks about housing solutions at Coverley, Greens and Cottage, I would like the Honourable Member to say to the Members of this House of Assembly that the planning applications...

His Honour. K. St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Chamber. Sir, nowhere in this Chamber today any word has been mentioned about Cottage. Sir, Cottage was never mentioned in this Chamber today.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, to carry on, I would like the Minister of Housing to say to this Chamber how many of the districts to which we referred, had their

planning applications submitted and approved, under the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, we have no difficulty with the Minister of Housing continuing unfinished work. That is the nature of unfinished work, somebody has to finish it. I want to see the 17 lots in my constituency - I am almost frightened to tell him because he has not mentioned it, so the Minister may go looking for it now - in St. Ann's. I would like to see those lots conveyed urgently. If the Honourable Member wants to take credit for them, let him do so. We know that the houses were allocated some time back, and the roads were started some time back.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Sir, what we want to see is a housing programme that builds on what we left and we know what we left. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member, I believe, is taking much satisfaction on building on that foundation, but there are a few concerns. The issue of housing is not purely a matter of individuals saying I want a housing solution. I have to say that in my constituency, and in all the constituencies that have parts of the Scotland District within them, we have housing challenges, not because people say I want a house, but because of the fact, Sir, that the house they currently own, is rapidly being taken away from them by land slippage. Sir, that is of especially great concern to me.

Sir, it is one thing for an individual living with his family to feel that it is time to move on; I am a big man or woman now, I want to be independent, I want a house Minister. That is one scenario but what I am faced with in St. Joseph, in areas like Surinam, Parks Road and other areas, are situations where individual have homes and some of these homes have been in their families for generations, but the land slippage that we have not been able to check and we, perhaps, will never be able to check in its entirety, is causing those people to lose their homes. Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Minister not just to think of housing opportunities de novo, but to look to deal with the very serious conditions that some of these individuals are in, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, in Surinam there are some houses that have been dreadfully affected by slippage over this difficult rainy season. There is one individual whose house I have seen, Sir, the precipice now is about 5 feet away from his back door. He recounts to me that whenever the rain falls, he cannot sleep, simply because he has an expectation that if he were to sleep, he might have a rude awakening.

I have already suggested to the Honourable Minister that there are about three house spots, or there is land for which Town Planning permission has already been given, during our Administration, and the National Housing Corporation had proposed to sell those spots but I have asked the Minister if he would look into the possibility of relocating those individuals from Surinam to those three spots at the corner of Tourville Road and Horse Hill.

Equally, Sir, individuals in Parks Road have been promised house spots in Farmers. It is of great regret that we were not able to see those house spots delivered to the individuals. I have asked the Minister, not as a political issue but as a matter of dealing with the human condition that he should see his way, as soon as possible, to provide relief to those individuals, so that they could move to Farmers.

I want to make public at this juncture that the explanation given to me, Sir, is that the electricity in Farmers is not in yet, and they have no Certificate of Compliance. Whatever the facts, Mr. Speaker, I believe that most of the people in this Chamber, including myself, grew up in a situation where we did not have the benefit of roads.

We did not have the benefit of electricity. I am not at all suggesting that we should put people in a housing condition that is not adequate, but in a situation, Mr. Speaker, where an individual's house is about to go down a ravine, I think it is a dreadful thing to tell him that he has to wait until Farmers gets electricity, or until the road in Farmers is fully paved.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Housing has a fund that will provide BDS$25 000 to every individual who is relocating because of slippage and other natural disasters. I believe if the Minister looks into the Estimates, he would see, that for the most part, the $½ million that is generally allocated in the Estimates for that purpose, lapses every year.

I am aware that in my term, I have been able to ensure that about five or six of my constituents have received that grant. But to have a situation where you have lots at Farmers, and you have individuals who are in a great peril, not benefiting from the allocation of the house spots at Farmers, and not benefiting from the $25 000 Grant, is a travesty.

As I said, I believe that these individuals should be allowed to take possession of the lots because if they take possession of the lots, they could at least start to prepare the foundation. Hopefully, by the time the foundation is complete, the National Housing Corporation would have the Certificate of Compliance and individuals could move their houses. Sir, let that be their choice, because I would venture that any Barbadian whose house is in a peril through slippage, would much rather have a situation, where he can move his house to safety, even though the utilities may not be fully completed.

Therefore, as a humanitarian matter, Sir, I would like to ask that the Minister look into the relocation of individuals from parts of St. Joseph and other constituencies. I know it is happening at White Hill in St. Andrew and the Member of Parliament for St. Andrew, I have no doubt would make his own appeal to you. I think it an important part of the responsibility of any Minister of Housing.

16:30:14

Mr. Speaker, we certainly support the vesting. There is other work that is on stream for St. Philip, especially for the Six Roads area. Sir, I look forward today to hearing the Honourable Member for St. Philip West in support of this particular vesting.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I first want to thank all Honourable Members who participated in this debate and lent their support to this Resolution.

Sir, I sat and listened to the Opposition. Sir, I want to respond to some comments that emanated from the mouth of the Honourable Member for St. George North. Sir, it was interesting that he said that what was created in the Ministry of Housing and Lands was an atmosphere. I do not know what atmosphere he was speaking about. Sir, I believe that when we speak about atmosphere and we link it to the Honourable Member for St. George North, then we can come to our own conclusions. Sir, I thought that he was going to say that the Ministry of Housing and Lands was about creating homes or opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, he indirectly prosecuted his own Government and pleaded guilty based on the comments he made that the period 2004-2008 was a very unfortunate period. Mr. Speaker, that to me encapsulates and characterise the period of non-performance of the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, what is also interesting is that the Honourable Member boasts about the Inter-American Development Bank programme. Mr. Speaker, the first part of the Country Park Towers was linked to the Inter-American Development Bank project, that was supposed to provide housing to facilitate the relocation of residents from Greenfield. His Administration abandoned Country Park Towers, so I do not understand the Honourable Member for St. George North. He is very consistent in his inconsistency. Mr. Speaker, that is something that really and truly happens over there.

Sir, I will go through some further points he made. He stumbled over the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act. He was dealt with by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. The Honourable Member then went into a period of irrelevance. He touched on drainage which is not relevant to this Resolution at all, and he was the lead spokesman for the Opposition.

Sir, we had the lead spokesman mentioning the fact that all they did was to create an atmosphere. He further said that the housing projects must continue. Mr. Speaker, no project was started under that Administration between 2004-2008, so how can we continue something that was not started?

Mr. Speaker, he also said that the Government must not claim the former Administration's projects. Mr. Speaker, I want to know if the acquisition of Bushy Park was a Barbados Labour Party project. I want to know if the 500 lot programme was a part of the Barbados Labour Party Administration. I want to know if the infilling programme that we are seeking to do was part of the Barbados Labour Party Administration. I want to know if the free transfer of the units was a part of the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, he is saying that we are claiming the previous Government's projects. Where is the evidence that we are claiming their projects? As was rightly said, there is no Barbados Labour Party land or no Democratic Labour Party land in Barbados. If the land is there and you decide not to do anything with it and we decide to put houses on it, then that is our business and we must move on. It is not about talk.

This Government has the vision. The people are out there knocking on the doors of the National Housing Corporation. Should we leave land idle? It is our social responsibility and duty to provide housing for Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, I also take note of what was said by my former teacher, the Honourable Member for St. James North, when he mentioned about political sabotage and staff morale. Sir, I will take those words with me.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: He is looking out for me. I will always walk with those words, 'political sabotage' at the National Housing Corporation. I have seen no evidence of it but thanks for reminding me of the element of political sabotage. I will meet with him later to discuss it further to get further details.

Mr. Speaker, I also take note of the fact that he mentioned about a land bank. Sir, I searched up and down the Ministry of Housing and Lands for this so-called land bank. I will continue to search for it tomorrow when I go back to the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Mr. Speaker, we are already doing a search of derelict Government-owned properties that we can utilise. It is Crown lands and we could make use of it because we do not have to make any output for the cost of acquisition.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central also made an interesting comment in relation to building a community instead of building houses, I support that. Sir, when we look further at conceptualising the area at Valery, we would be looking at building a community so that everyone in that district would have an opportunity, be it commercial or otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. James South also mentioned the fact that 157 tenants in his area are now the proud owners of housing units. Mr. Speaker, when we visited his area on that evening to deliver the letters, one lady said this is Emancipation Day.

Mr. Speaker, I would have expected the Other Side, particularly the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, because his area is earmarked for a development, to get up and support the Ministry of Housing and Lands and also asked about the project that would start in his constituency. I guess that is a clear indication that you would be going elsewhere and so I would have to make sure that the people in your constituency...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please address your comments to the Chair and not to the Honourable Member directly.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I will make sure that the members of the constituency of Christ Church West are looked after although, the Honourable Member remains silent today.

4.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, what we are developing in our policy is a new property-owning class. Sir, as was correctly put by the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, our policies are basically geared towards the low income and middle income earners, who we are seeking to develop as the property-owning class, so that their dream of owning a piece of this rock would be realised by our policies and social programmes.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, in his usual way, skilfully cross-examined the reign of the Barbados Labour Party, particularly in St. Philip. We know they practised the politics of spite towards him during that period. We know very well that the people of St. Philip wanted houses and that they approached the Government, time and time again. We know that land is in abundance in St. Philip. We know that Crown land at Rices and St. Martin's have remained idle for a number of years. Sir, all that time we had a representative from the Barbados Labour Party, who was sitting on the Front Bench, yet he allowed his Government to build only 10 houses in St. Philip, in l4 years.

Sir, they built 10 houses in 14 years, yet that Minister did not even have the decency to request from the Minister of Housing and Lands, to vest the property in the powers of the National Housing Corporation, so that those 10 homeowners could have gotten their conveyances.

Mr. Speaker, further, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, who is now leaving...

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, under the Rules and under the Convention of Parliament, it is unparliamentary to reflect on Honourable Member's absence from the Chamber. Sir, I invite you to look at May's on Parliament Practice and the Procedure in Australia on that particular matter.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I visited St. Joseph and we were looking at a tenantry there. Sir, suddenly I was surrounded by a number of constituents, all asking me to be their representative. I told them that legally it was impossible for me to do so. I asked them why they wanted me to become their representative and they said that they had this problem now for a number of years and that the present sitting Honourable Member had not shown up and had turned a blind eye to the problem, and so they were asking for representation.

Sir, I am surprised today that like "Hurry Murray", the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, who was in power for l4 years, who was a senior Member of the then Cabinet, who is a former Attorney-General, is now asking this Minister of Housing and Lands to rush down to Surinam, to attend to the problems there.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph had no strength in his voice to encourage the then Minister of Housing and Lands to attend to the problem. There was no strength in his voice, all he had was strength in a smile. I got the impression that instead of requesting assistance, he simply smiled his way through for l4 years.

Mr. Speaker, could you imagine the lives of people living in Surinam were being threatened and the Honourable Member was smiling? Sir, the Honourable Member sat silently by. Mr. Speaker, I will assist them but the Honourable Member, who is like "Hurry Murray" or "Hari-Kari", wants to rush me down there all of a sudden, telling me that this thing must be done. Mr. Speaker, we have a social responsibility and we will take care of all

Barbadians, irrespective of whatever constituency they are from.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member started to paint a picture and started to question the record of the Democratic Labour Party, but I can tell you that housing communities were created at Pleasant Hall, Haynesville, Wildey, Eden Lodge and Silver Hill. Low and middle income housing was developed for sale at Eden Lodge, Friendship Terrace, North Wildey, Wildey Terrace and Lodge Terrace. Sir, that is the record of the Democratic Labour Party on housing solution. Of course, that record cannot be challenged and today I place on record in this Honourable House, challenging the Honourable Members on the Other Side to get up.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, they did not get up and mention that the Primary Homes Programme was successful, they could not do it, not a man nor woman could get up.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you mean not an Honourable Member.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, not one Honourable Member of the Opposition could have defended the Primary Homes Programme. Sir, in my opening, as I said, in 14 years, there were l0 homes built at Six Roads; l8 homes were built in l4 years in St. Lucy, while none were built in St. John. In fact, I do recall the former Honourable Member for St. George South mentioning that he has not received one single house nor house spot from the then Administration. The Honourable Member said that he was being treated like an outside child, yet we had two Ministers of Government, one being the former Honourable Member for St. James South.

Sir, I like to mention the former Honourable Member for St. James South, because I can recall the giggles and the broad smiles on that 4th September, I can recall the: "Oh, I have found a housing solution." Sir, the Honourable Member was like a snake oil salesman, who had the panacea for every ill.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, that particular Minister would go down in history. The former Honourable Member for Christ Church East would go down in history as the Minister for rapid inaction, while the other Honourable Member would go down in history as the Minister who produced nothing.

4.50 p.m.

The Minister of nothing. The Minister who produced nothing throughout those 14 years. Barbadians will remember the promises. The promise of Bumble Bee. The promise of Sparrow. The promise of grasshopper. The promise of ladybird, all of those promises, Sir, and they all ended up into nothing.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I want to mention again that I was taken back by the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Joseph got up in here and mentioned residential mortgages at Bakers and Apes Hill. Sir, that is for a particular class of Barbadians. The houses at Bakers are about $300 and something or $400 and something thousand dollars.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, this has nothing to do with National Housing Corporation at all. It has nothing to do with low-income earners or nothing to do with gas station workers, nothing to do with the post man, nothing to do with policemen, teachers or maids that wanted help and placed their confidence in the former Administration to get a house or a piece of land.

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

Hon. F.J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 3 – SPECIAL LOANS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am proposing to deal with both the Special Loans Amendment and the Local Loans (Amendment) Bill. I believe that the Leader of the House has already indicated that to Honourable Members on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, the Special Loans Act currently authorised the Government to borrow from either another Government, bank, corporation, company or other institution sums of money not exceeding $500 million for purposes to be approved by Parliament. Sir, that limit has been in place since 1987.

Mr. Speaker, at September 30, 2008, the balance outstanding was, in fact, $638.9 million, which is $138.9 million in excess of the current limit. Sir, I believe when I go through the list, you will see it is not this Government's fault that this limit was exceeded.

There is a loan for $28.6 million HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control; loans from the Republic of China; Gymnasium and Cheapside $8.4 million; South Coast Sewerage Project $10.6 million; equipment for the Police Force $17.7 million; vehicles for the Sanitation Services Authority $6.8 million; the National Housing Corporation, to repay working capital, debt, $33 million; C.O. Williams Paving Works, $6.5 million; Rayside Construction and R S Paving Inc., $12.4 million; the Barbados Coast Guard Headquarters, $59.5 million; Integrated Coastal Surveillance $131.1 million; assistance to LIAT, $3.1 million; and the Correction Corporation Prison Project, $288 million. Therefore, the main reason for exceeding the limit is attributed to the new prison at $288 million, which was constructed under a public/private sector partnership arrangement.

There is no legislation in Barbados governing public/private partnerships and, therefore, until such legislation is brought into force, the new prison can only be covered under the Special Loans Act. In addition, when it was originally conceptualised, the project would not have been carried out under the cash basis of accounting where it would not have to be facilitated under this Act. Sir, that is also the case....

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: We did not have the accrual system then. When it was conceptualised, it would have been conceptualised under the old system of accounting. Under the new system, it has to be brought to account now; under the old system it would not have to be brought to account. The Integrated Coastal Surveillance System and the Coast Guard Headquarters are also ... but they were covered under the Special Loans Act, during the last financial year.

Sir, as I have said, the balance outstanding under the Special Loans, if the prison had not been taken into account would be $350.9 million and would be well within the limit. There are, however, new loans to be facilitated, the new Judicial Centre is $117.5 million; the second World Bank Loan for HIV/AIDS is $71.4 million; the ABC Highway Project is $120 million and the Integrated Coastal Surveillance System, which requires some final pieces of equipment of $15 million is to be brought to account.

Mr. Speaker, obviously there are other projects like the Empire Theatre and the completion of the Lloyds Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference Centre, which have not been finalised, but these will be brought under the provisions of the Special Loans Act.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to local loans, the Local Loans Act currently authorises the Minister responsible for Finance to borrow sums not exceeding $3.5 billion. I should have said that the objective of the Amendment under the Special Loans Act is to facilitate both those matters that I mentioned before, as well as the new ones, and we are looking to increase the limit to $1.5 billion, which I believe would cover any future identified obligations as well as any other borrowing that would be required.

Mr. Speaker, under the Local Loans Act, the Minister responsible for finance can borrow sums not exceeding $3.5 billion in the aggregate. Sir, at September 30, 2008, the balance outstanding under the Act is $3.1 billion. There was a new issue of debentures in the amount of $100 million in October and there is another issue of $120 million in November. There will be an additional $100 million in December 2008 and January 2009. There is also upcoming maturing issues, which have to be rolled over and it is, therefore, anticipated at the end of this financial year, the outstanding balance would be about $3.4 billion, in order to accommodate new debt that we need to raise by way of treasury notes or debentures. It is felt that it is prudent to give some flexibility to that process by increasing the ceiling under the Local Loans Act to $4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, you have too very small Bills, the first of which we are dealing is the Local Loans Act.

I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. F.J. STUART: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very interesting time for me. First, as the youngest member of the Opposition and secondly, as the most junior member on the Opposition Benches, to be leading a debate on behalf of the Opposition to respond to the Honourable Member for St. John, the current Prime Minister.

17:00

I start there, even although it is simple in terms of the legislation, it has extremely far-reaching effects for the social, infra-structural and economic development of this country.

Sir, let us first start with the global situation. Everybody would agree that the United States, Europe and all of those countries are under significant stress and difficulties with their economies. We would appreciate that, but people in Barbados do not live out there. They live here in this country and expect the people who were elected to serve them, to find solutions to the problems

that they are experiencing.

I think we must always keep in the forefront that of all things we do are to the benefit of the people of this country. This Opposition will support the increases to both the Special Loans as well as the Local Loans Amendments, but we have to give it critical support.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member very well. He said that they were increasing it for any future identified obligation and any other borrowing that would be required. This is interesting. Let me say why this is interesting. It is interesting because on Page 23 of the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, it says clearly that a tightly managed debt accumulation strategy is targeted at the reduction at both domestic and foreign components of the national debt.

Therefore, one would have expected the Honourable Member for St. John would have come to this Honourable House, not to increase the limit but to decrease it, in keeping with the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party to reduce the domestic and foreign components of the national debt.

Sir, I am not surprised, because the Democratic Labour Party has proven that it has no economic philosophy whatsoever. They are prepared to flip flop on every economic situation they see fit and I am not very surprised at that.

Sir, the Honourable Member did not get up and say, which I imagined he would say later in his wrap up, I do not know, why the people of Barbados need to consider having a higher fiscal deficit and borrowing to enhance the productive capacity in this country.

Let us face it. We are now in a situation of what we call stagflation. Do you know what that is? It is increased inflation, increased unemployment with the economy in a downward spiral. What has happened, since the Democratic Labour Party has shown the lack of initiative to start this economy, this country has essentially been set back one full year.

We have lost one full year of managing the economic crisis that we are now facing. I am very surprised because the Honourable Member for St. John, in his Budget, rather than trying to reduce the tax burden on the people, rather than trying to increase employment in this country, rather than trying to fight the stagflation we are experiencing, came and made matters worse, like Hurricane David, made matters worse with a high inflationary Budget.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you are not referring to the Honourable Member for St. John.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: No, Sir. There was a hurricane called "David". I would not refer to the Honourable Member as Hurricane David.

Sir, the lack of response to fight the international crisis and to be able to put programmes and policies in place has put us back 11 months. I would hope and pray that the Democratic Labour Party would come to the realisation to decide that we have to borrow to enhance the capacity building ability of this country. You have to protect jobs. You have to protect businesses. You have to protect tourism.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central could tell you that right now the pound is plummeting. The pound is $2.98, $3, sometimes, and going down. Do you know what that means? It means that every single commodity a person from Britain purchases in this country has increased by 20 per cent or 30 per cent, depending on the rate of exchange. Do you know what that means, 65 per cent to 70 per cent of the tourists that come to Barbados now find an expensive destination even more expensive. These are critical crisis matters. Sir, I am shocked and appalled that the Democratic Labour Party shows no vision or direction to try to solve these economic problems. I am very surprised at that.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John, not only in his Budget raised the cost of doing business and increased taxes in this country, things that you should not be doing in a situation with high inflation and rising unemployment. He then also put a tax on cell phones that they now do not know how to collect. I am surprised, very surprised.

I want the Honourable Member to answer a few things. I want to ask him about the energy, and in particular, what is the debt now at Barbados National Oil Company . I hope that in his wrap up he would give an indication of what the debt is, now, at Barbados National Oil Company?

The reason, over time, even although a small number of cents per litre has reduced that debt, the quantum of litres of gas and diesel sold in Barbados is so high, we should very soon be approaching a place and a time when that debt has been almost fully repaid. That is why I want to ask how much is that debt now, for when it is fully repaid we would expect a further reduction on the price of diesel and gasoline, and I thank the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party continues to price gouge in this country on energy prices. When I got up in here...

His Honour. K.St.C. BEST: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. Nowhere in this country is there any evidence of price gouging.

17.10 p.m.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West who was the former Chairman of the NPC, would know every well about price gouging and the kind of behaviour that exhibited on That Side.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: In January, the international price of a barrel of oil was $112, the local price at the pump was $1.46. In November, this month of this year, the price for an international barrel of oil is $50, less than half the cost. You would imagine and anticipate that the price of diesel should be equally reduced and be half or less than half but that is not the case, Mr. Speaker. The price is, in fact, 60 cents more. Therefore, how on earth could a cost price now be half of what it was then, in January, be less than half, now and the selling price be still 60 cents more than it was. Mr. Speaker, if that is not price gouging, what is?

Mr. Speaker, I go further. This country is familiar with economic crises. In recent memory, we have had three known economic issues. We had the 1992 economic crisis. We had the 2001 economic crisis, due to the September 11, 2001 event; and we are now facing an economic crisis in 2008, so what I sought to do was to compare these crises and how they were managed.

In the 1992 crisis, there existed a situation of high unemployment and minimal international foreign reserves. In 2001 and 2008 the situation is a little different. Unemployment is significantly lower than it was in the 1992 crisis and in the converse, we have relatively high international foreign reserves, $2.2 billion at the current time. What did each Government do at the time?

In 1992, the Democratic Labour Party Administration chose to put the brunt of the economic crisis on the backs of the people of this country. Does anyone on the Other Side want to get up and say that is not so? In 1992, the Democratic Labour Party Administration decided to put the entire burden on the backs of the people of this country, because it was a situation where they had high unemployment and a low foreign reserve.

In 2001 after the September 11, 2001 crisis what did the Barbados Labour Party Administration do? They said, no, we will not put the brunt of the burden on the people of the country, we will go to the financial institutions and we will borrow money to do two things; protect jobs and protect businesses. Why? Because the strength of this country is essentially our human resource, our people. If you have a situation where people are not able to work; people are not able to support their families, and you have a breakdown in the social fabric of the country.

Sir, an economic crisis will not last forever. There will come a time that you will no longer be in an economic crisis. If you allow your businesses to fall by the wayside, then when the economy starts to rebound, you would have lost critical businesses that are necessary to help in the restructuring of the economy, when the economy rebounds. Sir, those are the two guiding principles that the Barbados Labour Party Administration took to be able to guide us through the difficulties of September 11, 2001.

Sir, you can ask anybody in Barbados if they felt any significant crisis after the September 11, 2001 issue. There were hotels in St. Lucia closing down. There were hotels in Antigua closing down but people in Barbados were protected by programmes and policies put in place by the Barbados Labour Party Administration.

Now that we are seeing a similar crisis in 2008, we would have expected, we would have hoped that the Democratic Labour Party would have moved away from its previous policy of putting the burden on the backs of the people of the country and instead, borrow money to help to protect this country's jobs and the people's jobs; borrow money to help to build businesses and build capacity in this country.

This is what we would expect and it is evident that they will obviously be going down that route, because the Honourable Member said they are increasing enough for any future identified obligation and any other borrowing that would be required. Therefore, we understand and we support it because we are firmly grounded in an economic philosophy that we have to borrow for developmental purposes.

When we borrowed to build the Barbados National Bank and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados, these were things that built capacity in this country. These are things that later on sold for significantly more than they cost us to build up in the first place, and they provided jobs while they were our ours. Sir, that is building capacity in a country and that is what Governments must do to prop up their people and to prop up their economies.

Asides.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, what is unfortunate, however, is that instead of coming with programmes similar to what we did after the September 11, 2001 crisis to be able to protect jobs and to be able to keep businesses going in an effective manner, we have seen an increase in

diesel prices, an inflationary Budget, a raising of $180 million in taxes, significant increase in Land Tax and a cut in the Capital Works Programme.

What has this meant? This has meant that all of these programmes the Democratic Labour Party brought, have only made a bad situation times worse. Instead of finding policies and programmes to fight the crisis, they made it worse.

17:20:14

Mr. Speaker, if they are not prepared to implement their Manifesto, they are free to implement the Barbados Labour Party's. Mr. Speaker, I want to lead them to page 11 of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto which states that:

"We will lower the top rates of personal income tax from 35 per cent to 25 per cent for those on incomes of $7 000 per month."

What does that do? Mr. Speaker, that immediately puts money in the hands of the middle-class people of Barbados. It will prop up the middle-class people and they themselves would get to work to investing and helping to rebuild this country and get this country back on a firm and sound footing. That is what this Administration needs to be doing.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South say a similar thing. It is not often that he says something that is worthwhile, but he said one thing that I have to agree with him on. Mr. Speaker, I was so amazed at this one thing, I had to write it down and commit it to memory. Sir, he said that just because the diesel prices have come down, the people who have benefited from that reduction have not themselves reduce their prices, or words to that effect.

Sir, that is significant because after I got in here and told the Democratic Labour Party Administration and the Honourable Member for St. John that they had to reduce the diesel prices, they pooh-poohed it. One Honourable Member said it is monkey playing with a gun and another Honourable Member said that I was watching too much television. Sir, the next week, they reduced it not once, twice or three times, but four times, and they are going to reduce it again because up to now they have not got the reduction in prices right. Mr. Speaker, we understand.

Mr. Speaker, what is ironic about this debate is that the Democratic Labour Party was elected on this concept of reducing the debt. In fact, there was an activist - I like to call him "Dr. Debt"', who went up and down this country talking that due to the borrowing of the Barbados Labour Party, it has resulted in an unstable economy. He said the economy was going to crash. He said the debt was so high that the country was bankrupt. He said that the debt was so high that it was burying Barbados. He said it was a total debt trap. Therefore, for the Honourable Member to come and increase the opportunity for them to borrow to take the country into more debt is more than delicious irony. It is unfortunate that "Dr. Debt" is not here today.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I heard somebody called somebody 'Hurry Murray'. Obviously that was some sort of nickname, so "Dr. Debt" could also be a nickname, but I will move on.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the Democratic Labour Party Administration to follow the Barbados Labour Party model of the 2001 crisis because it worked. What the Barbados Labour Party Administration did was to borrow money to protect jobs, to protect businesses, to decrease the cost of doing business and to decrease the tax take that people would have to give in to Government and leave money in the people's pockets. They did these things to make the economy more robust and more resilient and encourage investment by so doing.

Sir, they also supported local manufacturing. Sir, that was significant because all of these things were done to reposition and rebuild an economy. These are the critical things that were absolutely necessary in a time of crisis.

Mr. Speaker, we are in an economic crisis again. It is unfortunate that the reality of that crisis has still not yet hit home.

Mr. Speaker, we need to send a message to the world. Barbados, irrespective of the crisis, must remain open for business and Government must play its part. Mr. Speaker, we can do nothing to control the global situation, but there are things we can do here. Nobody sent and called the Democratic Labour Party. They begged for the job. If they begged for the job, they need to get up and do the job and provide the policies and programmes to protect the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, they simply have no clue what to do. In medicine, we call it supervised neglect. That is what we are seeing from that Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: That is basically when you have the tools and the wherewithal to provide a remedy but you are not prepared to take the situation in hand and remedy the situation, so instead you supervise the neglect.

Mr. Speaker, the only thing that we have seen is a shake up of the Cabinet.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope you are not quoting from the newspaper.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: I am not referring to the shake up, Mr. Speaker. The shake up of the Cabinet is like the shake up of a glass of mauby, more froth and less substance, that is all that has resulted.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, it is the public who will judge, when they look at their ability to buy products in the supermarket and their ability to find a new job after having been laid off, or sent home from the construction industry, or from the hotel industry, and all those other industries that are under pressure in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote the Honourable Member for St. John from the House of Assembly debate of Tuesday, October 30, 2001. The Honourable Member was at the time speaking about the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow. In that debate he said, and I quote:

"Development may take place in a society without any planning on the part of Government. Such development would be the total sum of a multiplicity of independent decisions made by individuals mainly businessmen, to expand their operations or to increase production."

5.30 p.m.

"In times of prosperity, development by the private sector tends to accelerate. In an economic recession it tends to slow down and grind to a halt and may even go into reverse. If this Government sees it fit to continue its policy, then we can expect to see a reversal of all of those social and economic gains that we have made in this country."

Sir, these are not my words, this is a quote from the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, and repeated by the Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. Speaker, it is not like the Honourable Member does not know, he knows. Sir, I will go further, the Honourable Member also said in that same debate:

"Sir, the winter of our discontent is now upon us and we will, therefore, know soon how steady the hand is, relative to the choppy seas that we face as a people."

Mr. Speaker, well, now the shoe is on the other foot and the Honourable Member, who was making those remarks at this time was Leader of the Opposition. Sir, the Honourable Member is now Prime Minister and now rather than the people of Barbados looking to a different entity to see how steady that hand is, we are now looking to see how steady his hand is, after he has made those remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I go further, the Honourable Member also said this, because this was a monumental debate, this was a debate about a crisis management taking place in this country, after September 11 disaster. The Honourable Member said:

"Sir, if Government does not act in these circumstances, thousands of Barbadians will lose their jobs, families in Barbados will suffer, and people who started out during a time of economic prosperity and started to build businesses and invest in this economy, may end up losing all. Therefore, let us understand the reality of it."

Mr. Speaker, if, in 2001, the Honourable Member recognised that action was absolutely necessary by Government, in order to save jobs and businesses, why now in 2008, the Honourable Member has proven masterfully inactive in addressing this crisis? If the Honourable Member has a crisis management plan, we look forward to hearing it. We look forward to hearing of the stimulus package because up to now it does not exist. I understand that one is in the works but we look forward to hearing about it because we recognise that Government must act to save people's jobs and to save businesses.

Mr. Speaker, these are not my words, these are the words of the Honourable Member for St. John, so he knows about it. The Honourable Member knows what Governments must do, so why then the inactivity? Why the inertia to start to move? We have already lost a year in responding to the crisis. The United States of America knows they have to run a big deficit, so they are looking at a 10 per cent deficit, yet we had a Throne Speech, in 2008, which talked about a balanced budget and a small fiscal deficit. Sir, that is truly counterproductive. There is no such thing. You cannot have a balanced budget and a small fiscal deficit but that was in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, further, rather than increasing the deficit to support the construction industry and to support businesses and to help people find credit, this Government continues to run a small deficit, just to make a political point.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Well, we have to change that, and the Honourable Member knows that full well. He knew it in 2001. What is different from 2001 and 2008, is that in 2001 he wanted to win an Election, and so he had cared about the people and had to do and say things to win, while, in 2008, he has won the Election and it is now time for him to move on.

Mr. Speaker, I go further. The Honourable Member also said - and I found this one to be extremely ironic and extremely interesting. Sir, like the Honourable Member for St. Peter, I am the son of a shopkeeper and I understand the difficulties that shopkeepers have to endure. Like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, my father was a shopkeeper from age l4 until he died at age 53.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: He started his life as a shopkeeper and I am sure that one would not hold success against him. Sir, I continue, the Honourable Member for St. John, Mr. D. J. H. Thompson, in a debate on Tuesday, October 30...

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you did not say you were reading from Hansard.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I am reading from the same debate which I started.

MR. SPEAKER: Please cite what you were reading then. I thought you were referring to your copious notes.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member went on to say:

"Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on That Side do not like me to tell you what they call anecdotal stories. They are not Aesop, they are rum shop stories, stories of rum shops, rum shop fables - if you want to call them that - of guys who have run their shops down to almost nothing and in recent times, because of the economic circumstances and because during times of prosperity, they were given a lot of credit and they were able to run up high levels of credit with distributors, a lot of them are facing severe times. They are going through that cycle now. The downswing in relation to many of those businesses is taking place. I am talking about some of the smaller ones that are merely selling alcoholic beverages, small items such as soap, soap powder, sardines, milk, macaroni, rice and onions. Many of these enterprises are facing severe problems. How do you save them from closure?"

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member felt the pain of the rum shop owners then in 2001, but in 2008 he does not but instead, raises the tax on cigarettes and on rum, then turned around and raised the registration fee for the rum shop people too.

Sir, instead of feeling the pain he felt in 2001 to ease their pains, he has inflicted a crushing burden on those rum shop people. Sir, instead of asking the question again, how do you save them from closure? He has put the final nail into their coffin. Sir, with his policies and programmes in 2001, where he committed to protecting the rum shop people, now in 2008, he has come to put the final nail into their coffin.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to go further. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John did some of his best work when he was in Opposition, and I think we should put him back there. Sir, the Honourable Member really did some excellent work. The Honourable Member did good programmes, good policies, and he was thinking about the poor man in the country. Sir, what has happened since then?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John said something else, and it is another important thing that we in this country have to understand. Sir, I do not have the quote to hand and so I am going to try to paraphrase. The Honourable Member said that if we in Barbados, in 2008, could find remedies for our economic crisis but we are prepared to help our main trading partners in the region, the people with whom we trade on a daily basis, to help to prop up this country, to help to provide places for our manufacturers to have people with whom to trade, if we do not find ways to help the region, then where would we be? Sir, they too would be suffering an economic crisis. He said that we also need to think about the region and about the problems that the people in the region suffer when under economic crises.

5.40 p.m.

Sir, because of that, our trading partners, if they come under significant pressure, it will have a knock-on effect on the economy of this country. Sir, that was some good work that the Honourable Member for St. John did, when he was the Leader of the Opposition. I cannot say that he continues to do good work in this new elevated position, but he certainly did good work then.

Mr. Speaker, what we need to do in this country is to protect Barbadian families from the early mistakes and mismanagement of the Democratic Labour Party Administration. Sir, that has resulted in increased inflation; increased losses of jobs; 3 000 people sent home since January 15, 2008. Sir, one would have thought, based on all the pre-election prostestation that all would have been fixed. That everything would have been put right and people would be living now in a utopian society. Sir, that has not occurred and, instead, what was a difficult situation has now got significantly worse.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is obvious, the time is long gone but too late, better than never. We need to start putting this economy back on a stable and productive past. Let us not wait for the crisis to hit to such a point that we reach the point of no return. Sir, that is what we have to do. What we have to do is we have to adjust the land tax bands

in this country so that the brunt and burden of land tax is not borne solely by the people.

We have to continue to reduce the price of petroleum products, keeping in line with the reductions nationally and stop price gouging the people of this country. We need to bring to Parliament the middle-class tax cuts to put money back in the hands of people so that they could turn around, invest it and help this country to rebound from the economic crisis that grips us.

We need an emergency stabilisation package, which would include building a new hospital and maybe building a school to replace the Louis Lynch School and we need to run a slightly higher deficit. Sir, by doing that, it would put money in Government's hands to continue the programmes and policies and get Barbadians back to work.

Mr. Speaker, we need to do two other things. You will recall that people benefited from the reversed tax credit; people who make less than the threshold amount. In addition, those people should not pay withholding tax on their savings.

Sir, if we already accept that they are essentially not people making a lot of money and they are getting a reversed tax credit on one hand, how could they be asked to pay tax on their savings? Sir, those people should be removed from paying withholding tax.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, all of this is about increasing disposable income in the hands of the people because, whether or not we like it, the Government cannot do everything, the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow said it. It relies on the people of the country to put their hands to the plough and get to improve the economy of this country. What we need is visionary thinking; programmes and policies to protect the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in this debate and to say from the outset that one would not believe that it is because of the Barbados Labour Party that we are here today before this Parliament to increase the special loans and to increase the local loans.

Sir, a few years ago, when the Barbados Labour Party entered into the BOLT arrangements, they were forewarned by the Opposition that they could make these arrangements but some time they would have to come to the books. Sir, today we are in Parliament and we are here dealing with special loans and with the BOLT arrangements.

It is because of the BOLT arrangements that we are here now seeking permission from Parliament to increase the limits on special loans because we had to include those hidden figures that were hidden from the public of Barbados because somebody else picked up the tab to construct these projects and now the Government is faced with the debt.

Mr. Speaker, we have two problems, one, we hid cost and two, we hid debt. We hid the cost from the taxpayers and we hid the tax from the taxpayers but today we are in Parliament, a new Government and we have to find the money to cover the debt and the costs which were hidden from the taxpayers by the Barbados Labour Party because of the BOLT arrangements. Sir, they postponed the expenditure and now it has to be picked up by a new Government that did not incur the cost.

Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that they sent the most junior person to this Parliament to contradict his leader. I am going to tell you why he contradicted his leader. His leader came to this Parliament and said that the Government should borrow money for the citizens of Barbados to get cheap gas and the Honourable Member is now here quarrelling because the Government reduced gasoline four times.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you still addressing the Chair?

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, Sir. I have always respected the Chair even if it has not done the same to me and not in this Session I might be speaking, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I see, I was just getting concerned, Honourable Member.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, do not get too concerned. I will tell you when to, Sir. Mr. Speaker, what is interesting is that the Leader of the Opposition asked this Government to go and create long-term debt for short-term problems and, Sir, I challenge any of them to get up on this point.

We were being told as a Government to go and borrow money instead of raising gasoline in this country. Sir, had we stupidly accepted that advice, where would we be today. We would tie the country down to long-term borrowing for a short-term problem because the gasoline was up, they panicked but now the gasoline is down, the gas prices are dropping. Sir, here it is that we would have gone on the international market and borrowed money, when this country has a serious liquidity problem and not a negative one.

Sir, a positive one, that is, they allowed people who had investment, because of their policy to sell off all their investments, created savings and now we have real savings within the economy that is now creating a problem for the Government of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, because of this, we could afford to come to this Parliament and raise the local loans limit because there is no need to go outside and seek money because we have the money here and we have to find creative ways in dealing with the money. Sir, if we do not do, we will create a serious problem for this country.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Yes, on the local market. We have to dry up some of the liquidity. If we do not do this, we will create problems for the economy. Sir, one would not believe that they have turned Barbadians from investors into savers and they are now asking the Government to go on the international market to borrow money.

17:50

I am saying that when one looks at what is occurring, the Government is doing the right thing. It is on the right path and understands the problems as they relate to this economy.

Sir, it is clear to me that it is a good thing, and I want to thank the Barbadian public for seeing through the Barbados Labour Party and removing them quicker, because if they were in the same position that we find ourselves in, they would have been on the international market borrowing money to buy fuel, only to realise a reduction in the fuel and there would be no need for the loan. Sir, because of the foresight of the Democratic Labour Party we could not accept that advice.

I want to say to my comrades, there is no need to listen to the Other Side. I have not heard them proffer anything that would help this Party. They went around talking about a one term Government because they have a system in place and they know where they have placed their people and they now know where they want to place that information, so that the Blue Peter sharks will accept ill advice and turn this country upside down; I am saying that there might be some big lion sharks, according to the newspaper, but I prefer to deal with the lion sharks than the blue peter sharks, because at least the lion sharks know what to eat, and when there is no bait on the hook.

Sir, I am saying that the Barbados Labour Party also made some serious statements, and if you go on the website, deniskellman.com you will see I warned the Barbados Labour Party when the Canadian dollar, the pound and the Euro were high not to depend on the local exchange, but to encourage people to be more aggressive to increase market numbers, but not the dollar value in Barbados.

Instead, you saw people prepared to sit back and count the number of Barbadian dollars they were receiving, because of the conversion rate, but they were not in the market, tapping the Canadian market as this Government is now doing. We have not given up on the American market.

We have not given up on the English market or the European market. The Government and Minister is broadening the scope to ensure we bring more numbers, so that when you multiply the rate by the numbers, you will get more money.

Sir, I am saying that had the Barbados Labour Party accepted the advice given to them, the Tourism Industry would have been in a better position, but they allowed the players to sit back and accept the high foreign currency rate and did nothing to increase the numbers to benefit this country. All they were interested in was the books looking good, not recognising the need to increase the number of people coming into this country. That is why we are here looking at the Special Loans and the Local Loans.

Sir, I want to say that the Barbados Labour Party has been found guilty. They have been sentenced and even though they have been found guilty, sentenced and jailed, they still want to be sentenced again for giving poor advice on matters like these.

I also want to say that...

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: On a point of order. Is the Honourable Member saying that we deserve such treatment and such punishment, because we incurred debt to pay debt? Is he saying that the debt we incurred was for consumption or production? I am not sure. I think that as an Honourable Member, the privilege of the House permits me to understand him, and he has to speak in English clear enough for me to understand.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, continue.

His Excellency D.ST.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. SPEAKER: St. James North.

His Excellency D.ST.E. KELLMAN: I do not know why I would associate St. George for St. James with such quality of speech. You would expect a question like that coming from the Honourable Member for St. James North

because he is in a happy mood today and he wants me to remind this Honourable House that I have always accused his Government of borrowing long-term money to pay current debts.

I want to thank him for reminding me of that point, because when one looks at the deficit, the total borrowing, and what has been produced in this country, one can only come to the conclusion that the Honourable Member came to, and he has always been a bright student. I want to thank him for that. I have always said that he should have gone further within the Barbados Labour Party because of his ability.

Sir, I am surprised that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West would deliver a statement like this when the Honourable Member for St. James North is sitting in his seat, and is much more capable of delivering a better speech on finances in this Parliament. He has always been under-rated but I would never under rate him because I know his ability. His Dad would have told him that had he gone in the right direction, he would have been much better off.

Asides.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, we heard a lot from the Honourable Member for Christ Church West about flip flopping and no policy. One would have thought after the Honourable Member spoke about flip flopping and no policy, as it relates to the Democratic Labour Party, at least what the Honourable Member said would have matched what the Leader of that Party was saying. If one wants to see flip flopping and no policy, all one has to do is to compare what the Honourable Member for Christ Church West said on energy, with what his leader said on energy. There is no connection between the two Honourable Members as they spoke about energy.

Again, none of them would be qualified to speak on energy, when one reflects two years, ago when they came to this Honourable House with a Budget called a Green Budget. They came here with glorified terms of renewable energy but after that Budget you saw no action as it relates to renewable energy. No one would believe that Barbados is the leading country in the world as it relates to solar heating.

No one would believe that Barbados is well respected throughout the world as it relates to solar heating, and they have not done anything to pioneer that project beyond our shores, to make it one of the leading export industries in this country.

I say to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy that we have something we need to run with, and instead of talking, we also need to do the walking and the opposite to the Barbados Labour Party. There is a demand for solar heating within the world and we have to tap into it before somebody else does. We have to ensure that we get our fair share of the market.

It does not mean coming to this Parliament talking talk green because this Party cannot be about talk, it has to be about action. I am saying that because oil prices are dropping, we must walk away from renewable energy. We must ensure that we have an advantage to deliver the message around the world for maximum returns.

Sir, there are too many companies in Barbados with potential, and because they have a local market, we allow them to remain within the local market. I am saying that the renewable energy market can be the first Pan-Caribbean company, if we know exactly what we are doing because we have many players. We need to ensure that we take it beyond our shores for investment as it relates to the Caribbean. We can ensure the same way we look at tourism and many other things, we dominate that market. This is nothing new. This is all part of our campaign.

Anybody who would have been at the Independence Square, during the last meeting of the Democratic Labour Party, would have heard us speaking on this issue. We are not going to come in here and grandstand about how we are bringing a green Budget and then beg the Government to borrow money to buy fossil fuel, when you come talking about a green Budget, a big contradiction.

18.00 p.m.

Sir, I cannot understand how the public of Barbados can put up with these contributions from the Leader of the Opposition. In one breath, they will give the impression that they are serious about something and then they will quarrel with the Opposition for doing the opposite of what they ask.

Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that this is serous business and we must take this Parliament seriously. We cannot come in here and grand-stand, and behave as if somebody owes us something in the world. I am saying that today we are in here because we are discussing serious, matters but let nobody charge the Democratic Labour Party with creating, printing or anything to do with money. If we had a certain economist in here, we would have been told that the Barbados Labour Party printed $139.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, this $638.9 million is $138.9 million higher than the limit. Sir, that is exactly the same thing the Barbados Labour Party quarrelled about in the 90s, and they brought down a Government because of that, Sir. They are now guilty of the same thing that they accused the Democratic Labour Party for, in the 1990s. This $638.9 million had nothing to do with the Democratic Labour

Party. It had to do with the Barbados Labour Party, the only difference, Sir, we came to the public and we told them when the limit was broken but they hid it from the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, another thing is that somewhere in Barbados, it would have been said that they actually printed money and they had no authority to do that. I am telling you that and I want to see if they will deny it, Sir. They hid all those BOLT arrangements from the public but now we know that under the accrual system, they cannot do it anymore. They could get in here and dance and they could try to hide but the accountants have to account for it. Gone are the days when they could have a BOLT arrangement and bolt it to us. They cannot bolt it up any more. As soon as they enter into a contract for it, they have to bring it to book.

Mr. Speaker, without any further ado, I say to you that the same charge they put on our heads in the early 90s, they are now guilty of, but with a difference. We admitted out right and they hid theirs.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I venture into this debate without reluctance. At the outset let me say that since the 1960s periodical adjustments have been made upwards to the amounts of money that can be borrowed, either under the Special Loans Act or under the Local Loans Act. Limits had been set over time to forbid Government from being excessive in its spending, and to engage Government to be responsible in every way, when it comes to public finances.

There are some issues and concerns that came forth from this debate. Let me start by saying that one of the ways Government borrows, is by issuing paper, Treasury Bills and Debentures. Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that in a culture like ours where Government borrows through Treasury Bills and Debentures, there is a need for widespread public education on how those things work.

The way Treasury Bills function, and are made available to the public would at first appear to smack of some openness by Government to make Treasury Bills for sale, the Government always advertises them. Then the public as a whole does not know how to obtain them.

When Treasury Bills are issued, bought and sold, inflows of money come into Government but the hard fact of the situation is that as things are now, the issue of Treasury Bills tends to favour institutional investors, as opposed to the small man from Pie Corner or the little young lady from Upper Carlton, or Rock Dundo in St. James.

I therefore call on the authorities to ensure that our culture develops a familiarity with how Government Debentures and Treasury Bills work, so that the institutional biases that favour banks and insurance companies over the general public, can be overcome.

We are into interesting times. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy mentioned that we have both a negative and a positive situation, as far as liquidity in the banking system is concerned. Mr. Speaker, we are surrounded on all sides by an international recession, in circumstances where our banking systems' integrity has not been compromised and will not be compromised, and in circumstances where there has been a buildup of funds in the banking system.

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to mention the range of savings that would have been made available to the public in recent years, many of which were introduced by the Barbados Labour Party Administration of 1994 to 2008.

The Barbados Labour Party facilitated legislation to allow for the sale and purchase of mutual funds. I will get back to them later. The Barbados Labour Party also, under the late Rt. Honourable J.M.G.M. "Tom" Adams between 1976 and 1986 had introduced a very exciting mechanism called the "Savings Certificates", where you can buy Savings Certificates at a rate of interest higher than the interest in normal deposits in the banking sector.

The Barbados Labour Party also granted concessions to persons who owned shares in credit unions. I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, with your permission to applaud all those credit unions which have made use of the concessions and have grown. It is a source of tremendous pleasure that at least two credit unions own parts of Broad Street. This is a signal achievement which ought to be replicated.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure you understand the Credit Union Movement very well. Sir, ordinary people have been able to save, buy shares and to have ownership in financial institutions, which distinguish themselves by encouraging regular inflows of capital. My only concern with the Credit Union Movement is that nothing should be done to undermine the efforts of those persons, who in recent times, have given yeoman service to credit unions.

A secondary concern is that the public must be told that when they join credit unions, there is a definite distinction between shares in a credit union and deposits. A credit union shareholder actually puts money at risk but, fortunately, through the efforts of the Registrar of Cooperatives, internal mechanisms and sound management

of our Credit Union Movement, we have been able to withstand any serious allegations that the future of the Movement is in doubt.

Mr. Speaker, we have also had under the Barbados Labour Party, legislation to encourage pension funds. Historically, pension funds used to be administered sometimes abroad, and some pension funds were administered by insurance companies. Today, you could actually go to commercial banks and buy pension plans. All this has been facilitated through the efforts of the grand old Party, the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, we also have a situation where insurance companies which attract savings are now diversifying their product range. Assurance, as originally contemplated and conceived, was insurance on life, meaning that when the insured died, his estate would inherit what it was entitled to, under his policy of life assurance. House 18:10:14

Amazingly, Barbadian insurance companies are now offering a range of products, some of which are part assurance and part savings and some of which are almost exclusively savings. Mr. Speaker, in the context of a perfect world, if we could have a huge amount of savings backed up by the correct entrepreneurial and other will, we might be able to allow for a scenario by which locals, who access the built-up of savings, might be able to invest.

Mr. Speaker, earlier today I heard the Honourable Member for St. James South lamenting the fact that many commercial banks do not see themselves as having a true developmental role. In fact, recently in Trinidad and Tobago, a leading spokesman in the financial sector said that commercial banks were under no obligation, whether moral or otherwise, to prop up businesses or to permit money to go into investment. That was said in the news either last week or the week before.

Mr. Speaker, in circumstances where commercial banks have excess liquidity, they should be able to reserve a certain amount for investment rather than for the purchase of motor cars, refrigerators, videos and such like. Sir, once again, I call on the commercial banks in Barbados to ensure that as part of their social conscience, they do more for business especially small businesses. At the same time, I would like commercial banks, with the correct safeguards, to make sure that when people in our culture want to borrow using chattel houses as security that they be not frustrated in that.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon I mentioned that the Barbados Labour Party Administration, under the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, had facilitated legislation by which mutual funds had been introduced into this country. Mr. Speaker, you get different mutual funds. You get some funds administered by Fund Manager A, then funds administered by Fund Manager B and then funds administered by Fund Manager C. What they all have in common is that they invest savings of Barbadians in the United States of America, Europe and other places.

In circumstances, Mr. Speaker, where fund managers of mutual funds have been known to invest worldwide, as we approach a big and deep economic recession worldwide the public of Barbados, which has invested in mutual funds, would definitely want an assurance that their money is safe. That is a very important point in the context of where this world is going.

Mr. Speaker, I trust that their levels of prudence and the levels of caution required so prevail that the simple working-class people who have invested in mutual funds in this country do not lose what they have invested. I would not want to ever again see a Trade Confirmers situation in Barbados in the same way that many people would not want to see an ENRON.

Sir, a legitimate question is: What safeguards are there for persons who have invested in mutual funds and who, in a climate of international economic uncertainty, might already have started to wonder if some of their money goes into institutions which have gone under whether in the United States of America, England or Germany?

Mr. Speaker, it is for the Honourable Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Finance to find monitoring mechanisms to make sure that the fears that I am expressing do not materialise.

Sir, earlier the Honourable Member for Christ Church West pointed out aspects of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto of 2008. Sir, I just want to mention a few things from that Manifesto. The Manifesto promised that individuals would enjoy a tax break of up to $5 000 on health related activity and gym memberships out of un-taxed incomes.

The Manifesto also promised to move the child allowance, which prevails in PAYE circles from $1 000 to $2 000 per child. It promised to further widen the lower tax band of 20 per cent to be levied on the first $30 000 of taxable income up from $24 200. It pledged that a Barbados Labour Party Administration would have lowered the top tax rate of personal income tax from 35 to 25 per cent for those on incomes of less than $7 000 per month. It also mentioned adjustments to the reversed tax credit. Mr. Speaker, those are promises made by a Party which was not elected in 2008 but there are promises worthy of review and consideration.

Mr. Speaker, in small Barbados, if somebody called Patrick has a good idea but is in no position to implement it and another fellow called William can implement it, on behalf of the people of Barbados and for the good of Barbados, pro bono publico, then well and fine.

Mr. Speaker, the first person I ever heard talking about reversed tax credit was Sir Richard Haynes as he is now, may he achieve a speedy recovery. A Barbados Labour Party Administration introduced it. Sir Richard Haynes said that once the idea was introduced for the good of Barbados, he did not mind that he was not the person to implement it. He was not a person to fight for territory.

Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to make this point. Bearing in mind the economic realities that we have had in Barbados for 50 years. The point is about the national debt. There are scholars who feel that a 7 per cent deficit is a good enough deficit to work with. There are scholars who feel that you could exceed that deficit, and there are scholars who think that you could go up to 60 per cent debt of Gross Domestic Product.

Mr. Speaker, I am just cautioning that we be careful how we manage our national debt because even though cynics say blessed are the young people for they shall inherit the national debt, I beg to differ. I think that Government would be well advised to ensure that the management of the national debt, especially in light of what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, be properly taken into account.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East who unfortunately had through a special engagement to be away from the country, did make this observation in this House of Assembly on Tuesday November 23, 2004. She said:

"Mr. Speaker, I therefore want to cast this debate in terms of a sustainable debt management policy. It is acknowledged that our debt to gross domestic ratio is over 50 per cent, which is what we ideally want just as we set the limit of 3 per cent."

Mr. Speaker, she would have been talking about the fiscal deficit there.

She further went on to state that:

"Both of these indices are indices utilised under the matrix treaty."

Mr. Speaker, an important point was made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who, despite his youth and his speciality as a scientist more than an economist, did a very good job, which we have to take to heart. Mr. Speaker, it is so important that Both Sides of this Honourable House should really give this point the closest possible thought. The reality I am coming to is that we live and subsist in an open economy where there is potential for a diminution of foreign reserves if we involve ourselves in reckless importation of non-necessary things.

6.20 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is, not withstanding the fact that we need to protect the foreign reserves by controlling imports, ironically, there is a minimum amount of spending below which you cannot go in the economy. What is that minimum? That minimum can be quantified by the experts but if, for example, aggregate national demands in Barbados fall to unacceptably low levels, then those businesses that employ people, those businesses who pay taxes, those businesses which produce would find themselves unable to pursue activity at a level that is profitable.

Sir, I am making this point deliberately as a Barbadian with my country's best interest at heart. Sir, there are those businesses which require that a certain minimum amount of income comes in to ensure the continuation of employment. To ensure that they pay their taxes, to ensure that economic activity proceed apace at healthy levels. Therefore, the challenge is for us to confront that reality, bearing in mind that in it all, in a closed economy, it would really be easier.

Sir, in a closed economy in which imports exceed exports, it could do with great amounts of consumer demand for those goods and services in those closed economies because there would be no severe implications for the foreign exchange position. Sir, the challenge confronting Barbados is that in this opened economy - and it is very opened - we need to maintain a level of balance between how much we import, so as not to put unnecessary pressure on the foreign reserves, and how much we produce for local demand.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the final point, how do we stimulate our economy. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West was saying that one way of stimulating the economy is to make more money available to middle-class. Sir, Barack Obama kept saying so repeatedly. I am not saying the Honourable Member is borrowing from Mr. Obama, but I am saying that Barack Obama constantly said that the middle-class needed protecting. Sir, why do Mr. Obama and the Honourable Member for Christ Church West say that? Sir, the middle class, properly taken care of, will probably save, will probably invest and will probably, in their work and in their jobs, contribute to the national development.

Sir, I want to see something done for the poor man too. Clearly, there are those in Barbados who could number

between 25 000 and 35 000, who live below the poverty line. These are persons whose standard of living is not good enough by Barbadian or by any other standards. Therefore, I would like to see protective methods introduced to ensure that those people, some of whom are our cousins, grandparents, some of whom have relations with us, all of whom are Barbadians and want to make a contribution, are all taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, when I mentioned about special mechanisms, permit me to borrow from a distinguished son of St. James North, Sir Lloyd Erskine Sandiford. Sir Lloyd is one of the most distinguished constituents I have. I have never seen him in the privacy of the ballot box but I am assured that he has made an outstanding contribution. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy knows the area so well, that he would know Sir Lloyd and my family went to Sunday School together, played together, and that some of my family may have shared the political persuasion of Sir Lloyd, for which I am not ashamed to admit, as we all have our choice.

Mr. Speaker, Sir Lloyd used to say when things were really bad that we had to do something called mitigating the effects of unfavourable economic conditions. Therefore, the challenge to Government is to find measures to mollify the harsh reality that can confront, not only the middle class but particularly the lower elements of society. Sir, by the use of lower elements, I certainly do not mean the lower elements in behavioral terms, as a lot of these people are poor, through no fault of their own.

Mr. Speaker, I, therefore, conclude by saying that I have deliberately cast my contribution in that light, not necessarily for any short-term political gain, but in an effort to make a contribution to this Honourable House, one that history would be able to look back at and evaluate with favour. Sir, that history would be evaluated in a way to show there are Honourable Members who, from time to time, put country before Party.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John has, in his presentation, recited a list. Sir, that list does not seem too long but nevertheless, it was a list of projects, which, according to him, results in significant debt to the Government. I must confess I tried to remember most of them but I could not quite keep pace, but my mathematical inclination tells me that those amounts listed fall very, very short from the $l.5 billion window that the Honourable Member for St. John wishes to have introduced in Parliament today.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is grossly misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member knows we are dealing with two Bills, because the Leader of Government Business told him that. The projects I listed relate to the Special Loans Act and the limit to that is $500 million. They do not relate to the Local Loans Act, for which the limit is much higher, and is being carried to $4 billion. Sir, the Special Loans Act relate to the projects of which the Honourable Member was in charge, therefore, he should know about them. The Law is clear. I told you, you must read the Law.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Special Loans limit is to be increased by $1 billion, the Local Loans limit is to be increased by a further $500 million.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member said when he calculated the projects, they do not add to the limit. The limit is $500 million. It, in fact, exceeds the limit by $l38 million.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member did say he did not manage to list all of them. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John has just said that the projects exceed the existing limit by $138 million. Sir, I am very happy for that clarification. Sir, it is $138 million, over the current limit of $500 million. Therefore, we are seeking to increase the Special Loans limit to $1.5 billion, so you are increasing it by $1 billion. When you subtract $138 million from that, the answer is $862 million. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John has been very vague in his statement. The Honourable Member said it is to cover the excess and to allow for further borrowing.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member was too busy reading the Rules of the Supreme Court and preparing a brief. I watched him carefully. The Honourable Member needs to pay attention in his duties to his constituents.

6.30 p.m.

I went on to say that it will go over by $138 million and that we anticipate the following additional projects. The Judicial Centre, $107.5 million; the second World Bank HIV/AIDS loan of $71 million; and the ABC Highway Project, $120 million. Sir, that will carry it near to the limit, it is simple as that. Sir, all of that was said.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, we support the increase. The Honourable Member, who led off the response for This Side said that and we support the increase. In fact, our own Administration has, from time to time, increased the relevant limits. Sir, the fact of the matter is that we are not inclined to give this Administration a blank cheque and we would like to hear what are these likely borrowing that may come in the future.

Sir, Our Side has always taken the position that borrowing of that sort should be for the purpose of increasing the productive capacity in Barbados. Sir, that has always been our position.

Mr. Speaker, all we are asking is for the Honourable Member for St. John to take the Honourable Members of this Chamber and to take the country into his confidence and to tell us whether these additional borrowing are going to be utilised for a stimulus package because, clearly, the country needs one, and if it is not going to be for a stimulus package, what is it going to be used for?

Mr. Speaker, on occasion when we were...

Aside.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. John wants to say that they do not have a road map for the future, we accept that, but we would have hoped that the Government would by now have already charted a particular path to take us forward. Sir, we thank the Honourable Member for St. John for saying to this country that he does not know what he may borrow the money for and, therefore, any talk of a stimulus package is clearly not before the House today.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that we are in a very difficult situation as far as the economy is concerned. I would venture that one need not be an economist to rationalise this. One only has to listen to the cries of the people, whose gas is still high; whose LPG is still high, who now have to add to all the other burdens they have to bear additional licensing fees, if you are a shopkeeper or a plant vendor. When we listen to people that is what they are telling us.

Mr. Speaker, there was a time when the Government said they had the ears of the people but I wonder if the people are not telling them the same thing they are telling us because, as far as we can tell, the people of Barbados are feeling the pinch.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard reports that there may be another 3 000 jobs lost in January. Sir, that is speculation and you may call it idle or not. You may call it whatever you want to call it.

Asides.

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: You may call it irresponsible too but, Sir, the speculation did not come from This Side because it is a matter that the House should be aware of. Sir, what we do know for sure is that the unemployment rate has not gone up and we have already lost a significant amount of jobs since January. Mr. Speaker, those individuals will want job opportunities and if they can be employed, the earnings they make will be spent in small shops and other little businesses and it will have a ripple effect.

Mr. Speaker, we feel that this country needs to have a stimulus package. I believe that the Government feels so too and if they have not yet worked out what it is, I believe there was some Committee set up after the National Consultation to work out the nuts and bolts of it. Sir, if it has not been worked out yet, just tell the country that is the position, but we feel a stimulus package is necessary.

If the Honourable Member for St. John does not yet know what they intend to use the money for, we would commend to the Honourable Member for St. John that, with our support, we would like to see that additional borrowing capacity directed towards increasing productivity in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member mentioned the prison as being a project taking about $280 million that will balloon out the situation. Sir, I well recollect that the Government of Barbados is paying for the prison lease payments in January of every year and they will pay lease payments in every January for a period of 25 years. I, therefore, have to wonder why it would be necessary to treat it as a debt situation at this time, if the country's obligation to pay is stretched out over a period of 25 years.

Sir, the fact is that the contract between the company that owns the prison and Barbados requires payment only by way of lease payments. It is an obligation but I would venture that the money is not owed as it falls due. Sir, as contrast with a loan where you say I am borrowing X million dollars and, therefore, you work it out over that period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the documents are in the office of the Prime Minister and the office of the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs. Sir, whatever else is said in this House, we feel that the country should have an explanation. It is no more than the position taken by the Opposition, when on other occasion we came to Parliament to raise the limit. The Opposition said they wanted to know what we wanted the money for. When we came after 9/11, the now

Prime Minister, who was the Leader of the Opposition at that time, said he wanted to know what we wanted the money for.

Sir, in a recent debate, the Honourable Member for St. John, when he was in Opposition actually went into the minutia and said that we not only need to borrow money but that we needed to make sure that we had the institutional capacity to be able to utilise such funds as we were going to borrow. Sir, we feel that we are entitled to the same explanation, as has been sought from the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that the Government must be in a credibility crisis, as far at this is concerned because, one of their members, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has enunciated the position of the Democratic Labour Party, when on This Side, and objected on every occasion to borrowing by the Government. He repeatedly cried out up and down this country, especially in this Chamber, that we were doing the wrong thing to borrow these monies, deficit financing and a whole host of complaints that he made.

Now the Government of which he is now the Minister responsible for economic matters, and I look forward to hearing him when he speaks in this debate, he must now turn face and support exactly what he cried out against. It seems to me that the Party, because nobody has disavowed the Honourable Member for St. Philip West. It seems to me that the Party must face credibility issues as far as that is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, we said that we would give our critical support to this but we believe that the country deserves an explanation of what the Government has in mind. This is not a mere overdraft, where you write a cheque when something comes up. We are dealing with one half of a billion dollars of debt. Surely the Government, at this early stage, must have in mind some kind of plan. We accept that you will have to come to Parliament, when you are actually engaged in the process of borrowing with that Resolution, but at this time there must be some road map, something that says, this is how we want to stimulate the Barbadian economy and this is how we are going to do it. It is only fair that the Honourable Members on This Side and all of Barbados get some insight into the plans of the Government in that regard.

I am obliged.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am going to wrap up this debate. Sir, there is a maxim in Law, which I am certain the Honourable Member for St. James North would know...

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: No, not that one. I am sure you will know it cause you know the Law - or in equity, that he who comes to equity must come with clean hands. This debate is very characteristic of the way in which people can become very sanctimonious, almost overnight. I am not referring to Honourable Members of this House yet - can become very sanctimonious having created the very conditions which have led to this.

As the Honourable Member for St. Peter used to say, the speech that I heard on That Side, other than the one for the Honourable Member for St. James North, you could characterise it as somebody lighting their own house, calling the fire brigade, then getting up and boasting that they called the fire brigade.

We have a situation where a former Honourable Attorney-General oversaw private/public sector partnerships and did not lift a finger in this country to put in legislation to deal with private/public sector partnerships. So we have to bring them under the Special Loans Act because they have to be brought to account, if not the Act does not belong to us. The foolishness that was being done in the Ministry of Transport and Works, where you were going to have a fly-over owned by somebody else, which could not come under the rubric of the Road Traffic Act was about to be visited on up by the Honourable Member for St. George North, because he was getting bad legal advice.

We have a prison which I am hearing and understanding the former Honourable Attorney General to be saying does not belong to us, we are only leasing it because the debt has not coalesced. We are only leasing our prison in this country and it does not become ours until 25 years from now.

If that is so, that is a major national security calamity for Barbados. Sir, they want us to do it with the Port too. It was to be done with the airport and we raised it in this Chamber. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy will recall that on several occasions in this Chamber it was raised. So that you would have a prison that belongs to us, apparently, that would be nowhere on the books.

We would be paying lease payments for it. It is not in the National Accounts of Barbados for 25 years, and if something happens up there, who does it belong to? Who does the Judicial Centre, the seat of justice in this country, built under a public/private sector partnership, this is a major issue of sovereignty in Barbados. Our Court of Appeal is about to occupy that building. Our judges in this

country are about to occupy that building and a former Honourable Attorney-General, under the previous Government, is telling us that building does not belong to the Government, that we are merely making lease payments and it does not become ours until we finish paying for it and I must read the documents. That is one of the reasons we have accelerated some of those payments and decided to take some of the same funds to clear some of those obligations.

Sir, we had it in roads in St. Philip which were being paved off budget, that we had to bring to account. Do you know what is even worse than that, if the Honourable Attorney General is correct, Barbados' Coastal Surveillance System that protects this country does not belong to us either, and the Coast Guard Station, at the Flour Mill, which is supposed to be a station owned by the people of this country, to protect the sovereignty of Barbados does not belong to us.

I have never conceived that this could be the natural result of what was taking place for the past 14 years in this country, but the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has confirmed it for me in this debate, today, that we do not own our Coast Guard Station, we do not own our Judicial Complex, we do not own our Prison and we would not have owned, not the whole highway, the portion that related to the public/private partnership, which would have been the flyovers, that the citizens of this country have to drive over every day, and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is asking what is wrong with that.

Sir, do you not think we should own our prison? Do you not think we should own our Coast Guard Station? Do you not think that a proud country like Barbados should own its Judicial Complex?

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, I think so Honourable Member. You are still addressing those comments to the Chair?

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I know that you would think so as well.

Sir, there are these kinds of arguments that we are hearing now that make you wonder what levels of accountability. that is why the people from VECO are being locked up every day. They have not locked up any down here, yet, but they have been locking them up in Alaska. Tickets from a Crop Over fete here were actually put in as evidence in a trial up there. A lot of people may not know that.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I am not going to get into that yet, all in due course.

Sir, we are dealing with people in Barbados, a sovereign nation, coming to Barbados and building these facilities, which construction companies in this country had been able to build down through the years, and I get the impression that it had been an attempt to avoid that element of accountability.

If you want to argue the point you have to have clean hands. Do not ask for a chance. You have been in here long enough. I mean the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. You should have learnt something. You sat at the feet of your Gamaliel for five years, do not mind he did not like you.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You sat at his feet and you should have learnt something from him. The fact that he left you in here today to undertake the task that you undertook does not mean that you should ask for a chance. If you think you do not know something, you go and learn it. That does not mean you should be permitted by your colleagues to come in here and make a speech that is totally out of touch with reality, that makes no contact with sensible economic ideals.

18.50 p.m.

To my mind, totally destroys the very argument that the Leader of the Opposition, who as I understand it, at least up to a few days ago, was the chief and principal spokesperson on economic affairs made during the Budget debate.

What is happening over there, Sir, is that people are tripping over each other, to try and make statements.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We had three. We had one from a want-to-be leader; one from a cannot- be leader; and the other from an-absentee leader, last week in the newspaper. Three statements on the same issue, all of them saying something different.

Sir, today, we had three statements. We had one from a highly responsible, sensible and erudite presentation by the Honourable Member for St. James North. The only part of his presentation which, I think, needs realistic assessment is the extent to which you can do something about protecting people, in relation to mutual funds.

Mutual Funds, by their very nature, carry much higher risks than putting money in the bank and when things were good, the mutual fund people benefited. Many of them saw appreciation in their share values that were astronomical. In fact, there are domestic mutual fund

fortresses performed, I think, third highest in the entire hemisphere at one point.

In those kinds of investments, you have to take the highs and you have to take the lows. There is nothing that a Government can do to protect that. I think that we in Barbados have rightly chosen the kinds of investments and assets that we will protect.

Barbados has a deposit insurance programme, as you know, and we have other kinds of financial assets protected. It would be far too risky for us to absorb the burden of protecting mutual funds. Sir, that is my view. I am open to persuasion on it and you have views.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, on a point of elucidation. Sir, what I meant is that in the current unfavourable international economic environment, some Barbadians might wonder the extent to which assurance can be given that they are not at a peril or at risk for losing what they have invested. I just wanted to elucidate that, Sir.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, that is a fair statement. We certainly would not want to see that and I can assure people who have invested in our traditional banking institutions that their funds are safe. Sir, you have to understand, and I am very sorry that my learned friend from Christ Church West did not appreciate this, that Barbados is in a slightly different position to many other countries.

The source of our tourism, the kinds of tourists that we have...the Member said the Government has done nothing, which he called supervised neglect. Sir, Lehman Brothers collapsed in September. The Honourable Member for Christ Church West said that a year ago, the crisis started. A year ago, we were not in office. If it started then, your economic knowledge that you displayed today should have been put to work, in dealing with the economic crisis.

The crisis that I know about started with Lehman Brothers in September. There may have been signs on the horizon, in relation to the increase in oil prices and the increase in food prices, but that was not a collapse of the world financial system. What we saw after Lehman was a destruction of confidence. We saw the potential for a recession that would have been worse than the 1930, but worse than that -

I think this is the point that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West does not understand because he said Barbados is back to where it was 11 months ago - the United States of America economy is likely to be back where it was 11 years ago. When you look at the Dow Jones and the financial markets, the prices are back to where they were 11 years ago. Therefore, if we are back to where we were 11 months ago, we are very, very lucky.

Mr. Speaker, on the concept that we have done nothing. We went to London. The Minister of Tourism has been out waving the flag making sure our airlift out of the United Kingdom is kept intact. Both Virgin Atlantic Airlines and British Airways have come on board. They will fill the void.

We went to Canada and concluded the WestJet arrangements. Then, we went to the United States of America. What have we been doing in those markets? A much neglected area of Government's inflows, has been the diaspora. Do you know that Barbadians who live overseas right now are, probably, better off keeping their money in Barbadian banks? Therefore, we have been systematically going to every corner, where there is a diaspora and explaining to Barbadians that they can bring their money home.

I said that I am not asking you to buy anything in Barbados. I am not asking you to build anything. I am not asking you to buy a car. You can live in the United States of America and we can facilitate you bringing some of your money home, because remittances, account for a substantial amount of our foreign exchange earnings.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy did a little matrix one day that I had not thought about. We do not pay any interest on it. It is unlikely that they are going to want to take it back out of the country. It is pure hard foreign exchange earnings; and we do not have to give them any concessions, if they do not return. Therefore systematically, without being too crude about it, we have gone to the diaspora and we have said to them, now is the time for you to invest your money back home.

There is the idea that we have done nothing. There have been social partnership arrangements. Barbados has operated for the past 16 years under a social partnership. Whether you like it or not, that is the model we have used. The Honourable Member wants me to abandon the social partnership now, and come up with some kind of stimulus package and emergency stabilisation programme: To stabilise what?

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am going to get to that in a minute.

The social partnership has said: "We want a meeting on the cost of living." We did it. Then they said, before we get to discuss wages let us sit with the Government under our normal rubric, look at the state of Barbados' economy. Arising out of that some experts were chosen from the private sector, the trade unions and Barbadians working in the international institutions and who are well qualified, if you do not mind me calling their names, because I am not

calling them in a negative way; Dr. Delisle Worrell, Mr. Winston Cox, Ms. Mary Zephrin. These are all people who have worked with the Central Bank who, collectively, together with the private sector, Mr. Peter Boos, Mr. Ben Arrindale, the Trade Union people and the Public Sector people, Mr. Grantley Smith.

Our advisers have not changed. They are the same people who advised you in 2001, unless you are saying that the Honourable Member for St. Peter did it all alone. Maybe that is the mantra that you have been taught and in your typical Pavlovian response, you believe that the great I AM designed it alone, but I am not that kind of leader and I have never been. We have a social partnership. The proposals from the Committee have to go before the social partnership on Friday of this week, and at that point, a plan will be unveiled to the country.

There are ways to do things. Some people seem to want to be able to say "Wow" as if something has been pulled out of a hat and displayed for the public to show that you are doing something. Sir, we have tried to get as many inputs. Do you know what most people are saying? We do not know where this crisis is going.

President elect Barack Obama, who is advised by Paul Volkner and others, was heard to say yesterday that I do not know where it is going but the one thing I can tell you is we need a major injection in the economy of funds.

19:00:07

Kinsean never advocated - I am going to say this to the Honourable Member for Christ Church West - to borrow more, spend more and reduce taxes all at the same time. I have never read that. That would be a recipe for economic madness that I do not intend to pursue.

The Honourable Members on the Other Side have said borrow more to mop up the liquidity. All this legislation does is to increase the limit.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, who is a lawyer, say that this is a lot of debt. Mr. Speaker, we have not created any debt. We have increased the limit. You created the debt that we now have to bring on to the books. We also have to increase the limit to accommodate debt that you created.

If the Honourable Member wants to argue his case, he needs to understand what his case is. He is not coming to this argument with clean hands. You created the conditions that led to this. We are seeking to deal with it. You are pretending you do not know. Do not bring the Prison to an account for 25 years. Do not bring the highway to account, leave it for 25 years, just pay the lease payments and the interest. Do not bring the coastal surveillance to account. Do not bring the Judicial Centre to account, leave it for 25 years, and 25 years later let some future generation of Barbadians deal with all of that at one time. Do not bring any of those areas of expenditure both contemplated and already incurred to account. I do not believe in that, Sir.

We therefore have sought in an orderly way to deal with these matters. This will accommodate two things; the debt that has already been incurred by the previous Government and new borrowing, which before it is undertaken, has to come to this Chamber.

At that point you would get a chance to say whether you agree or disagree with the refurbishment of the Empire Theatre and the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, with new office blocks for public officers and with money being made available to the National Housing Corporation for bridging finance. Nothing can be hidden.

The Prison was hidden. We are bringing an end to that. All of those other public/private sector partnerships were hidden from view. I am hearing from the former Attorney-General that they were not even required to surface for 25 years. We are bringing them to the light and the clarity of accountability so people can see what was spent on the Prison and on the roads and make their own value judgements.

When the Democratic Labour Party last left office, Mr. Speaker, the public debt represented 65.3 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, the foreign component was 14.9 per cent and the domestic component was 50.4 per cent. By the end of 2007/2008, which is that financial year that ended in March, the public debt was 84.5 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, the foreign component was 22 per cent and the domestic component was 62.5 per cent. That is the situation we found.

Mr. Speaker, we would very much like and are going to attempt to bring these percentages more in line with what we think is prudent. We have not asked anybody for advice on that. You in your own way know what debt you can sustain on a daily basis. We have our own perception of what proportion of the people's money should go towards repaying debt and what proportion should go towards building new schools, new police stations, houses, new tourism plants, new social service facilities, et cetera in this country. We will come to our determination and make that information available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am very disappointed that the impression is being given that nothing is being done. Sir, I want to make one last point. Sir, the Honourable Members on the Other Side say you should go to the market and borrow. Explain to me who is lending now.

Citibank that had been operating as a merchant bank in Trinidad for quite some time now, and which was going to buy Bank of America, and has financed capital market loans for Barbados and for Trinidad to finance its industrial expansion, had to receive an injection of capital in respect to its existing operations two days ago. If it had collapsed, that would have had a tremendous impact on the Trinidadian economy.

Mr. Speaker, where is it that Barbados is to go now? The multilateral institutions and the international financial institutions are setting up a facility that apparently would not have conditions on it for countries that are facing major crises like this to borrow. Jamaica is having major issues, and we have had to give our support as a country to assistance that should be made available to them. Barbados is not currently in that position, and I do not foresee that it would be in that position.

I am not saying that next year would not be a tough year. It will be a tough year, but the worst thing that we can do is not believe in ourselves, to lose confidence and to stop spending. Sir, I am seeing some people suggesting that all of this belt-tightening has to take place. There are things we have to do, but we also have to attempt to ensure that our economy remains buoyant.

The word the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is usually a wordsmith and has written two books wanted, was "threshold". You want to make sure that there is a threshold of economic activity such that we can maintain jobs, our standard of living and quality of life in this country. Those are the important considerations.

Mr. Speaker, we are not going to sit and allow the situation to deteriorate without taking every action possible to protect the citizens of Barbados, to protect your investments, our investments and our children. Therefore, as I said, Honourable Members on the Other Side do not need to join on any bandwagon effect. We have a great country but confidence even in small countries can be severely damaged by people saying the wrong things at the wrong time. I do not think that is what you want for Barbados. It certainly is not what I want for Barbados. Sir, I want however in closing to say thanks to the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. He gave a reasonably long speech. He is cutting his teeth he said. I notice that he quoted me extensively, therefore I want to thank him for paying such a kind compliment to me.

I thank you, Sir, and beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that.

On the motion of Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee, Mr. S. A. LASHLEY in the Chair.

7.10 p.m.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 3, inclusive, were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, 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. J. H. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Special Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

ORDER NO. 6 – SECOND READING OF LOCAL LOANS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, when I spoke on the Second Reading of the Special Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008, I indicated that I was also dealing with the Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008. Therefore, I do not have anything more to add to what I said. I, therefore, beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ADJOURNMENT OF HOUSE

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now adjourned until Tuesday, April 22, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be now adjourned until Tuesday, December 9, 2008, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

7.15 p.m.

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HUTSON, Hon. E .G. (St. James Central)
INNISS, Hon. D. O'N. (St. James South)
JONES, Hon. R.D. (Christ Church East Central)
KELLMAN, His Excellency D. St.E. (St. Lucy)
LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)
LASHLEY, Mr. S.A. (Christ Church West Central)
LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D.S. (Christ Church East)
MARSHALL, Mr. D. D. (St. Joseph)
SEALY, Hon. R. L. (St. Michael South Central)
STUART, Hon. F.J. (St. Michael South)
THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)
TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)
TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C (St. Michael North)

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. *Order No. 5, take-slip 3.00 p.m.*. The source file carries two reporters' versions of the same passage, from the close of the speech of Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe to the opening of the speech of His Honour K. St.C. Best, each ending at a take-slip marked '3.00 p.m.'. The first, slightly more complete, version is printed here and the second version (about 1,180 words) has been left out. Please confirm.

Q2. *Adjournment.* The Leader of the House moves that the House be adjourned 'until Tuesday, April 22, 2008', but the procedural note records the question put as adjournment 'until Tuesday, December 9, 2008'. Printed as in the source.

Q3. *Order No. 6.* The Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008 is recorded as read a second time, but no Committee stage or third reading is recorded before the adjournment. Printed as in the source.

Q4. *Order No. 3.* Moving the second reading of the Special Loans (Amendment) Bill, the Prime Minister is recorded as saying 'the first of which we are dealing is the Local Loans Act'. Printed as in the source.

Q5. *PRESENT list.* 'Hon. M. A. LASHLEY' is listed twice, and Mr. D. D. Marshall appears as 'Hon. D. D. MARSHALL'; prayers are recorded as taken by 'Reverend Cannon Ivan Harewood'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 25th November, 2008, with the Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of Tuesday, 18th November, 2008 were confirmed. The Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008 and the Transport Board (Amendment) Bill, 2008 were read a first time, and Standing Orders Nos. 6, 8, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 were suspended for the rest of the Sitting.

Hon. M. A. Lashley, the Member for St. Philip North and Minister of Housing and Lands, moved Order No. 5, the Resolution to vest in the National Housing Corporation 4 827 square metres of Crown land at Six Roads, St. Philip for housing development. He explained that the land, earmarked by Cabinet in 1980, had been used by the Corporation to build 10 low-income homes under the Primary Homes Programme without being vested in it, so that the residents had paid occupancy rent since 2005 without title. He accused the former Administration of 'rapid inaction' and set out the Government's plans: housing at Constant to be launched on 15th December, French Village, Coverley Phase 2 beginning with 225 lots, a 500-lot programme at $5 per square foot, the acquisition of Bushy Park for 2 000 housing solutions and high-rise units at Mason Hall Street.

For the Opposition, Mr. G. A. Clarke, Member for St. George North, supported the Resolution but defended the record of the National Housing Corporation from 1994 to 2007; his speech drew points of order from His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, whom the Speaker required to withdraw two remarks. Mr. R. C. Eastmond asked about the land bank and warned of political sabotage at the Corporation, and Hon. R. L. Sealy argued for denser housing in urban Barbados. Hon. P. M. T. Todd, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, Hon. D. O'N. Inniss, Mr. S. A. Lashley, Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, His Honour K. St.C. Best, Hon. S. D. Blackett, Hon. E. G. Hutson, His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman and Hon. F. J. Stuart supported the Resolution, while Mr. D. D. Marshall argued that the Government's picture of the previous 14 years was inaccurate.

In reply, the Minister answered Mr. Clarke and Mr. Marshall point by point, noting that 157 tenants in St. James South were now owners and that only 10 homes had been built at Six Roads and 18 in St. Lucy in 14 years; Mr. Marshall objected on a point of order to reflections on a Member's absence. The Resolution was agreed to without division.

The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, then moved the second reading of the Special Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008, dealing with the Local Loans (Amendment) Bill at the same time. He said the $500 million Special Loans limit had stood since 1987 and that at 30th September, 2008 the balance outstanding was $638.9 million, the excess arising largely because the new prison had to be brought to account under the accrual system; without it the balance would be $350.9 million. New loans included $117.5 million for the Judicial Centre, $71.4 million for a second HIV/AIDS loan and $120 million for the ABC Highway. Under the Local Loans Act the balance was $3.1 billion against a $3.5 billion ceiling, which he proposed to raise to $4 billion.

Dr. W. F. Duguid, Member for Christ Church West, led for the Opposition, arguing that while oil had fallen from $112 a barrel in January to $50 in November, diesel was 60 cents dearer at the pump. His Excellency D. St.E. Kellman, Mr. R. C. Eastmond and Mr. D. D. Marshall, who said the Opposition supported the increase but would not give a 'blank cheque', also spoke. In reply the Prime Minister assured depositors that their funds in the traditional banks were safe and urged that confidence be maintained.

The House went into Committee, Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair; clauses 1 to 3 were passed and the Special Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008 was read a third time and passed. The Local Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2008 was then read a second time on the Prime Minister's motion without further debate. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones, seconded by Hon. F. J. Stuart, the House was adjourned until Tuesday, 9th December, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.