
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

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HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Monday, March 23, 2009

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This House is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, this Honourable House was in Committee of Supply. To that it will now revert.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER vacated the Chair. Mr. CHAIRMAN assume the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee of Supply. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, when the House retired on Friday last, we were in the middle of a battle, I believe, between the Honourable Members of the Barbados Labour Party and the Government, as to the merits and demerits of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North stewardship as Minister of Housing and Lands.

Mr. Chairman, the record, I believe, speaks for itself. The Honourable Members on That Side may want to attempt to distort the definition of housing and to extend the acceptance of housing solutions as one of their many ways of measuring achievement.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados, however, are the best barometers on which we can measure the performance of an administration or the performance of a Minister, and the people of Barbados have already spoken to the record of the Barbados Labour Party. Therefore, for the Opposition to get in here and try to attribute success to land acquisition or to “intentions” or to “expressions of desire to have completed”, Sir, these are terms we heard used. We

have even heard Honourable Members on That Side claiming that mortgage applications, house repairs or small additions for comfort by way of the Rural Development Commission or the Urban Development Commission, was to be included in their claim for success.

Mr. Chairman, on Our Side we understand very seriously the need to answer the shortage of adequate housing in almost every category, and I am heartened by the success so far of our Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, who has demonstrated a flexibility in finding solutions that, to my view, is unprecedented in this Parliament and this Government of Barbados.

Sir, as a matter of fact, the Honourable Member for St. George North had to strain his memory and probably resort to anecdote from elderly members of the Barbados community, to claim that the solution of rent-to-own is one which began in the 1950s. Sir, I would not be aware of that kind of achievement.

The Honourable Member for St. George North may be old enough to relate vividly to this Honourable Chamber in those exercise.

Mr. Chairman, the point we need to make is that the Democratic Labour Party Administration has sought to ensure that wherever possible, we find solutions to the housing needs in Barbados. Therefore, along with the rent-to-own concept, which is now in its embryonic stages, and to be developed into a real hardcore solution that can bring relief to especially the less fortunate - the lower income in Barbados - the question of in-filling, which I think has been one of the most exciting opportunities we have landed upon.

For instance, in Christ Church West Central, where there are two very large housing areas, there is already discussion with the Minister of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation, to locate areas of land that

have been left unused and using modern technology, modern acceptable methods of construction and accommodation, to use these areas to usefully achieve more housing solutions.

Mr. Chairman, the other opportunity in this kind of solution is that with the continued acceptance of high-rise living in Barbados, we have to understand where the Barbados Labour Party is coming from. I have heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, the Leader of the Opposition, claiming that the Honourable Member does not want any high-rise solutions in her Constituency. Sir, the truth is, it is not her Constituency, the Honourable Member is the Member of Parliament for that Constituency, but the people of Barbados, who live in that Constituency, also want housing solutions. The Honourable Member may not personally require that kind of solution, but I am sure that those people, even in the Constituency of St. Michael North, who today wait for relief, look forward to the kind of solutions which we on This Side are putting forward.

10.00 a.m.

I think that the Infilling Programme is a tremendously exciting opportunity to provide, at low cost, more housing solutions for the people of Barbados, and I think that you could find 20 per cent or 30 per cent growth within the Constituencies like, I have mentioned Gall Hill, Silver Hill, and in the case of the entire Pine development area, we have tremendous opportunities.

Sir, in Sayers Court, to get a little closer home, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East could tell you that these are opportunities to go back into these communities and create infilling.

Mr. Chairman, it may not be beyond our powers to put in place an extra storey or two on top existing solutions, even as we go about doing repairs in the units because the existing solution may have been at the floor level.

Mr. Chairman, we have a lot of people to satisfy. There are a lot of Barbadians, who need to find housing and, in our stated objective of housing every last person in Barbados, we need, therefore, to be able to exercise ourselves in these kinds of opportunities.

Mr. Chairman, I want to mention this but to be careful that I am not taken out of context. We may even have to go to the extent where in certain areas we look at the Town and Country Planning arrangements and probably vary them. I am not saying that we should break any Laws, but create innovative ways of maintaining all the correct criteria that are required for adequate and safe

housing, while at the same time, allowing Barbadians to keep finding their solutions.

Mr. Chairman, as we look at the success in Work Hall and in Marchfield, where I believe the process of handing over houses was imminent, looking forward to Four Hill, Constant and Coverley, where the Minister has announced that the zero lot line solution will be put in place for the first time. I think Barbadians ought to be as excited as we are in seeing these solutions come to pass. Mr. Speaker, I do not think we can understate the need and I do not think we can over-state the satisfaction that will be gained by Barbadians as they take advantage of these solutions being offered.

Mr. Chairman, as we continue to look at housing, we had an interesting discussion last night at Queens College in the Constituency of St. James South with the residents there. The onus will be on agencies like the Ministry of Transport and Works to ensure that we create, in our villages, a safety net by way of legislation, either enactment or amendment to existing legislation, so as to create a safe area for our children to grow in, and for adults to take care of their offsprings.

Sir, one of the burning complaints we heard last night was that parents are not comfortable leaving their children to play in our villages any more because of the intrusion, so to speak. Not of residential vehicles, but of people, who are trying to beat the traffic jams and make short-cuts and 'rat-riding', as suggested by the Honourable Member for St. George North. Sir, I guardedly accept the suggestion of the Honourable Member for St. George North and hope it means the same thing I am trying to say.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has three more minutes.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I guardedly accept it for now. The point being, Sir, we have got to create a safe environment. Sir, when we do our infilling, when we do our experiment at Coverly and when we finish areas like Work Hall, Marchfield and go into Constant and Four Hill, along with that, we need to embrace entire villages and as an agency, Transport and Works, need to go in and set up restrictions on access, which will not see us keep away deliveries and routine services, but would ensure that people who just want to 'rat-ride', as I have been taught, would have to think again, because they can be prosecuted and there will be a penalty attached to that kind of solution.

Mr. Chairman, on the other hand - and we will speak to this, probably if we get the opportunity under another Head, we also have to provide solutions to the kind of gridlock that may encourage or interest a driver in engaging in that kind of activity.

Mr. Chairman, in the words of that young lady who visited me at my Constituency office somewhere around March last year, she came with her mother, who was about 50 years old and her little daughter, who was probably three years old. When she was leaving she said:

“Mr. Boyce, I want you to know this. It is not that you have told me where to find a home tomorrow or next week, but the kind of hope and ideas which you have brought to me, have given me a greater sense of achievement and being in Barbados than I have had for a long time.”

Sir, I think that kind of commentary is the one which I think the Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, needs to take on board because, this is a satisfied resident. It is not a member of That Side or This Side, but a member of the Barbadian public.

Mr. Chairman, I want to say to the Honourable Minister to stay focus and be assured of our support in the Democratic Labour Party, as we seek to find solutions and to house every last person in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, they normally say ladies first, and I want to apologise for not giving way to a lady. Sir, this is a very important debate of these Estimates. The sub-heading of housing having been called at this time shows the priority that Government has placed on its social programming. It is against that background that I want to sincerely congratulate the Minister of Housing for, in my view, initiating a robust housing development programme in Barbados, that will certainly redound to the benefit of the poor and ordinary working class persons in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I have resided in the Government housing areas for more than 35 years of my life and I have never witnessed so many housing initiatives started by one Minister of Housing in this country called BIM. I really want to certainly congratulate him again for his foresight, the energy and also the innovation that he has brought to the Ministry of Housing.

Mr. Chairman, the speaker before me from Christ Church South spoke about Government's in-filling programme. Let me delve a little more deep into it by bringing it from a sociological perspective which, Mr. Chairman, Sir, you would be well acquainted with. Sir, we know that many persons residing in housing areas across Barbados, most of them reside under a situation of over-

crowding. You have two-bedroom units with one toilet, where 12 persons reside and you have one-bedroom units with six persons, et cetera.

Mr. Chairman, I probably represent the biggest land mass of housing areas in Barbados. Sir, I represent the Pine, Wildey and Parkinson Field,

Sir, the latest demographic profile coming out of the Statistical Department on the Pine Housing area is that it has 17.5 acres of land. Approximately five years ago, it had 17 000 persons, and Sir, the figure is rising.

10.10 a.m.

Sir, that situation certainly of over-crowding poses a lot of social problems, especially for the young people who want to escape the trap of living in an over-crowded situation, hence the Infilling Programme, to me, has brought a solution to the existing problem of over-crowding. Against that background, I want to thank the former Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. George North who started the process, but never continued. The fact of the matter is, this programme has been continued.

Sir, the Pine Housing Area, Wildey and Parkinson Field will be the beneficiaries of the Infilling Programme. I have toured the area with the Minister. We looked at Meadow Road, Parkinson Field, Regent Hill and wherever there is the availability of land where we can place, at least a block of two stories, to really deal with the whole problem of infilling.

Sir, the Infilling Programme is critical, simply because you are providing immediately to the people who live directly in the housing areas without them moving out of the housing areas to go elsewhere for housing. I think it is a wonderful initiative. Certainly, a programme of this nature should be replicated all across the housing areas across Barbados.

Again, I want to thank the Minister for expanding his current national housing development programme to include a very critical component of necessary housing, the Infilling Programme.

Additionally, the Rent-to-Own initiative is a wonderful idea. My understanding of this social initiative is, if I, or any poor person across Barbados, have been renting from Government for approximately 10 years, it could be less, and that person wants to purchase the house, that rent that has been paid over that period of time will be used as a down payment on that property. Hence, the critical point, which I want to address, the interest rates would be drastically reduced, making it more affordable for poor persons to own their houses.

Sir, I think it is such a revolutionary piece of social engineering, because the interest rates, outside of the Barbados Mortgage Finance, on properties across Barbados is exorbitantly high. Here it is, an initiative will be put in place where poor people of this society could finally, in a period of ten years or less, have direct ownership of their properties, is a better programme to me, than the 100 per cent mortgage, because it becomes less expensive and actually more affordable. I think that it is an initiative that should be lauded.

Sir, I also want to touch on the importance, because of the profile, not only a demographic profile, but the social profile of the housing areas across Barbados are rapidly changing, more innovative and a lot more young people are becoming more creative and more self-aware of the importance of being a member of the communities in which they live, particularly mine. You cannot speak for yourself because of your disposition in the Chair at this moment, but I can use this occasion to speak for you too, because you represent two of the most populated housing areas in Barbados, Gall Hill and Silver Hill. I am saying that we will recognise that the profile of the housing areas are changing.

I am saying that each and every housing area across Barbados, the new ones that are being built should have a business component attached to it, similar to the one in Parkinson Field, Deacons and the London Bourne Towers. I think the concept of having businesses and giving young people a chance to earn for themselves within the housing areas across Barbados is a wonderful concept from the perspective, because people can now take advantage of their immediate environment and the human resources that are within the housing areas to earn a living.

I am saying that because within the housing areas you will find young people who are getting involved in nail technology, hair braiding, and they are now getting involved in business at a macro level where they are establishing laundries, restaurants, health foods and a number of commercial programmes that certainly will enhance the image of the housing areas across Barbados.

Sir, I want to use this occasion to pay public tribute to a man called Anthony Wiggins. He is a prolific member of the call-in programme. He has his own views, but one thing I can say is, he has embarked on a wonderful initiative called 'The Tenants Association' across Barbados. Sir, I am speaking from what I know very well. The good thing about the Tenants Association is, it creates a more healthy relationship between the housing areas in Barbados. A great nexus could be created when we could see, for instance, in sports, Gall Hill versus The Pine Housing Area, I am not saying that you are going to win, Pine versus Church Village, the other Gall Hill, St. John, heavy inter-relations.

Sir, I do not come into this Honourable Chamber and guess anything. Sometimes I will make a slight guesstimate, but I am speaking from a position of fact, because we sat with the Minister of Housing and discussed a new Soccer Housing Area Programme that went extremely well. It included Church Village, The Pine, Eden Lodge, Grazettes, Deacons and Haynesville. Initially, the competition was so successful that we are now in the process of planning for this year.

Sir, in addition, can you imagine the National Housing Corporation initiated a national competition at Christmas where they encouraged persons to light up the facility, their houses. We did an Inter-Housing Area Competition among the housing areas. At Christmas time we bring the housing areas together and have cultural exchanges or throughout the year.

I have been residing in the housing areas for a long time and each housing area across Barbados has its own unique culture. There is a housing area in Barbados that I say should be the model of redevelopment as it relates to housing areas in Barbados, that is Haynesville. Haynesville Housing Area is truly working on a programme in tandem with the Royal Barbados Police Force, at their outpost. They have a wonderful community youth, Peter Skeete, attached to the Department of Youth Affairs who does wonderful work on the ground. They have their own culture programme. In fact, we have the Youth Expo, and the Minister spoke about it last night on the television. We are asking Haynesville to do the drum-major to announce the official opening of the Youth Expo.

Sir, Haynesville won three of the Divisions of the Housing Area Competitions which recently concluded. I would urge the Representative not to change the name. You have the internal name of Melbourne, but when you are competing on the national circuit, keep the housing area's name, Haynesville. They say that nothing good cannot come out of these housing areas. Deacons, they used to call it a war zone, Pine, war zone and Gall Hill, a war zone.

Sir, do you know what has happened? With effective representation, effective management and effective leadership skills, the stigma, which I am going to speak to when I return, and discrimination that have been attached by some in Barbados, and in some people's minds will never be removed but will eventually be eradicated.

10.20 p.m.

All of us in this Honourable Chamber and all of the community practitioners across Barbados, the social interventionist, the Church, the youths' organisations and the NGOs working collectively together with us, we could develop a blueprint for success, for those tenants that live in the housing areas across Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, we are living in a new era that is going to challenge our talents, our creativity and us, as a people, to prove our resilience. The only way we could do that, Sir, is to call for unification and harmonisation of social thought so that, eventually, we could create the national enabling environment across Barbados that will certainly redound to the benefit of all of the persons that are residing in the housing areas and, by extension, the inner ghetto cities across Barbados, and Sir, in some rural areas.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, as I am about to take my seat, again, I want to say that the Minister of Housing is really working hard to make sure that Barbadians not only get housing, but get affordable housing.

The Rent-to-Own Programme speaks to the ordinary person in Barbados, such as the maids, the janitors, those persons who work at gas stations, the sanitation workers, and single women of large households, whom most fathers have abandoned, and give them an opportunity to know that they finally will have a stake in this country.

Sir, I want to come back because I really want to do something in this Honourable Chamber that has not been done before. Sir, when I come back, I want to speak about the history of the Pine. I also want to lay a document in the Honourable Chamber. Sir, to me this is so precious that I will come back later.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I wish to add my contribution to the discussion on housing in particular, housing and lands. I want first to indicate that I am not going down any road on what happened 14 years ago. The truth will come out.

I want to indicate to the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Minister of Housing and Lands that, I believe, further consideration should be given to the Government to provide more housing units for rental. Sir, there are many persons who cannot meet the market cost for housing, but indeed Sir, for those who are displaced.

I know it is a tremendous difficulty. I had many house fires last year, but in 2007, I had a family that had to stay at a household, so it is not anything that is new. The Honourable Member has inherited that challenge, but for

persons to have to stay in a guest house for up to six and even months, I think that the cost to Government is prohibitive.

I do not think that families can be as comfortable, where three or four persons are staying in one room in a guest house, in order for them to be able to remove themselves from that environment. Sir, more often than not, these house fires affect ordinary working class persons. Therefore, I want some emphasis to be placed on constructing more units, and preserving them, specifically for persons who are displaced with fire, flooding, land slippage and things of that nature. Sir, many people out there are really relying on the Government to give them, 'a hands-up', in respect of that, Sir.

Secondly, I want the Honourable Member to place some emphasis, not just on housing but it is to do with that sector that is cultural to Barbados. There are persons who work in communities and because of expansion of the communities, and the enhancement of properties, they are now being forced to leave.

I can understand, Sir, persons having a concern for their health and wellness, so that persons like welders, spray painters, mechanics on the whole, really need a specific location. Sir, as we do the industrial park, I believe that there has to be some special location specifically placed to be able to accommodate persons of that nature. We know of communities where some mechanics have 25 and 39 old cars on the road. Sir, it reduces the flow of traffic, and creates numbers of challenges for the health and other social Ministries. Therefore, I know that there was a plan in place but I want the Minister to also work at having that kind of location earmarked, to be able to let Barbadians know that if they want to have a car spray painted, mechanical work or welding done, there is a one stop location, where they will be able to go. Sir, this would relieve those communities of the various hazards that will develop, as a result of the old cars, the noise, dust and the various chemicals that will impact on persons in the communities.

Sir, when I was in the classroom, I cannot tell you of two children between 1970 and 1979 who suffered with asthma. When I left, there were no less than 14 per class. Therefore, it has to be something that is impacting on our health.

I believe that cadre of individuals should get an opportunity to be able to ply their trade, without having to bother about the nuances and so on of people in the community complaining. They have a right to complain if there are challenges, but I feel the Government has to give them some measure of ease.

Thirdly, Sir, I want to ask Government and I know that there was another plan in place as well, for the social aspect of things. Lancaster House was put in the hands of the Salvation Army to facilitate persons who are displaced. I know that on Valentine's Day, 1999, a family of three was dislocated as a result of a house fire. There is nothing worse than on Valentine's Day to lose all you own. Those three men remained at the Lancaster House for many years, up until late last year. Sir, I know there was some controversy about them moving out.

I believe that any new housing unit coming on stream, should be offered to those families who are living in Lancaster House, so that the whole objective of having the Centre for people, who are displaced to come, spend three months and move out, would be put in place.

Sir, those young men did not have the ability to be able to pull themselves together and rise from that Lancaster location, where they felt comfortable. And so, many families are there, and go there and they are relieved, but the Government has to give them a hand-holding experience so that they can move on. They will be happy to pay the rent, but did not have the fire in their belly or the knowledge to be able to move on. They needed proper direction. I tried, but it was a little difficult for me to be able to cope with it.

Similarly, Sir, I would like to ask for another facility as well for battered women. Despite what anybody says, we have hundreds of women in Barbados, who are into households that are battered. Whenever a woman gets up and runs from a battered environment, that woman runs with her children. Very few will leave their children behind, unless there is not a close attachment with the children and the mother. Then, they are only in a limited facility, in a location which I will not expose, and are not coping well, because to go back to the home environment sometimes becomes even more turbulent. Sometimes, the men come looking for them. Sir, that is the reality.

We saw an incident in the newspaper only this weekend which really hurt my heart, when I read how the man was pleading and so on and so forth. I believe there has to be another specific location, where women can move to with their children, and be handed forward into another environment, instead of having to go back. If they can make up, fine, because I believe that is what relationships are about, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, but I want for this Government, to provide another facility. It does not have to be this year, but I know that plans were on the drawing board. I am not sure if it was the Soroptimist, or which organisation has been looking after it, but they have been doing an exceptionally good job. The nurse who has been working with them was highly commended last week for her excellent work. I

believe that another one should be in another location, so that wherever that one is in the island, in another zone, there is need for such an establishment.

10.30 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to refer to communities where the incidence of land slippage is so high, that I cry in my heart for a number of people. Mr. Chairman, last year in particular when there was a very high percentage of rainfall, many persons' properties slipped, as a lot of roads have. I know I will hear that today, but that does not bother me in respect of what I am saying. Mr. Chairman, many of those persons are still living in the environment where their lives and that of their family and their stock and so are threatened.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that there has to be a more concerted effort by Government to provide house spots for those persons most of whom have houses already which are chattel. Mr. Chairman, the whole concept of chattel is to take up and move.

Mr. Chairman, in October 1970, there was a terrible flood. I was a very young girl then. All of Halls Road was flooded and somebody drowned and all of Queen's Park was overtaken with water. In St. Andrew and the outskirts of St. Joseph that are leading into St. Andrew, many houses had to be relocated. The then Government saw it fit to relocate persons to Bagatelle, St. Thomas because those house spots were no more. Many of those house spots now have turned into gullies.

Mr. Chairman, at a later date in the 1970s, under another Administration, there was more slippage and persons were relocated to Bagatelle, St. Thomas. There are many others from White Hill, Baxters and other communities in St. Andrew who had to be relocated to Orange Hill. Mr. Chairman, we experienced another flood in St. James in 1995 and persons were relocated to Bakers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, last year in 2007, tremendous slippage occurred from up by CBC's antenna and two families living in Carrington's Village were affected. Somebody went up there with a bulldozer. It is really high in that area, but a valley where those two families live in Carrington's Village. Mr. Chairman, the homes of those two families went to the ground because of the land slippage. It carried away their outdoor bathrooms and so. These persons were relocated because there was a plan by the Barbados Labour Party to acquire Farmers Phase I and II to facilitate the needs of persons who were suffering as a result of land slippage.

In 2005-2006, there was a bad situation at Chapman Village, St. Thomas and a family had to be relocated. Sir, there are still others, and therefore, it is incumbent upon

Government to acquire some properties and put in the site and services to facilitate those who are affected by land slippage.

Where I find that there were challenges, I find that both Governments, meaning the past Government and the previous one, were not doing acquisitions on a timely basis, and therefore, people are just operating on a precipice at times fearing for their lives and that of their families.

Mr. Chairman, the way both governments slipped was that houses were not adequately bulldozed when persons were relocated. Mr. Chairman, if the house could not be moved because of its poor condition, it remained on the spot and other residents and strangers came in and tap up a board and so on and so forth, which means that Government has to do it twice, relocate those who were the legitimate property owners and then those who have gone in after they saw that the properties were not being removed.

Mr. Chairman, eviction is another issue. We know that now landlords are aware of what is happening in the country, many of them sometimes want the property for their children, and I can understand that. You would have purchased that property in the 1940s, 1950s, whatever or it would have been bequeathed to you, and therefore, you want to keep it for the children who went away. They have tenants on the land but then low and belold, overnight people are coming with letters of eviction. I have many of them. These are ordinary people. They are working honestly to make a living and raise their family, but they have absolutely no land on which to put their houses.

Mr. Chairman, there are times when their pressure goes up. The situation affects their normal mental health, because they do not know when the marshals would come and take the house down and take it down to the Mangrove Landfill.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that Government has to spend a little more time working at assisting those persons who received eviction notices in a more dynamic way. One or two persons have been helped. Some people went over to Haggatt Hall at one point in time. Mr. Chairman, I believe that there is need for that especially now that people are better understanding what their rights are. Mr. Chairman, there is absolutely nothing wrong with that.

Mr. Chairman, when those properties are acquired and the site and services are put in, persons should not have to buy a house and land because they already have a house. The community spirit that this Government is pushing is the way to go. Our fore-parents never went anywhere to get a mortgage. They did not have anything to take with them except the land papers if they had a spot of land. Some of them never had a loan. Mr. Speaker, they had a special

arrangement with a business place in town, that is still being accommodated, where they had charge accounts.

Mr. Chairman, members of the community came in on a Saturday or Sunday morning to put the house together, and the owner would cook some food or do something to feed those workers. Mr. Chairman, there were times when none of the workers took any money. They used to just say Ma'am, I am helping you because this is what community spirit is like.

Sir, that kind of community life is still in existence in Barbados. Therefore, if persons can get the spots where the services are in, I am sure that it would make a tremendous difference in their lives, particularly the ones with the eviction notices.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, before I close, I just want to speak to some requests that have been made by me over the past years. Persons have approached me, particularly for spots over in Blunts, which we normally called Airy Cot. Mr. Chairman, there is land at Kingsland, in Spring Farm, St. Thomas where the Rural Development Commission put in a road to accommodate the persons living on the left hand side when you go in that is fully populated. However, Kingsland is still vacant and I am asking Government to proceed with the acquisition. There are copious notes and letters, and visits have been made by other Honourable Ministers, but so far, nothing has happened.

Mr. Chairman, I would not support other persons getting those properties when the villagers in Spring Farm who have many children, have been waiting for the last four to five years for further action on that whole property in Kingsland.

Similarly, Forty Acres has been a request for many years. The Minister hinted something to me on Friday and I would want that to come to fruition. There are also Canefield and other communities.

Mr. Chairman, Allen View is part of the Neighbourhood Upgrade Project that has been the vision of the Barbados Labour Party in the past. Mr. Chairman, we worked towards every aspect of it, so that before this Government could rest in March or April 2008, they were able to sign that loan to be able to have those funds drawn down.

Mr. Chairman, I speak specifically to Allen View, because the folks in there have been greatly disadvantaged, not deliberately, by Harrison's Cave and its redevelopment and the restrictions that have been put on them when it

comes to building new houses. You could appreciate, Mr. Chairman, having your own spot, but the most you can do is light gardening, putting in a few vegetables.

Mr. Chairman, people want to give those spots to their children, and so I would want for those individuals to be included in any site and services that are to be identified, so that those families can get some help. More importantly, I want the housing neighbourhood upgrade project to really make a full start at the reorganizing and enhancing Allen View.

I also want to see the training that was indicated to us as well as the engagement of locals for employment purposes, because it should not only be the shops in Harrison's Cave that can sell a beverage or a few souvenirs, the residents in Allen View should be accommodated with those kiosks. It was the vision of the Barbados Labour Party that those residents should have kiosks, so that they can do their own entrepreneurship activities, so that they can be a continuous part of the youth path that works with the Environmental Special Project Unit and be empowered to take the next step with the enhancement of their road, housing and the sewerage project that have been put as part of the project.

I wish to thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will come back and make another intervention for two minutes if you would allow me, Sir.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. George South.

Hon. Dr. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Mr. Chairman, I thank you for allowing me to be able to add my support in this discussion on housing and on where the Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, is taking the housing programme.

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, appropriately the acronym for the housing programme is HELP (Housing For Every Last Person) and certainly today the requests we see for housing is no longer housing as a status symbol, which is to say that someone has 'arrived'. It is not about acquiring a certain status symbol where you get your car, your house and so on.

Mr. Chairman, housing is not just for status when we get these requests. When I see people coming to me for housing it is really a cry for help. Sir, I am glad that the Minister of Housing and Lands is listening to those cries and has not turned a deaf ear to them. Instead, the

Honourable Member has been working very hard to be able to provide this help.

Mr. Chairman, some of the requests you hear for housing would bring tears to your eyes. I think of a request that was made to me personally, a lady in desperate need for a home because her child is disabled and mentally retarded, and because that child is mentally retarded and she does not live in her own home, but in family home, the other members of the family feel uncomfortable with this mentally retarded, now almost grown child, being in the house and being able to disrupt the household. Sir, sad but true, this mentally retarded young person is left to sleep outdoors because the owners of that house is not comfortable with that child indoors. Therefore, the mother came to me in tears because she needs a home for herself and her child.

Of course, we know there are women who need to leave their homes in which they reside because they are victims of domestic violence. As was mentioned, often it is the mother who leaves the home to escape a situation of domestic violence, she does not want to leave her children behind. Sir, no mother wants to run and leave her children behind, unless she has nowhere to go. Sir, as there is nowhere for her to go, she may find herself stuck in a situation of violence that is constantly being repeated. Therefore, these people come seeking housing solutions, to get out of a dangerous and desperate situation.

Mr. Chairman, we have many situations in Barbados, and certainly in my constituency, where there are 14 persons living in one home. Sometimes there are three or four grown adults with their own children in that house and everybody feels the pinch. People are literally living on top of one another.

Sir, when these people come with a request for housing, again this is not a status symbol, this is not to say they are earning enough and so want to earn their own home. This is a request that they really need somewhere to raise their children, that they need to have control as to the rearing of their children.

Mr. Chairman, when a mother is living in a house with her three brothers, their children and her children, sometimes that mother cannot lay down the Law for her children as she would like, because of the fact that mother would be living with her granny, aunties and uncles and so everybody would have an input into the rearing of her children. Sir, sometimes this is not always a bad thing, but as a parent, you need to be able to set standards and rules for your children.

Mr. Chairman, we have situations in this country where little children are exposed to very explicit scenes in their own homes. It is not just on television or the internet,

but where people bring their 'blue' movies into the house and watch them in front of those little kids. They might think that these children are not aware of what is going on. Then we have stories coming out of nursery, infant or primary schools that would suggest that these children do see what is going on.

Sir, another situation is where sometimes you have both children and adults sharing the same bedroom. You might think that the children are asleep, but what we hear the children saying would suggest to us that the children are exposed to things that we know that in ideal situations we would not want our children to be exposed to. Mr. Chairman, housing has now become a desperate situation for many people, it is now a cause for help.

Mr. Chairman, we are also hearing about situations where people are asked to quit their homes. Sir, the first call I got this morning was from an old lady who said to me that she cannot sleep at night because everyday she is wondering if that day would be the last day she would be spending in the house. She has been asked to leave, there is nowhere else to go. The land owner wants to sell the land at \$15 a square foot.

Sir, land at \$15 a square foot is cheap in St. George because land is now going up to \$25 a square foot. This land that she is on, which she thought was tenantry land, they are now asking for \$15 a square foot. She has been there since the 1940s or 1950s. Of course, it is not just her anymore. It is also her extended family.

Mr. Chairman, these are the desperate cries we heard and I want to encourage the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to continue with what he is doing. We have seen what the Honourable Member has been doing and the impact has been felt across Barbados.

The Honourable Member is not a poster boy as anybody would want to suggest, but certainly he has hit the ground running. Mr. Chairman, when the Honourable Member for St. Philip North assumed this portfolio, the Honourable Member came to St. George, where he and I toured St. George South, looking for areas that could be used to provide various housing solutions for people in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, there is also the concept of handing over keys to persons who have been living in National Housing Corporation units, that has not really applied to people in St. George South. I understand that only two owners in St. George South would be getting keys because sadly, the last low income housing that was built in St. George South, Ellerton Housing Area and Waverley Cot, were built sometime in the 1960s. Since then we have had no further housing solutions built for the low income

earner. This is why the activity we are now seeing in St. George South has created so much excitement.

Mr. Chairman, I have heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central speaking to a sign that was erected in his Constituency as part of an election gimmick, where he has described what has happened to that sign. The Honourable Member said how that sign has now decayed.

Sir, I would want to say that the contrary has happened this past year before the General Elections in Greens, St. George. Sir, a sign went up saying that the National Housing Corporation was going to erect 51 houses, again creating a lot of excitement for those 51 promised housing. I have had hundreds of requests of people coming to me to see if I could help them to acquire one of those 51 lots. As I said, not having any housing solutions in St. George South in many decades, this sign created a lot of excitement.

Mr. Chairman, it has only been a matter of months, but now you see houses going up. The people in the community are already walking through the area, spending their Sunday afternoons or simply 'liming' in that area, because they are already embracing the 51 housing solutions as an extension of the community of Drax Hall Hope and Greens.

We see the same thing happening in Constant, St. George, where houses were promised and now the houses are being built. Sir, we are glad to see that we are getting housing solutions in those areas.

Sir, housing is sadly needed in St. George South, but the people are realising that we are no longer the outside children, that St. George South has been given legitimacy and we are being given the attention for which we have long been asking.

Mr. Chairman, I want also to congratulate the Minister of Housing and Lands, because when we were touring and he looked at areas - of course, land in St. George is prime agricultural land and much of it could be put into production. We know there are many who are letting their good land become rab land, so that they could sell it. Land is now fetching, in some cases, up to \$25 a square foot. St. George South is a lovely place, everybody is realising that. Everybody would agree that St. George is perhaps the most beautiful parish. I know that some of my colleagues have discovered that as well and they are all welcomed.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing and Lands was mindful about agriculture. In one instance, he saw that water was already put in to serve an area that he had proposed to use as part of his housing programme but he received a call from the land owner, who also called me, to

say the land has now been irrigated to be used for agriculture and he asked the Minister to let the land remain for agricultural purposes.

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, we have to be mindful that as much as we need land for housing, we do need to have agriculture sustained in this country and lands in St. George are also prime for that.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO: Sir, land is also needed for other options. We heard about when people are asked to quit and they need places to put their chattel houses and about the rent-to-own concept. Sir, hundreds of persons have come to me about the houses in Greens. I know many of them would not qualify for the low-income houses, but I am glad we are now looking at other opportunities such as the rent-to-own for those persons.

Mr. Chairman, just let me mention the Buckeley Meadows programme. It is not a low-income project, but one that has created a lot of commotion. When it came to the attention of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, he was very aggressive in getting to deal with it. I think that the prospective members of that area, even though they are not living in the area yet, formed a group, came together, said they were getting the short end of the deal, that they were paying mortgages and all kinds of interest on their loans, but that they did not have access to the properties, because the properties were not yet ready. We have seen where the Minister has come in. He has put his hands down and the residents are satisfied that they are having that attended to.

Mr. Chairman, I just want to mention two things. First, I know that people are looking for land and are desperate for land to put housing on but we are seeing a disturbing trend in St. George South where people, whose lands extend into gullies are now seeing the need to fill in these gullies. They are taking debris from other areas and filling in gullies so that they can build on that. I have mentioned it to the Minister who is responsible for drainage, to the Ministry of Housing and to the Town Planning Department that it is a dangerous practice to build in gullies. We have seen one gully in the Ellerton area, a gully about 30 feet deep that I have never in my lifetime seen full and someone started to fill it in, to build on it and in the last rains we saw the gully filled to the top and it created flooding, as one would expect, so we want to ask people not to do that.

Mr. Chairman, also we know that more houses are being built and people are coming into St. George. We

have seen the 51 houses recently put on the Farm and other houses being built in Rolling Hills, and we see Drax Hall being developed, and we want to make a call for water. Sadly, I spoke to a person who moved into St. George recently, who told me that if she knew the problem with water was so bad that she would not have. Sir, as one who has lived in St. George all her life, I felt sad when I heard her say that. Mr. Chairman, the fact is, we are getting these new developments with hundreds of people moving into the area and more being proposed, as we see the housing solutions in Greens and other private developments as well, but we need new water mains, and we probably need to look at desalinated water.

We need to look at other solutions for providing water because of the water pressure and people have to get up and bathe at 4.00 a.m. Sir, if they do not do that, there is no water until 9.00 a.m. Sir, that is a sad state of affairs and we would really encourage that any further development in St. George, be mindful of the need for water.

Sir, I am glad that attention is being paid to put recreational facilities. We have looked at Todds and as we look at providing housing there, we are also going to provide much needed playing facilities for the people in Todds.

Mr. Chairman, as I close, I want to encourage the Honourable Member to continue pressing on because he is doing a good job, and to say to the people of St. George South, hooray and congratulations to you, the people of St. George, we are no longer the outside children.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

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

Mr. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, it is perhaps unfortunate that in this modern Parliament, in these modern times, that an Administration feels the needs constantly to compare itself with the Administration before it. I expect though, as time goes on, that the Democratic Labour Party Administration would hopefully have a sense of self-worth.

Sir, when we came to Government in 1994, perhaps we did a little bit of the same thing, but it was an easier job then because in 1994, the National Housing Corporation, had a list of over 12 000 waiting on houses. They had a General Workers' Loan Scheme that had over 8 000 applicants. No loans had been disbursed for about seven years and the Barbados Labour Party in 1994, recognising this tremendous deficiency, set about doing something about it. Sir, no housing units had been built at all during the term between 1991 and 1994.

Mr. Chairman, some of the claims of the Democratic Labour Party do sound a little hollow. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party during their last opportunity to govern this country had a Venezuelan Project that left unfinished houses at Cane Gardens with the concrete falling-off. I think the engineers on That Side would know what they are. Sir, the point is, that by being self-righteous and holier-than-thou, they have conveniently pushed to the dark recesses of their minds, the dismal condition of housing, when they were last in Government.

Mr. Chairman, they now have an opportunity to correct some of the things that they failed to do when they were last in Government, but the truth must be told that the Barbados Labour Party does have a strong record in housing. Sir, we felt that the idea that National Housing Corporation would build housing units and nothing more, was really not a model that could take us where we needed to be in terms of housing solutions and so, Mr. Chairman, we immediately gave National Housing Corporation its mandate and, in very short order, we had housing units being built in St. Peter, housing units being built in Bridgetown, but at the same time, we took the Cane Garden housing project from being in the slough of despond and brought it to a situation, where within a matter of 12 months of taking Government, individuals were building houses at Cane Garden, and we see where Cane Garden is today.

Mr. Chairman, we also experimented with a Joint Venture Programme. Sir, of all the things that the current Government is criticising, I notice that they are also following suit by taking the pattern that we laid with the Joint Venture Programme and continuing with it. Sir, the old people say that you have to give Jack his jacket and I believe that whatever else the Government may want to criticise the Barbados Labour Party Administration for, it would be untrue to suggest that we do not have a solid record of housing.

Mr. Chairman, in my Constituency alone there are 120 houses at Blackmans Development. Sir, two speakers ago, the Honourable Member who spoke, talked about the Infill Programme as if the infill programme springs from the bosom of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, I well recollect that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, when he was Minister of Housing started the Infill Programme. We did infilling at the Pine, we did infilling at Buccaneer in St. James, we did infilling at St. Barnabas and a host of other places. Sir, this is not a new and novel idea. We are glad that they are continuing with it, but they are speaking of it with the excitement of original discovery.

11.00 a.m.

A housing project at Apes Hill and a host of other housing projects across this nation. Least the public of Barbados, having heard the strident voice of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, thinks that we have done nothing in housing, there are thousands and thousands of Barbadian who are in their own houses today, because of the unswerving efforts of the Barbados Labour Party.

We have openly spoken of housing as if the sole obligation for housing Barbadians rest on Government. That was not the position of the Barbados Labour Party when we were in Administration over the last 14 years. We felt that giving people the opportunities for the fullest possible employment, would encourage them as a priority, to acquire a house. So we did a number of things to enable Barbadians to own houses. For the first, we re-activated a dead and moribund General Workers' Housing Scheme, and at its finest, we have increased the loan limit to \$100 000.

I well remember when I was Chairman of the National Housing Corporation that one of the things that was plaguing us was the fact that many Barbadians still, at that time, and even now, rented housing spots. Many of the people who were general workers in the public service were not the owners of the land they lived on. They had a spot on family land or they were renting a house spot.

Sir, I well remember sitting down with the Board and saying to the legal officers that I felt we needed to get into the business of lending those individuals money. Do you know why? If they went to the bank, the bank would ask for title deeds. They did not have them. I well remember we generated a form of a mortgage which allowed individuals, with various and other documents, who were renting a spot to come to the National Housing Corporation and say, I cannot get a loan from a commercial bank or any other lending institution because they want deeds. I want to borrow this money from the National Housing Corporation. Through that particular slant, many hundreds and hundreds of Barbadians who were renting spots, found that they were able to get a significant loan such that they could build houses. Sir, the 100 per cent loans provided by the Barbados Mortgage Finance, also a significant initiative, which allowed Barbadians an opportunity to find their own housing solutions. I believe that if it were not for the efforts of our Administration, they would have been many thousands more Barbadians lining up at the National Housing Corporation's door.

Sir, what do you see? I do not have the numbers before me, but the number of mortgages, the value of mortgages for residences in Barbados moved from about \$200 million to over \$1 billion. What does that mean? It means that in 14 years Barbadians were in a position to go to financial institutions to borrow money to provide their

own housing solutions. What you saw during those 14 years was a massive expansion of housing stock all across this nation. So it is untrue to advance an argument that this Government did nothing.

Sir, I do not want to use up my entire time talking about that.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North excited my attention on Friday, when he said that some land was acquired in Branchbury. I would like to spend a little time talking about that scenario. I have asked for a plan of the lands at Branchbury, St. Joseph. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North said that he would supply me with it and I am sure he will do so during the course of the next day or so.

Sir, I have to say the reason why it excited my interest is the fact that, having provided 120 housing solutions in the last term at Blackmans Development, St. Joseph, having also provided another 17 housing solutions at St. Anns, St. Joseph, it is clear to me as Member of Parliament, that the need is still great, but unfortunately the situation that has presented itself over the years has caused many Josephines to have to look beyond the boundaries of our parish for housing.

Sir, my Constituency, in particular, has some unique challenges, so unique the challenges are that I should call on the Minister to focus on them as he determines what happens to lands at Branchbury.

Sir, a few weeks ago I invited the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to come with me into Suriname, St. Joseph, because there is a very serious situation of land slippage in Suriname.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: I pointed out to the Honourable Member that these houses were at great risk of slipping, especially given the very heavy rains, and that it was incumbent on the Government to find housing solutions for these individuals.

I then took the Honourable Member to the corner of Tour Ville Road and Horse Hill Road and pointed out to him another area of land that the National Housing Corporation had at my insistence and got Town and Country Planning permission for three lots. I asked him, as Minister, to use his good offices to secure those lots for the individuals in Suriname whose houses were at risk. Unfortunately, it appears as though nothing has happened to date, but more important, the issue of slippage persists in Parks Road and areas known as the 'saddle back'.

Slippage also persists in Chapman Village, part of which is in the Honourable Member for St. Thomas' Constituency and another part in mine. I believe those lands that will be acquired by the Government or has been acquired by the Government at Branchbury should be considered as the natural place for any relocations, that those individuals should be relocated within St. Joseph. I know the St. Joseph people and they are not at all anxious about moving into Christ Church or moving into any other place. They want to stay in their Constituency.

Sir, the Barbados Labour Party had a policy and we were governed by that policy, that as long as there was housing development, 80 per cent of the units or 80 per cent of the spots would be allocated to individuals from within that Constituency, and 20 per cent for individuals abroad. Sir, I do not know what the current Government's policy is in relation to that. I hope the Minister will enunciate it. In my view, it was an important initiative and approach, because districts need to be built up from within, especially rural communities. There is a very strong sense of family that we need to build on.

I am very conscious that I have to wind up, but I will come again. Therefore, I hope that the current Administration will see the wisdom of continuing that policy.

We are happy to welcome new blood, but I am asking that the lands at Branchbury be seen as a natural place where those individuals affected by slippage in my Constituency can have first claim on the lots. I really hope that before the next rainy season, that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North will put things in place for lots to be allocated to the individuals from Suriname, who need to be relocated.

I hope to have the opportunity to come again.

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

Hon. Dr. D.S. LOWE: Sir, I rise to make a very brief intervention in this debate under this Head. First of all, to join in congratulating the Honourable Member for St. Philip North on the wonderful work he is doing as the Honourable Minister of Housing. If I should agree with the Honourable Member who just took his seat, I would agree on this point. Really, it is of little virtue to compare what is happening today in housing with what happened before this Government took office.

11.10 a.m.

I think what is vital is that we continue to demonstrate that the Honourable Minister has a vision for

the people of Barbados, as it relates to housing and housing development, and that the Minister is at work.

I should remind this Honourable House that the comparison started when an Honourable Member for the Opposition suggested to Barbadians that this Minister of Housing had done nothing. Sir, just as the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has so painfully pointed out that they did do something, I think it is only fair that the country understands that the Government stands behind the Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, and he is doing the job.

Sir, you cannot compare oranges and apples. Mr. Chairman, the truth is that you are comparing the performance of the Minister of Housing today, who has only been in office for less than 14 months, with the performance of the last Administration, that would have been in office for 14 years.

I am saying that we do not need to antagonise ourselves over any comparison. In 14 or 15 years, we will come back and compare, and it would be a fair comparison then, because both Governments would have had the opportunity to serve for 14 years and would be able to say, here is what we did, versus what was done before.

Asides.

Dr. The Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, there were several Ministers of Housing on the Other Side. The fundamental observation is that, collectively, they underperformed in the 14-year period that they had to do the job, and that is the point.

Asides.

Dr. The Hon. D. S. LOWE: I do not think that there is any shame in admitting that, perhaps, we could have done more. Sir, given the fact that they had eight successive years of economic growth, they had a windfall of VAT revenue and the like and, then they borrowed a lot of money, so they had it there. Mr. Chairman, they cannot have it both ways. If you are given much, much will be required. I think that the aggravation in the public domain is that although the past Administration had much, and much was not delivered. Sir, let us move on.

Sir, let us talk about the fact that housing and the performance of housing Ministers under this Administration is storied. I am quite sure the Minister of Housing recognises the services of another housing Minister within the Government of the Democratic Labour Party, who did a fantastic job during difficult times.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. Thomas this morning rightfully pointing out that there was a time in

Barbados, where many people's homes became casualties of flooding. I grew up in St. Andrew and know of the great floods of the 70s where whole communities like Shorey Village, all down through Bruce Vale and Baxters down to Long Pond would have been washed away.

Sir, there was a Housing Minister, I believe his name would have been Joy DaCosta Edwards, whom though some people recognised as unorthodox in the way he handled providing houses for people was, nevertheless, effective in going after, trying to supply a need that, as the Honourable Member for St. George South said this morning, it is not just a matter of a social symbol, or it is not about social status. It is a fundamental, developmental psycho social need of people to have shelter, and housing becomes the major engine of providing that shelter for individuals. Therefore, the Minister of Housing is on track and I wanted to join my voice, with the voices of those who have applauded the Minister to say that this Minister is on track, and I believe, that he will continue to deliver.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: My constituents are happy that the Honourable Minister is doing such a fantastic job. Only this weekend I was in Sayers Court and observed that there is a project going on there. I want to thank the Minister personally for giving some attention to the needs of the Constituency of Christ Church East.

I will say this. Since becoming the M. P. for Christ Church East, there has been a steady pilgrimage of members, not only of my Constituency, but members from other Constituencies, who have registered their interest and need for housing; either a house, house and land or a house spot.

Again, let me reflect on one of the presentations earlier this morning. There are many persons out there, who have built their homes on rented land. The owners of those lands have either returned to the country or have awoken from their slumber and decide that this probably the best time to sell, and these persons are asked to pick up their houses as though they were handbags.

In many cases, these houses have to be put beside the road because there is no immediate solution for a house spot. It is a painful experience. I saw a guy who came to my office in the 70s in tears, because he now has to move his house, which for him, is his inheritance and he has no place to put that house. Therefore, we believe that the Honourable Minister will continue to diversify the housing solutions that he comes up with, as part of his innovative programme, because part of that has to be the provision of lots, where persons in situations as the one I just described, would be able to save their homes in that regard.

In complimenting the Minister of Housing, I must compliment his staff, because we were treated, on more than one occasion, to presentations by Members of the staff of the Ministry of Housing and the NHC. Sir, I am totally impressed by their understanding of the demand and what is required to fill that demand, by their dedication to ensuring that the programmes of Government are delivered.

Sir, there is always the possibility where someone may not be as enthusiastic as we would wish, I could say from my experience that there is a hardworking team in the Ministry of Housing that is getting the job done and allowing the Minister to be able to move with the kind of pace that he has been able to move, at this point in time.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: The restoration of the NHC mandate, I think, is an important point to be noted. Mr. Chairman, the NHC has been diverted perhaps to fulfilling responsibilities outside of their immediate remit. I am saying today that any developing country that wants to create a sustainable environment for its people, has to give an account for a dedicated agency that will look after the housing of Barbadians. Sir, not just housing of Barbadians. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Joseph noted that during the time of his Government's Administration, that they looked after ensuring that people got houses and houses were built, and that there should be a partnership between private and public. I agree with that, but let me say this.

The remit of the Government is to ensure that it houses its people and that remit should not be handed over to any private sector agency.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, if we are going to sustain our development strides, if we are going to be reckoned as any leading developing Small Island State, we have to ensure that housing our people, just as is feeding our people are at the top of our agenda. Therefore, I believe that the Minister is right, when he notes that the mandate of the NHC has to be the provision of housing. When he notes that the mandate of the HELP Programme must continue to be carried forward, and that the Charter for building houses in this country, has to be always the Charter of the Government, because that is absolutely critically important.

11.20 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, to solve a problem, you must define the problem. One of my learned friends on this side often say that if you do not understand the problem, chances are the solution would elude you. Mr. Chairman, when we come to understanding the problem of housing, it becomes

absolutely important that we start by understanding how Barbados has developed over time.

Mr. Chairman, expectations of Barbadians have changed. Since the village concept has become a little bit under threat, because of the migration of persons from one area to another because of employment, education, et cetera. It is important for us to understand that building houses cannot only just be the number of houses built. It has to be embosomed in the concept of building communities.

Mr. Chairman, I know that the Minister of Housing has contemplated that when you go into an open space and you are going to build 15, 20, 30 or a 100 houses, that part of that construct includes the creation of a self-contained community where persons are able to live, to move and to have their social, psychological and economic well-being sustained within that community.

Mr. Chairman, I walked around sometimes and I encountered people who have been in locations for years and there is a certain type of commonality that holds people together, particularly in difficult times. Mr. Chairman, part of the housing agenda of this Government has gone beyond the principle of building houses to building communities.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that we have to continue to pursue that path, because it is an important path. Sir, that course of action is one where we continue to inspire people not to take flight from their communities but allow us to help them create expanded communities, where they could continue to have their family relationships and ties with their churches, schools and so on. Mr. Chairman, I think that is very important in the whole process as well.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Chairman, we do understand that getting the job done as the Minister of Housing and Lands is a complex process. It is a process that requires innovation, creativity, vision, dedication and commitment to a cause. The cause cannot simply be the cause of the Government. It has to be the cause of the people.

Mr. Chairman, the people expect this Government to deliver on housing, and I am proud to say that the Minister of Housing and Lands has started and continues to do the job and do it effectively.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you. I will come back a little later.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, my intervention would more be to ask a few brief questions of the Minister in this whole exercise.

Mr. Chairman, judging from the comments which have been made from Honourable Members on That Side it would appear as though they are viewing our comments with respect to the Minister as comments attacking the Minister or the Ministry's programme. We are not attacking any Minister of Housing and Lands or the Honourable Member for St. Philip North. As a matter of fact, in my presentation I praised his exuberance and indicated that he obviously was not given the tools.

Mr. Chairman, if it is one thing that the Democratic Labour Party probably should learn from this whole exercise, it is that they should not go into an election and make promises they cannot satisfy. This has nothing to do with how many houses the Barbados Labour Party built.

Mr. Chairman, it is interesting to note that from the presentations from That Side, Honourable Members have not even read their own Manifesto. Mr. Chairman, what I would encourage the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to do down the road - I know that in these political parties people write things in Manifestoes for you. Sir, it happens. I have heard Honourable Members on That Side comment on it. It is fairly obvious that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is fully aware of what I am talking about.

Mr. Chairman, we as candidates should ensure that when a Manifesto is coming out, we make our input because we would be able to speak to what we have put forward and on what has been omitted. Mr. Chairman, I say that because of the word solutions. When you listen to Honourable Members on That Side, it would appear to us as though solutions is a word that dropped out of the sky that the Barbados Labour Party has used. Mr. Chairman, solution is a term that has been used directly out of the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto.

Mr. Chairman, if you come and say you would ensure that 2 000 housing solutions come to fruition in any particular year, and then we talked about housing solutions, you should not come and say that you do not want to hear anything about any solutions, that you want to know the number of houses built and the amount of house spots that have been provided. Mr. Chairman, the Democratic Labour Party has said that in their Manifesto.

Mr. Chairman, when the Honourable Minister gets up to speak, I want him to define housing solutions, because I do not know how else to define, it but to include what he has done to improve the lot of housing in any given community, whether it is loans, houses or land.

Mr. Chairman, if you are saying that you are dealing with house spots, land or buildings, then you could only lay claim to bringing to fruition things that have been included in the Manifesto, if you have actually delivered a conveyance.

Mr. Chairman, one of the questions I would like to ask of the Minister, is how many conveyances he has delivered since January 15. In order to respond to the comment from the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, I would like to know how many houses have been effectively transferred. I would not like to say none, because if I say none, there is an implication that the Minister of Housing and Lands has been doing nothing and I know that is not true because the Minister of Housing and Lands has been working.

Mr. Chairman, if you use the definition that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South wants us to use, the question is, how many conveyances have you actually delivered? None. Mr. Chairman, if the Honourable Member was listening to me when I made my first intervention, he would have understood.

Mr. Chairman, I am more in the corner of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, because I gave him 43 houses when it should have been zero and I was dealing with solutions. This Government cannot lay claim to making provision for any loans under the General Workers' Loan Fund, the Housing Credit Fund or the \$5 000 loan which we gave to almost 6 000 persons and empowered them to do repairs and improvements to their homes.

Mr. Chairman, between January 15 and now, they cannot lay claim to any solutions apart from the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has been very active. I believe that he is a good public relations man. He would make a very good journalist. He might even make a good marshal, because he has been serving notices all over the place. He is the only Minister that I know that has ever been serving notices. I believe that the Honourable Attorney-General should speak to him. Attorneys do not even do that. He serves notices himself.

11.30 a.m.

Mr. Chairman, we have to be very careful and we have to be very realistic. This is not a situation where we are coming into a forum, where the Government is making their argument and to a panel who would mark us the Opposition at the end of the day. This is not that forum. The reason you are over there and we are over here is that the people of Barbados have already judged us.

Sir, one of the main reasons for this exercise is for the Democratic Labour Party to tell the public that it

promised it would have done this and that it has delivered on its promises. If the Democratic Labour Party has not been able to deliver as they have indicated in their Manifesto, then all they need to do is to explain to the people of Barbados why they have not been able to deliver. Sir, it is not about the members in the Gallery or the Members on the Other Side. This is not about anybody making an excellent speech, this Government has to convince the people that what they said is what they will do, and if you have not done it, then they have to explain it to the people.

Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, it matters not whether we have built 1 000 houses. The record is there. If you come in here, like the Honourable Member for St. Philip South and say we have only built 163 in one term and the record is there in the Ministry. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South will not be in this Honourable House after the next General Election and then the people in the Ministry, the civil servants, would say they could now see why the Honourable Member was not in the House, because he had not been truthful to the facts.

Sir, that is not an issue. We want to know exactly how many houses were built since January 15, or in the words of the Honourable Member for St. Philip South, how many housing solutions? We want to know what are their plans? We want to know the reason? Because of the present economic situation, you cannot go forward with the programme you said you would have implemented. That is all we want to hear. You are not speaking for the Honourable Members of the Barbados Labour Party, because we all own our homes. You are speaking to the public of Barbados, some of whom are your constituents.

Sir, as I said already, this is why they are over there and we are over here, because may be in the dying moments of our term, the public of Barbados had forgotten the programme that we had in place, in the first part of our tenure in the governance in this country. May be that is the reason and they want to see what you would do now.

Mr. Chairman, when the Honourable Member for St. George South spoke, she spoke about how excited people were when they saw a sign advocating the erection of 51 houses. I know what it is like.

As a former Minister of Housing and Lands, where for only 51 units you would have more than one thousand persons barging in, wanting those 51 units. I also know of people who would come to your Constituency office, wanting to beat you. I do not know if the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has had that unpleasant experience of anybody coming to his Constituency office, to his Ministry or to his house, wanting to beat him up. If the Honourable Member has not had that experience as a Minister, then I will tell you things have changed.

Asides.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, the one thing that has come out in this debate - forgetting what we have done and what you have done - more important is that we cannot satisfy the housing solutions in this country. Therefore, when somebody could get up and say that we left 25 000 applications and that we have done nothing, that sounds good, but this Government would leave and it would be 50 000 applications because we as a Government cannot satisfy all of the needs of those persons as it relates to housing.

There is a school of thought that housing should be a right, like how freedom of speech is a right. In some of the 'better off' countries, people are moving in this direction. I do not think that Barbados could even think about that, because we do not have the resources. Sir, I cannot lecture this Government on what it should or should not do, but it would be good for the people of Barbados to hear what this Government plans on doing in this term.

Mr. Chairman, I made a point with respect to a previous Democratic Labour Party speaking about the fact they do not regard a Manifesto as part of a social contract with the people, but it is a social contract. Sir, this is why people would be excited about your programme and people would want to know what are your plans for the future.

Mr. Chairman, the other shocking thing that should have engaged the Minister's attention in his exuberance, and he touched on it already, is the fact that he has all the plans in the world. He then puts those plans in train, only to recognise that he has to do a survey, that he has to involve the Chief Town Planner.

Sir, sometimes two years would past, and I would like to warn the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, if he has plans, to make sure that those plans start by the end of the second year, otherwise he would be scrambling to have those plans implemented. Also, if he has some of the operatives in the Ministry, who are not sympathetic to his cause, they would make sure that the beneficiary of that programme would not be the person who proposed it in the first place.

Mr. Chairman, there is one important point I want to mention. In addition to letting us know about the programme, it would be good to hear from the Minister. Sir, as a former Minister of Housing and Lands, I have touched on a few of the frustrations that a Minister would encounter, but there are other areas I think the Minister of Housing and Lands could be looking at, in terms of frustration from the same people of which we speak.

Sir, somebody spoke about evictions. The Honourable Member should look at the legislation. Mr.

Chairman, whatever might have been said about the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, it gave us a start in order to empower people who were actually trampled in the past.

Asides.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes in which to wind up.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I would want to say there are certain amendments that still need to be made to the Tenancy Freehold Purchase Act. Although I must say that there are some people who run to the Nation Newspaper and to the Advocate, after due process has been served, a number of years would have passed and persons would have done nothing, some even chase the landlords off their properties. I believe this is one of the areas that as Minister of Housing, you should ensure that legislation is put in place in order to protect these people.

Mr. Speaker, my main problem with the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act is that you go to great lengths to create a tenantry, to create qualified tenants and when a tenant moves from that land and another tenant takes up the land, he is not a qualified tenant. It is something with which we have started to grapple towards the end of our term, because of the fact that a few unscrupulous landlords had 'unfair' a lot of tenants.

Sir, I believe that one of the first things the Honourable Member for St. Philip North should grapple with is the amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. Sir, once a tenantry always a tenantry, so that when a person is a tenant. Sir, I see it happening in Waterhall Plantation, where a developer wanted to use land for persons who are foreign to us - I did not say foreign persons - was allowed, literally, to chase persons off land because those people were not qualified tenants.

11.40 a.m.

Sir, those are the areas that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and the Attorney-General should be looking at so that where there is a tenantry and there are about 10 unoccupied lots, those lots should automatically be transferred to Government.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up.

Mr. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I will come back because I did not have the time to make all the points. Sir, I am obliged to you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. Just to very briefly come at this point and say that I started out a little disappointed with the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew. I must say that he ended where he should have started making constructive suggestions on things that need improving in relation to the issue of housing and land in Barbados, and Sir, I want to thank him for that.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot let it pass, this commentary that seems to be emerging about the work of the Honourable Minister of Housing and the Democratic Labour Party Government in relation to this issue. We do not presume to be lectured by the Barbados Labour Party, but we will take constructive suggestions, whenever they are given because, certainly, we are here as a Parliament to work on behalf of the people of Barbados to tackle this very vexing and obviously challenging issue for the Administrations of both of the political parties.

Sir, there is only so much that you could expect one Minister to do in a year and the commentary that we hear sometimes, gives the impression that a Minister's exuberance far outweighs his capacity to deliver, even in spite of the fact that the Honourable Member has demonstrated quite clearly that the Ministry, under his watch, has been able and will be able to deliver substantially to reduce the backlog of persons requiring houses and land in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the Opposition continues to say that we are going to deliver a certain number of houses and ask when those houses are going to come, but Sir, when we start to build the houses, they move the goal post and say that we are not about delivering the conveyances, as though the conveyances are not going to be delivered eventually.

Mr. Chairman, we need to get out of this pettiness in relation to housing, because it is too important an issue. The reality is that whether we say housing or housing solution - the nomenclature and the way in which we style it may be different, according to Parties or personalities - but the reality is, people in Barbados want houses and they want somewhere to live, they want somewhere to put their families and they want to create communities. I am mindful of the exhortations of the former Senator from New York, now Secretary of State, that it takes a village to raise a child.

Asides.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Yes, it is an African proverb. Sir, we need to look at these issues very seriously and that is what the Democratic Labour Party has been doing to try to tackle this thing strategically and not to just go out there putting down houses or trying to create the

impression that you are putting down houses when, in fact, you are not. Sir, that is what I think divides us.

Mr. Chairman, we are not saying that the Barbados Labour Party did not do things in housing. We are saying that when judged against the substantial amount of resources that would have been available to the last Government over a 14-year period, that substantially more could have been done, and I think that the Barbados Labour Party would accept that on sober reflection. Therefore, it places a tremendous amount of burden on the new Government to be able to satisfy demands that ought to be at least seriously tackled in the last 14 years. Sir, that is the issue that we now have. It is almost like a race against time for us to find solutions and to find them as quickly as the public demands. I want to say that the Minister has really taken to that task and I congratulate him thus far for his effort in relation to this particular issue.

Mr. Chairman, there are one or two other things that I want to raise. As you know, last year we engaged a process of transferring the housing units to residents in the housing estates of National Housing Corporation. Again, this is an innovative programme of the Democratic Labour Party Government to ensure that persons own their own houses.

I want to make this suggestion that the staff at the National Housing Corporation who have done a reasonably good job in expediting that programme of transfer, need to ensure that they go back in there and make the process of identification of those eligible and deserving tenants a lot easier than it has been.

Mr. Chairman, I have had people in my own Constituency and I have four housing areas, some of whom have lived in the houses for 35 years and 40 years, certainly more than the 20-year threshold that we established in the first instance, but who, up to this day, have been having problems and have to repeatedly go back to the Department to have these issues resolved.

Mr. Chairman, I know because I have lived in the area. I came and found people and I lived there for 37 years. Sir, other people know because they have lived there all their lives but yet, to this day, those persons have not been able to get their letters. I think this is a matter we have to look at. May be it is the urgency with which we did it or may be the lack of systems to handle that particular matter did not allow the National Housing Corporation to expedite it in a smooth manner.

Mr. Chairman, it is something I think we have to revisit because we do not want to have a situation, which is currently existing in some instances where a person has been in a house for 35 years, cannot get his or her letter,

but then you have persons who has been there for 20 years but has been able to get their letter.

Mr. Chairman, that is a matter we need to look at. Certainly, we have spoken to the Minister, the Minister recognises it and is trying to see how best we could address this particular issue.

Mr. Chairman, the second thing is the issue of how we treat to pensioners. Sir, there are some pensioners in the community - this is a suggestion which I have spoken to the Minister about and he is currently reviewing it - who because they are on a pension and not receiving an income other than that pension, are unable to perhaps meet the legal fees for the units and, Sir, some of them might have arrears as well. Sir, there is one suggestion that came to me by a pensioner. He told me that he would like to pay off the arrears and be able to save some money to meet the legal fees when it comes due, but he could not do so and pay the rent at the same time and, of course, you cannot get the rent to stop, unless you pay off the arrears.

Sir, I think for those persons who are over 65 years and who have that particular issue, I think we may have to look at a situation where they are allowed to pay the arrears, have the money they would pay the rent go towards the arrears and bring that down so that eventually they are able to get their papers and then proceed to save some resources to pay the legal fees down the road.

Mr. Chairman, that is a matter that I think the National Housing Corporation should seriously consider because these are people who have contributed to the society. Sir, some of them, I might add, may not be actually receiving contributory pensions or old age pensions based on the fact that we have adjusted the Laws relating to non-contributory pensions. There really is no longer an old age pension. You cannot qualify for that anymore and if you fall after a certain date, you do not get any at all. Sir, some of these people might not even be receiving pensions, might be cutting a little job here or there or they may be baby-sitting a grand daughter or something like that to get some resources. Mr. Chairman, I think we have to look at how we treat to those particular persons.

Mr. Chairman, the whole issue of the upkeep of the estates.

11.50 a.m.

Legal matters pertaining to the transfer of these estates, who will be responsible for what you call the common services, and this is to be worked out by the staff of the National Housing Corporation. I think at present we must have a situation in which open spaces that are not big enough to do the Infilling Programme, the Minister is so aggressively pursuing, that we can have some level of

common organisation within the estates to ensure that they can work together with the National Housing Corporation to keep those estates up to a certain level. May be it is that we can work with the private sector agencies to see how best we can develop a working relationship.

If you pass through a lot of the estates, and I am sure you have it in your own constituency, some of the estates really need painting. It is going to be very costly for the Government to paint all of them. They are some residents who are willing to paint their units who do not necessarily own them. You can have a situation where a fellow paints his in red, another fellow paints his in blue, somebody else paints his in green and then you have whole collage, which might be colourful, a kaleidoscope of colour, for a tropical country like Barbados, but which does not cut exactly the best picture. I think we may have to find a situation where we work together with the private sector home ownership. They get paint, may be on a discount, and we can have the entire block painted and outfitted in that particular way, that brings me to the whole issue of maintenance. The maintenance is a major issue that we have to face. I think that regardless to whichever Party is in office, it is a problem we are going to face and we have to tackle seriously.

It is clear that National Housing Corporation will never be given enough money in any Estimates in Barbados to be able in any given year, to tackle all of the maintenance issues that they have. I do not know what the budget is, but it has to be in the millions to maintain all of those units. Some of that they would get off their hands once units are transferred or purchased, but we have to find a way in which we use community artisans in addition to what the National Housing Corporation would have on its payroll, in terms of its maintenance department to get some of these issues solved.

I must say, frankly, that I am not necessarily satisfied. My constituents are telling me they are not satisfied that their issues in terms of maintenance are being addressed. Some of it has to do with human resource problems, some of it may have to do with financial problems, but I think the way in which people are dealt with by the agencies will go along way in reducing the anxiety and even in some instances anger, about how their case is treated when they call the Customer Service Department, how long people take to get back to them, what they are told and how many times they have to call.

These are things I think we need to deal with frontally. Explain to people upfront that there are some things we can do and other things we cannot because the resources are not there, but we have to take some level of responsibility for ensuring that those residents get their issues addressed. Sir, there are some very basic issues. Some of them are very basic values.

Frankly, in my view, as a Parliamentary Representative, with four housing areas, it takes too long in some instances to get some things addressed. I think we have to be honest and upfront, that we have to find a way to treat this matter a lot better than we have in the past, and futuristically looking forward to that.

Sir, that brings me to the matter on which I said I will issue some commentary that may not be entirely beautified, but I can also say things that are good. I am happy that they have started the electrical upgrades. There have situations in my Constituency where I have had to be called, where entire blocks - the last one, I think, the Barbados Light and Power was forced to shut down the current in that entire area because on one of the blocks, the meters started to catch fire and caused a lot of problems. We know that a lot of these houses were built in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and the electrical system that they are using is not up to date. The voltage for most of the modern equipment has increased. I think I have said that already. Therefore, we have as a matter of urgency, and I want to congratulate the National Housing Corporation in doing that, to accelerate the implementation of that programme.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. C.P. Sinckler: We have to do that because we have been very lucky not to have had a major electrical fire in one or more of these estates, given the state of the wiring, electrical systems and so forth.

I want to say, as a Parliamentary Representative with a large set of housing estates, that these are issues I want to see addressed. I am confident that the Minister understands the issues in relation to this, that he is working to ensure that those things get done.

I am hoping that in my Constituency that people in Rosemont and the Farm will very shortly get their conveyances. I know there is an issue that has arisen in relation to the land which these housing estates may be on. It is my understanding that the land actually may have been vested in the Psychiatric Hospital, rather than in National Housing Corporation and we have to correct those legal issues, but it is a matter I would like to see done as expeditiously as possible, but where those issues exist, we write to request the Corporation to address the residents and tell them the reason we are having these delays. I have done it myself and I have spoken to people about it, but I think that the Corporation also has as its mandate to speak to its clients and to explain to them any difficulties which may arise, so everybody understands that they would get their conveyance, but we have run into some legal issues that we have to get resolved. I think that once we do these simple things that would not cost so much money or should

not cost us any money in some instances, we would be able to forge ahead.

We are getting those units organised, getting those estates in a better shape and moving on to building some across the country to serve the housing needs of the society.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, I want to speak on this Head briefly. When I listen to the debate so far, I have been listening since last Friday, I wonder if the Government Benches, especially the Front Bench, are coming into contact at all with these Estimates. I say this because, when I look at Table 7, the classification of expenditure by the Ministry, I see, first of all, that the reduced revenue is being spent on land acquisition. I notice Honourable Members on the Front Bench have been saying that they want all of these housing solutions. I wonder where they are going to get all these housing solutions from.

My second point is, I hope when the Honourable Prime Minister has to make a valued judgement, that all the Honourable Members on the Front Bench will be willing to give up to the Minister of Housing some of their provisions, because \$6 million in acquisition here cannot produce the type of solutions that the Minister would want. Therefore, priorities have to be made.

Sir, when you look at the acquisition vote you see that money has to be spent on acquisition for road improvement and arrears. I know that the Minister of Housing will have to spend a lot of money buying parcels of land over the last couple of years for work that was done 10 years ago that has not yet been paid.

Sir, the housing solution that the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has been speaking of so brilliantly this morning, I wonder if he is going to get the solutions.

Sir, unless the Ministry comes for a new Supplementary for acquisition, then the Minister is constrained to delivering only those solutions.

12:00 noon

I know that he will acquire, because as the Minister, he can bring Acquisitions, and then pay in the future. I know that the Government said that they are not going to do this, because they are now under new systems in the Ministry of Finance. Sir, that is why I asked them, if they have come in contact with these Estimates. I notice that all

of them have them closed, so it means that they are not looking at them.

Mr. Chairman, the other thing is that when I looked at the vote for the Tenancies Relocation and Redevelopment, and I spoke on this before, but I noticed that for this year, there is a reduction here of \$696 000 for the Tenancies Relocation and Redevelopment Programme.

There is also a further reduction, Mr. Chairman, of \$459 000 in the Housing Planning Unit, almost a \$½ million. Therefore, I wonder if the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act will be carried through in a meaningful way, during this year.

Mr. Chairman, I note that over the years, the Plantations Tenancies Unit within the Ministry of Housing, has done a wonderful job. They have been doing a good job, in terms of carrying through the provisions of the 1980 Act, under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase. They estimated that approximately 6 660 lots must be conveyed to the 6 660 qualified tenants.

Mr. Chairman, I notice from the record, and I asked the Ministry sometime ago, that under the Act, only 70 per cent of the lots had been conveyed. Sir, I wonder what signal we are sending to the public, when this year we see a reduction in the vote to that Unit.

Mr. Chairman, across Barbados, we have many landlords, who previously owned the plantation tenancies. Sir, some of them have not been conveying the lots to those qualified people, and the Ministry must be vigilant. I know the Minister said that some tenants have not been coming forward. They have been doing a back-tracking exercise within the Ministry.

I believe, Mr. Chairman, that the Ministry of Housing, along with the Attorney-General's office, must bring an amendment, as my colleague from St. Andrew has said, to force those landlords who sometimes refuse, and to force those tenants or their estates, to close. Sir, after 15 to 25 years, more has to be done. Therefore, I am calling on the Government to spend more time on this, because we did a lot of work in upgrading the Land Registry. We also did a lot of work, in my time to upgrade the Statistical Department within the Land Registry, as well as the Surveying Department, but more has to be done.

I am calling on the Ministry to look at plantations like Groves, and Cottage in St. George, where the landlord has bluntly refused. Sir, we were planning at that time to take over part of that tenantry estate, in Cottage, St. George.

Mr. Chairman, there are still many landlords who refuse, and have not been playing the game right with the

tenants. I can talk about Walkers in St. George, where the planter has had some difficulties with the tenants, and the tenants have had great difficulties with the landlords, so there is a problem there as well. Therefore, we have to do something.

I believe that department within the Ministry of Housing needs to be strengthened. This is why I called last evening for institutional strengthening, within the Planning Unit. I can go on and talk about that Unit.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I would like to hear the Minister speak more on the Housing Neighbourhood Development Programme, because we need to hear more about this, because when you look at that vote, there is also a decrease in the subsidy. This is the Department that will be carrying forward the Housing Neighbourhood Programme.

Mr. Chairman, this is a Programme, which we are joining with the IADB, but money has been voted here for it. We have voted \$4.77 million in this year's vote for the upgrading of the Housing Neighbourhood Programme. This Programme is designed with three components: a neighbourhood upgrading, solution for affordable housing, and the institutional strengthening of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I would want to see more done, in terms of strengthening.

Sir, I am speaking from memory. It seems to me that whenever a new Minister comes in, there are new policies, and this seems to be an unfortunate situation within the Ministry of Housing. Sir, they have to carry through their mandate.

In my view, there needs to be a consultant exercise, where you bring in somebody to see what is happening within the National Housing Corporation and the Planning Unit, so that they can fulfill the policies.

For example, when you look at the Neighbourhood Upgrade Policy, the Government has to bring in counterpart financing, as far as I understand. It is an IADB Programme. This Programme was conceptualised and started since 2002. I remember when the IADB Programme came here that I visited Cats Castle and Garden Land, but so far: What has happened? The Honourable Member for the City has been asking about these things.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, this is true.

Sir, unless the Minister has the capacity to deliver, I am saying that there needs to be more funding put within this Unit, in order to carry through their Programme. I am further saying, and I said it last Thursday or Friday, that

you may have many of concepts, you may have a number of programmes, you may come up with a lot of solutions but, who will carry it through.

Sir, we need to take one or two of these Programmes at a time, for example, the Rent-to-Own concept. The rent-to-own concept, as I said before, is nothing new. This is a concept that has been redefined. The Minister said to me it is a new programme and I accept this. It is a redefined Rent-to-own Programme.

Sir, since 2003, the rental of lots or the lease of lots was introduced by the National Housing Corporation, where you rent to own. You lease for 25 years and then you get proper title. This has not been delivered.

Sir, that is why I say that the National Housing Corporation and the Planning Unit have to be up-to-date with these concepts. They must do it, because the Minister must represent Barbados abroad at the Habitat Meetings, and within the human settlement, within the eclat and within the world, the Minister has to be able to say what he is doing to carry forward Barbados' housing programme, as a settlement issue, within the world and the Habitat agenda. Therefore, best practices must be put forward. I wonder if ideas alone, as you must say, that we are currently doing this in Barbados.

For Example, in my time, we were able to showcase the best practices for the Tenancies Programme. What is happening now? There are lots of ideas, such as the HELP Programme, which the Government is bringing. I buy into that, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: What is happening? I am asking: Is it going beyond just a concept?

You have the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme. I am saying the Government has to be able to deliver that in a timely manner, if not, the funds will lapse on the IADB Programme. The Government has to do more on this, and that is the point.

I have said before that we could come in here and talk from a historical perspective: I did this, you did that, you did not do this, you did not do that. What is happening now?

Sir, that is why I asked the Members of the Front Bench this question: Have you read this Programme? Have you read the Estimates? If you had, you would see there is a need to put more money in these Estimates for the housing programme. Therefore, the Attorney-General must be willing to give up some of his vote to the Ministry of Housing.

12.10 p.m.

The Member for St. Philip West must be able to give up some of his money to push forward this and the Honourable Prime Minister must be supported when he comes to the Cabinet and say look, "Gentlemen, ladies, I have to make a value judgement. I got to put more money in housing."

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The other thing, Mr. Chairman, is that the Government says they want to find more accommodation. The Honourable Prime Minister said that he found a situation where civil servants are badly housed. Mr. Chairman, I know for a fact that there is always a need to upgrade accommodation for civil servants, and the Honourable Prime Minister has agreed to this. We did a lot.

When we came to office, Mr. Chairman, the vote for the Housing Management Section was less than \$8 million annually. When we left office, it was \$30 million. Mr. Chairman, despite that, the Honourable Prime Minister has reduced the vote from \$30 million to about... so most likely he is going to come with a supplementary because we want to see improved accommodation, not only for the Royal Barbados Police Force, but for all the civil servants.

The accommodation for Parliament has been improved and we have good accommodation now in Parliament. I am now calling on the Government to ensure that all accommodation across Barbados for the civil servants is improved as well. Government must not only talk the talk, they must walk the walk as well.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael Central.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Mr. Chairman, I rise to make a contribution to this debate on housing and also to add my encomiums to the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and to the kudos and bouquets that have already been showered on him by my colleagues.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member has been given a mandate, and he has formulated plans to execute that mandate. I want to add at this stage that he is doing this very much in collaboration with the staff of the National Housing Corporation, and they too must come in for some praise on this question of formulating the plan for housing in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, what we are faced with in Barbados at this time is a situation that has cascaded over 53 years.

From 1956, when figures, I believe were kept, until about January this year, the National Housing Corporation was faced with about 56 000 applications for housing. Over those years, spanning both Administrations, we have been able to find at least 11 000 housing solutions, especially in the area of rental units. I believe that would be the terrace units, leaving a deficit of about 45 000 people still in search of rental units.

Mr. Chairman, when the Honourable Member for St. Andrew said that it is not about who built what, it is really about that, because we are now faced with a situation where we have to find solutions for 45 000 people. Mr. Chairman, it is that background that we have been confronted with since we came into office in January 2008.

Mr. Chairman, between 2002 and 2007, the paltry offering by the Barbados Labour Party in contributing to alleviating this problem is that they found 916 solutions. Mr. Chairman, certainly if you want to make a real dent in addressing the 45 000 people who are in need or looking for housing solutions, 916 is really a paltry contribution to eliminating this particular situation. Of those 916 housing solutions that they found, you would be surprised, Mr. Chairman, that 814 were lots, so they only found 102 housing solutions where they put a shelter over somebody's head, which was spread across rental units, houses and primary home solutions. Mr. Chairman, they have made no dent whatsoever in addressing the problem that confronts us as a people.

Mr. Chairman, what have our solutions been ever since we came to office on January 15, 2008? They would probably want to claim that they started or at least conceptualized Country Park Towers, but the plans were put on a back burner somewhere in a back room. Mr. Chairman, it took the initiative of the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands along with the staff of the National Housing Corporation to bring this back to the fore and initiated a restart of that project. Mr. Chairman, very shortly, there would be 56 units there to help alleviate the problem that we are facing with housing.

Along with that, we are proposing to build an additional 153 units in the new financial year. The 500 lots that they pooh-poohed and say are not coming to fruition would shortly be delivered to the people of Barbados. A lot of them have been surveyed already and they will be delivered to the people. We have 202 houses that will be delivered shortly. These are either completed or very much under construction at this time. Mr. Chairman, in the shortest possible time we were out of the blocks early addressing the needs of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, every single Thursday in my clinic, and this would be replicated across the board even among

the Members of the Opposition, or whenever we have our clinics, people come asking for housing solutions.

Mr. Chairman, we are aggressively pursuing it along with the Minister. He is several years my junior but I believe that he is politically virile and is moving with great steam and great alacrity, therefore, I want to publicly again commend him and pay him all the kudos at this time.

Mr. Chairman, in my particular Constituency, there is one set of terrace units. This is in Bush Hall. These particular housing units were badly conceptualised from the point of view that they were built in a water bottom. Mr. Chairman, if the rain sets up, it floods. Last year when we had the heavy downpours of rain, the residents of that particular area were inundated with flood waters.

Mr. Chairman, I have already written to the Minister, I do not know if he has received the letter yet, asking for some kind of assistance to correct that drainage situation, because it is a real problem to the residents of that small terrace unit housing area at Bush Hall. It is just a stone's throw away from what, anybody who grew up in the Bush Hall area would know, was originally call 'Devil Hole'. It was an area where water accumulated and they built the units smack in the middle of that particular water hole and it is causing extreme problems to the residents of that area whenever the rain falls or whenever the rain sets up, so we are asking that some alleviation be given to that problem.

12.20 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, regarding the In-filling Project, enunciated by the Ministry, there are several vacant lots, especially in the several Royal Avenues stretching across Buckingham Road, Queen Mary, King George, King Edward, Prince of Wales, Windsor Road and Queen Victoria. There are about 25 vacant lots. The Minister and I took a tour of those areas recently and identified the lots. I know they are privately-owned by individuals and therefore it would be a long drawn-out legal process in acquiring those lots, but I believe that this is an area where we could identify the particular lots, seek out who the owners are and bring some solution to the people in that general area who are in search of house lots.

Mr. Chairman, I have been looking through the brief that was supplied by the Ministry regarding the real estate ownership of the Ministry and I see on the list there is the Eagle Hall Market. Mr. Chairman, if there has ever been an eyesore or building that is under-used, it would be the Eagle Hall Market. I do not know if it spans across the Ministry of Agriculture, but I believe that in relation to the Eagle Hall Market, several people have been asking for the dismantling of buildings, but certainly the Eagle Hall Market is one building that needs to be dismantled, and

immediately. It is an eyesore of the worse proportion. It needs to be dealt with. It is impractical.

Sir, every Sunday one passes the Eagle Hall Market, one can see all the vendors outside in front of Worrell Shop and stretching along the Plantrac building. It is certainly an empty market. It really needs to be dismantled and rebuilt in a practical way to accommodate the vendors who are now outside facing the elements. I would really implore the Ministry to look at a practical solution to this market, in the soonest possible time, to bring some solution to the vendors there.

Mr. Chairman, overall I think we are doing a wonderful job regarding housing Barbadians. It is just about 15 months since we have been in office. The Minister, along with the officials, are pursuing it with great alacrity and moving post-haste, and I want to implore him to continue along this vein to providing housing solutions to Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Chairman, I enter this debate in the context of the Appropriation Bill which is before us and the amounts voted, and to note that any debate on housing this year in Barbados still has to be taken against the economic circumstances of the nation today. It is important, therefore, that we temper expectations of the public, because not just the Government, but all of us who are in representative politics stand to be judged on these matters, in circumstances where these Estimates clearly show already that the sums allocated to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, I am sure, are not what the Minister of Housing and Lands or any Minister of Housing and Lands would have hoped for. And it is so, even in the context where international funding is available.

Mr. Chairman, the Inter-American Development Bank's Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme is perhaps one of the most innovative housing programmes under the context of international financing to come to this country. Sir, I would want to say that to the credit of the previous Government, it took a long time to craft the details of the loan, simply because of the innovative nature of what we are trying to achieve.

Sir, in respect of the upgrading of communities like Catts Castle, Greenfield and Allen View, you are literally trying to go in and take an area that has been the subject of under-development, for want of a better phrase, for a significant portion of time. It recognises that there is a need, not just to provide housing solution at the individual level, but that the community within which people live also has to be upgraded, if, indeed, not only the house values, but also the sociological benefits are to be achieved.

Mr. Speaker, I say this as one who has practised Criminal Law in this country in the Magistrate's Court and who is aware that many of the problems that come before the Magistrate's Court between neighbours very often related to boundary lines, for example, whose water has gone on whose land, whose paling has gone on whose land, who has crossed over and who should not, and very often, unfortunately, it has ended up with persons getting criminal convictions as a result of decades or centuries of ignoring how best to deal with housing planning in this country.

I also recognise that any modern Government in Barbados - and I am not sure that we have reached where I personally would be happy under any Government - has to treat to the issue of housing planning within the cultural context of our society. Sir, the reality is that Barbados is a country where people like land and while we recognised that the density of our population requires us to look at high-rise solutions, the truth also is that we have to bring along the population and not just assume that we must just build a high-rise and that people would go into them. Equally, we have to recognise that having high-rise changes some of the ways in which people interact.

Sir, people for the most part had a paling that encircled an area that was still part of the house and so even though there was no roof over the back of the yard, the reality is that was used as part of the housing solution.

The development of 'blocks' have largely occurred in this country, simply because the room within which the youngster had to function in the house was not sufficient. Therefore, people gravitated outside in a communal area, in the absence of special sporting and recreational facilities that can accommodate the natural and legitimate expectations of young people. Sir, all of these things, in my view, need to go into any effort into housing planning in Barbados, to allow us not to reap unintended consequences 10, 20 or 30 years from now.

Mr. Chairman, therefore, I would want to suggest that whether it is this Government or the Barbados Labour Party, that planning must take into account these issues. Sir, Bob Marley's song, "Concrete Jungle", speaks to the negative consequences of dense housing solutions without appropriate sociological considerations being taken into account.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East speaking this morning about the Pine and Wildey and about the notion of further in-filling there. Sir, I must say that I am very wary about that and further in-filling in Silver Hill and Gall Hill. Mr. Chairman, it is your area but by the same token it is part of Barbados, and I think it is not necessarily the wisest approach in circumstances where we do not already have sufficient

facilities to accommodate the natural and legitimate expectations of persons.

Mr. Chairman, I am all for looking at redeveloping where you have single-storey or single-dwelling units, as in Bayville, Thorpes or Belleplaine, but it requires us finding temporary solutions for those persons, so that you could then go back on those lots and build up three storeys. I do not think you could go more than three storeys realistically, given the narrowness of the plot, unless you want to create another 'King Kong' like what exists on the West Coast, which I do not like.

Mr. Chairman, the truth is that while I understand the exuberance of the Minister, and while it is not necessarily been matched by actual performance, but are still promises at this stage, the truth is that I think there needs to be some consideration to these issues, if we are not going to pay an untended high price in future years.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to address the area of low income housing because the Minister has spoken about intended solutions. My understanding is that most of them start at \$140 000 and if you bear with me, you will understand why a \$140 000 housing solution cannot help a maid in Barbados, cannot help a general worker in Barbados, cannot help a gardener in Barbados or cannot help a labourer in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the truth is that mortgage companies will use a ratio of one-third in terms of the mortgage payment, that your mortgage payment must be not more than one-third of your overall expenditure when the month comes. If you accept that, and you accept that we as a Government, the Barbados Labour Party would have put a number of things in place targeting low income workers, then you begin to see why I have a concern about the programme of the Minister of Housing that he is proposing to undertake, or indeed, that he has started in some instances in St. George and St. Philip.

Mr. Chairman, what is the concern? Sir, \$100 000 mortgage at 6 per cent, which is the best anyone could hope for at Barbados Mortgage Finance, because the Cabinet would have agreed to subsidise the interest difference and the cost of that low income mortgage, is \$600 a month. If you are asking that person to borrow \$140 000, they could only get the 6 per cent up to \$100 000. They either have to have \$40 000 in their pocket in savings or they cannot benefit. If they are going for \$140 000 in mortgage, then they are unlikely to get the 6 per cent for the full amount, but can they qualify even?

The truth is, Mr. Chairman, that to qualify for \$100 000 repaying \$600 a month, you would have to be earning

\$1 800 or more. Sir, \$1 800 or more excludes a whole category of Barbadians from being able to assess that mortgage and worse still, if we come to \$140 000, you would have to be earning at least \$2 500 in order to be able to access a mortgage to buy one of the houses, however small they are, at Greens, Constant or Marchfield.

Mr. Chairman, we have a genuine problem. Who are the people in difficult economic circumstances that are most vulnerable when it comes to the housing need? Sir, invariably, it is the poorest of the poor. Invariably it is those people, who do not live on tenancies that are protected by legislation, who are renting or who are at home, but the circumstances of overcrowding are such that they really need to get out. Sir, what are their solutions?

Mr. Chairman, the Minister is yet to identify a solution that in under the next 24 months, when we are likely to be in these difficult economic circumstances, can immediately address their needs. I would be the first to support such a solution, because those people do not have options. Sir, up to today, like everyone else who has spoken in here, everyone of us is faced with the spectacle of a person coming with an eviction notice every week, or at least two or three people. Sir, on my way here today, it was the same thing again.

Mr. Chairman, the truth is that a habit has also developed where marshals are going on the site and within 24 hours in some instances, buildings are being demolished. In the circumstances, I have said to previous Ministers of Housing, and I repeat it to this Minister, that I really believe that at least one-quarter of the rolling housing stock must be reserved for persons who are victims of eviction notices or house fire victims. Sir, that the country of Barbados must always have a reasonably ready solution barring, of course, major disaster, which we could not expect that we would, but have a stock of houses that is capable of being utilised by persons who have been given notices to quit and have literally been put out of the house or the house demolished, and one, those who are victims of fire.

Secondly, I believe that in circumstances where the IDB has provided guarantee funding under the loan contract that \$1 million in these Estimates to provide the \$10 000 subsidy to persons earning under \$20 000 a year, the same category of low income persons I am speaking about, is not enough. I would want to urge the Minister that the truth is, that is also pressed by the time-line of the project and that it would have made sense to be able to put in more money under subsidy, in these Estimates, even if you take it from elsewhere in the Government's programme, like Constituency Councils, and ensure that those who are most vulnerable, who in the absence of a dedicated solution from the Minister of Housing to deal with their circumstances could be given a \$10 000 subsidy,

could be given a lot on which to rent, the rent-to-own lots and you could immediately ensure that they are in a position to be protected during these difficult economic circumstances through which the country is now going.

Mr. Chairman, I am also saying that the wisdom of removing the first \$150 000 on land tax was also borne out of the recognition that it is the natural expectation of a Barbadian to own a piece of the rock, and we want to encourage them, either on their own, through the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, the urban tenancies or the Rent-to-Own programme, that those persons ought not to be penalised for owning their own house. Sir, that was the rationale behind us making the first \$150 000 exempt from land taxes in this country.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I believe that is still sufficient at this stage, but it is a threshold that has to be continuously reviewed if we are not to expose those who are at the bottom of the housing market.

Sir, I also want to speak very quickly to a Constituency matter. There are four lots on Whitehall Main Road that the National Housing Corporation owns and they were acquired, in part, to help the relocation of two houses next to the Whitehall Methodist Church so that the church could get back their property and finish the development of the church. Those two persons have been living there for decades and we had agreed, and the Urban Development Commission put in the road, which was completed about March or April last year, under this Government, but it started under us.

Sir, nothing has happened to advance the relocation process of the two tenants who live literally under the shadow of the Whitehall Methodist Church. Sir, one is a pensioner and the Urban Development Commission was to assist him and the other one is still working, although with some disability and hence, we had hoped that there would be access some form of loan funds. Sir, I would want to urge the Minister of Housing with the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban and Rural Development to ensure that those two persons could be appropriately located. There was consideration as to whom the other two lots should go to as well but, more important, those first two persons, because they cannot do anything to improve their circumstances there in that current location and equally, the church is hampered in terms of being able to meet its obligations in terms of parking and other things under Town and Country Planning and, by extension, the community then is affected because the parking spills over in circumstances where there are no natural parking lots in that district.

I believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is well familiar with the issue, because while the church is on my side, opposite where the other parking spills over, is on his side in Whitehall. Sir, I look forward to an urgent and amicable Resolution of that matter, that would meet the needs of all concerned.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to housing lots, I believe and the people for whom I have canvassed - I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael South seeking to disparage my constituents this morning on it, but I am not surprised by that. Sir, suffice it to say, the majority of persons in my Constituency, whether in Bush Hall, Jackson, Jackmans, Long Gap or Grazettes have all indicated their preference for the old traditional sites and services solution, which is a recognised aspect of Government's housing progressive. Sir, Lionel Craig would have played a key role in that back in the 1970s and, in respect of sites and services, if people get access to the lot, even to rent to start, they will take care of the rest.

12.40 p.m.

The rest, of course, is, until you can settle aspects of Barbados's physical development, until you can settle aspects of the appropriate ratios for agriculture, and we heard the voice of the Honourable Member for St. James West Central all the time, that we are going to continue with this kind of convoluted argument. I trust and hope that can be done. The laying of the Physical Development Plan in December 2007, as one of their last acts as appropriate, but it is not be the all and the end all of the situation. There is a serious need for a bipartisan approach to the use of land and to the use of technology and zoning in this country, if we are to lay the foundation for the next 40 years of housing in Barbados.

We stand where we stand, today, because of the fact that there has been a legitimate increase in the demand as a result of the improvement of the people's economic circumstances, for most part, during the 1990s and the early 21st century. Whereas, persons were prepared to stay home and live until they can find enough money. The 100 per cent mortgages in 1999, the introduction of the Urban Tenancies \$2.50 per square foot as well as the old Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, we have done well as a country, but demand has increased because people now have more money in their pockets and Accident and Emergency Department more disposed to seek on their own housing solutions that allow them to be independent of their traditional family units.

I look forward to that kind of debate that allows us to speak realistically on what is achievable on 166 square miles in this country.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

On the motion of the Hon. R. D. JONES, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, Mr. Chairman reported progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and asked for leave to sit again.

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

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.00 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. Deputy SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.43 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Resumed)

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

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Sir, I will be brief in my intervention, but I just want to say that I am always pleased to hear the eagerness of the Democratic Labour Party in relation to solving the housing problems in Barbados.

Sir, I well recall that during the period 1986 to 1994, a mere 53 houses were built by the Democratic Labour Party. Really, Sir, that was, in my view, the start, the very origin of the crisis that we have in housing in this country today. Sir, when I hear the eagerness of the Honourable Member on the Other Side in relation to solving the housing problem in this country, I abide by the principle, Sir, that he who broke it should fix it. Therefore, Sir, they have my full support in resolving the problem that they would have originated.

Sir, housing is a very serious matter. Really, we should not be playing with people's emotions when it comes to housing. I think that the current Government is doing, not only itself, but the country as a whole, a great disservice by the kind of hype that it engages in, whenever it speaks, in relation to the issue of housing.

I fully accept that a Government must give people hope. Hope is an essential part of governance, but it is also

time that the Government tones down its rhetoric a bit, in relation to housing because, really, neither the performance of the Government to date, nor the provisions contained in the Estimates really match the rhetoric and the hype, Sir, of the Government.

Sir, more and more people continue to come forward for housing in this country, just to find their hopes and expectations dashed to the ground when, in fact, their requests and requirements cannot be met. Therefore, I would ask the Government, Sir, in the interest of all concerned, to tone down the hype a bit, in relation to housing.

Sir, I have two Government housing estates in my Constituency. I really do not believe that many people appreciate the issue of the shortage of housing, more acutely, than a representative who has, in his constituency, many Government housing estates. It is there that you will see Sir, the massive overcrowding, and congestion. It is from there, Sir, that we receive the numerous requests. I am sure you receive it as well, numerous requests for housing, because of the overcrowding.

Sir, I believe that I can speak with a sense of feel for the hardship being endured by people who live in the Government's housing estates, and their really genuine need for housing.

Sir, I would ask the Government to, not only rethink but to abandon its plan, in relation to this In-filling Programme I have heard of.

2.00 p.m.

Sir, when I first heard of infilling, I had one concept in mind. Mr. Chairman, in Grazettes, where there is duplex housing, two houses were reduced to rubble as a result of a fire. The spot was cleared and is now vacant. When they are talking about infilling, and that is the concept they have in mind, for rebuilding those two units, and they go across Barbados and do an audit of what needs to be reconstructed, then I will support it entirely.

Sir, to speak of adding new blocks and new Government housing units in the housing estates across Barbados using that concept is, in my view, courting disaster. It really would be turning to a situation where the temperature would be boiling so high that you really would be playing with an explosion at any minute. In fact, they could actually be turning areas where people now have a lot of pride in themselves into concrete jungles and in some cases into more than shanties.

Sir, I do not think that any one of us in here would really be wishing upon the people of Barbados that their nice residential areas be turned into concrete jungles, and

places where there would be such friction based on the sheer number of people that would be inhabiting the area. Mr. Chairman, that would really be courting trouble and I would really ask the Government to rethink that programme.

Sir, what Government can do, and I have said this before, is to carry out an audit in relation to all the Government housing estates across the country, not with a view to compelling anybody to move, but with a view to seeing where the simple shifting around of persons from one unit to another can perhaps quell some of the concerns that people have.

Mr. Chairman, you would find that in many cases one person is living in a three-bedroom unit and seven to eight persons are living in a one-bedroom or two-bedroom unit. Obviously, a person who can afford to and wants to should be entitled to live in a three-bedroom unit if he so chooses.

Mr. Chairman, in doing an audit, you might come across people who individually are living in a two-bedroom or three-bedroom unit who might readily agree to switch with a family down the road, where they have eight people living in a two-bedroom or a one-bedroom unit. Sir, one housing problem would be solved just by doing that audit and seeing if you could get some consensus or agreement by the tenant, to shift and accommodate a larger family coming in to a unit.

Sir, as I said, it is not anything that anyone would want to force upon anybody, but you might be surprise, given the spirit of community across Barbados, that you may well come across persons who would be willing to accommodate their neighbours in that respect.

Sir, I have made this point already but it really bears repetition. Sir, I want to see persons in the Government estates, particularly those in my Constituency who have been there for more than 20 years, become the owners of their unit in a real sense, not the owners of a letter. Sir, I want to see the deposits that were paid by individuals returned to them. Sir, it is really bordering on a criminal offence for someone to retain the deposits paid by individuals.

Sir, I came across a case in my Constituency of a man in a unit from birth who, under the previous Government, had paid in \$6 000 to the National Housing Corporation as his payment toward becoming the owner under our system. Having paid the \$6 000, that person received a letter. He goes to the National Housing Corporation and says he needs some electrical and some other work done to his unit. Before that, he asked if he could get his deposit back and they said no, he cannot get it back. He then asked if they would carry out the repairs to

the unit and he was told no, that since he no longer pays rent, he is the owner and he has to carry out his own repairs.

Mr. Chairman, he then asked if he would be able to go to a financial institution and borrow some money on the strength of the unit as security to secure funds, to repair it and he was told that he cannot go because he does not have any conveyance or document of title.

Sir, that person is caught between a rock a hard place and now buried \$6 000 down the drain literally, he has no evidence in title, and the person who is supposed to do that, is not giving him ownership or his money back. Sir, that is wrong. I would urge the Government to work with haste in dealing with these sorts of situations.

Sir, in the case of persons who have paid deposits to the National Housing Corporation, it is extremely wrong, unjustified and unjustifiable to keep their deposits. Sir, the argument is that it would be the legal fee. Sir, as a result of the valuations that were done prior to the change of Government, I cannot see on earth how any legal fee could go anywhere near to \$6 000 unless you have a really unscrupulous Lawyer. Sir, this is really a case where an injustice is being done to an individual.

Mr. Chairman, there are other cases as well which I have heard about, some worse, some perhaps not as bad. Mr. Chairman, I am sure that these would not be cases I alone am hearing in St. Michael North. I am sure that everyone in here who has a Government housing estate in their Constituency, would also be hearing these concerns.

Sir, I want to see the distribution of housing in an equitable manner. Sir, I would never stand here in Opposition and say that I would not expect the Government to get most of the benefits of what it does. Sir, even on the Government Side, I would not expect Honourable Members to believe that the Minister should not get the most because the Minister should get the most. Sir, I am not asking for equality, I am asking for fairness.

Sir, under the last Administration when I was on the Government Side, when housing units became vacant in either Grazettes or Eden Lodge, I got some, that is true, but there were times when I was asking for units to satisfy the needs of some constituents of mine and I was told that I cannot get that and somebody was sent from St. Philip or wherever into the area that I represented, and I had to accept that.

Sir, some time last year, there were at least two persons, both of whom were at the receiving end of court ordered evictions, who came to me for help in getting units that became vacant in Eden Lodge.

Mr. Chairman, I remember calling the National Housing Corporation and speaking to a very high ranking official, I would not call the name, and after some initial small talk and so on, I was told by the individual, Mr. Toppin, I am not going to fool you, you are not going to get those houses. I said I do not want a house for me. These are people who need houses and I want fairness. I was told, I am not going to fool you, you cannot get these houses.

Mr. Chairman, I asked why not and they said that every single permission granted now must be approved by the Minister. That is what I was told. I said no problem, surely you could speak to the Minister and explain my position as I outlined it to you that this person needs genuine help.

2.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I was then told further, no. Sir, therefore, there is already a list that we have been guided by in terms of the allocation of houses.

Asides.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, I was in a state of shock because as I said, when I was in Government, I had to sit and accept that other persons would come from wherever, into the Government housing estates in the Constituency that I represent. There were times when quite frankly, I recognised it was but fair, particularly in emergency situations such as house fires, court order evictions, notice to quit, et cetera. I recognised at that time that it was perfectly fair to do it and that as much as I was disappointed, I had to accept it. Therefore, I am asking Government to play by the same rules that we had to play by, to play by the rules, not of equality, but where we engaged in equitable distribution.

His Excellency D. S St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. I remember well that this Honourable Member was in the House. I am not saying that the Honourable Member agreed with it, when a Minister of Housing and Lands told me, in no uncertain terms, that I was in Opposition and that she was not doing any work in my constituency. Sir, I must say in fairness to the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, who is now in his grave, that he chastised that Minister by telling that Minister that no Minister of Government could make a statement like that and that a Minister has to represent everybody.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I have never heard any such statement being made by any Honourable Member of My Side and certainly the Honourable Member to whom the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is referring is not now here to defend himself or herself. Mr. Chairman,

I am simply asking for an equitable distribution, which I do not think is unreasonable.

Sir, one last point I want to make in relation to the hold-up in transferring the title of these units, the Minister of Housing and Lands indicated on Friday evening that there was an issue of the extensions on units. Sir, I will not resile from my position by one millimetre of an inch, as a once former trade union leader once said. I do not believe that in the context of these times where housing is like gold, housing is very scarce and hard to come by, you cannot expect to say to people in the context of there being a housing shortage in a country that they cannot build extensions on to their units. It is unrealistic and wrong.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, the idea that Minister of Housing and Lands is saying that the rules of the Town Planning Department might be violated in some way, I remember the former Honourable Member for Christ Church South saying in this Parliament that Parliament can do anything at all, except change a man into a woman. It can do anything and I am saying that if it is necessary to bring a relevant piece of legislation to this Parliament to validate all of those extensions, I am calling on Government to do it, because you cannot tell people, in these hard times now housing is in such shortage, that to become the owners of their houses they are going to have to knock down something that they have built and are using. That would be 'unconscionable'. Sir, I have taken this position from the beginning and I do not intend to change from it now.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is speaking as though this is an action that is now occurring under this new Government. I was in here long enough to know that the Honourable Member was in a position to bring the necessary changes to which he is speaking. Sir, I also want it known that I support what the Honourable Member is saying, but the Honourable Member cannot be saying these things now being Opposition, but when he was in Government, he did not say them.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up now.

Mr. R. St.C TOPPIN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member should know better than to say that I am changing my position. This has been my position from the beginning and it is still my position today. There is nothing inconsistent with anything I am saying today than with what I have said before. In fact, I made the point back then

about Parliament being able to do anything at all, except changing a man into a woman.

Mr. Chairman, I am asking the Minister, if he really wants to show he is on a new path and that we could be fully convinced that he is doing something, let him expedite these transfers by ensuring that people who would have put their hard-earned cash into a little extra accommodation on to their units, would not now find themselves being deprived because of this Government acting in its own interest in that way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, as Minister of Housing and Lands, I rise to add my voice to this debate. Let me say from the outset that in relation to the in-filling programme, the Ministry of Housing and Lands is not approaching that programme in a willy-nilly way. What the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation have done, is that we have approached all the agencies. In fact, we have toured the housing estates with the Chief Town Planner and other agencies, so that we could have an idea of what areas we could begin the in-filling programme. Sir, certainly there would have to be open spaces and we would have to take into account the existing population in these estates.

Mr. Speaker, we have had discussions and a recent tour and the Chief Town Planner has indicated areas in St. Michael South East Constituency where he would support in-filling in some of these areas and not in others. Sir, we are being guided appropriately. It is not a reckless approach where for every vacant land or in-filling that we see, we are just going to drop something on it. We have to take into account other factors and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Chairman, with regard to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who has accused the National Housing Corporation of highway robbery, I want to apologise to the staff of the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the staff of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I want to defend them on the fact that no one can accuse them of highway robbery, no one can accuse them of any reckless act or of any acts of a criminal nature. They are now doing work that was properly conceptualised. Sir, I would want to say too, that in a short space of time, we have set up committees.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, who had responsibility for Water, because we know that housing impact on these agencies, could tell you when he came to my office and we set up a committee to fast-track applications, so that the Barbados Water Authority would have early notice that the projects of the Ministry of Housing and Lands should be moved at a particular pace and not put in the mainstream of other projects.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for St. George North danced around the Inter-American Bank's programme. Mr. Chairman, in relation to the Inter-American Bank's programme, this loan of US\$30 million was signed on April 8, 2008. I want to report to this Honourable Chamber that all of the general conditions detailed in Article Four of the said programme, the conditions of the contract, have now been fulfilled. I also want to further submit to this Honourable Chamber that the first disbursement of loan funds was submitted on Friday, December 12, 2008, by the Inter-American Bank and requested funds were received by the Central Bank of Barbados on December 23, 2008. Further, a line of credit to facilitate project preparation and execution was established on August 14, 2007, in the sum of \$1.7 million.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to respectfully submit, in terms of the institutional strengthening component.

2.20 p.m.

A project team in office has have been set up at the National Housing Corporation for the institutional strengthening component of the programme. Sir, I want to report to this Chamber that the training of the staff has began and implementation of Smart Stream, at the National Housing Corporation, and a general upgrade information technology programme is scheduled to be completed in the next financial year. I also want to further indicate to this Chamber that the other sites, in terms of the pilot sites, that is, Cats Castle, Greenfields, Garden Land and Allen View, that we have started in terms of preparation, in terms of getting those sites ready for this programme.

Mr. Chairman, I will come back to this programme in the fullness of time, but I also want to touch on what the Honourable Member for St. George North said. The Honourable Member said he wanted to know about the titles under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

Sir, everything that comes out his mouth is about titles, but let me say to this Chamber that when I came into the Ministry of Housing I was presented with a stockpile of files from tenancies to be signed by the Minister that were not signed. I had to take my time and allocate a particular time in the Ministry of Housing to sign those Form 1 Notices, to get the process off the ground and to get it completed so that we could get those conveyances in the hand of Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, that is not the only problem. We know full well that there is a problem in Barbados in relation to the availability of land surveyors and, Sir, that has been a major problem. In fact, under the present Law, to become a surveyor, you have to train with the land registry.

Sir, from my understanding, when I spoke to the General Manager recently, he told me there are a number of land surveyors that want to get into the business that are now waiting for their turn, to get into the Ministry of Housing to get into the land registry so they could start their practice. Sir, we might have to find a way, where we could amend the existing legislation so that they could go with private firms to get their training.

Mr. Chairman, what we have to do in the Ministry of Housing is to contract out the service so that we could speed up the land surveying services.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, who has just found his voice, all of a sudden, spoke about the housing programme. I have said in this Chamber last Friday - the officers are here from the Ministry of Housing and Lands - and they could not believe that this Administration has acquired land in such a short time. Again, I repeat to this Chamber in relation to the \$5 lot programme and, Sir, I repeat it again to the public, because they want the public to believe that we have not started the process but Sir, the process is started.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that the conveyances at Branchbury received, is now Crown lands, that Woodbourne is now Crown lands, that Clifton is now Crown lands and that we have compensated the owners in a short space of time. They are not waiting on their moneys, we have acquired their lands and they have now received their funds.

Mr. Chairman, why is it that a Government, knowing full well, and in fact, the Barbados Labour Party had evidence and knowledge of what existed at the time in housing. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew his claim to fame is that he had a White Paper on Housing, but my question is, whether he read the contents of it and understood it. Sir, when you read the contents of it at page 27 - I believe he was the Minister at the time.

Mr. Chairman, crave my indulgence to read paragraph 2, page 27 of the paper on housing. It is a document of the House already. Sir, this is what was said at the time when the Barbados Labour Party was in Government:

"Fulfilling the housing needs of the disadvantaged group create the greatest challenge to Government's goal of providing adequate shelter for all by the year 2000."

Sir, their goal was to provide housing to disadvantaged groups by the year 2000, but Mr. Chairman, the evidence was in their bosom. The evidence revealed that statistics show that some 36 000 persons or 34 per cent of the labour force earned less than \$200 weekly, which automatically excludes them from acquiring housing in

formal markets both in terms of affordability and qualification.

Mr. Chairman, further evidence also reveals and, Sir, this is what the Government said:

“In the absence of cheaper housing or some form of subsidy to assist select household in acquiring a home, some 60 per cent of Barbadians would be unable to afford a home in the absence of cheaper housing or some form of subsidy.”

Sir, that is the evidence they had and it goes further. A paper on Housing states here that as of 1990, there were some 9 649 physically challenged persons in Barbados with disabilities ranging from visual and hearing impairment, to loss of limbs and paralysis. Sir, the paper on housing also states half of the physically challenged, population is elderly. Sir, this the confession of the Government.

Mr. Chairman, the paper on housing also states that at present no special provision on housing in Government estates or elsewhere is made for the physically challenged and units are not designed to accommodate this group in terms of accessibility and use. Sir, in fact, they have collapsed, feeling guilty, in a general sense because the special needs of the disabled are not being addressed and access to housing is restricted. Sir, that is their confession.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Are you asking what year? The Honourable Member for St. Andrew should be able to tell you what year, because he got up and said it was his book. He said he was the most successful housing Minister because he produced a White Paper on Housing. Mr. Chairman, I prefer to be a Ministry of Housing to boast about houses than to boast about paper. He said to me that I might be a poster boy, but Sir, he is a paper Minister; short in substance and short in delivery.

Mr. Chairman, I have more information, but we will get to that in the fullness of time. I have the Warrens Building file with Al Barack, in relation to the contract, but we have to operate as if we are playing a cricket match. You wait until the last 15 minutes of play and then bring on the fast bowlers and you call for the new ball at the end, so Sir, I will get to Warrens Building at the end and rush in with the new ball from the Malcolm Marshall end, bowling at 90 miles an hour.

Mr. Chairman, if this evidence is in here and we are now trying to create an infilling programme, an infilling programme is there to house more people.

2.30 p.m.

Sir, in fact, we have to look at the disable.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, you have two more minutes.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I would not be part of any Government that would abandon an Infilling Programme when we know that one of the basic necessities of mankind is shelter, and the infilling is to provide more shelter.

Sir, I visited your Constituency and you said that there is land existing in the housing estate that can be utilised. So I journeyed with the Chief Town Planner, who said that we can utilise a portion of land in Silver Hill as part of the Infilling Programme. The land is Crown land already. We do not have to expense ourselves in buying land. The land is there. Sir, I do not understand it, but that is the way of their thinking.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North also spoke about equality, but when he called the National Housing Corporation he could have entered some more lunch and go about on his business. I am sorry Mr. Chairman.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: I am not saying that he is hungry. I am saying that he probably would have done better if he had eaten some more lunch.

Sir, in relation to the equality and fairness in terms of allocating housing, I never benefitted from it. The record of the former Government is, they built seven houses in St. Philip from 1994 to 2007, the Barbados Labour Party built seven houses in St. Philip. I could not benefit from equality. I could not benefit from any fairness. Sir, they built seven houses and then I had to rush to Parliament to vest the houses in the National Housing Corporation, so that the owners could get their conveyances. Sir, they were paying occupancy rent for years. Sir, they knew that the people wanted their conveyances.

Sir, I read a Cabinet Paper in which the former Administration outlined the challenges of the sale of terrace units. They spoke about going to Parliament to validate the title, the challenges, the extensions, that is why they could not move forward, because they encountered those problems and I now have to grapple with them. So I met with the Chief Town Planner to see how we can come to some amicable solution so that the qualifying tenants can get their conveyances.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should be winding up by now.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I can go on some more, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: You can come back.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, those challenges, existed with the former Administration and we now have to grapple with them.

This red herring about the maid at the gas station would never get a house, is foolishness. I am sorry, Mr. Chairman. It is not the policy of this Government to exclude the gas station worker. That is why we conceptualised the Rent-to-Own Concept.

Sir, if they had knowledge, in a White Paper, that 60 per cent could not qualify, then the obvious thing would be to create some mechanism of a programme, to include that 60 per cent of the Barbadian population, that cannot get a house. We recognise the problem in our 12 months and we came up with the Rent-to-Own Concept to embrace them, so that they could become property owners in the democracy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, permit me to cite page 38 of the 31st Annual Report of the National Housing Corporation and at Paragraph 6 (a) it mentioned that the National Housing Corporation introduced a special category of loans for applicants desirous of repairing their houses and it mentioned that a maximum of \$5 000 is disbursed for the purpose and the security use for this type of the loan is a promissory note, and that the processing time for these application is 48 hours. I commence there because I want for the next 3 or 4 minutes to mention the whole question of housing financing of public housing.

We have in Barbados a Fund called the Housing Revolving Fund that lends merely to low income participants and being that it is a revolving fund, as monies flow in, there is always on-lending for housing. Perhaps I should mention that at Page 34, of the very document I am reading, says:

“The National Housing Corporation in exercise of the powers conferred on it by Section 2 (2) of the Housing Act, may make loans to general workers under the Housing General Workers Loans Regulation, 1986.”

It then spells out that:

“Loans under the above regulations may be made to general workers for the following purposes:

To construct or complete a house.

To purchase land or house.

To repair, alter or extend a house.

To relocate a house.

To discharge a mortgage.”

Sir, it goes on to say who qualifies.

Sir, time was in Barbados, very many years ago, when there were particular persons who dreamed of having to turn to the State to secure housing, but beginning in 1956, some 7 or 8 years after the Second World War, a Housing Authority was established in Barbados, which means that this Housing Authority took care of housing and it was very much the precursor of the National Housing Corporation. The State has increasingly played a part in housing, house spots, land for houses, and such like simply because either of philosophical considerations, ideological considerations or just because of pure need.

We are into an interesting scenario where even though the Honourable Member for St. Lucy tells you that initially the National Housing Corporation was established to help the poor. We are into interesting time where because of the severe cash constraints, the National Housing Corporation does not necessarily assist the poor the way the original Act was intended. So the reality is a lot of middle income people and middle class people think about going to the National Housing Corporation as first resort.

Sir, permit me to mention another Fund, The General Workers Loan Fund which lends up to \$100 000 for buying land, for improving housing and even for some type of collateral where the person affected, might very well be the person involved who might very well go to the banking system and then have to resort back to the National Housing Corporation to provide the collateral for that person.

Sir, terrace units are in fashion and in vogue. The old Barbadians of the 1930s and 1940s would have known little about terrace units, and would have expected very little of Government when it comes to the erection and the availability of terrace units.

2.40 p.m.

Sir, on this question of terrace units, I want to say I am concerned that occupants of terrace units, especially in the wider St. Michael's parish, persons always complain to the National Housing Corporation (NHC) of leaking roofs, defects in the houses and of the need for routine

maintenance. I am told that very often, the response of the National Housing Corporation is too tardy and too slow.

Sir, as we re-look at the National Housing Corporation under an energetic and enthusiastic Minister, the fact is that in our own tenure of office, we actually had particular plans in mind. Sir, I want to make a proposal before this Honourable Committee.

Mr. Chairman, I want to propose that the National Housing Corporation in light of its mandate, the reality of the size of Barbados and the decreasing size of lots, that the National Housing Corporation invests in a Special Technical Unit, not for its own purposes as a National Housing Corporation thing, but to facilitate builders, carpenters, masons, et cetera, in the maximization of the use of land.

I want to see something in the way of ergonomic, where on a relatively small piece of land, the National Housing Corporation is able, through technical assistance and technical considerations, help people to better build, in circumstances where there is some evidence that the artisan class of Barbados is in decline, certainly in terms of numbers, and so, I think the day has come when the Government will be well advised to establish with it, a Technical Unit that is advisory, that goes out there among the people, that can rely on institutions like the Barbados Vocational Training working with it, and that can maximise the use of land, when it comes to building. Sir, this brings me to another idea.

Sir, we live in a tiny 166-square mile island, and we see a habit of building across, widely and sprawling. The more we sprawl across, the less land there is. The time has clearly come, notwithstanding particular issues of Town Planning when, in certain zones in Barbados, we would do well to contemplate building up.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Sir, building up to save space.

Mr. Chairman, of course, for people like the disabled, and the indigent, building up to three or four stories would not be the most convenient thing, but in the interest of the public good, and in ensuring that we make use of every available piece of land that is fit for housing, we should consider going up. We should also consider identifying two or three marginal estates that are not good for agriculture, and take them and put them in house spots and housing. We should do that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, I am troubled because when the public, which has been going to the National Housing Corporation since 1956, is sometimes told, go to your

politician or your MP for a letter, and you would get a house. I do not like that at all. A lot of people who tell constituents, whether these constituents come from urban Barbados, or rural Barbados that all they need is a Member of Parliament's letter, they are really misleading the public.

The truth of the situation is, that there has been a preponderance of applications going to the National Housing Corporation. The National Housing Corporation is constrained heavily, not only in terms of debt and cash flow, but in terms of its capacity to meet the many demands of persons who go to it.

In all this, too, Mr. Chairman, the National Housing Corporation has to embark on an enlightened public relations policy, to tell the truth to Barbadians as to what services they offer, as to what services are plentiful, as to what services are more readily accessible than other services, and where there are no houses. Tell the people, point blank, there are no houses.

Sir, they should not send the people to the Honourable Members here, or the four Honourable Members over there, or the other Honourable Member over here and give the impression that once a politician writes a letter, a house is granted automatically.

Sir, considering the work of the wider Ministry, the line Ministry itself - and going off the National Housing Corporation a bit - the Urban Development Commission Act permits Urban to vest title in tenancies, including non plantation tenancies. But the Rural Development Commission Act does not have a similar provision. It means relying on the Ministry of Housing and sometimes on the Registrar of Titles, where the landlord cannot be found; where the landlord would not cooperate, where the landlord is dead, and where there are questions as to the original ownership of tenancy lands.

I think the time has clearly come, when the line Ministry itself, which is staffed with professionals, take responsibility for a greater sense of political will to vest lands in tenants, in fee, simple, absolute in possession, based on the fact that many of these people do not only qualify by being there five years to seven years, but some people have been on spots sometimes for 25 years and 40 years, and have nothing to show after having paid rent for such long periods.

I also want to say, Sir, that the National Housing Corporation has to be more astute in the management of its finances. A few months ago, some anonymous letters were in circulation, and even though they were anonymous, they did not really mean mischief. These letters were saying that particular institutions had successfully won judgements against the National Housing Corporation because the National Housing Corporation was not paying its debts.

Sir, imagine a youngster called, David Emanuel Estwick, going to purchase from the National Housing Corporation. He has the purchase price. He is of good character and can pay the installments. Then, when he gets his conveyance, he is told that the conveyance is subject to a debt owed to the National Housing Department, to use an example. The time has clearly come, Mr. Chairman, when that type of thing has to stop.

The National Housing Corporation has to look at itself, examine its finances, look at the barrage of judgments that have come against it, try its best to find money, do not fall into the ploy of granting so-called title in circumstances where it cannot, or should the National Housing Corporation ever tolerate any situation from anybody, who advise its tenants not to pay rent.

The National Housing Corporation needs to have its rents paid into the National Housing Corporation. I am aware that in recent times, preceding January of 2008 and January 2007 that in some instances, the National Housing Corporation gets its rent up-front, where certain categories of workers are able to authorise their employers to deduct the rents and pay it straight to the National Housing Corporation. Sir, then you have those who do not sit in those positions, who are supposed to go in and pay, and would not pay.

Sir, under a socialist type of arrangement, where we should be our brother's keeper, on the principle of neutralisms, under a socialist principle or social democratic principle, if W owes \$100 000 in unpaid rent, and Y needs to get a facility from the institution to which the rent is owed, then it means that Y is not going to get any facility because W had defaulted.

Persons who owe the National Housing Corporation should really see that they are depriving their brother, their sister, their uncle, their aunt, their grandmother, their niece, their nephew, or other persons from being able to access opportunities on the basis of the fact that they have not been paying their rents.

2.50 p.m.

I want to urge that every effort be made by the National Housing Corporation to collect the rents. We have to destroy that culture that where you owe a Government entity, that the Government entity does not rank high on your list of priority when you are paying. I believe that the same situation would occur at the Barbados Water Authority because it is perceived to be Government-owned and people would not pay their water rates.

Persons would not pay their National Housing Corporation rents, but very few people owe Cable and Wireless or the Barbados Light and Power Company

Limited because they know that those entities are not Government-owned, and therefore, they set out to ensure that the light and the telephone is on.

Mr. Chairman, the telephone thing is easy to understand, because as a nation brimful of many talkers, not only are land lines respected sufficiently to attract the payment of rates, but cell phones which by nature are toys, are so plentiful in this country that it is unthinkable how many Barbadians would allow their cell phone bill to either go out of control or refuse to pay their cell phone bill, yet we have the very undesirable situation of persons not paying their National Housing Corporation rent or water rates.

Some of these people who owe the National Housing Corporation have carpets, freezers, dishwashers, dryers and such like and the best possible beds suitably outfitted.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Chairman, does anyone feel that I have never been into a National Housing Corporation house? I have been in a National Housing Corporation house going back 30 and 40 years in Wildey and such like.

Mr. Chairman, the point is serious. I think that we must do our best to encourage the National Housing Corporation and the line Ministry, which often acquires people's property and is tardy in paying back. There are people whose properties were acquired to make room for highways who have been waiting 10, 12 and 15 years to be compensated and who sometimes would receive the odd letter saying: "are you sure you do not want to grant the land rather than be paid for it?"

With these remarks, therefore, Mr. Chairman, I am very deeply obliged to you.

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on this Head. I was fortunate to hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North criticising the infilling programme.

Mr. Chairman, when one considers that the Honourable Member represents an area where a large number of persons are living in those units, that according to him, they need some space, I thought that the Honourable Member would have used the infilling programme to beseech and encourage the Minister of Housing and Lands to legalise the use of the infilling programme. Sir, infilling is nothing new, it has already been done by the tenants in the area.

Mr. Chairman, I heard a lot of people criticising the tenants for bettering themselves. I am a bit surprise to hear the Honourable Member stating that he is against the members for bettering their lives and that if you allow them to expand their units, that you are creating negativity. Mr. Chairman, I want to differ.

Sir, let me first state that I am speaking on behalf of those persons who are fortunate to represent people who have units in their Constituency. Mr. Chairman, even though I have already said very clearly to the Minister and to all Governments, that I do not need any in my constituency, I still understand the need for these units in certain areas in Barbados. Mr. Chairman, because I and my constituents have a personal opinion, I would not necessarily say that those units are not good for Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, instead of moving and switching two families, I thought that the Honourable Member would have recognised that infilling is now the solution to give persons the capacity to apply and be able to expand the units using the space that is available. Sir, you do not have to be a rocket scientist to recognise that most of these units have land at one side that they could easily build on to them as the tenants have demonstrated.

Mr. Chairman, we in this country have a way of knocking poor people for doing things good. They might not do it right, but we need to at least admit that they have created ideas for us to build on and then guide them to do it the right way.

Mr. Chairman, infilling is nothing new. The people in the areas already have demonstrated to us how to do infilling. Sir, all I am saying is that you need to legalise infilling and expand on it. Mr. Chairman, it is not Government's policy. It is the people's people.

Mr. Chairman, all the Minister is doing is going out there and implementing what the people of the area wants and he should be congratulated on it. It is not like one Member of the former Government who said one thing and then put his foot in his mouth. He is saying that if you take your apartment and nice it up, that just because you are living in it alone, that the Government should move you out, because there is somebody who got 12 children living down the road in a one-bedroom house. Sir, I am saying no, this is where the infilling comes in now. What they should do is allow that person to build on and add some rooms for those persons without interfering with another person.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: I am hearing now that infilling cannot be about building on, if you are utilising the space you have. In other words, I cannot infill

the land I got in my backyard and build on any more room. Infilling is utilising the land that you have next to you.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, this is exactly what I have said all the time. The problem in this country is that you could give the Barbados Labour Party the best ideas and then they would destroy it. The Honourable Member just demonstrated that he does not understand anything as it relates to poor people even though he has some in his Constituency.

Sir, you would not believe that the Honourable Member represents Bonnetts and that they have additional land that you could easily infill by asking the people to infill themselves instead of the National Housing Corporation. What the Honourable Member sees is another piece of land for building some more apartments by someone else, but the poor people cannot build on to their apartments. Mr. Chairman, if you have land in Bonnetts, it does not make sense that somebody will tell me that infilling is for you to come and build a new block, when you could allow the people that living in Bonnetts that have 12 children living in one apartment to add to their apartment.

Sir, you see now where the confusion came. What it meant is that they went and told the Town Planner that it was a crime for those persons to have 12 children living in one apartment. They did not say it should be rectified, because they see infilling as a way of allowing somebody who got money, to come into Bonnetts and get that good piece of real estate.

Mr. Chairman, that would not happen on This Side. We see it as building new apartments and also allowing the present people to improve their standards of living in the area. Mr. Chairman, I know that I do not have to convince the Minister of this. I know that what I am speaking, is what he knows.

Mr. Chairman, I am very glad that the Honourable Member for St. James North made the point - I know it is not new to his ears - that the Government should buy two marginal estates and create some more lots. This is nothing new to this Parliament.

3.00 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, the only thing that was lacking from that was that I have always asked, not only for Government to buy two large estates or a number of estates but for the Ministry of Transport and Works to put in the roads at no cost to the people.

Sir, I will tell you why I said that. The Ministry of Transport and Works is known for building roads where people live. Do they charge the people for building those roads, when those people would already have their houses? Therefore, if you want to help people, why not use the Ministry of Transport and Works onto the same land, as that would help the people better. Mr. Chairman, I have always argued that since 1994. I believe that if we have a social problem, we have to find creative ideas to solve those social problems for Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Transport and Works is not a private company. It is the other hand to Government. Sir, I cannot support this foolishness that the Ministry of Transport and Works does not do good work.

I want to support workers at the Ministry of Transport and Works. That is why I would ask for them to build the roads into the new housing developments to reduce the cost of those houses. Sir, for example, if you go into North Cumberland and you see the work that is being done by the Ministry of Transport and Works, you would believe that it is being done by contractors. Sir, that is because I have a good supervisor, who the Minister would not let remain in St. Lucy. The Minister believes that my good supervisor must be shared with everybody because he understands what to do.

Mr. Chairman, the previous Government should be charged for the number of derelict houses they claim that have been destroyed in this country. I drive through this country, and the Honourable Member for St. James North knows of what I am speaking, and if you were to see the number of houses that have been deemed derelict that have been destroyed, it would be a crying shame. Sir, these houses did not need a lot of work to rectify them.

Sir, the most disgraceful thing is that they would push down good houses, while having people living in houses that are far worst. Am I to believe, according to them, that a derelict house is one in which nobody lives? Sir, who determines the quality of what is a derelict house? Sir, I have seen houses in Barbados that have been bulldozed that only wanted windows or a roof, while there was nothing else wrong with the structures of these houses, yet a tender would be out for the dismantling of them.

What I am calling for today is for this Government to recognise that as a poor country, we cannot afford for this to continue. Government should make it a point to acquire the property, repair the houses and sell these houses and land. Sir, at the same time, so as not to disenfranchise the owners of these properties, Government should give them a similar piece of land elsewhere, while taking over the said properties.

Sir, there is nothing wrong in condemning a property, but after condemning it, since that property would not have anymore value, Government should move in, take over the property, repair it, then sell it, because it does not make sense destroying these structures. Sir, I have always opposed the destruction of these properties. You could go back to the Record of this House, but I am seeing too many structured being destroyed.

I saw a situation in my Constituency, on which I had to fight on the behalf of the lady. Sir, all that was wrong with that house was that the lady was waiting to get some money to fix up the house, but because the roof and windows were not in a good state, the lady received a letter informing her that in some many number of weeks her property would be bulldozed. Sir, there was nothing wrong with the structure of that house. Sir, it is wrong and I want to thank the good judgment of the officers in the department who, once one does the right thing, are prepared to rectify that situation.

Mr. Chairman, I am told in this Honourable Chamber that a derelict house is one in which nobody lives. I have seen it in the Act, yet the Ministry has bulldozed a house of one of my constituents, while the person was still living in that house. Sir, you know I would not come here and speak to this matter lightly. I have given the Ministry time enough to rectify the problems.

Mr. Chairman, I have already said to the Minister and I have not heard any response as yet, yet I have to face the owners, because whenever I go to Moon Town, I can see the house has not yet been rebuilt. Sir, the Ministry has to rectify that, and very soon.

Mr. Chairman, I was on the Board of the National Housing Corporation when I saw the National Housing Corporation not having had material to work with in the crisis time, yet the workers were being paid.

Sir, we as a Government cannot afford to have workers going to work and not having anything to do, when we have a lot of old people out there, some of whom have lumber under their cellars.

Sir, the National Housing Corporation Act must be amended and the Minister must be given the authority to be able to deploy these workers to do social work in this country, in situations where the National Housing Corporation does not have any work. I have been saying this since 1994 and it is something with which I am very serious.

Mr. Chairman, we believe that the taxpayers in this country must spend money and must now benefit from that money in helping Government to develop this country. There are people who believe that once you are poor that

you cannot get benefit from Government. Mr. Chairman, if you look at these Estimates and look at the subsidies given to people who have money, you would see that nobody has complained, but as soon as Government has to spend money on poor people, everybody talks about how much money is being wasted.

Mr. Chairman, I want you to know that I personally do not believe in handouts. I believe it would be in Government's best interest, where there are able-bodied persons, to subsidise their wages than to give them handouts. If there are young people in Barbados who cannot find work, it would be better for a Government to place them somewhere else and give the employer some money to keep them employed.

I have seen where, under the Barbados Labour Party, people could not get proper housing, because they were given unemployment for 26 weeks and a television to watch soap operas. Sir, those people got hooked to the soap operas and forgot that they had to work. Sir, for a productive country, this cannot continue. I have seen that we have thousands of those persons in Barbados who should be working, but we then had to increase the population of Barbados by bringing other persons to do the work that those persons would have normally done, because we have created a 'joy stick' for those people to play with, also by their pressing a button and watching soap operas.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am saying it would have been better had the Minister of Finance done exactly what I have been calling for in this Honourable House for more than 10 years now, and that is to calculate the total contributions to that person. I am saying to discount it and give that person a lump sum of money in their hand and put them back on the production line.

Mr. Chairman, it does not make sense and all of us are hearing it and pretending it is not happening. There are many persons who would tell you they are not going back to work until they have completed drawing their 26 weeks' unemployment benefit.

Asides.

His Excellency D. ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, it is better to give people an option. If they opt to remain unemployed for that 26 weeks, that would be up to them, but if given that lump sum, they could use it as capital to open their own business or to use it as savings, while finding a job that pays less. Government should look at that option, instead of bringing more people into

Barbados. Sir, whenever we bring one more person into Barbados to help with our production level, we are increasing our social cost.

Sir, people have to understand this is serious business. We cannot continue increasing the population of Barbados, when we have people at home sitting down because that is social cost for them and also for the person coming into the country. Sometimes we ask ourselves why we have these budget deficits. We have these budget deficits because some politicians believe in votes, without looking at the cost of running a country. That is why we have this housing problem, and we as a Government have to solve it.

3.10 p.m.

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, I have always argued that the issue of housing Barbadians is perhaps one of the greatest divides between the Barbados Labour Party and the Democratic Labour Party. Sir, some on That Side are certainly comfortable with rhetoric while on This Side we know what the reality is.

Mr. Chairman, last Elections we campaigned vigorously on the issue of housing because the statistics spoke clearly to a dereliction of duty by the former Government in respect of providing affordable housing solutions to Barbados.

Sir, I am extremely pleased that 14 months after being in office, this Democratic Labour Party Administration, ably led in its housing programme by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North can stand proud in respect of our successes in housing solutions in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, the evidence speaks for itself and we do not need to go too far. I heard the Honourable Member for St. Michael North went back all the way to 1996. As a matter of fact, he could have gone all the way back to Grantley Adams, if he had so desired, and we would have realised the failings there. Sir, the evidence is clear that between the year 2002 and 2007 the then Administration, armed with all the money in the world and never before...

Asides.

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: We heard them on the one hand talk about how robust the economy was and how great the foreign reserves of the country was. Sir, all these great economic statistics, and yet still there were only able to provide 814 lots in Barbados. We are not talking about

houses yet. We are only talking about vacant lots for people to construct on.

Mr. Chairman, in 14 months, this Administration has been able to confirm 500 in the first year, as we promised in our Manifesto and an additional 392 have been identified.

Mr. Chairman, why is this so? The officer of the National Housing Corporation, the principal agency that fuels the housing drive has not changed, by and large. The Board has changed, but a lot of the artisans who work in this field have not changed and a lot of the stakeholders have not changed. What has changed is the political directorate, and we have brought a freshness and a level of energy to housing development and housing demands to the satisfaction of Barbadians, that could never be found from all the Honourable Members on the Other Side. Sir, that basically is what, to my mind, well exemplifies the difference between the two major political parties.

Mr. Chairman, this Government is committed to providing affordable housing solutions for all Barbadians wherever possible. We know the challenge is on, because we inherited a situation where, I believe, there were nearly 20 000 individuals who had applied to the National Housing Corporation for housing solutions, whether they were rental units or to buy, and there was very little of a dint that could have been made. We know that even though we would have been able to identify well in excess of 1 000 housing solutions in our first year in office, that is still a small drop in the bucket, but Sir, it is very significant because, once again, it is beginning to give people in Barbados a sense of hope that they too could own a piece of the rock.

Mr. Chairman, I make no apologies for it when I say that the former Government was much more concerned about creating an environment, that aided and abetted principally high net worth for foreign individual with their housing demands in Barbados, as opposed to the average Barbadian. I make no apology to that whatsoever, because the reality speaks to that.

Mr. Chairman, what have we done in the short time we have been in office? I mentioned the 500 house lots plus another 382 identified. I have heard other Members on the Other Side speak to housing solutions and started to quantify them, but let me remind you that when this Administration took that decision a few months ago, to transfer ownership of National Housing Corporation units to those who have been tenants for 20 years or more, that in itself is an innovative housing solution that has brought housing to thousands of Barbadians. Sir, we can be extremely proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear comments on the other side in respect of those who made deposits and need to get them back, et cetera. The reality about it is that just under 2 000 units have been earmarked to transfer to these individuals. Yes, we all get a bit concerned in relation of the title deeds, et cetera, but this Government is known for keeping its commitment. All of these individuals have been offered the units. I believe in excess of 80 per cent of them have accepted the offer. We are well on our way but please accept, Honourable Members, that decision of the Government to provide these units free, with a small legal fee, is a wonderful example of this Government's commitment to housing solutions.

Mr. Chairman, certainly in my Constituency in Haynesville, in St. James South, at least 157 families, not individuals, who previously, prior to 2007, when they had the former Honourable Member for St. James South as a housing Minister, they could not dream of owning a piece of the rock, but Sir, with one decision of this enlightened Government and Government of Barbados, 157 could now say they own a piece of the rock.

Mr. Chairman, let us face reality. What does that mean to these individuals? I know that as a youngster, I got a start because my father was able to give me 6 000 square feet of land in Bayfield to build a house on. These families in Haynesville, eventually or rather soon, would be able to go to the bank, say they own the unit, that it is worth \$60 000, \$75 000 or whatever and offer that as security to help their offspring to get another piece of the rock. Sir, let us disabuse our minds and think that this is cheap political rhetoric, because in reality, we are helping poor Barbadians own a piece of the rock.

Mr. Chairman, I go further and look at what is happening at Work Hall and Marchfield. Sir, I go up to St. Philip quite often and see all these houses going up. They have gone up quickly. They are well-built houses and they are well designed. Sir, once again these families would be able to say that they have a roof over their heads. Mr. Chairman, to my mind, that is what empowerment is about. Sir, that is the way in which you move people from poverty to a position where they could really feel empowered and feel that they are a serious class in this society.

Mr. Chairman, I say to the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, you can take a bow and this Democratic Labour Party Administration certainly has a lot that we could be proud of.

Mr. Chairman, we have gone further than that, because it is not about building houses. We have also identified lots which we have put on the market on \$5 a square foot, as I have said before. Sir, you would not believe that the National Housing Corporation, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and by extension, the Crown, is one

of the largest land owners in this country, whereas before you had an Administration that talked about a land bank. Sir, never before have I heard such silliness about a bank. Barbadians wanted a piece of the rock to build their own shed roof and you are talking about a land bank.

Mr. Chairman, the reality about it is that this Administration has been able to come and identify lots that we will put on the market at \$5 per square foot hence, providing a solid foundation upon which many Barbadian families would too, own a piece of the rock and have their own homes.

Mr. Chairman, right in my Constituency of St. James South, I could not believe that my Constituency was once represented by a Minister of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation has been able to identify 99 house lots. I have asked the Ministry to ensure that my constituents get their fair share. I hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael North talked about equity, but Sir, it was not equity when his Party was in power, but all of a sudden, they want equity. Well, you will face the polls again and we will see about it there and then.

Mr. Chairman, the reality about it is that in St. James South, lots have been identified in West Terrace Gardens, Wanstead and Oxnards. Sir, this is land that was sitting there for years, vacant, that could be built upon. Mr. Chairman, this is not something imported from St. Lucia or New York City. This is land sitting there and, certainly, to my mind, it would provide affordable housing solutions to middle class Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I have always said that as a responsible Government we have a duty to assist those middle income individuals.

3:20

I have always said that I represent a Constituency that is predominately middle income and they too need some help. This Government will certainly come to the rescue and ensure that in places like West Terrace Gardens and Wanstead, we are able to provide affordable housing solutions, particularly to those second generation middle income Barbadians who too have to struggle and have challenges on their hands from time to time. Clearly this is an enlightened Government that has thought long and hard about housing challenges and have been able to bring it to the fore. Sir, it goes beyond that.

We need to look at the housing stock we are constructing. I am of the view that with a limited land mass, Barbadians have to accept that high rise units will have to be the way to go. I believe this Administration will go, but rest assured that as a community-minded Government, we will ensure that the appropriate

recreational and social facilities are readily available for these communities with high rise units. Sir, the land space is limited, therefore we have to find new solutions like these as well.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, speak about the Zero Lot Line Programme, and we certainly look forward to hearing more about it as well as the Rent-to-Own Concept. This is extremely innovative and this Government can only be commended for it. We accept that a situation where nearly 65 per cent of the applicants to the National Housing Corporation do not qualify to buy the units that may be currently available, as a responsible Government we have to find alternatives. That is why I wholeheartedly support the Rent-to-Own Concept, which allows thousand more Barbadians to own a piece of the rock.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East should support it as well because it will ensure that her gardeners, housekeepers and bed chamber maids will be able to own a piece of the rock. Not everybody is like her that may inherit two mansions in Miami. The reality is, there are many of us who have maids and gardeners who need a chance to own a piece of the rock. That is why sometimes I shudder when I hear Honourable Members on the Other Side speak, because they genuinely cannot connect to the people, who they will like get up in here and propagate. No, they cannot. When you know that your inheritance includes two mansions in Miami, check Barbadosfreepress.Com. Sir, this Government certainly has a lot to do.

Sir, when I hear individuals speak about keeping units free in the event of a house fire or somebody being evicted, I would like to move to the stage where we are able to have homes of working class Barbadians insured. We need to stop believing in this welfarism all the time. The reality is, these individuals have a right to their houses insured. It would be much better and less costly on the State if we are able to find innovative programmes that allow for house insurance coverage on these lower income houses as well. Mr. Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, I urge you to take that to light as you embark upon your housing plans in the development of Barbados as well. We certainly have to ensure that everybody is well-taken care of in this country.

Sir, finally, I note and I know that the National Housing Corporation's drive to provide, in particular the lots from many of these plantations have been delayed by the attorneys-at-Law operating for the plantations, not the Government's Side, but by the attorneys-at-Law for the plantations.

I would like to send a message that Massa Day Done. These plantation owners have to ensure that their attorneys-at-Law work in a much speedier manner to ensure that the Government can get on with its programme. I can only urge them to do that. It is absolutely necessary. Therefore, in closing, let me reiterate my full support for Head 38 and the wonderful work being done by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, his officers in the National Housing Corporation, and throughout the Ministry of Housing and Lands. On the whole, I think it certainly reflects the type of enlightened thought, that this Democratic Labour Party Government offers, especially in the area of housing solutions.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Mr. H.F. LASHLEY: Sir, this morning when I spoke I said that I will come back later this afternoon to speak about a very important aspect of housing development in Barbados that lies in the Constituency of St. Michael South East, which I want to address for the record.

As I go on during the short intervention period which I have, I would want to clearly outline those persons in St. Michael South East, particularly the area of The Pine, who have contributed significantly to that area.

Sir, when persons across Barbados hear about the Pine Housing Area they conjure up thoughts of a violent place, where there are bad men, tyrannosaurus and broncasaurus and all sorts of ancient species of reptiles and mammals residing in this area, the worst sort of human kind. That thinking in the year 2009, is still in the minds of some persons, particularly in the elitist class of Barbados about the Pine, where the greater number of persons are from the poor echelon of this society. Some of them, who I will speak about in this Honourable House, have elevated themselves to significant prominence in this country, yet the stigma of discrimination in the minds of some people across this country still lies.

Sir, I met a young man, not a young man because young people know differently. The interaction between young people in Barbados is great. I met a person who asked me, "Hamilton Lashley, where are you from?" I said that I am from the Pine and I have no problem with saying where I am from. If I go to Egypt and anybody asks me where I am from I say, "I am from the Pine, Barbados", but I say where I come from first, because I know of my identity. I am very conscious of who I am as a person and I know my roots. The man asked me, "You from the Pine?"

Asides.

Mr. H.F. LASHLEY: Pinelands now?

The man pulled out a map from his back pocket. He said, "You see this place called the Pine, I would like to blow it off the map." It is a serious thing to say. Do you know where that mind-set came from? That mind-set came from the judiciary in Barbados. Strange enough, in the mid-1960s the judiciary felt that it was jurisprudence, to import, and I want to use the word import, a magistrate out of Guyana to quell the non-existent disturbance in the Pine Housing Area. The infamous Lennox Perry, who coined the three Ps, P for Perry, P for Pine and P for prison.

Sir, I will tell this story all the time because I know Barbadians well. Barbadians have short memories. I will forever believe that every time once in this Honourable Chamber it will be remembered. So I will repeat it until it is stuck in the minds of persons across Barbados that the Pine Housing Area, in itself, is a model of good social governance and has established itself as a model community throughout the Eastern Caribbean and beyond the shores of the Caribbean, and has also written its name indelibly on the planet's pages of history, and I will speak about it.

Sir, after the 1948 flood, many persons were thrust into that area. Obviously it created a juxtapose with people being brought from St. Lucy, Martindales Road, Halls Road, The Ivy, et cetera. Strange enough, there was a General Manager at the National Housing Corporation by the name of Mr. Ansil Grosvenor, who took me into his room and traced the history of the development of the Pine Housing Area. I will always be eternally grateful to him, because every word he uttered and the record that was shown to me, had me swallowing like a turnover, sweet, sweet to me. It was a learning process for me.

Sir, Mr. Grosvenor documented that history. Then a lady by the name of Miss Grace McKaskie also wrote pieces on the history of the Pine and it turned out to be a local best seller. I believe that every person who is researching sociology, any good student, should get the Grace McKaskie report on the Pine Housing Area.

3.30 p.m.

Sir, for you who might not know the Pine, because there are people who live in the Pine that are so frightened to associate themselves with the Pine, too. When you ask them where they are from, they would tell you: "I am from Wildey. I do not live in the Pine." Yet, I could take a big rock and pelt them over the other side.

The fact of the matter is that the Pine Housing Area, geographically lies from Princess Royal Avenue, right up to Regent Hill. Then, there is Parkinson Field. Then there is the Wildey Estate, which is on Webster Plantation. Sir, we

have two major plantations in the Pine, the Pine Plantation and Webster Plantation, which is now Webster Industrial Park.

Mr. Chairman, coming up in the Pine, we had a lot of fights too. We fought with the residents of Chapman Lane and that war lasted for three long years. I remember going to Chapman Lane and I went in a shop and called for a pine drink and a man told me, "listen Skipper, call for something else, not a pine drink, do not even mention that word down here." I mean, the war was so intense. A fellow came up and said, I am frightened for wanna, I am from Chap... We said: "you better mean Chapel Gap. You cannot call Chapman Lane in the Pine." Sir, it was that ferocious war that lasted for three years.

The good thing that came out of that anyhow is that both warring fractions, I am talking about the 19s. I am not talking about 2008 or the 1990s. it is the then Commissioner of Police Mr. Aviston Prescott, who brought the warring fractions together and we signed, believe it or not, a Peace Treaty, a truce, to stop three years of fighting between each other.

I was playing football at Weymouth and all I remember seeing was a cutlass on my shoulder. Well by-passed Weymouth. Sir, I bypassed Government Hill, I went all the way around Brittons Hill and got up in the Pine, before the Pine Bus that was parked by the globe. I was that frightened.

Sir, the point is that I want to put on the records in this Honourable Chamber, and that is what I was speaking about this morning, the freedom fighters, the community practitioners and the very early pioneers who fought against the stigma and discrimination. Also those who stood the test of time, and stood up for a just cause, called the Pine.

Hence, I believe, Sir, when I call these people's names in this Honourable Chamber, every community, particularly the housing areas across Barbados should create their own Halls of Fame and Walls of Fame to Honour their community practitioners and those who have done extremely good outstanding work, within their communities and pattern themselves after those persons for posterity forever and ever, or else, we simply practice the philosophy of hypocrisy, and then honour them when they have died and say great and grandiose things about them. I do not believe in that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman, Red Plastic Bag put it very well in his song when he said, this Nation was not built by our leaders alone, so many heroes out there in the communities, are unknown.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I would now call the Honour role and I want to use Hansard, in this Honourable Chamber so that the worth and work of these most Honourable Community Practitioners from the Pine, will always be there in Parliament to be etched in pages of Hansard, which is the historical document of Parliament forever and ever.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I do not want to stop you, but we are dealing with housing, and I am hoping you can get home to housing.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, I am talking about the Pine Housing Area in context of the sociological background of the area and the contribution that the community practitioners in the housing areas are making.

I am also making out a case, Sir, for the creation of Halls of Fame and Walls of Fame, within the Government housing estate, so that those persons residing in them could have persons as role models to look up to. Sir, that is the point I am trying to make.

Sir, it is against that background I submit:

- Sir Mencea Cox was a taxi driver and a wonderful pioneer. In my view, he should have been the Prime Minister of Barbados but the leading plantation class did not see it fit at the time. He was one of the first representatives of St. Michael South East. At that time, it was the Pine properly.

- Mr. J. B. Patsie Springer, was an early pioneer, who did tremendous social work in the Pine community.

- Miss Sylvia O'Neal, the longest standing resident, is also helping the children in the Pine Housing Areas.

- Mr. Egbert Sealy, Community Practitioner, par excellence.

- Miss Enid Best, an old lady, who is there fighting all, doing service to the community.

- The late great Granville Foster, who helped built the Community Centre in the Pine. He built the ground-sill, without a single cent from the Government. The Government provided the material, Sir, and it was a wonderful situation of cooperative planning and functioning between Government and the National Housing Corporation at the time.

- Mr. Ralph Walker.

- Ms. Hazel Lindo, who was the first female President of the Pinelands Development Council, now holding Ph.D. in Education.

- Ms. Lynnette Napoleon, the current Deputy General Manager of the National Housing Corporation has also resided in the Pine Housing Area.

Sir, I am going to put it a different way. She and I used to live in the same house, not together, but at different times.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Mr. Chairman, there are others:

- Mr. Rawle Clarke
- Mr. Rodney Grant
- Dr. Bradley Niles
- Mr. Errol Boyce
- Mr. Denneth Reece
- Mr. Omowale Elson
- Mr. Darcy Boyce
- Mr. Michael Newton

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: I believe this man should also be congratulated:

•Magistrate Robert Simmons is still residing in the Pine Housing Area, not that he cannot move out, but he is staying there as a shining model and a light to the youth, stabilising the community. I owe a debt of gratitude to him because he is staying in the area, and we are looking up to him.

Sir, do you know what? One day I was in conversation with him and I said to him: "Suppose I was driving a car and I did not have a licence, and doing over the speed limit, you know we are from the Pine. He said: "Well Lashley, you break the Law. You will have to pay." Sir, that is the kind of person that we still have residing in the community.

Sir, you would not believe this. There are a number of entertainers that came from the area. All the Burkes.

- Mr. Desmond Burke
- Mr. William "Smokey" Burke
- Ms. Natalie Burke
- Mr. Dudley Burke

- Mr. Winston "Casius Clay" Yearwood

- Mr. Richard Stoute

- Mr. Michael Thompson

- Mr. Clarence Thompson

- Mr. Burke "Panta" Brown

- Mr. Admiral Nelson

- Pineland Creative Workshop

- Mr. Wayne Riley

- Mr. Anthony "Boardie" Young

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Sir, these are just about a few of the names.

Asides.

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, we had a nice relationship going.

Sir, Wednesday coming is going to mark a historic chapter in the Annals of this housing area. On Wednesday the Board of Tourism will be launching one of its first Community Tourism Projects in the Pine.

If Honourable Members leave here now, they will see what you call a community at work, a community in action, 'dreads', 'non-dreads', rastafarians, old people, all classes of strata in the society, working now in the Pine to make sure that when Wednesday comes that the tourists that come up there will be well treated.

Mr. Chairman, I know the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. We have extended a special invitation to him because he is the person who has been announcing and promoting the whole philosophy and practice of community tourism and we cannot take it away from him.

Asides.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY: He has been the lone voice and practice at Moon Town. He invited me down there, Sir, at a time when I used to consume a certain degree of alcohol. The fact is that I enjoyed myself in Moon Town.

3.40 p.m.

I am encouraging every single Barbadian to come to North Stars tomorrow and see what is happening.

Mr. Chairman, I want to give great thanks to the Honourable Minister of Tourism, because he entrusted a project in the Pine, despite the fact that many persons said: "You really are going to let those tourists go up in the Pine and then something happens?" They reminded me of the time when I brought the idea about the senior games when they said you are going to let the people sue the Government of Barbados, all of them old people gine drop down, they got injuries.

Mr. Chairman, I could assure this Honourable Minister that those persons residing in the precincts of the Pine Housing Area, now Pinelands, I have been reminded by my colleague from St. Michael South, will make sure that this programme is a success.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for your indulgence and your patience with me, but I just wanted to get over that.

I thank you.

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

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, I am going to intervene here to highlight what I consider to be the contrast in the approach to housing between the Government and the Opposition, particularly in relation to what are commonly called terrace units.

Mr. Chairman, it was very refreshing hearing the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East bring balance to the line of argument being pursued by the Honourable Members on the Other Side, particularly the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who criticised the Government's initiative in terms of infilling in the housing estates. They talked about the sociological impact and creating an explosive situation.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that line of argument is too much of a stereotype where people are stigmatised. If a person lives in a populated working class area, be it a housing estate, Chapman Lane, New Orleans or Nelson Street, you are considered the scum of the earth, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Mr. Chairman, I have personally interacted with many of these people who are genuinely decent Law-abiding citizens who are often marginalised by society to the extent that if they want a job, they do not dare put their real address because they would not even get an interview.

Mr. Chairman, I am appealing to society to be fair to fellow Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, there is nothing wrong with the construction of terrace units. Mr. Chairman, I personally live in the heart of the City in Reed Street. Mr. Chairman, it is very convenient for you to be able to wake up a morning and go into Bridgetown, a stone's throw away and do your business without having to worry about parking or transportation.

Mr. Chairman, the people who live in urban Barbados cherish this strategic location of their residences that enables them to keep a job as there are no transportation problems, which is unlike persons who live in the more outlying areas who have transportation challenges that threaten their job sometimes. Mr. Chairman, these people in urban Barbados are seeking housing solutions in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Leader of the Opposition does not want to see any terrace units in her Constituency, and I now understand why. There is this prejudice against these concentration of working class people, but this fear is not founded in good judgement. Mr. Chairman, that is why this Democratic Labour Party Government is not going to be constrained by those views.

I remember that the former Barbados Labour Party Member of Parliament for the City of Bridgetown publicly saying that she had resistance within her party for the construction of those high-rise terrace units at the London Bourne Towers. May be the conservatives in the Barbados Labour Party felt that they were too good for the people of the City.

Mr. Chairman, for us to provide housing solutions in large enough numbers to enable the urban dwellers to be able to move out of their cramped housing to more comfortable housing within their communities, we will have to provide high-rise terrace units because there just simply is not enough land available.

Mr. Chairman, I have searched far and wide throughout my Constituency and I have only been able to identify three tracks of land large enough to accommodate terrace units, primarily at Mason Hall Street, which I congratulate the Government again for taking the initiative to commit to building high-rise terrace units there. I have also seen some land at Whitepark Road, the King's Village area and the Wharton Gap, New Orleans area. I looked all over the Constituency and these are the only three parcels of land available to us in the City, so clearly to provide housing solutions in adequate numbers we would have to build terrace units.

Mr. Chairman, this creates an issue that the Honourable Member for St. James North alluded to, the fact that when we go up three storeys or more, we clearly have to seriously look at providing some sort of elevators, and if we cannot provide them immediately, at least design the building so that elevators can be installed in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Chairman, we are all concerned about the disabled community in our country where we have special footpaths and access to housing in terms of the ramps and so on for wheelchairs, so I am saying that if we are serious about the disabled and people who would become disabled as they get older due to the natural ageing process, as rheumatoid arthritis kicks in and back ailments and so, that it is important that we provide elevators as soon as we are going up three or more storeys.

Mr. Chairman, even in campaigning in Kensington Lodge and the same London Bourne Towers, you got to be fit to get up to those three flights of stairs. I understand that even the postmen protested and they do not go up to the top floor anymore, they deliver the mail downstairs. These are the realities we have to address.

Mr. Chairman, concomitant with the construction of these high-rise terrace units, we must ensure that we speed up the pit toilet eradication programme. Mr. Chairman, it is not fair or aesthetically pleasing to have people living four storeys up in a densely populated area, be it Chapman Lane or New Orleans, then to see their neighbours bathing in the yard or going out to the outhouse with a pail in their hand. Mr. Chairman, this is the reality in some instances.

Mr. Chairman, this Government is committed therefore to the eradication of pit toilets to ensure that the housing stock in these densely populated areas are brought up to modern sanitary standards. Mr. Chairman, that is again strengthening my point about the need to provide these terrace units.

The reality, Mr. Chairman, as you may know, is that many people are faced with the indignity in my view of having to rent a room for sometimes \$100 to \$150 a week in a house that really was not designed for such accommodation where people have to share one toilet, one shower and one kitchen to the extent that people have to put their stoves within their room.

Mr. Chairman, as we approach Easter Sunday, I remember that Easter Sunday last year at Constitution Road, just a stone's throw from this building, I was at the scene of fire that claimed a life. A building which used to house a tutorial college was retrofitted to accommodate approximately 15 different rooms and a fire broke out and with not enough fire exits and fire extinguishers and so on, somebody lost their life, so this is a reality out there.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes women with small children are forced to rent these rooms because nobody wants to rent accommodation to persons with children because they figure that the children are going to destroy the place, so they have young mothers out there with nowhere to go and being exploited by these landlords who are just looking for dollars.

Mr. Chairman, this is where the Government must step in to alleviate this crisis situation, because people are having to live on the street as they may be evicted or may be fire victims.

3.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, therefore, I congratulate the Minister of Housing and Lands and the Government for stepping forward with great urgency to bring these solutions in massive numbers to these people who are waiting.

Sir, when you look at the fact that people are renting rooms that are in dilapidated conditions, such as poor roofs and the termite eating up the structures, they become fire hazards. Sir, the fact that we are also in a hurricane belt, these concrete steel reinforced terrace units and duplexes are sturdier and therefore reduces the likelihood of life and limb being threatened in any natural disaster. Mr. Chairman, this is very exciting as we move forward and I am concerned that the Opposition has missed the boat, in terms of the urgency of this matter.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Chairman, while I am talking about terrace units, let me say that I have seen condominiums up for sale in the Maxwell area and in other places now being advertised in the newspapers. Sir, I believe that in terms of the nomenclature, we should do away from using the word terrace units and talk about condominiums, because that is what they are. I also believe that architects could be challenged to be more creative, so that rather than providing the traditional 'block' or the aesthetically boring unit, we could have some nice front porches and back porches, so that these become real upscale condominiums.

The Democratic Labour Party moved in that direction when we constructed Church Village and the rents were a little higher than the traditional rate. The Barbados Labour Party continued that with the London Bourne Towers and to a lesser extent Kensington Lodge. Sir, I am saying that is a way to go where we can show residents that it is not a disgrace to be living in a condominium complex because of the fact that the upper class would pay big bucks to live in such condominiums. Sir, that is internationally accepted, so I think once we rebrand these housing solutions...

Mr. Chairman, with the Rent-to-Own concept, I believe people would be more greatly motivated to take pride because now they would be owning these housing solutions, provided by Government and they are going to take better care of them. Sir, as the Honourable Member for St. James mentioned, it is a stepping stone for the greater accumulation of ownership of a piece of this rock, as they could use the terrace unit as a collateral to gain loans to build other structures elsewhere and to leave a legacy for their children.

Mr. Chairman, we on This Side are very excited and certainly the people in Kensington Lodge, Pondsides, Mansion Place, people within the City of Bridgetown, are very excited about the ability to get their houses free of cost. They cannot wait to get the title deeds in their hands and this Government is committed to ensuring that this process is completed, so that the people of Barbados, not just the rich and famous, but the masses - the workers of our country, the proletariat - would all be able to enjoy positive and long-lasting housing solutions, as opposed to the Barbados Labour Party who were more interested in the rich and famous.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

His Excellency D. ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I want to deal with another aspect of the speech of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. The Honourable Member said it was a criminal offence for the Ministry of Housing and Lands or the National Housing Corporation, to take a deposit of \$6 000 from those persons who would have agreed with the Barbados Labour Party to buy their units. I want to repeat this point. The Honourable Member said that it was a criminal offence for us not to refund the \$6 000 that was taken by the Barbados Labour Party when they were in Government.

Mr. Chairman, I ask the question, who committed the crime? Sir, it was not the Democratic Labour Party who took the \$6 000 from the tenants of these housing units and refused to pay them back. Sir, what they are now asking us to do, is to solve their crime for them.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, everybody knows that political parties do not take in a deposit, the entity involved is the National Housing Corporation. Therefore, be it the Barbados Labour Party, who was the Executor at the time or the Democratic Labour Party, the entity is the National Housing Corporation, which would have taken in deposits. Sir, the Honourable Member knows well that this is exactly the situation. Therefore, for the Honourable Member to suggest that it was the Barbados Labour Party who took in

deposits from the people is wrong and misleading the House. I would ask that the Honourable Member would certainly modify his words in the least to better inform the House or that he should withdraw them.

His Excellency D. ST.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, I am in total agreement with the Honourable Member for Christ Church West for criticising the Honourable Member for St. Michael North. Sir, it was not I who made the statement. It was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North who made the statement. Sir, I support the Honourable Member for Christ Church West in criticising him for making it.

Mr. Chairman, I am only helping the Honourable Member because when I first heard it, I behaved in the same way in which the Honourable Member is now behaving, because I could not believe it. I could not believe that anybody would get in here and say that it was a criminal offence, so I agree with the Honourable Member. Therefore, I would want the Honourable Member to rise on another point of order like that.

Mr. Chairman, I want the Honourable Member to know that if given a house under the Democratic Labour Party is now a criminal offence, I would like to know what it would be to charge someone \$6 000 for a deposit, which is only 10 per cent, so it means that the next \$54 000 would have been what? We are giving it free and we are said to be criminals and that we are committing a criminal offence. Therefore, what happens when somebody takes \$6 000 as 10 per cent?

Mr. Chairman, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North that those persons who took that money should repay it, but I would not call my colleagues criminals. Sir, I have faith in the Democratic Labour Party and if the Honourable Member is saying that they are going to use the money for legal fees and so on... Sir, you know what is quite clever? Sir, the Honourable Member is behaving as if when you speak about legal fees, that you are not speaking about all the other fees that Lawyers would take in on behalf of other people.

Mr. Chairman, if that is the case, then those tenants have nothing to worry about, because they would have already paid their fees and there is a possibility that they might also be refunded. Mr. Chairman, does it make sense if a man has paid money, to give him back that money, then for him to bring it back to you again? That does not make sense. What I would want the Honourable Member to tell us is how come the Barbados Labour Party was forewarned not to build houses for poor people and for those houses to rot before the poor people got into them and yet they continue to do so. Sir, in Mount Poyer, the National Housing Corporation, after the Minister had given instruction to go against the policy of Parliament, had to go

back in at Mount Poyer, stripped those houses and rebuild them.

Mr. Chairman, we know about Apes Hill, where before the people moved into those houses, they had to put back in door jams, door frames and repair doors in those new houses, when they could have easily given the people the lot and allowed them to build.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West is still a good deed. His dad would have been proud of him to hear that he is helping the Democratic Labour Party attack the Barbados Labour Party in their policies.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that if we are going to be seriously tackling the housing problem in Barbados, the important thing would be to get the land in the hand of the people.

Mr. Chairman, under the Barbados Labour Party there were many good houses that went to the landfill. Let me explain. Many persons converted their green heart houses to stone structures and because there were not many people with land to put those green heart houses elsewhere, instead of those persons putting the old structures next to their existing green heart houses, where the termites could have eaten the wooden structure in the roof, they had to put them on the landfill, instead of giving them to persons.

4.00 p.m.

Sir, they were not people who had land to relocate the houses and rather than keeping these houses next to theirs for termites to eat down the wooden structure in the roof, they transported them to the landfill instead of giving them to other persons.

Sir, not only that. There are many persons in Barbados, any good MP would know this and I challenge anybody on the Other Side to tell me that I am wrong, who have houses, but no land to put them on. The problem is not the house. The problem is the house spot. Sir, I would bet you today that if you give your constituents the land they would find the house. That is why I am proud of this Government for its housing policy. It is clear that they are listening. They are not interested in joint ventures for profits to be made and divisions otherwise.

I am saying to the Honourable Minister to continue to allocate house lots. Do not worry about the number of houses being built. Make sure that you empower people by making land available to them. To be honest with you, if

house lots and money are available, you will have a revolving fund that will revolve much faster and will assist more persons. At the end of your tenure, it is not the number of houses being built, but the number of people you would have been able to empower with house lots.

Sir, the biggest problem in Barbados today is, and if we do not solve it, we will never be able to solve it. If we wait to give everybody houses, all the land in Barbados will be owned by other persons. We need at this time, especially in this climate, to ensure that we acquire the land we need and get the house spots to the people quickly.

Sir, in this Honourable House, every time we come to Parliament, I heard about a housing bank. I used to ask every Tuesday how much interest has been grown from the bank. I had to say, grow? Do you know that the housing bank held in 1 000 lots and at the end of the day, it is still 1 000 lots? Do you know what was happening? While the poor people were out there suffering, they were creating a demand on the housing market, which pushed up the price of land for poor people, and the Honourable Members could not understand that.

I am saying that under the Democratic Labour Party the process has been reversed, because what we have now have is what I call a Parallel Housing Policy. While the private sector was out there trying to get the highest price, we are out there trying to get the most lots on the market and a competing force to level out the middle income, to ensure that they get their lots at the right price.

Sir, not only that, this Democratic Labour Party's housing policy is clear. It was known since 1994, and we have no apologies to make for it, as a Board, we recognised that the National Housing Corporation has to make money too.

We recognised that the National Housing Corporation had land in some areas and that land had the capacity to fetch high returns.

At the time the National Housing Corporation was cash strapped, we made a Board policy to ensure that those lands in Husbands, Oxnard Terrace and Oxnard Heights where there was a great demand, that we got the market price so that we can keep the price for poor people down. That is why we need not worry about it, because all we did was to stop the contractors in Barbados from making the money, and directed the money into National Housing Corporation. What was happening, the Government of the day was giving the National Housing Corporation the land and they were giving it to a small 'too few' group to make the profits, then to sell back to poor people.

Sir, if we do not give land to poor people, poor people will never get houses in Barbados. I want to repeat

this point. If we do not give land to poor people, they will never get houses in Barbados, because by the time National Housing Corporation goes to bed with the contractor, there is nothing called a poor man's house. Sir, I want to repeat that point. By the time the National Housing Corporation and the contractor build, there will be nothing. There is nothing called a poor man's house, because the amount of money that person must have for a mortgage, poor people will never be able to reach it, but if you give him a house lot, he can do exactly what you and I know he can do, get his friends and artisans in the district to help him to build and come forward, or to start something.

Sir, we have to understand that when you are speaking about houses, you are not speaking about building houses for poor people. You are speaking of building houses for the middle income and otherwise, or those persons who want to profiteer, but when you are speaking about house lots, especially at \$5 a square foot, you are empowering the masses of people in this country. That is the policy I will support and that is the policy I will continue to fight for. I am proud of the Democratic Labour Party for pushing that policy.

Sir, we also have to ensure that the electric company in Barbados, when they are going for a rate increase in the near future, that they include the resiting of electricity poles and anything else, and that they be given a fee to resite electricity poles. I am frustrated to drive around Barbados, to see the number of electricity poles to be resited, but some companies that are making money do not realise they have an obligation to resite those poles. Sir, they believe that the Ministry of Public Works has a large budget, operating specifically to pay all of this money to resite poles. It is dangerous to the people of Barbados, to have these electricity poles in the middle of a road or near the edge of the roads.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, these poles are unsightly. I am saying that the Minister responsible for what I hope will be the Fair Trading Commission, which is FAIR - I hope it will not continue to FEAR - must give them the right to include in any new rates they want, an allocation for electricity poles and also an allocation for resiting street lights that are doubled up.

It is a waste of tax payers' money to see street lights falling on each other when there are other areas that need street lights. I will speak more on this matter some other time. It is frustrating to see electricity poles which should be resited, cannot be because some companies in Barbados do not believe that they have a social interest to look after lights at roundabout and street lights, and other areas that

are dark. They do not believe they have a social responsibility in this country to resite them.

Sir, they feel good writing the MP and sending him the bill, as if I own the Constituency. You have never heard me say in this Honourable House my Constituency. Every time I speak I say the Constituency which I have the privilege to represent. I do not own any constituency. I serve at the request of the people, so why are they sending me a bill to resite poles and to resite street lights? I do not get the revenue from the street lights. They do. I request on behalf of the people, but if I request on behalf of the people I do not own it. So why are they sending me bills?

Sir, I am saying that if I made a request and they believe there is a charge, send it to the Ministry of Public Works. I am no Government Department.

Sir, I am very grateful to you for allowing me to speak, but I also want to say that poor people need to utilise the opportunity given to them, especially those persons in chattel houses, but also persons in stone structures, opportunities given to them by ICB to pay their insurance premiums in installments. I think it is about time they recognise, at least, there is an insurance company offering that and to utilise it.

Thank you very much, Sir.

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

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Sir, I do not intend to delay the House long.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I do not intend to delay the House long, but just a few points I wanted to make on this particular Head, which I believe must be obvious errors, and obviously this is the time to raise them in the Estimates. Sir, in particular page 179, when it says that land acquisition should be \$1 009 042 000. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to that one because I did not see it in the errata. Also, page 181, Property and Plant in the Estimates says \$1 000 216 000. I do not know if my copy is different to yours, Sir. I checked the errata and I did not see it in there as well. If there are, in fact errors, I would ask that we see those amendments because, at the end of the day, this document forms Law. This is the document we would be going by so we need to have it perfectly correct.

Mr. Chairman, I want to start where the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East and, to some extent, the Honourable Member for the City left off. Essentially, they spoke about the stigmas associated with housing

estates and the need to improve the designs in housing estates and, Sir, I want to start there.

Mr. Chairman, in the United Kingdom, the vast majority of people living there, live in terrace units. Sir, not 50 per cent, not 60 per cent, but we are talking about 80 per cent or may be 90 per cent of the people living in United Kingdom.

Sir, I live in the United Kingdom for five years at one point and then another year in Ireland, and every single time, all of my friends, all of my family, everybody I know, lived in terrace units and they call them Council flats. They would have started out as a Council flat, which the Government would have built; the Government, over time would have sold them to people, they privatised them and then people sell them, and Sir, they are very good.

Mr. Chairman, even No. 10 Downing Street is, in essence, a terrace unit. Sir, I want to agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East that we need to move away from this stigma about terrace units, because terrace units are an economic way of building to house as many people as possible in the smallest possible footprint. It is something that came up from architectural times to be able to bring people together, because everybody wants to be close to the bus route, everybody wants to be close to the services that may be available rather than having the urban or rural sprawl that we see in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, if we have to move more to terrace units in Barbados, it is something that is of benefit to the community and to the country.

Mr. Chairman, I go further. If you take a 10 000 square feet of land and put one house on it, you are housing one family. If you take that same 10 000 square feet of land and put eight units on it or six units on it, you are providing for six families. You are getting people near the services without having to draw on the infrastructure to put in more mains for water, to put in more mains for natural gas, to build more roads or to put more lights. Sir, our designers, our town planners and our developers have to think more about better utilising our land space. Sir, that is the important thing because it is a cost to the country.

Mr. Chairman, town houses and terrace units will, with time, become more popular, because it is the only way. I hear a lot of people talking about going up. Sir, it is not necessary to go up because it is not always more economical. Sir, it is more expensive because I know a little bit about building. Honourable Members like to talk about building, but I know a little bit about building and as you go up, it is more expensive to do the upper floors because getting the materials up there is more expensive. You have to have the facilities in place and you have to

have more manpower in place, not to mention the risk and the difficulties of people falling off scaffold and all sorts of things.

Mr. Chairman, building across and having houses touching, terrace units, is something practised all over the world. Sir, it is something that this country has to embrace, because it is of benefit to the country to understand that this is the way forward for a small country like Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I want to go further. In addition to that, I want to implore the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Ministry of Housing. When we go into this infilling programme, for instance, unlike the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, I certainly believe that the infilling programme is to build new units on places where there are not any units available, on open pieces of land. I did not believe that people who have units would expand their units to the extent sometimes to the detriment to the Certificate of Compliance for the area or to make it difficult then for a Certificate of Compliance to be applied to the whole block, because it is a problem we have in the country.

Mr. Chairman, if you are going to embark on an infilling programme, which means you are essentially deciding to build new units in this country so that people would benefit from existing services, the first thing we have to look at is the design. Mr. Chairman, everything in life is about design. Sir, every insect, every mammal, everything is about design and the design of those new units is absolutely critical, and Sir, I will explain why to you.

Mr. Chairman, we have had to see a situation where after units were built and the Government of the day decided to sell the units, we had to go back and retrofit units by putting in fire walls, by looking at how we would service grease traps, man holes and wells, by looking at how the electricity would be run, by looking at how the plumbing was sorted out and by looking at how we would be able to put natural gas in.

Mr. Chairman, all these things need to be sorted now in the design of these new units, so Sir, let us spend the time and effort, now we are at the design stage.

Sir, if we are saying that people could graduate from renting a unit to owning that unit, be it by purchasing it, by grant or whatever, we have to design it with that in mind from the beginning. It means that the units, wherever possible, should have their own well, access to their own well or share a well between two, but not between 10 units.

We have to have positions in place for firewalls or separate roofs from the beginning.

We have to have in place facilities for the water, natural gas and all those things from the beginning, rather than having to come back and retrofit.

Sir, the electrical must, if possible, has its own meter from the beginning. I see in the Estimates that it is \$400 for upgrading the electrical. Sir, that means the electrical was not separate from the beginning. Mr. Chairman, I have had to deal with problems like that. When a meter or a junction box goes, everybody in the unit loses their fridge, because the computer conked out because of the surge. Sir, that is because the electrical supply in one unit was linked to the next, the third, so and so forth and it causes major problems.

Asides.

DR. W. F. DUGID: I am a Member of Parliament and I deal with my people and the issues of my constituents. Sir, if we are going to build new places for more people to benefit, we have to look at making sure that the design is of paramount and the design fits our intent.

Mr. Chairman, I do not mean to belittle the policy of the Democratic Labour Party to give away the terrace units to people and I am glad for the people, especially my constituents in Christ Church. I am glad they have derived the benefit, but Mr. Chairman, if we did not build them, they would have nothing to give away.

Asides.

DR. W.F. DUGID: Sir, that is a fact. If we did not build them, they would have nothing to give away. Mr. Chairman, you would know that the hard part is in the building, not in the giving away. It is in the designing, it is in the conceptualising, it is in the funding, it is in going all the way from the design to handing persons the keys. Sir, my friend from St. Philip North is trying to put me off, but I have one more point on his matter.

Mr. Chairman, the giving away is easy. You could decide that you want it or that you do not want it, but the hard problem and the difficulty was the building and, Sir, that is what the Barbados Labour Party Administration did.

4.20 p.m.

They are not only the people that are there now. Other people would have come in, graduated and left, but benefited from those places that were built by the Barbados Labour Party, not given away by the Democratic Labour Party, the hard part is the building. I am going further.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North in his exuberance, and we came in here to this Parliament together and he is a friend of mine, but he has gone around,

giving people Letters of Intent, I would imagine, to sell the units, to these people. I think it is reasonable that you can inform people of your intent to give them the Units. What has he actually given them? Has he given them something that they could carry to the bank? Has he given them something that they could not give to their heirs and successors that follow them, which say, yes, this is something that I can leave for you in my will? He has not given them a piece of the rock. He has given them a piece of two-down. Do you know what two-down is? Mr. Chairman, it is ground up rock. We use that term in construction all the time. You cannot build anything on it. You cannot borrow any money for it. You cannot give it to your daughter or your son.

Sir, I think that if we are going to give the people, and truly give them, we need to get the conveyances sorted for the people. The Honourable Member talked about conveyances. The only housing areas that were able to get conveyances, are Bonnetts and Lammings. Do you know why they were able to get their conveyances? Because there were not many areas where the people in the area had infringed with the compliance of the block, and that is the important thing.

There were many areas where people had expanded and gone on to the boundary, and encroached on the neighbours and covered the wells and so on. The good people of Bonnetts had not expanded their units in a reckless manner, so they were able to benefit from getting conveyances. The Town Planner requires that there are certain guidelines that you have to follow.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber when he wants to suggest that you do now build on two-down. I mean, two-down is a material that we compact, as a final stage, in a number of foundations, depending on what the finish will require. I think if we are going to be correct, we should be correct right through.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Chairman, I was on the matter of the Certificates of Compliance. In order for people to get good title, they must have the Certificate of Compliance, although the Honourable Member for St. Michael South suggested to us that sometimes, something called a 'Certificate of Completion' as was seen in a previous matter, but 'Certificate of Compliance' is what the Town Planning Department produces. This means that you have complied with all the conditions, the drawings and the regulations.

When you go and build on, in an illegal way, as the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants to suggest to the people of this country, because that is what he wants to do

from this Parliament. He is suggesting to people, to go and add on, in his concept of in-filling, and what you do, you do not only jeopardise your own opportunity to benefit from a conveyance, but you jeopardise everybody on the block. The Town Planner is not going to give a Certificate of Compliance, even if one person has jeopardised the whole block.

We have had situations even in the very same Bonnetts, where people who had built on, had to dismantle the construction, so that the block could benefit from Certificate of Compliance.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: on a point of order. Sir, it is quite clear that the Honourable Member is misleading the House because he is alluding to an Honourable Member, something that was not stated. Sir, what was suggested is that the In-filling Programme be taken to a new level, which is not known to the Barbados Labour Party. I think the Honourable Member got offended when I said you could give the Barbados Labour Party the best ideas and they do not know how to work them.

Sir, what we were saying is that the same way you are seeking permission to build additional units that you can also seek permission for the members to add on. Sir, at the same time, while seeking permission for the present members to add on, that all those persons who would have added on previously, you encompass that and get it regulated.

If the Honourable Member is now saying that he does not want the work that was done by the people in Bonnetts to be regularised, Sir, and that he opposes what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said, he needs to tell the House that he is against what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North said. Sir, I will sit at this time.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please continue.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you, Sir.

Sir, if you have an existing property which has been there for more than four years - and you would know this, Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member obviously does not know it - and nobody has put any request for you to remove it, you apply for a Certificate of Retention, through the Town Planner, and through the Certificate of Retention, the Town Planner can then certify, once he accepts and approves. It has nothing to do with new units. It is a completely separate and different issue. It has to do with individual blocks.

The point is, if you have a unit, stick within the Law. Do not add on, because you are jeopardising not only your

own self from getting a Certificate of Compliance, but the Certificates of Compliance for everybody else on the block. Everybody else on the block could have problems and you do not want to do that to your neighbours.

There is another issue with the National Housing Corporation, as it relates to people getting Conveyances and getting Title. I am going to see if I can give you a scenario.

Mr. Chairman, a family of a mother and two daughters live in a unit. They have lived there for five, six years. The mother passes away and one daughter leaves. The other daughter remains and continues to pay the rent for 20 years, in the mother's name. Is that new person, who is not the tenant of record, still entitle to benefit from the unit?

This is an important point.

Asides.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Because it is unclear at the National Housing Corporation.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is always accusing me of misleading people and being confused. The Honourable Member just said, Sir, that the rent is still being paid in the person's name that has passed 20 years ago. The Honourable Member seems not to understand that what the Honourable Member is saying is that the same name has paid for 20 years.

Dr. W.F. DUGUID: Mr. Chairman, I am going to go through the scenario again, and I would ask the Minister of Housing, when he comes back, to settle this matter for me, because I have not been able to get a satisfactory answer.

You have a mother who is the tenant of record at a National Housing Corporation unit. There are two sisters for argument sake. The mother has passed on. A second sister has left the unit. She has gone on to bigger and better things for whatever reason, and leaves one sister left at the unit, who continues to pay the rent and has met all of the requirements for the National Housing Corporation to be able to benefit, because she has continued to pay the rent. The mother has been dead 22 years, so the person continues to pay the rent in the mother's name. Will we change the tenant of record over to that person, and backdate it, so that she would now qualify? Or because she was not the tenant of record, does she not qualify?

4.30 p.m.

That is the important thing. There are many people and many situations in Barbados where the tenant of record

has long since died or gone overseas and has no intention to come back for the unit, but has left other people there and because they cannot regularise who the tenant of record is, you get that problem because they continue to pay the rent in the person's name who is the tenant of record.

Mr. Chairman, what is the policy for those people? I am just asking a simple question. What is the policy for people who have paid rent for 20 years, who are not the tenant of record? Are those people now being disenfranchised because the National Housing Corporation decided not to make them tenants of record? They would have paid rent for 20, 22 years or more, so that is an important matter I want to bring to this Honourable House attention.

Mr. Chairman, the other matter is that of insurance. Mr. Chairman, we do not have any programme for mandatory insurance in the National Housing Corporation units. I heard my good friend from St. Philip North when he was first Minister, got up and said about a year and a half ago that could you imagine the National Housing Corporation units are not insured. I imagine that was such an alarming thing to him that he has now put in place insurance for the National Housing Corporation units, therefore, I would like him to inform us of which company he has insured all the National Housing Corporation units with, what is the value they are insured for and all of the details about that insurance.

Mr. Chairman, it is my belief that it would be very difficult for the Government of the country to insure all of the National Housing Corporation units. Mr. Chairman, if it was so alarming to him at the time, I know now that he has fixed that problem and has insured them, so I will give way and ask him to tell us what is the value of the insurance and who they are insured with?

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member should wind up now.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you. I will come back.

Mr. Chairman, the reason I speak about the insurance comes back to the two-down piece of paper. Mr. Chairman, you have now given to a tenant on one side or a tenant on the other side a piece of paper saying that there is an intent to own the unit, a fire occurs and that unit as well as the one next door is completely gutted. Who is liable for repairing that unit? Is it still the National Housing Corporation who is liable for this unit after you have already given them this Letter of Intent and said they do not need to pay rent anymore, or is the owner of that unit liable for the person next door who has never been given a letter, but who has lost all of their belonging and may be someone passed away, because I have...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Your time has expired young man.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I asked that the Minister address these simple questions relating to tenants and people of the National Housing Corporation and the people of Barbados.

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

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, there are a few matters which I believe require raising an analysis in this Chamber as it relates to the housing programme of the National Housing Corporation and of the Minister of Housing and Lands.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps the most important pillar of the housing programme that has been canvassed and championed by the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has been that early effort at vesting people with titles. Mr. Chairman, I believe that it is a laudable thing, but perhaps done in so much haste that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North did not consider a few of the issues that might arise. Mr. Chairman, I take this opportunity on the occasion of the debating of housing in this year's Estimates to raise a few of them.

Mr. Chairman, as I understand it, the programme for the vesting of titles to the National Housing Corporation tenants was a programme which essentially said that if you were a tenant of the National Housing Corporation and your rent was current, you had 100 days and within that 100 days, title would be transferred to you free of cost. Mr. Chairman, I am not suggesting that actual conveyance would be done within the 100 days, but that programme meant that during that 100-day period, and you were current in your rent and has been in occupation of a National Housing Corporation unit for about 20 or more years, that you were entitled to have the land conveyed to you free of cost. It is my understanding also that there was a cut-off date so that individuals who might have passed a threshold of the 20th year post that cut-off date, would not be eligible for the beneficence of the State. Sir, I believe that this approach to the vesting of lots, specifically the cut-off period, raises some significant issues of Law. Permit me, Sir, just to highlight the essence of one of those issues.

Mr. Chairman, in the realm of administrative Law which governs how Statutory Corporations would discharge their duties, it is quite clear that there is such a thing as legitimate expectation.

Mr. Chairman, legitimate expectation means principally that an individual is entitled to be treated in the same way by the State as other people. I have the meaning

of it in Wade and Forsythe, but I would not trouble the House to actually quote it now.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the concept of legitimate expectation is one that is known to all Lawyers. Essentially, it is a guarantee of equal treatment under the Law, so that individuals who are being dealt with by a Statutory Corporation are in my submission, I believe the Law supports that, entitled to equal treatment under the Law and to be able to claim the same beneficence from the State.

I would, therefore, suggest, Mr. Chairman, that individuals who passed that 20-year threshold and whose rents are also current, but might have passed it beyond the cut-off period have in essence the legitimate expectation to be treated by the Law in precisely the same way as other people would have been.

Sir, part of the reason for this is that the selection of cut-off date is of necessity an arbitrary act. There is no magic in the date that was chosen, so an individual who qualifies the day after, in my respectful submission, is entitled to claim of the State that the same condition that you set for John Brown and for Inez Cox, whoever they may be, should be applied to me in equal measure and therefore I should have my legitimate expectation to receive a gift of this housing unit from the State in exactly the same way as those individuals who qualify before the cut-off date.

Part of the essence of it too is that when a statutory corporation or an administrative tribunal or body decides to set a date, if they are going to use a cut-off date, that date the Law says clearly, should be of sufficiently long or distant time to come that individuals would all know exactly what is going to happen.

Mr. Chairman, in this case, the Election came in January 2008 and I believe the relevant cut-off date was April of 2008. This means that if the Crown wanted to make it quite clear, that in the functioning of the National Housing Corporation, the date itself was not arbitrary. It would require the National Housing Corporation to have set a date sufficiently hence, so that all individual would know.

Mr. Chairman, I am sure you are well aware that cut-off dates are known to Law without doubt but you would see that when it comes to operations of administrative arrangements and policies, and also by operation of statutes, those dates are usually set two years down the line, so that pension rights would have an effective date two years down the line, so as to make it quite clear that it is not an arbitrary time that is being selected.

Mr. Chairman, I believe that the National Housing Corporation, because we cannot blame the Crown, would have been the agency that set that date, April of whatever it was of 2008. The time-frame was too short and therefore arbitrary.

Secondly, all individuals who qualify after that, I believe, would have a legitimate expectation. Of course, the other caveat is that there must be equal treatment under the Law. If an individual is current, his or her rents are paid up, and they have been in occupation for 20 or more years but falling past the cut-off date, they are entitled in these circumstances to be treated equally under the Law and to expect equal treatment from the National Housing Corporation.

4.40 p.m.

I believe, therefore, that prior to any litigation that might arise - because my understanding is that is a very definite possibility - the corporation ought seriously to consider that date, because it was so short, is arbitrary, and therefore ought to be extended to a point in the distant future, such that the individuals would know for sure what the position is going to be.

Mr. Chairman, there is another matter of even more fundamental concern, in relation to the capacity of the National Housing Corporation to give away these land and housing units. Sir, I invite the Minister to consider the functions of the Housing Act. Honourable Members would be aware that the Housing Act, Cap. 226 of the Laws of Barbados, passed first in 1973, provides for the establishment of the National Housing Corporation. Chairman, the Housing Act says at Section 9:

“The functions of the Corporation shall be

(a) to acquire, hold and managed land and other property of any kind whatsoever and sell, let, lease or otherwise dispose of, such land or other property, on such terms and conditions as the Minister determines.”

Mr. Chairman, essentially what I am calling on the National Housing Corporation to consider is essentially whether it is within their legal powers to give away, free of cost, the land or units.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: That may be, Mr. Chairman, but the fact of the matter is that we are dealing with a course of conduct that the National Housing Corporation has embarked upon, and if the Members of Government, who were formally in Opposition, did not seek to pose any challenge to acts of the corporation at a time passed, that is a matter for them.

I believe that the Attorney-General of Barbados, an Office that is always constituted under the Constitution, ought to look seriously at the provisions of Clause 8. It says to sell, let, lease or otherwise dispose of. It is a cannon of statutory interpretation that when once you - and I believe that the practitioners in the House would be aware - have a general term following specific terms, that general term has to be read in the context of the terms that preceded it. Therefore, sell, let or lease, are all contractual arrangements requiring consideration, then I think it is arguable that the Corporation, under this clause, may not have the power to give away the National Housing Corporation units.

Sir, I am not being flippant. It is a matter that deserves serious consideration. If it requires an amendment to the Law, then come to Parliament and amend that Law, but to the extent I believe it is uncertain, based on the interpretation, it ought to be considered.

Mr. Chairman, there is yet another issue. Sir, Clause 17 (A) of the Act says:

“Where the corporation enters into a contract to sell land, it shall make the conveyance in the Form prescribed in the Second Schedule.”

17A(2) says:

“A conveyance made under the authority of and in the Form prescribed under that subsection (1), shall vest a good and marketable title in the purchaser, notwithstanding that he has not investigated the title of the Corporation for the period of years required by Section 50 of the Property Act.”

Mr. Chairman, there are further issues that arise from that. The essence of 17(A) is to guarantee title to land to purchasers from the National Housing Corporation, in circumstances where there is a sale of those lands and a sale of those lands carried out in the form of a conveyance as set out in the Schedule. If the National Housing Corporation is going to be giving lands or units to individuals, then a donee, I would submit, is not protected. Sir, equity protects what we call bona fide purchasers for value without notice. Sir, 17(A) would mean if the unit is given to an individual, the protection in relation to the guarantee of title under Section 17(A) would not be available to such a purchaser.

Mr. Chairman, the Other Side may, for whatever reasons they may find expedient, choose to ignore these comments. They are being offered from the point of view of the need...

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: We never gave away National Housing Corporation units. We agreed to sell them, so there is nothing that we ever did at the National Housing Corporation that would have required us to amend the Law. If the Government does not want to amend it, so be it, but the record would show that a view has been expressed today in this Honourable House, which suggests that the actions being taken by the National Housing Corporation may be contrary to the Law and that secondly, if pursued without amendment to the legislation, it may well mean that the guarantee of title which is given....

Mr. Chairman, any individual who has practised with the National Housing Corporation knows that sometimes the National Housing Corporation's title is so convoluted and that sometimes all kinds of issues arise, for example, easements, the existence of which cannot be established or cannot be released. Therefore, this guarantee of title is what enables the wheels, in relation to the National Housing Corporation selling land, to turn smoothly.

Sir, anything that we do now that might call into question the ability of the National Housing Corporation to guarantee title, is something that is worthy of consideration.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I believe that if the Corporation intends to support this policy, it needs to look to be sure that actions are within the Law. If the learned Attorney-General considers it and finds that there are, then so be it. Whatever legal challenge that we have mounted would be determined by the court. But I believe, as the old people always say, a stitch in time saves nine. It is up to the Government to decide whether or not they are going to amend the Act, or if they are going to ignore that there may be other views. But I think the Attorney-General, a week ago, said that opposing views must contend, and therefore I believe that the Attorney-General should consider the matter to see whether his view would contend or whether it would concur.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. Chairman, I rise to share those comments made by the Honourable Members on Both Sides of this Honourable Chamber, in relation to the unscrupulous landlords. I can remember clearly in the past, and I believe in the present, there are still many landlords who choose to convert properties that they are renting to accommodate a larger number of persons, when we know, in truth and in fact, those properties were not designed to accommodate such numbers.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown spoke to the fact that there are some of those landlords who encourage the use of communal facilities, when we know that one bathroom cannot accommodate a family of 10. Honourable Members also spoke to the large amount of money that tenants, both local and non-national, are expected to pay. Mr. Chairman, I think it is a wrong concept that is being promoted and I believe Government has a responsibility for looking after the needs of persons who live in deplorable conditions.

We learnt about someone living in the St. Michael area, who had converted pig pens into living conditions for individuals. Sir, I believe human-beings have a dignity that should always be preserved. Therefore, I oppose any effort by anyone to develop housing under those circumstances and indeed charging such high rents.

Mr. Chairman, I would want the Honourable Member for St. Philip North to indicate to us, the status of the promised Rent Control Act that was touted in the past to ensure that some efforts are being made to control those kinds of living conditions, and the kind of rents that some landlords choose to impose on tenants.

Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West spoke about insurance on Government-owned properties, including the housing units.

4.50 p.m.

Of course there are many schools and other Government facilities for which we must ensure proper insurance policies on these properties. I would wish to ensure, and this is not a problem the Minister himself can deal with, but I would like to encourage property owners to work assiduously towards ensuring their properties. There is nothing more disturbing at 2.00 a.m., 6.00 a.m., or 5.00 p.m. than to hear that constituents have lost properties, in most instances all of their property, and when you check the houses are not insured.

I want to congratulate those insurance agencies that provide the opportunity for persons to insure chattel houses in instalments. I know that ICB has been the vanguard in this regard. I think that is very significant, because for one to pay \$1 000 or \$1 500 in insurance in one instalment for a house, we know that a number of persons working in the lower income bracket would not be able to pay that all at once. I would remind them that Barbadians have always been very resilient. Once they have their properties, they do what our parents and fore-parents did, they cut their noses to spoil their features and would forego a washing machine so that money could go towards paying the insurance, for when people are dislocated, especially with children, families that are dislocated, can experience much humiliation. I believe that we should seriously continue, as

Members of Parliament and as community leaders, to encourage individual householders to pay closer attention ensuring their properties.

Sir, I am not very good at the Estimates, as you would know with the finances, but I would want the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands, to indicate to us where we might be able to find in these Estimates the funds for the refurbishment or the expansion of Sherbourne Conference Centre. I know that there would be a specific project, but I have not been able to locate it in Estimates. I know that the Government has spoken about the expansion of what is now called the Lloyd Erskine Conference Centre.

Sir, I know that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North spoke about the White Paper of 1998 and that there were 9 000 disabled persons who lacked some form of assistance. I agree that persons who are disabled and others who are vulnerable, the aged, and persons living with HIV, must be given specific attention. I believe that White Paper needs to be reviewed in light of the fact that 11 years later, the numbers would have been reduced, but we still need to cater to the needs of those individuals. Any new units established must certainly cater to the needs of the disabled and others.

Sir, I know for sure that the Urban Development Commission, Rural Development Commission and, of course, the recommendations that would have come from the Poverty Alleviation Bureau would have assisted hundreds of those persons in need. I can speak of the ones in the Constituency where I live. I know that the Rural Development Commission presented a document. It was always without the name of a person, particularly those persons living with HIV/AIDS. Here was a code, which I think the correct, because confidentiality is extremely important. I believe that review would show how those approximately 9 000 persons would have been reduced over the 10/11-year period as would have been indicated in the White Paper.

Sir, the topic I am going to touch is a ticklish one, but I need to speak to it, because Barbadians are not and have not been part of a culture of squatting. I would wish for the Honourable Minister, yes, the Government is new, but it is a challenge we must tackle as early as possible, particularly when we know that it is not the culture of Barbadians, but when they see others who have grown accustomed to the country, how they live, people squatting on Government's land and otherwise, Barbadians would say I have nowhere to live either, and if those persons can do it and they do not belong, perhaps, so can we. Therefore, I believe those locations or districts where families have been squatting should be addressed in a very systematic manner.

I know that the Barbados Labour Party as a Government sought to put systems in place to ensure that we look after the needs of persons squatting in communities. We all know what a deleterious impact squatting can have, especially in Zone 1 areas, not only for the persons who are squatting there, but indeed, for the rest of Barbados, because that represents the largest percentage of the Zone 1 water resource areas in the country.

Sir, I would wish for the Government to tell us, when I look at the survey which was done about three years ago, there were persons who said they were on a spot because a politician sent them there. Perhaps, that was not always true either. Sir, people come for an interview, they talk to you and say, they saw a place, and you say that is a Government spot and it would not be wise to go there. They still say the politician, but our backs are broad, and we receive some criticism that really not always merited. That is one of the problems.

Sir, another set of persons say they like the area, another set says they cannot afford to pay rent, which is understood too, another set says they needed somewhere to live and there were squabbles in the family, or families were too large and they could not stay there any longer, there was overcrowding. Of course, we were evicted and we needed someplace to put our house, or we wanted to own a home in these hard times so we went squatting. We got notices to quit, and therefore, we chose to move; land rent is too high or our house was burnt, and it goes on and on.

Sir, I believe that the Government needs to urgently look at those areas where persons have been squatting. I know that Rock Hall, St. Philip, is one of the biggest areas. If we are to look after the health and welfare of all citizens, including those who are squatting, I believe the matter must be addressed in a fashion similar to the construction of private dwellings as well as housing units, because at the end of day all of us should be living and receiving the best benefit.

Sir, I can speak of the squatting resettlement areas the Barbados Labour Party had started to look at where four sites were identified to accommodate those persons in Belview, the Belle and Rock Hall, St. Philip. We looked at Four Roads, Barkers Road, Haggatt Hall, Stuarts Land,

Tweedside Road, Eckstien Village and a number of others, because 233 households are large numbers. At Station Hill, yesterday evening, I saw new structures to the South East of a pavilion, as soon as you past the Police Station going in that easternly direction. I believe we need to address it urgently so that those households can have a better life in some kind of relocation project, with a package for a house spot somewhere where the land is not Zone 1 that will impact on the lives of others.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: The final comment I would wish to raise, I will not go into the derelict sites. I will deal with the infilling. The only thing I will ask is, when the infilling begins, some location be left as an opening for recreational facilities and some green area.

The final comment I would like to close on is, those persons who have built houses, and the National Housing Corporation has been dealing with it for more than 10 years. They built their own posh houses, and there is nothing wrong with that, they did it honestly, but they have chosen to rent out the houses, while remaining in the housing units. Therefore, persons who would be glad to come into the units, people with children and disabled people and others, would be left out of the loop, because that person who would have already acquired a property refused to vacate, but would still be collecting rent from the other property.

Sir, I know some persons, and there are no less than six and not working class persons either, who have been able to benefit from the free houses that have been offered, even though they own another house. I think that is where confusion will kick in, where others are saying they have been there all these years and do not seem to qualify, and it looks as though that cut-off date would leave me out of the loop, but others who are in the units have been able to get a house, meaning a unit, when they already own their own houses.

5.00 p.m.

I believe that is something that the Ministry of Housing must look at carefully.

Sir, I know there has been a measure put in place way back in the past, that if persons have already have houses, they would not qualify to get a second house through the Ministry of Housing and Lands, but a lot of that has been happening and people on the outside are saying it is because they know the Joneses and that is why they are being left out of the loop. Sir, this will create a disparity if equity is not being shown in the way people are allocated or offered houses in this whole exercise of the housing unit they are qualified to have.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you on that matter.

On the motion of Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE, seconded by Hon. F.J. STUART, Mr. Chairman reported progress to Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 5.30 p.m.

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

The question that the House be suspended until 5.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER, suspended the House accordingly.

5.04 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

When the suspension was taken, the House was in Committee of Supply, to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Resumed)

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

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, I rise to contribute to the debate on Head 38. First of all, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Housing on his effort to try to deal, in a very careful and methodical way, with the housing problems facing our people.

Sir, I want to say that the way in which we deal with these things is not simple. Sir, in that respect, we have many task masters to please, if we are to adequately address those difficult issues in housing. Sir, one of the things I really think that we need to appreciate, as far as that is concerned, is that when we speak about housing, we are not speaking about three or four Barbadoses.

Sir, very often, when we seek to address a lot of the difficult issues facing our country, we seem to partition up Barbados and believe that the actions we undertake, in respect of one particular thing, does not impact on other things.

I want to say, Sir, that in trying to resolve the very difficult issues of housing, we must also take into consideration the impact that it has on the wider Barbados as a whole. Sir, we live in an environment which, as we know, is fragile and we want to ensure that as we develop this country, we do so with the objective of trying to preserve the environmental integrity of this country as a whole.

Sir, in that respect, when it comes to the whole question of housing, what we are also trying to do, is to provide Barbadians with the type of housing that we can look at and be justly proud. When we say housing, Sir, we should not look at housing really in terms of just the physical structure of a house, but also the environment in which that housing is actually placed. I think, Sir, we need to be mindful of that, when we are discussing housing and the issues that affect Barbadians when it comes to housing.

Sir, one of the unfortunate things that we have seen developed over the years, is that in many cases, housing areas develop and we have noticed the lack of services in those areas where we have placed them. Sir, that in the future, we need to look to see how we can actually put services closer to persons homes, so that the services are in the areas. As the lack of that, we have seen a negative impact in a lot of housing areas.

Sir, I heard earlier, the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, when he spoke about the Pine and how people view the Pine. I want to say that largely what we have done sometimes in the past, is that the way in which we have gone about housing developments, we have actually contributed to the image that those housing estates have developed.

Sir, we have not recognised that if we are going to put in a housing estate, that we also need to put in the necessary infrastructure that will service the people who are living in those housing estates.

Sir, a simple thing that we might talk about, for instance, is the whole question of nurseries in that housing estate, the extent to which we have put in place, adequate nurseries to provide for mothers who need to have their children taken care of.

Sir, the whole question of police stations, whether or not we have enough police stations located near housing areas, as well as putting libraries in communities. Sir, these are essential services that are part of a community.

5.30 p.m.

In terms of looking at the whole question of housing developments, we have not been looking to ensure that communities are afforded the kind of services that would help them to feel comfortable within those housing environments.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to look at the whole question of parks. In a lot of these areas, we have seen the putting in place of parks which were done on second thought. When we approach the whole question of housing in Barbados, we need to recognise the overall impact on the

environment and on the people themselves, in terms of being comfortable in those environments.

Mr. Chairman, I really want to look at how we have utilised our land resource in some cases. Sir, we have seen situations in Barbados where large tracks of land have been taken out for housing, and when you look to see who are the principal beneficiaries of the best housing, you find that they are people from overseas.

Mr. Chairman, that is unfortunate, because in a country where we are saying that we want to provide our people with an environment in which they can actually realise their true potential, we realise they cannot do that in an environment which, at the same time, seeks to undermine them in terms of their physical and mental well-being. I really think that we need to look at this in a very serious way.

Mr. Chairman, I want to applaud the Minister of Housing and Lands for his efforts. Mr. Chairman, when we look to do new housing developments in the future, we should try to ensure that we make the community which we are establishing a new community and not one in which we have residents lacking certain services.

Sir, we have also seen in Barbados a situation where in many cases, land prices have gone up. Sir, we need to look at what is aggravating this housing crisis. Mr. Chairman, I like to look at the Constituency of St. Michael West Central, because in many cases you find that in your Constituency, a lot of the reasons why the housing crisis is being aggravated lies in those things. Sir, when we look at them, we find a lot of the problems that are there.

Sir, for instance, you have situations St. Michael West Central where families are getting too large for the house they live in, and as a result, they need to find a way of actually getting additional housing. Sir, that is one of the things we need to recognise.

Sir, we also have situations in St. Michael West Central where persons are occupying houses that are badly in need of repairs. Sir, part of the problem is that these persons who are occupying the houses cannot really afford any other accommodation. These are the basic issues that are driving this whole question of housing.

Sir, there is also the situation in St. Michael West Central of tenantry issues which need to be resolved. Sir, I know that this might more relate to the Urban Development Commission. Sir, one of the main reasons why we are finding a lot of these difficulties is the fact that we are taking too long to resolve issues when it comes to tenancies. We have people within St. Michael West Central who have been living in tenancies for the last 14 years who are finding it very difficult to actually acquire

the land on which they live. Sir, we need to find a way to resolve these issues.

Sir, within St. Michael West Central, there are some vacant lots which need to be debushed on a regular basis. Mr. Chairman, you do not know who the owner of the land is. You have not seen them for a while. You write letters to find out what is their interest in the land and you cannot get any reply. Sir, as a result of that, land that could be used for housing purposes is then left there and nobody can touch it.

Sir, these are the very difficult issues, besides the issues that are already there, that are driving the question of housing. Sir, we need to look at it in a very creative way to see how we can actually get our teeth into trying to resolve these difficult issues that we find in those communities that drive that question of housing.

Sir, I also want to look at the whole question of housing solutions. Sir, we need to recognise that one of the normal aspirations of a Barbadian is generally to own something, and if it is owning a piece of the rock, it is something that we should support.

Sir, we need to look at the harsh reality that not every Barbadian would be able to do it. Therefore, it is Government's responsibility that where a Barbadian demonstrates the necessary aptitude to do so, that we facilitate that process, but not to the disadvantage of anyone else. Mr. Chairman, there are other ways in which we can help Barbadians to feel that they can at least own their own property.

Sir, one of the things I really want to compliment Government on in that respect, is the move we made to transfer ownership of the housing units to the tenants. Mr. Chairman, this demonstrates that we understand that people need to feel a sense of ownership when they can own the particular unit they live in.

Mr. Chairman, that is the trend in which a lot of countries are moving, because they recognise that they have limited land space and would need to maximise the potential of the land they are using. Mr. Chairman, the whole question of terrace units is something that we want to do.

Mr. Chairman, in trying to create a community that people can feel proud of, it is important that we look at the designs of the terrace units. I think that point was made earlier. We need to make them attractive so that people would want to become part of that particular community. It is extremely important that we encourage moves like that and help people to really want to be part of this thing in terms of owning a terrace unit. I think that Barbadians would not be averse to doing something like that.

Mr. Chairman, I also want to look at the whole question of the sustainable community. Sir, one of the things we find a lot in our communities is that of older persons who need proper housing. As a Government, we might need to see in a very proactive way how we can help to assist older persons living in dilapidated housing conditions even more quickly than we are doing at this present time.

Sir, the provision for dealing with issues such as these has not been cut in the Estimates. This represents the commitment of the Government to ensure that those persons in society who might actually need assistance from Government, in terms of housing, especially older persons, are adequately dealt with. In that way, it would at least ease the pressure that we feel in terms of trying to provide adequate housing units for persons within those communities.

Sir, some of the units that have been transferred to the tenants have had some problems, whether or not they were electrical or in terms of the actual structure of the units.

5.30 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I want to encourage the Minister to see whether or not, in some cases, assistance could be given to tenants who have actually taken over housing units for which there were unresolved problems prior to those persons taking over those units. Sir, I know of one instance where there was an electrical problem within a particular 'block' and prior to handing over the unit, the electrical problem was not resolved. I think it has still not been resolved and I think that is an issue to which we need to look.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: The next point I want to make as far as that is concerned is that, in some cases, the actual doors to the units would need to be fixed, prior to the units being handed over to the tenant. Sir, I want to say that as yet, some of those doors have not been fixed. I think those are issues I want the Minister of Housing and Lands to look at, to see whether or not we could at least provide some assistance as far as trying to have those doors fixed, so that the tenants cannot complain that the National Housing Corporation has handed them a unit with deficiencies.

Mr. Chairman, in relation to housing solutions, I want to say we need to support the idea that where Barbadians want to own property, that the Government has to facilitate them in that process. I also think that in terms of housing solutions, we need to take a rather broad look at housing solutions and recognise that we need to facilitate

Barbadians in the ownership of property in whatever way or means they deem fit for themselves.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add my voice in respect to housing solutions. I first want to congratulate the work being done by the Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Sir, the Minister has embarked on what is certainly an ambitious housing programme over the next five years, as is proposed by the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto. In my own Constituency of St. James Central, we had the benefit of some of those proposals. We have residents who are part of the Redman's Village community, where I believe more than 20 persons have been able to benefit from the programme introduced, where those persons who have been residents in their units for in excess of 20 years, have been able to have their conveyances.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Chairman, there seems to be a problem developing and we would want to take a five minute Suspension while we check on this matter.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I begin to smell it myself. Are you asking for 10 minutes then?

On the motion of the Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported progress to His Honour the Deputy SPEAKER, and ask for leave to sit again.

Mr. CHAIRMAN vacated the Chair. Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER assume the Chair and reported accordingly.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in light of a problem which seems to be developing, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now suspended for 10 minutes, to be resumed at 6.00 p.m., to check on a matter.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 6.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

5.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken, this Honourable House was in Committee of Supply and to that it will now revert.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This Honourable House is now in Committee of Supply. The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Sir, when we took the break, I was addressing some of the issues as they relate to housing within the industrial estates within the Redman Village area and I am sure, Mr. Chairman, some of these issues would extend to some of the National Housing Corporation housing areas within and across the breadth of Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, one of the issues we have in that area is the whole question of shared sewage facility services and this has been causing some problems among tenants in that, occasionally, you get somebody who wants to block off the septic tanks or well within the area, putting the other four or five units that share that facility at risk. I have already chatted with the Minister about this issue on a few occasions and we have had some wells dug in the area to address the problem, but there are still a number of persons experiencing that. Sir, from time to time, we have some persons, who are not as neighbourly as we would like, creating these problems.

Mr. Chairman, the whole question, as well to the maintenance and repair of the units by the National Housing Corporation, is an issue that rears its head from time to time. I think that it is one of those areas that the National Housing Corporation would have to look seriously at, going forward, how do they solve that particular problem of adequate maintenance of the units.

Mr. Chairman, I would want to suggest that it would provide an opportunity, whether that is done through the budget Constituency Councils, but it does create an opportunity for some of the smaller business persons, who live within the community to be engaged on some contractual basis to perform this maintenance exercise. Mr. Chairman, you generally find that these sorts of situations happen to elderly persons living within the housing unit. Sir, that reminds me of the whole question of dealing with the financing of homes for the elderly.

Mr. Chairman, we now have a situation developing in Barbados where our senior persons who completed their mortgages over the past 20 years or 30 years, most of these persons are now retired and are on fixed income and limited pensions. While we would like to think that people

would provide for their old age in a significant way, we do have those persons, who unfortunately, were not able to put aside the sort of nest egg that they should and the impact of inflation and other cost of living problems over the years, have meant that the cost of daily living is a challenge for this.

Mr. Chairman, I think we are approaching the time that we have to seriously look at the whole question of the reverse mortgages, where old seniors, particularly where

6.00 p.m.

they have no dependents for their houses, can look at the whole question of utilising that equity within their homes for generating a bit of income at this time, so that they will be able to carry out the necessary repairs to the houses.

When you look around at a lot of these houses, they are in need of repairs, particularly things like the eave boards and those parts of the building that are exposed to the weather. It certainly would be an opportunity if there is that vision for those people, rather than having to come to the State for repairs and so on, because we are people, and a number of these seniors - I know the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, some weeks ago, made light of the fact that one of our Honourable Members was painting a bungalow, but these are the challenges.

I remember many years ago delivering, as part of my Rotary duties, hampers to a family in St. James in the Carlton area, I think it was. I delivered my hamper to the home, which was a board home, and from the outside it looked as though those persons were needy type of persons.

I was called across the street by a gentleman in a bungalow. He and his wife were there. He explained to me the challenges they were encountering in meeting the recurring expenses as well as any insurance and land taxes for their home. I was, in all honesty, taken back because I did not think about those challenges that were facing some of the elderly within our society. I was then able to look at things a little bit better. The fact that just because somebody is in a bungalow and it looks in reasonable condition, does not necessarily mean they are not experiencing those challenges that other elderly persons would have.

I think it is an opportunity, certainly for us as a people, to look at that method of financing. That elderly couple, as far as I recall, had land and so on. They were farmers and kids to leave the house and so to. It is something that we certainly should be looking at, going forward.

Sir, I would like to support some of the Honourable Members on This Side who have made the point, certainly in terms of how we develop our communities going forward, certainly at Lancaster where there is provision for 140 odd homes, and for which I have been assured by the Minister that those Lancaster lots, Phases 1 and 2, should be coming on stream towards the end of the calendar years 2009/2010. I certainly would think that when developing that area, because it is a fairly big area, geographically, we would ensure that there is provision for recreational facilities within that area.

As a matter of fact, some of the residents of Morgans have indicated that there was a provision or talk some years ago. May be the Honourable Member for St. James North, who is not in his seat, but might still be in the precinct of this Honourable Chamber...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two more minutes.

Hon. E. G. HUTSON: ... whether there was provision for some recreational facilities. I think an area had been earmarked for a pasture and so on, that would create some recreation for residents of Greenwich Village, or Morgan, as we refer to it. I would like to think that going forward when that Lancaster area is developed, provision would be made to ensure that we have those recreational facilities within the precinct of the community.

Sir, I would want to again congratulate the Minister for the work he is doing, and to encourage him not to be side-tracked by the comments of those on the other side, but to move forward with the programme of the Democratic Labour Party in terms of their housing programme for 2008 forward.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, I would like to speak to a few things that I did not get to earlier today in my intervention. If I may deal with one or two of the simpler ones up front. In relation to the whole issue of the titling of land, one of the things that has distinguished Barbados from many other Caribbean islands, and may I say other developing countries has been the ability to bring title suit proceedings, as you know, so that persons who have had land passed down to them from seed to seed, as it is described, may have the ability to convert that physical possession of the land into a form of title document, such that they can use that land as a basis for the creation of additional wealth. They can go to the bank. They can borrow against the land.

The famous economist Hernando de Soto, has pointed out that one of the reasons why much of Africa and Latin America remains undeveloped is because they have not been able to convert the communal possession of land into physical titling, which allows them to be able to access more money in order to improve their tools, to have access to building out their houses, et cetera.

We have been fortunate to have the title suit option and it is really a fictional process, as you know. While I was Honourable Attorney-General, the deceased, Court of Appeal Judge Justice Williams did, excellent work in modifying the process for us, such instead of it being a three to four-year process, as it now is, that we could reform it to be completed within 6 to 9 months. The rules are there and the work is there.

I believe that while the Honourable Member for St. Joseph was Honourable Attorney-General there were issues raised by the Land Registration Department, and the Chief Parliamentary Council wanted time to deal with it. I believe that those issues have now been resolved and I would urge the Minister of Housing and the Honourable Attorney-General to be able to treat to this matter, with some degree of urgency.

It will make a significant difference to a number of Barbadians, who have had the lots passed to them seed to seed, but who cannot go and borrow money to fix up the house, who cannot go and borrow to buy tools if they are farmers, who cannot do anything with it, because they cannot prove ownership. The irony is, once that fictional suit passes the court, you get what is known in Law as a perfect title, because the Registrar's conveyance is, in fact, the best title that can be given in Law in this jurisdiction.

Asides.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: Sir, I beg to move that you report progress to His Honour the SPEAKER and beg for leave to sit again.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I beg to second that.

6.10 p.m.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in light of the problem which seems to be persisting, we have decided to suspend the Sitting. Sir, the problem is one where the air-conditioning system seems to be malfunctioning. The technicians are on their way, but in interest of utmost safety, we think we should suspend the Sitting.

I would like to remind all Honourable Members that one recognises the nature of the problem that is existing, and just remember that when the House is on suspension, it begins at 9.30 a.m. sharp.

Thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 9.30 a.m.

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

The question that the House be now suspended until tomorrow, Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 9.30 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

6.11 p.m.

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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. Opening. The source opens without the convening sentence (Pursuant to the adjournment ... met at ...). The date is taken from the heading of the source.

Q2. Committee of Supply, Head 38, after the 2.00 p.m. resumption. The Chairman calls 'The Honourable Member for St. Michael North', but the speech that follows is labelled 'Hon. E. G. HUTSON', who refers to 'my own Constituency of St. James Central'. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Committee of Supply, Hon. D. O'N. Inniss. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss says that 'an additional 392' house lots have been identified and, a few paragraphs later, 'the 500 house lots plus another 382 identified'. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Take-slips. One take-slip reads '10.20 p.m.' among morning slips, presumably 10.20 a.m.; two consecutive take-slips in Mr. J. D. Paul's speech both read '5.30 p.m.'; '3:20', '5.00 p.m.' and '6.10 p.m.' appear as paragraphs. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Suspensions. Before the luncheon suspension the source has no motion by Hon. R. D. Jones, only his seconder's words and the procedural sentences. The House was suspended at about 5.50 p.m. by Mr. Deputy Speaker but resumed under 'Mr. SPEAKER'. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Speaker labels. Dr. W. F. Duguid appears also as 'DR. W. F. DUGID'; Mr. D. St.E. Kellman as 'His Excellency' and once 'His Excellency D. S St.E. KELLMAN'; Hon. F. J. Stuart once as 'Hon. J. STUART'. Several speeches in Committee address 'Mr. Speaker'. Printed as in the source.

Q7. Close of sitting. Business ended early because the air-conditioning seemed to be malfunctioning; the Committee of Supply had not finished Head 38. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly resumed on Monday, 23rd March, 2009, with Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair, and went back into Committee of Supply on Head 38, Ministry

of Housing and Lands, the subject of the whole day's proceedings.

Hon. J. D. E. Boyce spoke for the Government's infilling programme and the possibility of adding storeys to existing housing. Mr. H. F. Lashley, who said he had lived in Government housing areas for more than 35 years, welcomed infilling for the Pine, Wildey and Parkinson Field and called the rent-to-own initiative a revolutionary piece of social engineering. Miss C. Y. Forde asked for help for families displaced by fires, land slippage and eviction, a further facility for battered women, and house spots for villagers at Spring Farm, Forty Acres and Allen View. Dr. the Hon. E. R. Byer-Suckoo described overcrowding among her constituents and praised the Minister's work at Greens and Constant. Mr. D. D. Marshall pointed to houses at risk of slipping in Suriname and Chapman Village, St. Joseph, and asked that the lands at Branchbury be used for those affected.

Mr. G. W. Payne asked the Minister to define 'housing solutions', to say how many conveyances had been delivered since January 15, and to amend the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act. Mr. G. A. Clarke noted a reduction of \$459 000 in the Housing Planning Unit vote. The Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, supported the Inter-American Development Bank's Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme but warned that a \$100 000 mortgage at 6 per cent, about \$600 a month, would require an income of \$1 800 or more, so that many low-income Barbadians would be excluded, and that the \$1 million provided for \$10 000 subsidies to those earning under \$20 000 a year was not enough. The Committee reported progress and the House was suspended at 12.43 p.m. until 2.00 p.m.

In the afternoon Mr. R. St.C. Toppin urged the Government to abandon infilling, proposing instead an audit of housing estates so that tenants could switch units, and complained that houses were being allocated from a list approved by the Minister; Mr. D. St.E. Kellman twice rose on points of order. The Minister of Housing and Lands, Hon. M. A. Lashley, said the US \$30 million IDB loan signed on April 8, 2008 had met its conditions, that land at Branchbury, Woodbourne and Clifton was now Crown land, and that a shortage of land surveyors had delayed titles, and quoted a former Government paper on the 60 per cent of Barbadians unable to afford a home.

Mr. R. C. Eastmond urged the National Housing Corporation to build upwards and to collect its rents. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman defended infilling and called for derelict properties to be acquired and for Ministry workers to build roads into new developments. Hon. D. O'N. Inniss said 500

house lots had been confirmed in the first year and more identified. Mr. H. F. Lashley paid tribute to community practitioners in the Pine. Hon. P. M. T. Todd contrasted the parties' approaches to terrace units, Dr. W. F. Duguid questioned rents and titles in NHC units, and Mr. D. D. Marshall questioned the legal basis for vesting title free of cost in tenants. Miss C. Y. Forde asked about the promised Rent Control Act.

After a suspension from 5.04 p.m., Mr. J. D. Paul and Hon. E. G. Hutson spoke, Mr. Hutson raising shared sewage facilities and reverse mortgages for elderly owners. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce then moved a short suspension because of 'a problem developing'. On resumption Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley urged reform of the title suit process, after which Mr. Boyce explained that the air-conditioning system seemed to be malfunctioning, and on his motion the House was suspended at 6.11 p.m. until Tuesday, March 24, 2009 at 9.30 a.m.