
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Pursuant to the Adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, November 10, 2009.

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B.
(Speaker)

His Honour K. St.C. BEST, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.
(Deputy Speaker)

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), Dip.Ed.,
LL.B (Hons.) (Lond.), LL.M. (Leic.).

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

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

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B. (Leader
of the Opposition)

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

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

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

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, F.C.C.A., C.A. (Minister of
Trade, Industry and Commerce)

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, Ed.D., M.Ed., B.A., Dip.
Theology (Minister of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Urban Development)

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B. (Hons.)

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.
(Chairman of Committees)

Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc. (Minister of State,
Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and
Urban Development)

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc. (Minister of
State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade Union
Movement and International Business)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER, M.Sc., B.A. (Minister of
Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and International Business)

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B.,B.S.
(Minister of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the
Environment)

*Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan
Harewood.*

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable
Members. This

House is now in session. Honourable Members, let
me first say quickly before we begin that I have noticed
that sometimes on mornings when I bow to you in
acknowledgment of your presence and mutual respect, a
number of Honourable Members are doing their own thing
and are ignoring me.

Honourable Members, in addition to it feeling a bit
stupid on my part, I wish that we would adhere to this show
of mutual respect. I do not think it is asking too much, so
please let us keep it that way.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, October
27, 2009.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, it is my
understanding

that the Minutes were circulated, and subject to any observations or corrections, I beg to move that these Minutes be confirmed.

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

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

PAPERS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, Investment, Telecommunications and Energy, I am commanded to lay the following:

Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No.5) Order, 2009;

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce, I am commanded to lay the following:

Annual Report of the Fair Trading Commission (FTC) for the year ending March 31, 2009.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 2009, be read a first time.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 4 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225, IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF THE PARCEL OF LAND THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN SITUATE AT IVY IN THE PARISH OF SAINT MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, as is Law, the National Housing Corporation is only able to convey and give good title by virtue of vesting. We have to do the process of vesting Crown's lands in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that since 2003, the then Government sought to divest rental units under the control of the National Housing Corporation. When this Administration came to Government, the promise was made that units of the National Housing Corporation would be transferred free of cost, except for legal fees, for units where tenants occupied those units for 20 years or more.

Mr. Speaker, it must be stated that there were a number of challenges. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North knew there were challenges. In fact, those challenges came after the Honourable Member was removed from the Ministry of Housing and Lands.

Mr. Speaker, if I may state some of those challenges in relation to the disposal of the units. Sir, what I came and found was that we had no thorough preparation in terms of preparing the units for sale. Sir, let me say that one crucial step was the fact that some of the estates were not vested in the National Housing Corporation. I must state to this Honourable House that Deacons, Rosemont, Fernihurst, the Ivy, Maynards, Kensington Lodge and London Bourne Towers are outstanding in terms of vesting them in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I know it would come as a surprise to Barbadians that the London Bourne Towers has not been vested in the National Housing Corporation as yet. Sir, we have moved at swift pace and today we are vesting the Ivy Estate into the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, for your information and for the country's information, Ivy Estate is located at Government Hill, St. Michael. It consists of 61 three-bedroom units. This development was completed in 1985 and was built completely by direct labour of the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to announce to this Honourable House that the surveying has been completed and that a certificate of compliance has been issued by the Chief Town Planner for 44 units. I must also state to this Honourable House that 41 of the 61 tenants have qualified under the Government's 20-year transfer programme. Further, 39 tenants have signed and have returned their Offer of Acceptance to the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am a little appalled because when I examined the file, there was an absence of representation from the former Representative in asking when would the estate be vested in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, there was an absence from the former representative but I must say to this Honourable House that the Back Bench, the current Representative, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, has constantly urged, cajoled, poked at and asked me when would these units be vested into the National Housing Corporation. Sir, the Honourable Member has done his work and I must congratulate him for aiding and abetting in the process, in allowing his constituents to have the real possibility of becoming property owners in this country.

Mr. Speaker, what can we make of this? Sir, I will go back to the challenges. What we also recognised was that no surveying activity was undertaken to prepare the units for sale.

10.30 a.m.

H:No.A48()

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Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, again we had to reactivate that process. We had to hold meetings and get teams together. We had to set time-lines and we had to engage meetings with the relevant agency, the Town Planning Department, so that we could have an ongoing process. Sir, we have up-to-date meetings on the process thus far in relation to the transfer of the units.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other major challenges is in relation to extensions. There were multiple extensions by tenants occupying the units. Of course, if someone puts an extension on the unit, without the permission of the Town Planner, that is a breach of the Law. Sir, we are confronted with matters of this sort and the former Administration was confronted with problems like these multiple extensions. In fact, one evening, you can drive pass an estate and the next morning when you drive pass again, you would see two rooms built on. Sir, the wardens at the National Housing Corporation have their jobs cut out in terms of policing

matters like those but they do not have the power to stop it. Sir, in relation to that, it is a challenge we have to confront.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I must also state to you that it is a fact that the former Administration had looked at special legislation but, I believe, that the powers, at the time, did not agree with the special legislation because it was their view that you would have been condoning illegal activity and that if the special legislation was passed, that it would have condoned illegal activity because these extensions are illegal. Sir, some people say that it is similar to placing condoms in prison because it would be condoning illegal activity.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that a lot more could have been done, that all you need is to engage the tenants who actually did the extension; engage the Town Planning agency and come to some common position because, even in some common places and open areas within the estate, we have extensions.

Sir, I know in one instance, next to a Government's unit, there is a very successful canteen business, so the question is the balancing of the interest. Are you going to disrupt a profitable business and place people on the unemployment line? Mr. Speaker, we have to be extremely sensitive to these matters and I believe that some common agreement could be reached between the tenants and the Government.

Mr. Speaker, that is why at this particular stage, within the National Housing Corporation, I can tell you that there is now a move to establish tenants' associations so that all those grievances and all those matters could be dealt with by the National Housing Corporation with Representatives from the tenants' associations and Representatives from the other agencies involved and those connected, which would be affected by those matters.

Mr. Speaker, I must also say that under the sale of the Terrace Unit Programme, under the Barbados Labour Party that you had to pay and, Sir, in some instances, people paid all their gratuities and all their pensions.

I have a case which I have to deal with in which a pensioner was asked to bring all of her money, which would have wiped out all her savings and all her hard-earned money.

Mr. Speaker, the other problem is that they had no upgrading programme. Sir, they put no upgrading programmes in place in terms of offering the units for sale.

Mr. Speaker, only recently we started the electrical upgrading programme in Deacon's Farm, in the Constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. The reason we started the electrical upgrade is

because even in the area of the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, there were a lot of house fires. Sir, in the first week in the Ministry I was called out by the Minister as a result of a house fire to two units. Further, in the area of Silver Hill and in the area of the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, there were fires in those areas and this is why we started the electrical upgrade programme.

Mr. Speaker, we have had some challenges and we tried to get the programme moving because we believe in safety of the tenants. Sir, those units were built back in the time when you had only a limited amount of electrical appliances. Sir, using the language of the electrician, there were single-phased units, and now we have to upgrade them so that they could carry the necessary load for the appliances. Sir, it was a challenge but Cabinet has agreed to the vesting of those units at Deacon's Farm.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Special Audit of the National Housing Corporation is now a document of this House. Sir, through that document the Auditor General was concerned about the lack of vesting and the fact that a lot of projects were started but the vesting was started years after. For example, with your indulgence, if I may move to the Special Audit of the National Housing Corporation at Chapter 4, page 28 of 45, Sir, the Auditor General said:

"During the last five years, the Corporation has offered for sale many lots of properties. However, it has been unable to convey these properties because of vesting issues, that is, the transfer of legal titles of land from the Crown to the lands from the Crown to the Corporation."

Mr. Speaker, then the Auditor General speaks further and this is what he said:

"The Corporation built 10 houses at Six Cross Roads in St. Philip."

Sir, I want to say that this is again a manifestation of what we were saying and of what I said in the first two months as Minister, that there was an absence of any programme by the National Housing Corporation for the past 14 years in St. Philip. Sir, I said that they built no houses and I am correct when I said it because it is substantiated by the Auditor General. Sir, after building the 10 houses in 2005, nothing else was done.

H/A48/10:40 Sequence 4

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Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: They subsequently offered the properties for sale in 2005 to applicants who accepted the offer. Sir, the applicants then signed agreements with the Corporation to pay rents, they paid what was termed an

Occupancy Rent until they could obtain mortgages to pay for their property, at which time the Corporation issued a conveyance vesting the property to them.

He went on to say that these properties were not conveyed because the Corporation did not have legal title. Sir, within the first two months of this Administration, we came to Parliament and vested the land in the Corporation so that those occupants at Six Roads could receive their titles and conveyances for those houses. It was done.

Sir, the comment was further made that the Corporation offered for sale land for which they had no clear title, and under-estimated the time and issues involved in the vesting process. Until these lands are conveyed to the Corporation, it will not be able to sell these properties. That is why we moved in haste to bring this Resolution to Parliament to vest the Estate at The Ivy in the National Housing Corporation. That is why we are moving at quick pace to the vesting issue.

Further, the response to the programme, the 20-year programme of this Government, is still going well. Indeed, the outstanding issues we need to work on, the fact is we have a Maintenance Department at the National Housing Corporation. Therefore we are trying to ensure that there is better communication between those tenants who are affected, a tenant who wants a door or window fixed, that there is good communication between the National Housing Corporation and the tenant. There has been some improvement.

Sir, In fact, I received a call that a lady on a call-in programme said that she wanted to congratulate the National Housing Corporation for the swift response in a matter in relation to an estate. She said that she was surprised because over the years, when she called the Corporation, sometimes a year after she received a reply or got something done. We are trying to have regular meetings with the Maintenance Department.

In fact, there will be a time where we have to centralise all the materials in one location, with the necessary checks and balances in place, so that the materials can be moved freely and at a quick pace to the tenants affected.

Sir, in terms of the database at the National Housing Corporation, the comment was made by us, and substantiated by the Auditor General, he said that at March 31, 2008, the Corporation had a data base of over 29 000 persons for land and housing solutions. This database has grown at a rate of 2 400 applicants a year over the 10-year period. The database, however, needs to be properly maintained, since it contains names of persons who have already acquired properties and others who have applied in the 1990s and who may no longer be eligible or interested in acquiring a property or rental.

Sir, a Customer Service Department was set up at the National Housing Corporation by this Administration and calls are being made to ensure that the database has been purged, and we have a proper and realistic list of applicants that are still interested, and checks are made to ensure that those who own property cannot now benefit from the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, the housing programme at the National Housing Corporation, under this Administration we have decided to look at a different approach to the Joint Venture Programme. We have decided to put other checks and balances in place in relation to the Joint Venture Programme.

Sir, there is obviously a need for more rental units. I have said time and time again there is a need in relation to owners of land joining with the Government because sometimes you have to be very careful when utilising the Land Acquisition Act, and you have to be sensitive to the land owners. The Land Acquisition Act is not a weapon. It should not be a weapon.

Recently the Property Management Section indicated to yours truly that there is land in Cluff, St. Lucy, and all we need to do is vest this land into the National Housing Corporation. Roads are already constructed. It is an existing village and we can get approximately 50 house spots in that area in St. Lucy alone.

I want to assure the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that I will bring that matter to Cabinet first, then to Parliament so that his constituents in St. Lucy could be empowered, and will have more house spots in the Constituency of St. Lucy.

Sir, further, I was speaking about the Joint Venture Programme. Again, it must be noted that the then Government, in March 2002, agreed that the Corporation should invite proposals from developers to enter into joint venture programmes to develop land owned by the Corporation. Specific areas were to be developed for middle and lower income housing and were assigned to certain developers and contractors.

Sir, the report stipulates that the Cabinet at the time required that a due diligence test be carried out on the contractors, in terms of their financial capabilities and in terms of their ability to provide houses for the programme.

Sir, it was revealed that no due diligence test was done in relation to the selection of the contractors and as such no checks and balances. The list associated with those projects could not have been minimised. The fact is, it was revealed that some of them lacked the necessary finance, and some of them lacked the necessary expertise in terms of carrying out their duty.

HA48 10.50 a.m. Sequence 5

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House A48, Sequence 06, 10.50 a.m.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: In fact, Mr. Speaker, if we look at Buckeley Meadows, the Special Audit states that the arrangements at Buckeley Meadows resulted in an inexperienced developer with no track record being assigned to a major development in St. George to complete building on its own. It was revealed, Sir, that the said contractor had never done any work for the Corporation and there is no evidence that the Corporation was aware of the company's track record. Mr. Speaker, that is Buckeley Meadows and we could go on to Lower Burney, the Husbands Gardens project, and so on.

Mr. Speaker, if you read page 45 of that Report, Chapter 6, paragraph 6.2 and with your indulgence I will quote:

"6.2 Considerable amounts of land have been vested in the Corporation over the years for housing development."

Mr. Speaker, this was under the then Administration.

"The Corporation had set a target for the construction of 1 300 low and middle income houses along with the development of lots for sale over a five-year period from January 2003 to 2008. However, it was only able to develop 226 houses..."

Again, Sir, at paragraph 6.6 and again I quote:

"6.6 Approximately 85 acres of land which was capable of producing more than 750 lots were sold during the period 2003 to 2008 to developers. In one instance, a parcel of land was offered for sale to a developer but there was no evidence that the buyer had either expressed any interest in purchasing the land, or that the land was made available to other potential buyers. This transaction lacked transparency."

Sir, 85 acres of land between 2003 and 2008 were offered for sale. There was no evidence that the buyer expressed interest in purchasing the land, or the land was made available to other potential buyers and this transaction, Sir, lacked transparency. Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on.

Mr. Speaker, again we have decided that - and I do not want to anticipate - Coverley will be vested in the National Housing Corporation so we have to activate the vesting process.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is interferring with me. I know he will speak today and I like to listen to the Queen's Counsel. I was always told as a young Lawyer to listen to Queen's Counsels and I will listen to him today, since he is an abled barrister because I believe he would expound today. Sir, I will have to do the closing so I will wait on him.

Mr. Speaker, I will say no more with respect to the Honourable Member for St. Andrew and I know that he would want to show his talents today because he too, is in position for the prize. Sir, the Honourable Member is looking to elevate himself to that position, and that is why I wait in excitement to hear him today.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, we have started the construction of some 50 houses at Coverley and we have just received permission from the Town Planning Department to build 300 more houses at Coverley.

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's Special Audit on the National Housing Corporation is a clear manifestation of the failings of the former Administration. I believe, Sir, that there must come a time when we, as a Parliament, have to look at how we will restructure and refocus the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of outstanding issues in terms of other matters. We have the Al Barrack matter but I will not go into that because it is sub judice and we have to look at that matter in terms of the \$50 million someday, but I do not want to go into the facts of it, Sir, because obviously it is sub judice.

Mr. Speaker, I am stating, respectfully, that we have sought to move at a quick pace in terms of the vesting for the other areas. In terms of Deacons and London Bourne Towers, we have to bring them to Parliament so that we can provide clear title to those persons who will want to purchase those units.

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

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

Asides.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I would want to support this Resolution. The vesting of land in the National Housing Corporation is always important. The Minister said, and rightly so, that lands vested in the National Housing Corporation provides a good and solid title for those who would buy the land. We, on This Side, always will support the provision of title for a large number of Barbadians because we believe in not only enfranchising Barbadians in the political process, but also to provide meaningful economic enfranchisement. Sir, we saw on This Side that the home ownership of property was a vital ingredient to complete the mix.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we on This Side and Barbadians across the island and elsewhere, would recognise that since adult suffrage, it was this Party when in Government that provided meaningful incentives, whether it is the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act where persons were able to get the land at 10 cents per square foot in 1981, whether it was in divesting of the National Housing Corporation units which we started, or whether it was the amendment to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act allowing the urban tenants the right to purchase their land at \$2.50 per square foot.

House A48, Sequence 06, 11:00:10

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Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The records will show, Mr. Speaker, that between 1994 and the end of 1996, we were able to bring mortgages from a mere \$293 million to \$1.5 billion. That increase in mortgages went on until 2007. Mr. Speaker, we were able to create in this country a large number of small contractors, I will speak to them, and a housing boom the likes of which have never been seen before, and which we would need at this point in time.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I believe fundamentally what I am saying. Mr. Speaker, Barbadians would recognise that the housing boom that we spoke of before, which the present Government has recognised, lasted for well over 12 years. During this time, persons were building, construction was booming and people were working.

Today, Mr. Speaker, we see the opposite. We see a country, Mr. Speaker, where one out of every three persons in the construction industry do not know what is happening and have found themselves on the breadline. The present Administration is blaming the recession for the decline in the construction industry, which we have taken pains to develop in this country. Many persons in the construction industry are unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Democratic Labour Party Manifesto which said that they would sustain this building boom. It was their Manifesto which claimed that they would put large numbers of people and small contractors back to work, but I have not seen that happen. In fact, the opposite is true.

We have noticed that at the National Housing Corporation, even though work is continuing, only a few contractors are benefitting from the large sums of money being dispensed to those contractors. The majority of small contractors that work for the past 14 years are not now working. Mr. Speaker, we need to ask the question: How many small contractors are now employed at the National Housing Corporation and how many people are these contractors employing at the National Housing Corporation?

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that conveyance is important. I want to find out from the Minister how many conveyances were issued over the last two years for persons buying land in the new developments and to persons in the urban and rural tenancies programme. I want to find out from the Minister if he could tell us today, or if he cannot tell us today, to promise to tell this House, when he looks at the backtracking of the programme under the tenancies programme, how many persons in the last two years received a good title to their land, whether it is in the urban tenancies or the rural tenancies.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing and Lands are responsible for overseeing the private tenancies and the plantation tenancies. I am not satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of work had been done to promote and fast-track this programme.

Mr. Speaker, in my Constituency at the Glebe, we have done a lot of work with the Church and with the Ministry of Housing and Lands, yet nothing has happened since 2007. I want to find out if the Ministry is still undertaking that programme and what is happening. Mr. Speaker, after two years, persons cannot get a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, you would know that persons wanting to obtain a mortgage must have a title to the land. There are several persons within the Glebe whose houses are at rim beam level but they cannot go any further because they

cannot obtain a mortgage. I want to know what is happening in this programme.

I called the Ministry of Housing and Lands and spoke to the officer in charge of the Planning Housing Unit, I have not spoken to the Minister on this, and I was told that the key plan cannot be found. What is really happening? We need some action at the Glebe.

We also need some action on the development at Parish Land. When we were in Government, we were pushing the private tenancies to obtain title at \$2.50 a square foot. I am not satisfied that enough work is being done on this programme. I think more work needs to be done to ensure that those persons who qualify under the Act...

The Law states that if you are living in an area with five or more houses, that you must be able to buy the land at \$2.50 per square foot. How many persons have not obtained? That is what I want to find out. We must understand that despite it was This Side that promoted the tenancies programme, that the present Government has a duty to push forward this programme.

We understand the need, Mr. Speaker, for the divestment of the units because as the Minister said the divestment of the units is nothing new. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend some time on this because the records must show... The Minister read from a Paper of which I am familiar because I carried that Paper to Cabinet in 2003.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: On a point of order. I read from no Paper, Mr. Speaker. I read from the Special Audit.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is there something wrong in referring to it as a Paper? I do not know. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: The Minister made some references from a Paper...

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The document that the Honourable Member is quoting from would have to be a document that was taken to Cabinet by the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, not by the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. SPEAKER: Very well. Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we know that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is always trying to confuse this issue, but he is an Honourable Member and we recognise his talent.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that the Minister made references to a Paper that I am well aware of. I never said he quoted. I said he made references to a Paper which I took to Cabinet in 2003 for the divestment of the units. I was the Minister at the time and I took the Paper to Cabinet to divest the units.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that since 1963 the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow saw the divestment of the units as a necessary improvement on the lives of the people at the time. In 1963, the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow did not want to give away the units. In fact, most of the units which were in The Pine and in St. George and some of those across the island were to be sold at \$3.80 a square foot in some cases and the land was to be sold at 15 cents per square foot.

House A48 Sequence 7

11.10 a.m.

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Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it was from 1963 to 2003 that Governments felt there was a need to divest these units.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, somebody had to pay for them. Sir, when the Government said to the people of Barbados that they were getting these units free of cost, it still means that somebody has to pay for them. In fact, we recognised it would cost this Government and the people of Barbados in the vicinity of \$67 million.

When we did the calculations in 2003, it was envisaged that it would have cost the Corporation approximately \$67 million. Sir, that \$67 million had to be borne by somebody. Even though the Corporation is giving these units free, according to Government, the taxpayers of this country have to pay for them.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister went on to say that they have to upgrade these units. The partywalls have to be put in and this is a cost to the taxpayers. Sir, we recognised that in 2008 the overdraft at the National Housing Corporation went up to \$23 million. Sir, the Minister has not spoken about it.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, in the Auditor General Report for 2008, under the Democratic Labour Party, the overdraft facility at the National Housing Corporation rose to \$23 million, when originally it was \$7 million. Sir, who would pay for this at the end of 2007? I

want to find out from the Minister if he has recognised that we brought Paper here that was able to clear off the debt of the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, \$33 million was given to the National Housing Corporation at the end of 2007 to clear the debt. In other words, the Minister inherited a corporation that was debt-free. The Government of the day paid off the debt of the National Housing Corporation.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, clearly, when this Government took over, and up to now, there are a number of outstanding debts registered against the National Housing Corporation. Sir, for the Honourable Member to say that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North has taken over the National Housing Corporation free of debt is incorrect.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I wonder why the Honourable Member for St. Michael East is rising on a point of order for a debt with which he is not familiar. Sir, let us look at the overdraft facilities. The Honourable Member quoted from the Auditor General's Report: "A Special Audit on the National Housing Corporation."

Sir, on page 33, Section 5.3, it states:

"The Corporation has an overdraft facility whose limit is set by the Ministry of Finance. However, the Corporation has been operating in excess of this limit. For example, in 2003, the limit was \$4 million, while the overdraft had reached \$8.9 million. In 2008, the limit was \$7 million, while the overdraft was as high as \$23 million.'

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. Sir, two minutes ago, the Honourable Member said to this Honourable House that under the watch of the present Minister, the overdraft limit was legally at \$7 million and that it rose to \$33 million. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North saw that as a crime. Sir, the Honourable Member is now saying that in 2003 the legal limit was \$4 million and that it rose to \$8.9 million and that he sees nothing wrong with that.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sure that the Honourable Member would clarify it for us somewhere along the line. Please continue, Honourable Member.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that in 2008, the limit was \$7 million, while the overdraft reached \$23 million - three times the amount. Sir, I want to find out from the Honourable Member if he could explain to this Honourable House what was done with this excess

money. Was it used to employ staff? Was it used to promote more housing units? Was it used to acquire more land? Was it used to promote better housing for Barbadians? Sir, I want to know if any of it was put into the General Workers' Loan Fund.

Mr. Speaker, I have already made the point that the National Housing Corporation, by 2003, had recognised that it would cost in excess of \$67 million. Sir, when Barbadians heard they were getting their units free of cost, we had both agreed it was a good idea but that the policy of getting units free of cost needs to be explained to Barbadians. Sir, Government is building a number of new houses at Country Park Towers. I want to find out if the tenants would receive the keys and would not have to pay rent.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member wants this Honourable House to believe that 20 years and zero years are the same. Sir, the Honourable Member knows that the policy of the Democratic Labour Party was that if persons were renting their units for 20 years or more and the rent was up-to-date, those persons would get their units free of cost.

Sir, the Honourable Member is now suggesting that houses that are now being built, in circumstances where tenants have no years, that these tenants would be entitled to the same. Sir, the Honourable Member is trying to give the impression that is the policy of the Democratic Labour Party and is therefore misleading this Honourable House.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am asking a question. Would those persons who would occupy those units at Country Park Towers and at Tweedside Road be provided with housing free of cost? I want to know what about St. Philip. Are the people in Church Village going to get their units free of cost? What about those persons who have already paid? What is going to happen with those funds? What refunds would the Government make for these people?

Mr. Speaker, refunds are necessary. There are people who are calling the National Housing Corporation every day asking why it is that some people are getting units free of cost, while others have to pay? Sir, we need to ask these questions of Government. Sir, Government needs to be consistent in its promises because a promise that was made before Elections has not yet been fulfilled by this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking how many of the asbestos roofing and party-walls have been changed? In our time, we have spent a considerable sum of money to replace and to upgrade these things.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member talked about challenges but he did not explain to this Honourable House that there are many challenges and that it is not as easy as this Honourable House would want to believe. Sir, for example, the Honourable Member talked about the sale of these units. In my time, the question was, are we going to sell them under the Condominium Act or under the Subdivision Act?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member talked about a special Act. I want to say here that it was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, who first recognised years ago that there was need for a special Act, which is similar to the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, to divest this programme. Sir, these are the challenges, some of which happen to be the extension to which the Honourable Member and the Chief Town Planner have been speaking.

11.20 a.m.

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Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, the Town Planner has been saying that extension to the units were illegal. Sir, it was the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, while we were in Government, who recognised and wrote a Paper that there must be a special Act, and this is what we were looking at, so that those persons who had extensions would not now have to pull them down.

Mr. Speaker, we were saying there must be a Special Act to ensure those persons who now have extensions, that those extensions should remain and, Sir, this Government should honour that. Sir, if you go into any of the estates you would see that most persons living there started with two or three children but they end up with four, five, eight or nine children and they had to make extensions. Sir, some have built over the well and some have built over the soak-away but, Mr. Speaker, most of them have lovely units where there is good accommodation for people.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying that there is a need to bring that special Bill to Parliament and that we will support it in order to ensure that those persons do not have to pull down their extensions. Sir, we understand...

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member would have said in this House that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, for years, pleaded with the Cabinet at the time to bring this same request before Parliament. Sir, the Honourable Member wants this House to believe that they are more prepared to listen to us than to listen to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, of which I do not support.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we had prepared a Bill but, Sir, we could not do everything. Sir, this Government does not want to work and there is a lot of work that this Government has to do. Sir, from the beginning I have spoken to this House and I have said that a lot of work has to be completed both at the Ministry of Transport and Works and at the Ministry of Housing and Lands because, Sir, it is a continuum.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that a lot of work has to be done and this is why I have said to the Minister that the tenancies programme is not completed. I know that more could be done. I am not saying that the Minister can do it himself but he needs to call on the Minister of Finance to put more staff in that unit, especially the Planning Unit, in order to carry out the programme.

Mr. Speaker, I have said in here before that the technical programme within the Ministry of Housing needs to be upgraded. We started to look at the way titles were issues at the Land Registry. We did a lot of work to update and to bring the Land Registry in line with modern times. Sir, I am not sure what has happened in recent times but more has to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard this Government talk about e-commerce and Smart Card but, Sir, this is nothing new. We did a lot of work on the Smart Card, which I heard the Prime Minister talked about and, at the time, we said it was better to introduce one card first and then go towards a Smart Card, so it is nothing new. Sir, we did a lot of work on these things both in the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Commerce and Information and the Electoral Office to bring them in line. Sir, a lot of work is still to be done here.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Ministry of Housing and Lands, I know that sometimes it is difficult for a new Minister to know most things but after two years, the Minister must know what is happening to the General Workers' Loan Fund. Sir, we were able, in our time, to disburse over \$69 million in the General Workers' Loan Fund to more than 2 500 people. Sir, you know what the General Workers' Loan Fund does? At this point in time, coming up to Christmas, everybody wants to know that they have a roof over their heads. Everybody wants to know that their windows are clean; everybody wants to know that they have some paint on their houses.

Sir, we used to ensure that the General Workers' Loan Fund was able to meet some of the requests. Sir, that is why we were able to give \$5 000 on a promissory note and we were able to give this to Barbadians when other banks were asking for all types of security.

Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation gave people loans to repair their homes just like that once you

promised to pay and you were working. Mr. Speaker, that is what the Barbados Labour Party Government was all about. It gave Barbadians this opportunity and I want to know what is happening to the General Workers' Loan Fund today?

Mr. Speaker, too many people in my Constituency have been applying to the General Workers' Loan Fund and it is nothing for the Minister to do because it was set up since the 1950s. Sir, It is an old fund that was set up and established to help Barbadians to repair their homes and so on and we want to find out what has happened to the General Workers' Loan Fund.

Mr. Speaker, a lot is not known about the Housing Credit Fund but this Fund was also established by This Side as a mechanism to further on-lend to the General Workers' Loan Fund and funds from the bank to help low-income housing. Sir, what is really happening to these Funds?

I want to find out if it is possible for the Minister to ask the technocrats within the Ministry that we need to look carefully at these two Funds, both the General Workers' Loan Fund and the Housing Credit Fund, which is not now under his watch but is now under the Minister of Finance but still does the same thing because it is supposed to lend to low-income housing, to people who are at the lowest level of the society.

Mr. Speaker, there are still too many people who the banking system does not cater to. I have said before that if there is one thing and one thing alone that is important for housing construction, that it is finance.

Mr. Speaker, housing finance is important and I am not satisfied that the present banking system is geared to help poor people in this country. The present banking system is archaic and it needs to be revamped. We have a number of banks who come here but do not want to take risks. Sir, if you go to the bank to borrow a loan, they ask if you have security and, Sir, security means you have to put cash on the bank.

Mr. Speaker, recently there was a situation where a person wanted to borrow \$20 000 to repair their house and the bank told the person to bring \$20 000 in cash and, Sir, in this day and age, that is foolishness. We need to encourage 100 per cent mortgages in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I have told the Minister of Finance in one of the first speeches I have made, that the banking system in this country must be geared up to lend. Sir, at this time, where you have a recession, the banks must be prepared to take risks.

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Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I am going to ask the Government a question. What is it the Town and Country Planning Department is insisting that persons must have a certificate of compliance? Can the Ministry not give a partial Certificate of Compliance to allow people to get ahead? Too many banks are insisting that you must present a Certificate of Compliance before you get your final draw down, while people are waiting for it.

I think the Government should carry out a special audit on those banks that are causing people to pay heavy interest in this country, because people are paying interest upon interest for which they know nothing about. I believe that we need to watch this thing very carefully. The banks in this country are getting away with a lot of foolishness.

People are paying heavy fines that they should not have to, because the Town and Country Planning Department is keeping back the Certificate of Compliance too long, and banks are insisting that if you do not present the Certificate of Compliance they cannot close, but you have to pay the interest. Sir, I believe that the Ministry of Housing and Lands should be gearing up technically to look at some of these issues.

There is still a lot of work to be done. I believe there is still a lot of work that needs to be done within the Ministry of Housing and Lands. It is all right to say that we have produced so many houses and so many lots, but we have a situation which the Minister needs to look at. The cost of some of the houses that are being built by the National Housing Corporation are out of the reach of the ordinary person, low income earners.

In fact, we recognise that houses are being built at Greens, St. George, and Constant, St. George. I am not like the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy got in here one day and said that the houses at Bakers were 460 square feet and they were too small.

His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He has to learn to quote me correctly. I said that the houses at Bakers were much smaller than the slave huts that were built by the slave masters. That is what I said. I never gave square footage.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, the Honourable Member used to come in here and grandstand that the 460 square feet houses were too small. I told the Honourable Member that those houses were starter houses and people would

improve on them. If you go to Barkers today, the same houses that he criticised, people have improved on them.

In those days the first 82 houses were affordable. People were paying just over \$50 000 for house and land, \$50 000 less than 10 years ago for house and land at Bakers and Farmers. Today, I understand that the same 462 square feet house is costing over \$200 000. Can you imagine that?

Asides.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: I do not know. I want the Minister to tell me. I do not know the price. I am hearing. I do not know the price. I want the Honourable Minister to set the record straight. The Honourable Minister must set the record straight. Are these houses affordable or not? I do not know. I believe the cost must reflect.

Sir, we know that sometimes the Ministry of Housing and Lands must absorb the subsidy. I believe the time has come that if the Government wants to provide housing for Barbadians, the Government must absorb some of the cost of those houses, even though the building cost may be, I do not know, if the cost of building has gone up, I believe the cost of building has gone up in this country.

If the cost of those 462 square feet houses, or whatever size they are, and the price per square footage has gone up, and it is in excess of what the Ministry was projecting, the Ministry should absorb some of the cost before passing it on to the client.

Sir, this is nothing new, because the Board of the National Housing Corporation on many occasions was able to set out what was the subsidy. I had encouraged the Board, at the time, to look at the full cost of a house and if the full cost of constructing a house was, let us say \$100 000, you do not pass on the full cost of labour to the homeowner, but bring it to the Board as a subsidy, that is part of it. So the Ministry should absorb some of the cost, especially if they want to target low income earners.

Sir, if you are targetting persons working for under \$2 000 a month, you cannot expect those persons to qualify for a mortgage of over \$200 000. Why this is so, I do not know. This is what I am hearing. I am saying there must be a case for the Minister to ask the Ministry of Finance to provide that subsidy which would bring the cost of houses down, so that ordinary Barbadians can qualify for those low income housing. There are only low income housing and you would find that nobody would want to buy them, because the price would be reflected in the market price. There must be as a subsidised entity.

Sir, the house and land, and the land was supposed to be sold at \$5 a square foot. I do not know if the land is being sold at \$5 a square foot. The Minister can tell us if

the land at Constance or Greens is being sold at \$5 or \$7 a square foot. Again, I am not hearing what is the cost of the land.

Sir, when we look at these developments, I am not talking about the Tenantry Programme, I am talking about the new developments. If the cost of land is \$5 or \$7 a square foot, the homeowner needs to know that the cost of land is \$5, \$7 or \$9, and X amount to build. You need to dissect the prices so that persons would be happy that they are paying their fair share for the houses.

Sir, I believe that the Ministry of Housing needs to do more work in policing the cost of building material. Too many times people are crying about the cost of building material, stone, cement, steel, windows and other inputs into housing. The Ministry needs to follow an index to see what is happening within the building industry, and what subsidies can be given, especially for the poor sector of this society.

Sir, we support this Resolution and agree that more has to be done within the Ministry of Housing and Lands. There need to be mechanisms set up to monitor what is happening within the building industry. More has to be done in the National Housing Corporation, with respect to the Pension Programme and the General Workers' Loan Fund, to ensure that persons who qualify for housing get them. According to the Minister, there are over 29 000 applicants, which is a lot. One would say that the demand for housing would go up. Whenever people are working they will demand housing and they will always be in demand.

H A48 11.40 a.m. Sequence 10

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House A48, Sequence 11, 11.40 a.m.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, we need to know more about the 29 000 applicants that the Minister mentioned. What types of housing are they demanding, rental of houses, land alone or land and house? Again, one has to look at the applicant very carefully because you need to understand that there are persons who will apply but have land already, and the National Housing Corporation's programme will only give to first time homeowners.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, if you are still on your feet, please address the Chair.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Housing needs to tell us about the 29 000 applicants and what they are applying for, because it is a bit vague. Mr. Speaker, I must tell the Minister that we are aware that there are some people who have received a free unit but have houses elsewhere and you have to watch this because under the policy of this Government and that Government, the National Housing Corporation can only and should only sell to first time homeowners, persons who have no houses at all. Sir, I am aware that there are persons, who own land, who own property and still get a free house.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, the Ministry of Housing has to watch that very carefully but I am happy for those persons in the Ivy. Sir, you need to understand that this divestment programme and the vesting in the National Housing Corporation is very important to allow them to get their title and, therefore, we support this Resolution. Mr. Speaker, we support those persons in the Ivy, we support those persons in Deacons, we support those persons across Barbados but I would like to see more being done for those persons who have been applying for years and have not got any assistance. What will happen to those persons?

Mr. Speaker, the Minister also needs to tell us what is happening to the Rent-to-own Programme and what is happening to those large numbers of persons who will not qualify for a mortgage. I am worried about those persons because under the General Workers' Loan Fund they were able to do something. What about the long lease that the Manifestos of both political parties spoke about, where persons would be able to acquire a home through a long lease, without paying down any money? We believe, Mr. Speaker, that housing is a very important ingredient. We have participated in every housing debate because we recognise that it is a very important programme for the people of Barbados.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, This Side fully supports this Resolution. We look forward to the other vesting in Coverley when it comes, the vesting across Barbados and the vesting of all the land because we know that a lot of work is still to be done. We recognise that it is time consuming and I have once said to the Minister that housing is a two-year cycle because it takes time.

Sir, regardless of whatever he does, it is going to take time to produce those houses and that is why I have not brought a question yet on the houses at Greens or Constant because I know it takes time. It is also going to take time for the contractor because it takes time to develop the land. It takes time to put in the infrastructure, roads, water, lights, and it has to be done properly.

Mr. Speaker, only last night somebody asked me what is happening with Country Park Towers, the high-rise prefab houses that are being done by PreConcor. The people want to find out if they have steel, how long they will last, and if they are affordable and durable? I told the person we have to wait and see because it is a new venture. These are things that the Minister can reassure the Barbadian public, that these PreConcor houses or whatever, will be durable, long lasting and they will stand the test of scrutiny by most of the engineers.

We know that there are engineers in the country who will want to ask the question and they have been telling me to ask the Minister to find out what is happening to those houses. I hope that we can be given the assurance that those high-rise houses, which will be going to four storeys in height, will be safe for Barbadians who will want to live in them.

With those few remarks, I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

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

The debate has taken a particular turn, Mr. Speaker, which has actually seen this Honourable House visit the whole question of policy to do with lands, policy to do with the financing of housing and policy to do with housing, Sir, the debate has gone broader than would normally meet the eye but in a context, where all the observations that have been raised are highly relevant both from the Other Side and from This Side.

It all started, Mr. Speaker, around the year 1955, about 55 years ago, with the Security of Tenure of the Small Holdings Act, coming four years after the right to vote was introduced to this our fair land through the urging of the agitation of Grantley Herbert Adams, as he then was. Sir, it started with the Security of Tenure of Small Holdings Act, 1955.

Next year, we will see 55 years since the passage of that Act. Sir, that Act was introduced to the then Parliament to become Law to be able give a certain category of persons security of tenure, and I will develop the whole question of security of tenure as I proceed down my modest speech.

Sir, after a while, the society of Barbados watched particular developments in tenancies, that impacted on the lives of working-class people. Even before Chapter 239B came here, the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, there were particular measures passed designed to guarantee to the small person, a right of security, and a right of access to housing and right of access to lands.

In fact, the Honourable Member for St. George North raised a very strong and deep philosophical point. It is a point that is beyond dispute. It is a point that is truthful and that is what the Honourable Member for St. George North said. He made an utterance to the effect that housing policy at the level of social or public housing has been informed by a philosophy that those who do not have housing, should be enabled to access housing.

House A48, Sequence 11, 11:50:15

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Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Therefore, if a person called John Smith already has house and land, then John Smith should not qualify for public housing being subsidised by the State. That would not be fair to Joanne Small who has nothing at all but who qualifies on the grounds of deed.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, outside of this debate, has repeatedly stressed - he has to stress it, he is a small man like many of us in here - that the National Housing Corporation should never allow itself to stand condemned as not facilitating the small man.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have been joined by a lot of us with a social conscience on the basis of the fact that when the National Housing Authority was first established, the philosophy undergirding the establishment of that Authority was to allow it to permit the small person to access housing and lands in a scenario where such people were effectively excluded from housing.

Sir, if we ever come to a state where we permit market forces to have their way and to exert themselves excessively, then effectively what we would do is disenfranchise the small man. Mr. Speaker, I make no apology for saying so. We must not let there be ever a policy of runaway market forces in the housing market because a policy of runaway market forces would lead inevitably to particular economies at a certain level but particular diseconomies and disequilibrium at another level.

That is the reality of the situation, so the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and the Honourable Member for St. George North are on happy ground when they both suggest that we, as a Parliament, must of necessity bear the social reality in mind when we view this whole thing of a housing policy.

Sir, I would want to invite Honourable Members to check for themselves Section 17 (a) of Cap. 239A, the Tenancies Development Act. Section 17 (a) of that Act effectively empowers the Minister of Housing and Lands to sell Crown lands without the need to come to Parliament.

Obviously, the purpose of that particular provision is to ensure that when there is an insistent and persistent demand for housing that the Minister's hands are not really tied. That is the provision because we have had a lot of debate on this whole question of Parliament's role in public sector housing.

We have had fellows from the old club, who are not any longer involved in politics, lamented the fact that sometimes when you are doing a vesting, you have to vest it in the Crown and then there is passage of time and then you have to come back here to ask parliamentary approval to vest it in the National Housing Corporation. Mr. Speaker, with that you get the two-way cycle that the Honourable Member for St. George North is mentioning.

Sir, what we have to do is to make sure that where working-class Barbadians, those people who are called "the working poor", run the risk of being born citizens but, at the same time, experience the life of being strangers or foreigners in a distant land, are emancipated and that the process of their development continues unchecked.

Mr. Speaker, one of the noble things about next year is not only the fact that we are going to have three decades since Cap. 239B had been passed, we are also going to have three decades since Cap. 239A was passed. In fact, Cap. 239A and Cap. 239B were passed and came into being on the same date in November 1980. We are in November 2009. The month of November seems to hold a lot of significance for us Barbadians. We are in November, Independence month.

We were in November when the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act was passed offering a measure of emancipation. We were in November in respect of the Tenancies Development Act. Sir, other interesting things have occurred in this month of November. We are in November today re-enacting and reaffirming particular philosophies and particular policies and programmes which have seen the disadvantaged and the poor being free.

Mr. Speaker, as regard the actual sale of the housing units, initially it was believed that the nature of the units being what they were would have required invoking the provisions of the Condominium Act. Sir, the Condominium Act always insists on the establishment of a management company in every case, so therefore those who were putting the position that we sell our housing units to the poor and we encourage the sale, we would not readily brook the fact that we would have to invoke legislation that effectively slows down the process or effectively rendered the process nugatory compared with the philosophy behind the process. If the process is in conflict with the philosophy, then the philosophy should prevail. It is as simple as that. You liberate the poor.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to the allegations that are made across the length and breadth of Barbados. The Constituency of St. James North has been ruled incapable of accommodating housing because the available lots in St. James North are all in the Zone 1 area. Mr. Speaker, that is one of the courts of fate but we will search and search until we get to it. We would also be checking the world to see who have similar geographical features and how they got around those features in the interest of making sure that people access housing and lands for housing.

We also have though, Mr. Speaker, a very serious charge being made by society as a whole, led by John Public and John Public's wife Joan Public, who are alleging that they have paid deposits on their units through the authorities but that they cannot access the very houses on which they have paid the deposits.

Mr. Speaker, I would want the Minister in his wrap up speech to give some indication or some suggestion to this Honourable House what would likely guide him in respect of this particular matter which is potentially very serious. It smacks not only of a delay in the delivery of public goods but it also tends to suggest that we are not going out of that ethic called the ethic of bureaucracy.

Mr. Speaker, when people want a solution to a problem, people do not want to encounter any bureaucracy at all. When people want action, they want to be able to see something happen and for it to happen speedily. Mr. Speaker, it is no comfort to the poor man to tell that poor man that there is a bureaucratic process that has to be observed on each and every occasion. We have to find ways around the problem of the procrastination that infects the delivery of public and social goods.

House A48 Sequence 12

12:00 noon

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Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, the public can be assured that a future Barbados Labour Party will either deliver and transfer title to them as expeditiously as possible. Further, Sir, where that does not occur, a future Barbados Labour Party, if constrained and prevented from being able to deliver, will give back the people their deposits, without prejudice to their continuing being renters of the properties which they have been occupying for a long time. Sir, every effort should be made to persuade persons who have been renters not to see themselves of hewers of wood or drawers of water but to see themselves as being positioned to be freehold owners.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the speech by the Honourable Member for St. George North was so

important when he spoke to the question of what facilitates the acquisition of property. Sir, members of the public would want the assurance that Government is able to deliver a package called a house with land, directly to them.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North was saying that the financing of the package plays a critical role, and that where financing was readily available, then persons would be able to acquire houses. The Honourable Member was able to cite particular instances where Barbadians, who were not able to get a house straight and direct from the National Housing Corporation, were able to go to a particular fund, a General Workers' Loan Fund, and access that fund and use the money from that fund to be able to build.

Mr. Speaker, the average Barbadian, given his or her own way, would like his or her own design for their house, or would like to choose their own builders. The average Barbadian is not going to get carried away with things such as engineering and architecture. Barbadians have improvised over the years.

Sir, even though quantity surveyors, architects and draftsmen all have a role to play, we would have seen small working-class people, over the years, being able to access particular support systems as they advance towards acquiring housing, without any fanfare or fuss, so long as they were able to get money and planning approval.

Mr. Speaker, in respect of planning approval, I would like to beseech all my fellow Barbadians to note, very carefully, the fact of the existence of the Town Planning Department. I want to say that they ought not to go building without getting the blessings from the Town Planning Department.

If Barbadians are dissatisfied with the rules and measures as are practised by the Town Planning Department, then Barbadians should read Chapter 240 and agitate and pressure us, their Members of Parliament, to come here to propose changes to Chapter 249A.

There are times when particular plans are approved and with the rapid passage of time, time overtakes the planning approach by particular builders. Sir, when one catches oneself, so much time would have elapsed that, that permission would be no longer effectual.

Sir, we have come to a situation where I would like to call on Government, through the Attorney-General's Office, to look at Chapter 240 and to match it against the complaints that are being made by Barbadians about how this particular piece of legislation works.

I would like to call on Government to come up with a plan to make life better for all Barbadians - Barbados Labour Party - Better Life for the People.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be associated with a Party which has a very proud record, one that would be made manifest one day, in the same way that the record of other political organisations in this country would be made manifest.

Asides.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, what we are embarking upon here today is producing the paths through which numbers of Barbadians would be able to stroll, to run and to sprint. We are enabling Barbadians to be able to meet a number of ambitions that they would have developed over the years. At the same time, we are giving Barbadians the assurance that Parliament ultimately will function in the interest of the public good. Sir, in Latin it would say *pro bono publica* - on behalf of the public.

Sir, whatever the situation, we know that the amount of legislation on the question of tenancies is not insignificant. Sir, for example, in industrial, commercial and even residential estates, we have nothing called rent restriction in Barbados. However, with regard to tenantry land, there is a system of control of rents in tenantry lands, where the landlord of a tenantry, if he proposes to increase the rent a tenant must pay, that landlord must first seek the permission of the Magistrate for his jurisdiction. The Magistrate, on hearing the application, is forbidden from increasing the rent by more than 20 per cent of the existing level of rent.

Sir, that is the closest to what Barbados has come to what is called rent restriction, a particular regime of policy and Law applicable to tenancies and certainly originally plantation tenancies. We have come a long way. We have been able, with the blessing of the people of Barbados and with the blessing of God Almighty, to see developments spectacularly occurring in more than 100 tenancies in this island.

Mr. Speaker, one of the features of Chapter 239B, the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, is that there exists a Schedule of plantation tenancies which are the approved plantation tenancies, and which are governed by the Act. In addition, quite independently of that particular provision, there also exists a regime of non-plantation tenancies where there is rent restriction but where there is also some control of the power of the owner. There are checks and balances on the power of the owner. Sir, those provisions are for the benefit of occupants who have been in possession for long periods of time.

Mr. Speaker, we have had scenarios where people would have been renting from the same landlord for 15 or 20 years, where the landlord either disappears or dies, then a fraud comes along, posing as being entitled to collect money in the name of that landlord. Sir, legislation, along with the Urban Development Commission Act, have gone somewhere in protecting the renter from the unscrupulous, cynical and dishonest landlord or landlady.

Mr. Speaker, in the same way that landlords and landladies expect tenants to deal on equal footing with them, the Law requires landlord and tenants to operate on equal footing with the tenants, so as to decrease the superior bargaining power that landlords or landladies would normally have had over the poor tenants. Sir, these are all things that have been introduced for the protection of the weaker party. They were introduced systematically over the years for the protection of the public and for the protection of the public good, while, at the same time, to strike a balance between how the Law operates to offer support to the landlord and how the Law operates to offer support to the tenant.

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Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, all of these are things that have been produced for the protection of the weaker party and those were introduced systematically over the years for the protection of the public; for the promotion of the public good and, at the same time, to strike a balance between how the Law operates and to offer support to the landlord.

Mr. Speaker, this being the case, we on This Side, as the Honourable Member for St. George North has said, have no difficulty whatsoever with supporting it. We want to make sure, though, that those who have paid deposits get back those deposits. We want to assure those who have paid deposits that if the deposits are not paid back by the Democratic Labour Party that when the Barbados Labour Party returns to office, that a Barbados Labour Party Government will actually pay back the deposit.

We also want to make sure that every available approach to offering freehold to the poor be not only explored but be pursued in the interest of ensuring that the likes of your parents and my parents; that the likes of many of us in here...

Asides.

Mr. R.C. EASTMOND: Sir, many of us in here belong to a particular grouping, a grouping that I need not investigate or dwell on because once you are sure where you are, you do not have to be repeating it all the time. Sir,

anybody who is sure about where he or she is, does not have to repeat themselves. Mr. Speaker, we are embarking on proving the quality of guarantee and assurance that the typical Barbadian would have experienced; that the typical Barbadian would require.

Mr. Speaker, finally, a word about the situation in St. Michael and parts of Christ Church. Sir, you can begin in your own Constituency. If one investigates the quantum of tenancies in the whole of suburban St. Michael and parts of Christ Church, including the parts of Christ Church that are suburban, one would come across a variety of names of tenancies like, Alleyne Land, Bovell Land, Bradshaw Land and Small Land.

Sir, in some Constituencies in this island, there could be in excess of 25 tenancies. Sir, in some parishes, clearly, the number of tenancies in existence is astronomically high.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that a lot of tenants do not really know to whom to go when they have a problem and, therefore, they have to go to the Urban Development Commission, where it has a mandate, or the Rural Development Commission, where it has a mandate, and what we want is to ensure that persons who are qualified to help tenants under Cap. 239 (B) can be able to acquire freehold.

Mr. Speaker, we also want to make sure that where no landlord can be found, and where justice requires that occupants remain in occupation, under a freehold tenancy, that such be achieved. Sir, in the interest of fairness, we do not want to deprive any true owner of his or her right. We would want, however, to ensure that justice, which is always the jealous mistress, is available to all parties, and that such justice can be accessed.

Sir, I want to thank you for having allowed me to explore this area.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief remarks, I want to say what a pleasure it has been for me to have engaged myself in this debate. I thank you.

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

His Honour K. St. C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the vesting of this land in the Ivy Housing Area, which falls within the Constituency that I represent. Sir, I am happy that the Minister of Housing has taken heed to my constant urging him at the request of the residents of the Ivy Housing Area to ensure that those who qualify could have the property. Sir, as the Minister has indicated, there are some challenges and one recognises that all the persons who reside in those units can only qualify, under

the system of the Democratic Labour Party, if they have lived in the unit for 20 years and their rent is up-to-date.

Mr. Speaker, we have challenges if the father or the mother has passed away, irrespective of the Administration of the estates of those persons, or there may be circumstances where the parent has migrated and the children, born in the unit, continued to live in the unit and paid the rent but there are challenges in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I would urge the Minister to get his Ministry to look at those challenges to see that we do not disadvantage those individuals who have resided in the unit for 20 years or more, and have continued to pay rent to the National Housing Corporation in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that those persons would be better off, one has to look at the persons who did not qualify, because those persons have constantly indicated to me that there are challenges. Sir, these challenges come because of personnel from the National Housing Corporation.

The situation was extremely bad over the year but it is getting better now. Sir, I believe that if persons are paying their rents, and they are up-to-date that the National Housing Corporation has a duty that when individuals call with a problem that problem should be addressed with haste.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, there has been improvement but we must remember that there are persons within the system that would want to frustrate the efforts of this Government only for the sake of the other Government which was there before and, Sir, we must be cognisant of that.

Sir, I have always said that whether you are B, D, or Q, that when it comes to equality, that he who comes to equity must come with clean hands and that persons who come to work to do a job, whether they are a supporter of any political Party and individuals are suffering, that they should take the politics out of it and ensure that the service they are being paid for is executed in the best way. Sir, that is the only way that we can see productivity or tenants in Barbados feeling comfortable, whichever Government is in power.

Mr. Speaker, I would give a word of caution, that as politicians, we have to be extremely careful because the quest for votes allows persons to put down illegal structures. Clearly, this particular thing is an encroachment and one knows the history of this encroachment. We would see that the National Housing Corporation has agreed and accepted, to undertake this problem but that should never happen because people should remember that there are

Laws that govern the country and certain developments, and that you have to abide by those Laws.

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Hon. K.St.C. BEST: Mr. Speaker, another issue is that you have throughout Barbados, not only in St. Michael East, where a lot of persons would have paid money to certain landlords, the landlord passes away, and as the Honourable Member for St. James North would say, up comes some unscrupulous person pretending to be the benefactor of that land.

Over the years persons continue to pay that person, that person then disappears and the children of the rightful owner of that property come forward, and those persons who are living there for so long become disadvantaged, because the children are now saying that they need their land. Sir, because of that kind of behaviour, additional pressure is placed on the National Housing Corporation and courts to be extremely lenient, giving periods of extension where people are struggling to find a house spot.

Sir, while we are on that question of house spots, we must look at the type of houses that are being rented, their condition. We, all of a sudden have developed into a room culture, unheard of, unknown to Barbados. If you check some of those houses that are being rented where the landlords are charging exorbitant rents, as soon as the tenants complain or ask the landlord to remedy or to repair, the first thing the landlord says is, notice to quit, leave my place. Then there is additional pressure on the National Housing Corporation.

We, as a Government, needs to look seriously and urgently at the Rent Registration Act, make certain amendments to the Landlord and Tenant Act, and ensure that the conveyance of the landlord and the tenant are well respected and enforced.

The National Housing Corporation, the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission need to almost work in tandem. You have situations where individuals are on land, and the first thing they say when you are traversing, the land belongs to the Government. When you make inquiries, you discover that the land is owned privately, and an individual then decides because it is vacant for so long, that it is their right to erect a structure and then expect the politician to condone their illegal activity.

I am saying the time has come where you have to tell the people that you represent the truth and let them know that any open space is not yours. It is not Government's. It probably belongs to somebody and not to erect any illegal

structures. By erecting illegal structures they are creating problems on the water table and the health system. All of those issues come about as a result of the lack of proper housing management and housing policy by the last Administration.

The former Minister of Housing indicated that they had land here and land there, but yet the numbers continue to increase at the National Housing Corporation. I am saying again that we need to look at the question of house spots, where certain individuals can start one roof, two roofs and continue. We must look at the policy where there is a land developer who can provide a perfect example with a scheme like that, where they allow you to pay a small portion up front and then pay monthly instalments.

Sir, if you look throughout Barbados, some of the developments that you see where persons are now asking for more than \$1 million for a property, would have started by paying a small portion to that developer followed by monthly payments. If we have more developers with that practice, I think we can solve some of the housing problems in Barbados.

Sir, while we are on this issue, we must send a caution to the financial institutions. Government can do all in their power to ensure that the average working person can acquire a piece of the rock, but then there are many challenges and various costs attached when they approach various financial institutions. What do we do as a Government? I think we need to sit down with these players, and ask them to assist the working-class as far as finding a solution for the housing problems in Barbados.

I am saying that we need to move forward. I am glad that the Minister has come today to ensure that the people of the Ivy Housing Area would be in a better position, or probably very early in the new year, to have their conveyances in their hands. I hope that it would be done in haste.

Sir, I understand that there is another development which is supposed to start at Barkers Road. I believe that if you traverse the various Constituencies, you would see land where persons are willing to partnership with Government in that regard. You can have high rise housing or the Rent to Own concept. I believe that with some urging and poking, persons who own large areas of land would get into the Rent-to-Own concept. You would then be sure that you have proper quality houses available on the market for rent.

Sir, we have a system in Barbados where anybody wants to have almost the high end property, so the average person who will be able to afford rent of probably \$400 or \$500 a month are suffering now because of this room renting that has suddenly invaded Barbados. I am glad we

are here today to look after the people of the Ivy. I am sure that other areas, within the first 100 days, have been given their letters of offer.

Sir, I am happy to hear that out of 44 persons, 39 persons have signed and returned those letters saying that they are willing to accept the offer. I believe the others will fall into the category where some parents have gone overseas and are administrators of the estate. I believe that as time goes by, those problems will be resolved.

H A48 12.30 p.m. Sequence 15

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House A48, Sequence 16, 12.30 p.m.

His Honour K. St.C. BEST: Sir, I believe that we need to have a greater educational system, as far as educating Barbadians of the way forward for housing, how they can access various forms of housing and land. I am asking the land developers to come on stream and set up talk shops where they invite the average Barbadian, and market the product that they have so that the average Barbadian knows that they can pay \$2 000 or \$5 000 down on a piece of land, and pay for it over a period of time.

Sir, at the same time, they might be in a position to start building so that they will then have equity. Sir, they have the land and as they start to erect this structure, they have more equity in that property. Mr. Speaker, in that regard, the problem of housing will be gradually eroded in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, with these brief remarks, I want to support this Bill.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. today.

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

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

House A48, Sequence 16, 12:31:26

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RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. When the Suspension was taken we were on Order No. 4 of Government Business, to that we should now revert.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown.

ORDER No. 4 (RESUMED)

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this matter before this Honourable Chamber, the vesting of lands at the Ivy in the National Housing Corporation to facilitate the smooth delivery of the Manifesto pledge of this Democratic Labour Party Administration to transfer, free of cost, except the legal cost, the terrace units occupied by tenants in the Ivy and around the island who have been residing in them for 20 or more years up until this new Administration took office.

In supporting this, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I was rather surprised to hear the Honourable Member for St. George North in his presentation asking the Minister of Housing and Lands about this Administration's policy towards the removal of asbestos roofs on Government housing units. I want to know, Mr. Speaker, where was the Honourable Member for St. George North when the Barbados Labour Party neglected to remove the asbestos roofs from the Government terrace units such as those at Kensington Lodge, which is within my Constituency, the City of Bridgetown.

House A48 Sequence 17

2.00 p.m.

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Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, Kensington Lodge was built prior to the 1986 General Elections and so it is over 20 years old. Sir, I was shocked to hear from the Minister of Housing and Lands that the Barbados Labour Party has refused to have the issue of the vesting of lands at Kensington Lodge, London Bourne Towers and other Housing Estates within the City of Bridgetown, into the National Housing Corporation.

As I said, Kensington Lodge was built over 20 years ago, and with asbestos roofs. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party was in office for 14 years, from 1994 to 2008. Sir, it was only in the dying days of their Administration, under public pressure, that they finally made a thwarted attempt to remove the asbestos roofing at Kensington Lodge.

Mr. Speaker, I very well recall that until a few years ago, less than five years, residents of Kensington Lodge were up-in-arms. Sir, they had to go public, they had to go on the national airwaves, on the Call-in programmes and

exposed the transgressions of the Barbados Labour Party regime, in terms of the sad state-of-affairs of the asbestos roofing at Kensington Lodge that was leaking.

Mr. Speaker, I myself have canvassed. I knocked on every door in Kensington Lodge several times prior to the last General Elections and subsequently. Sir, I am saying that while the Barbados Labour Party was in office, those people in Kensington Lodge suffered; their health was at risk with leaking asbestos roofing. I saw those leaks. I saw the cardboard ceiling being compromised.

I saw asbestos exposed and the residents were exposed to asbestos, which we all know is a serious health issue, especially when there are breaches in terms of cracks where that asbestos dust gets into the environment where, when it is inhaled, one can get cancer of the throat and other serious long-term life-threatening complications.

Mr. Speaker, I remember a resident who lived on the south-eastern block at Kensington Lodge, who succumbed to cancer. She lived upstairs where her roof was asbestos. Sir, up to this day the residents there are crying shame on the Barbados Labour Party. They are saying that had the Barbados Labour Party acted more swiftly in removing those asbestos roofs at Kensington Lodge, maybe today that lady might have still been alive. Therefore, her death is on the hands of the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, they now have the temerity to come here talking about asbestos roofing now that the Government has changed. They had the opportunity to address this and they fell way short of the mark and Barbadians suffered. Sir, Barbadians will suffer no more because they have put their trust in the Democratic Labour Party and we will not fail the people of Bridgetown, Kensington Lodge and throughout the housing estates throughout the length and breadth of Barbados because we are dear-loving people. Sir, I can assure the people of Kensington Lodge and throughout Barbados that we care.

Mr. Speaker, that sad state-of-affairs surrounding the removal of the asbestos roofing at Kensington Lodge was disgraceful. As I understand it, the first contractor, who is well-known to operatives of the Barbados Labour Party...

Sir, the person who had the initial contract to remove the asbestos roofing at Kensington Lodge, as I understand it, was not on the preferred list of contractors, according to the Environmental Protection Unit. That person was not a preferred option. How specialised was that person in the removal of asbestos? This is a specialised area. You have to have the approval of the Government Environmental Unit because you are dealing with very hazardous chemicals. When the asbestos are being removed, obviously the sheeting will be broken and there will be dust

particles in the atmosphere and so it had to be very well executed.

Sir, I am saying that the National Housing Corporation had to rescue that situation. The National Housing Corporation had to remove that initial contractor, to the expense of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, to this date that contractor has got off scotch-free.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, I am very concerned that the Barbados Labour Party has such scant regard for the residents of Kensington Lodge. Sir, while that asbestos was being removed, those dust particles would have been pervading the air, threatening the health of the people there and in the surrounding areas such as Passage Road, Browne's Gap, Mann's Gap, King's Street, Kings Village, Church Gap, Hunte Street, Baxter's Road and Westbury Road.

Sir, it would also be a threat to people in your Constituency next door because Westbury Road is the boundary between your Constituency and the City; therefore your constituents in Passage Gardens and Lower Westbury Road, near the Baxters Road Fish Fry, would have been threatened. Sir, I know that you and I share the same concerns that the Barbados Labour Party cared nothing about the health of these residents in surrounding areas.

Sir, also the residents in New Orleans and Pickwick Gap would have been threatened because these areas are downwind. All of these areas would have been threatened because of the incompetence of the Barbados Labour Party, in terms of the removal of the asbestos from Kensington Lodge. Sir, this Democratic Labour Party will not be engaged in this irresponsible behaviour and any removal of asbestos, be it from the old Fairchild Street Market, will be removed in an environmentally acceptable way. We definitely can give the public the assurance that the removal of asbestos will be done according to the Law and with properly experienced contractors, who will remove the asbestos in a way that is as safe as humanly possible.

I know the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, as Minister of Public Works and Transport, is liaising with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, to ensure that the asbestos on the old market at Fairchild Street will be removed in an appropriate manner, not to mention the remaining public buildings that have asbestos roofing.

Mr. Speaker, as I continue, I am very happy to see this vesting continues. Sir, I look forward to seeing Kensington Lodge and London Bourne Towers being quickly vested in the National Housing Corporation. I know those persons in Kensington Lodge are anxious to benefit from the visionary policies of this Democratic

Labour Party regime, in terms of transferring titles of these housing units practically free, excluding the legal cost.

Mr. Speaker, not one single Honourable Member from the Opposition Benches is present today. They have fattened themselves with lunch, at the expense of the public's purse, and they are not in their seats to do the people's business. Sir, what a shame, but this is the track record of this Barbados Labour Party Opposition. They are still in denial that the people have rejected them, so while they are squabbling among themselves, we the Democratic Labour Party will proceed and do the work of the people of Barbados, in the interest of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, that deserves a round of applause. We can applaud ourselves because we are here. We are reporting for work. We are not drawing a salary as a Member of Parliament and not reporting for work, neither are we simply turning up for Prayers and then leaving, as the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter did this morning, as usual.

Sir, that is making mock sport at this Honourable Chamber and I think that the Committee of Privilege needs to look into this. They need to look into the fact that Members of Parliament are being paid monthly and do not have enough respect to the people who have elected those Honourable Members, where Members of Parliament are to come here and represent the interest of the persons who have elected them. If Honourable Members are not interested, they should resign so that members of the Democratic Labour Party can be elected to be the Member of Parliament for St. Peter, St. Michael North East, et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking forward to Kensington Lodge and London Bourne Towers being vested in the National Housing Corporation. Sir, this brings me to the concept of what housing solutions should be, especially for the working-class sector of our society.

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Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, years ago, I have heard architects publicly complained that the architecture of the Government terrace area was boring, even for the architects to produce. It was just sort of boxed rectangular shape with no patios. I am saying that we could be creative and that we do not have to be exorbitant in terms of the construction cost, but that we could be creative. Sir, I am saying that we need to re-brand and re-package the whole concept of terrace units in terms of publicly provided terrace units.

Mr. Speaker, frankly, if these units meet a certain standard, because the Government is constructing them does not change the fact that these are effectively condominium apartments. Sir, just look at condominiums being built around Barbados in the private sector. Sir, because it is being built by the private sector, it is a condominium and people are happy and proud to reside in them but once the Government builds them, then they are low class, housing units for riff-raff.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that, we as a people, must be proud. This is a new millennium and I am saying that we, in the public sector, when we construct these terrace units, that they should be packaged as condominiums and, of course, affordably priced. Sir, with the rental concept people can pay incrementally from month to month so that eventually, they would own these condominiums.

Sir, this Member of Parliament is not going to settle for second best because within the financial constraints of the Government we can come up, in consultation with the architects and the engineers, with the designs of terrace units that are really within the range of the condominiums, where you have aesthetically pleasing appearance in terms of patios and if you are going up four storeys, you need to have elevators, so on and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that along with the construction of the terrace units where land permits, we must provide the necessary amenities such as barber shops, hairdressing shops, day care centres, mini marts, a bar and a restaurant where necessary. Sir, it should not be a bar that would stop people from sleeping every night. Sir, not with nightly karaoke; it must be some sort of blend that ensures residents would sleep. Sir, I am saying that by providing the necessary social amenities that you are developing the community, community life and enhancing the community spirit.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying the Ministry of Community Development and Cultural could get involved with the necessary social agencies so that we do not produce this traditional ghetto scenario where we think that because you live in a housing estate you are going to be a criminal. I am saying that there are people who live in housing estates, that they must be respected and that we must provide the necessary community development support so that if those persons need assistance in welfare and other social services like consulting and so on that they would be provided.

Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate the Ministry of Community Development and Culture for being creative to come with this initiative of the Home Work Programme where working-classing children in the housing estates and the working-class districts, be it the Bay Land, Nelson Street, New Orleans or Greenfield, who would not be able

to afford to pay for lessons, but the Government is coming within their community to give these lessons, so that they would have an equal chance with the people in the heights and terraces to get to the schools of their choice; to do CXCs, CAPE, "A" levels, Community College Associate Degrees, University Degrees and move on like the others in the society.

Mr. Speaker, these are sociological realities that those with means and in the higher income earning category have that advantage over the children of the working class who do not have the funds, so when Government steps in with a social conscious to provide this social support, it shows that this is a Government that cares about working-class people and, Sir, the Ministry of Community Development must be congratulated for this bold initiative.

Mr. Speaker, including in this is the Breakfast Feeding programme, which they piloted and I congratulate people like the YWCA, who are feeding the people uptown at St. Ambrose Church Centre every day and I have pledged to financially support them as well. Sir, they are feeding the poor people because if they are not well-fed, then they cannot assimilate.

Mr. Speaker, I relate this to housing in that when we provide housing solutions to the working class people in terms of our housing estate, we much look at the total package in terms of community development and once we provide this support then, we can reduce the likelihood of these communities developing the ghetto culture with its rampage drug abuse, crime and so on.

Sir, it does not have to happen and I look forward to the new housing estate being built at Mason Hall Street, as promised by the Minister of Housing and Lands, and this Member of Parliament would do all to ensure that these housing areas, as we call them, within the City, could be developed, in terms of positive community life and be really frowned upon in terms of the drug abused culture, the crime, the obscenity and so on.

Mr. Speaker, within the same City, within the same Kensington Lodge, it is a realistic goal I have. I have visited, as I have said, the houses in Kensington Lodge and I remember one young lady, who lives in the western corner of that housing estate. Sir, years ago, this young lady took the initiative to have a beautiful, well-manicured Lawn and garden in front of her house. Sir, when you go inside her house, at her own expense, she retrofitted the interior so that you have wonderful furniture and well-decorated and constructed cabinets. Sir, as a condominium they are taking pride in their humble abode.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if we lift the community up and have them engender a sense of pride in

their surrounding that they could develop into a very productive stable community. Sir, Government must provide the necessary incentive and I congratulate this regime for being able to provide, quickly, housing solutions for people.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North talked about the housing estate at Country Road, in your Constituency because, as you know, Country Road separates the City from St. Michael West. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North

asked about that estate but he should not stop there. The Honourable Member for St. George North must remind the public that under the Barbados Labour Party Government the steel foundation at that area at the corner of Passage Road, White Park Road and Country Road was rusting, while the people of St. Michael West, the City and the surrounding areas were dying for housing solutions.

Sir, there are 30 000 people on the waiting list and the Barbados Labour Party, for over 10 years, deliberately left that construction site unfinished. Sir, I want the Honourable Member for St. George North to remember that. Sir, thanks to the serious attitude of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Ministry of Housing and Lands, within months, started work there and the site is well on its way to completion and, Sir, it is an exciting initiative there.

Mr. Speaker, tied into this is the whole issue of the Housing and Neighbourhood Programme Fund by the Inter-American Development Bank. I am happy to note that in recent weeks we actually had an official launch at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Conference and Cultural Centre. I had a competing event but I rushed from one event up there to give full support to this venture.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that under the Barbados Labour Party that venture was sort of left hanging because, as part of that programme, neighbourhoods in Bridgetown such as Cat's Castle, Greenfield and in your area, Mr. Speaker, Garden Land and Alleyne View in St. Thomas, these areas are part of the pilot where these communities are upgraded in a significant way.

Mr. Speaker, in the plans of the Barbados Labour Party, residents in these areas would have had to be transferred. Certainly, those residents in Greenfield and Cat's Castle would have been relocated temporarily to the housing estates being constructed at the corner of Passage Road, Country Road and White Park Road.

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Hon. P.M.T. TODD: As I said, since the Barbados Labour Party abandoned that project, clearly that would have had negative implications for the execution of this Housing and Neighbourhood Programme. Clearly, the Barbados Labour Party was not serious about it.

Sir, I am saying now that we have the housing estate at Country Road Towers well on its way, clearly there is nothing to impede the Housing and Neighbourhood Programme. Of course, eventually the dozens of housing units at Country Park Towers will be made available to the thousands of Barbadians throughout the island, who are in search of terrace unit housing solutions.

Sir, I can, through you, assure the members of the public that those persons who are on the waiting list can note that in short order this Democratic Labour Party Government will be completing those units.

Sir, at Tweedside Road, just a few months ago, it seems like just a few weeks ago, we were able to approve in Parliament the provision for the construction of terrace units at Stuart Lodge, Tweedside Road. I passed there a few days ago, and as I was coming down Tweedside Road from Government Hill, and when I looked to my left I saw those housing solutions well on their way, high in the air. The Minister of Housing must be congratulated for not just talking, but acting assiduously to ensure that these solutions are provided in a timely manner.

I am saying that we are serious about providing housing solutions. I was at the Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre, a few weeks ago, where we officially launched the Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank, a multimillion dollar loan. I can assure the residents within the City of Bridgetown, in Greenfield in particular, Cats Castle/Reed Street area that we are serious.

This five-year project is definitely well on its way. I know that the various technocrats, as we speak, are fine-tuning the architectural drawings and so forth. I look forward to a Town Hall Meeting being held, shortly, where we can engage the residents in those areas to assure them and to enlighten them, in terms of the plans where the persons with pit toilets will be able to get flush toilets.

Sir, just the other day, I was with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Minister of Social Care, where the Urban Development Commission was able to repair and replace houses in the same Cat's Castle area. Sir, you saw some in the media. This must be congratulated. This house was within an alley off Reed Street. The sewerage main was on Reed Street but not through the alley. We connected the house in the alley to the sewerage main, and the neighbouring houses are now being connected. I look forward to that Cat's Castle

catchment, which is a block bound by Tudor Street, Baxters Road, Reed Street and Mason Hall Street, that little block.

I am sure that this Housing and Neighbourhood Upgrading Programme, where the Urban Development Commission, which I understand will be working closely with the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and those people within the Cat's Castle area can clearly be hooked up to the Bridgetown Sewerage Treatment Plant. Sir, we are upgrading the living condition of these good people in Bridgetown.

Sir, in the Cat's Castle area the Democratic Labour Party never won that polling district, and that was the thanks the Barbados Labour Party gave to their supporters. They neglected them for donkey years, where some people had dirt floors and pit toilets. That was a Barbados Labour Party stronghold. It was flood prone. Murphy's Pasture and Chapman Lane are flood prone areas. The Barbados Labour Party neglected those people, but this Honourable Member of Parliament represents all of Bridgetown, and all the Honourable Members on This Side will tell you that this Honourable Member made sure that those people in Cat's Castle or Greenfield were not left out. As I said, that programme is well on its way, where relief will come sooner rather than later, and certainly within this five-year of this Democratic Labour Party regime.

Sir, we are looking to widen streets where necessary, upgrade the drainage network to mitigate against flooding, to widen the streets so that emergency vehicles such as the fire and ambulance can access these houses. Where houses are too close, we will look to reblock them to ensure they are not too close to present fire hazards. We will also include lighting. In other words, a comprehensive upgrade of the community.

Sir, as I said, we have a number of pilot areas, Cats Castle, Allamby and Jordan Land, in your Constituency. We understand that there are an additional 10 sites which the Government would be able to identify throughout Barbados where upgrading can be done, albeit on a limited scale, upon the availability of funds.

Sir, as I spoke to the Inter-American Development Bank officials, they were very excited. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North was at the lunch table. The Inter-American Development Bank was excited because he has done work throughout developing countries where they went into depressed areas and ghettos, and saw for themselves the housing concerns and therefore were in a position to address them.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is deliberately misleading this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it is unparliamentary to accuse an Honourable Member of deliberately misleading the House.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, I withdraw that, but he is indeed misleading this House. To claim that the Inter-American Development Bank Programme is a Democratic Labour Party programme is very far from the truth.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I do not recall him saying that...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a moment, Honourable Member. He did not claim it as a Democratic Labour Party programme. So if that is the basis of your objection, then you have no point of order.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member said that the Inter-American Development Bank Programme was left hanging.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just state the point of order, please.

Mr. G.A. CLARKE: Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House to say that the Inter-American Development Bank Programme was left hanging, leaves the impression that nothing was being done. As a student of language one can interpret that to say, "hanging" means being left out to dry, and it is not true.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order found. Honourable Member, before the intervention I was about to say that your time was quickly expiring, but I will give you a few moments to wrap up.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Now that the Honourable Member for St. George North has finally found where this Chamber is, having been over...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I was going to tell you earlier when you were on that, it is considered unacceptable, essentially, to comment on Members absence from the House, simply because you do not know what they are doing. The Standing Orders provide certain censure which would be brought into play if necessary, but it is generally considered unacceptable. I would be happy if you would avoid that.

Thank you.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that I forgive the Honourable Member

for not being in his place to hear what I said, and that could have created the confusion of his non point of order. I was at the Town Hall Meeting when the Barbados Labour Party told the residents of Greenfield and Cat's Castle, that they are waiting to build Country Park Towers before the people can be removed temporarily, so that construction work can be started in Greenfield and Cats Castle.

If the Barbados Labour Party abandoned Country Park Towers, clearly they deliberately retarded the work of the Inter-American Development Bank Programme. This Democratic Labour Party Administration had to reassure the Inter-American Development Bank that we are serious so that we did not lose the funding.

H A48 14.30 p.m. Sequence 20

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House A48, Sequence 21, 2.20 p.m.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I had lunch with one of the IDB officials, who is prepared to go with the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and myself into Nelson Street, Chapman Lane and New Orleans so that we can identify and highlight to the IDB, the serious housing shortages left by the Barbados Labour Party in those areas.

Sir, as this pilot project is completed, we will be able to get more funding from the IDB and other agencies to transform working-class districts in Barbados, so that we can uplift the poor people of our country, who are reliant on a caring Government like the Democratic Labour Party Government to provide tangible housing solutions to the people of Barbados.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join this debate as we continue to discuss the Resolution for the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of the parcel of land, the property of the Crown, situate at the Ivy in the parish of St. Michael in this island. Sir, the Schedule more particularly describes the details of the area of land that is being vested.

In his presentation, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, the Honourable Minister of Housing was at pains to indicate to the Chamber and the people of Barbados the extent of the solutions, which this move will bring to the vexing question of satisfying housing needs in Barbados. The Democratic Labour Party in its Manifesto of 2008, set out as a major commitment to the people of

Barbados, bringing housing solutions to the people. We spoke in terms of owning a piece of this rock.

Sir, the way things are going and the way the Honourable Member for St. Philip North is working, the steadfastness with which he and National Housing are working, we will have these debates very often. Sir, it is becoming clear to me that all we are going to be hearing from the Other Side, are contributions which amount to political marl fill and a lot of unconnected excuses, as was the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. George North this morning.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North admitted at the end that he did nothing about it. As a matter of fact, he recently admitted that he was out to dry, hanging. The Honourable Members on That Side have nothing to tell Barbadians about housing. The Auditor General on the other hand, has a lot to tell Barbados about the Honourable Members on That Side, in relation to housing.

Again, Sir, this morning the Minister of Housing laid on the Floor of this House, the Special Audit of the National Housing Corporation which is dated August 2009, and this really is the epitaph of the Barbados Labour Party's housing programme.

I want to commit this document to the reading to the people of Barbados. Sir, just like the report of the Auditor General on the ABC Highway is the epitaph to their Road Works Programme, this document should be compulsory reading for all Barbadians. Sir, we will make sure from This Side of the House that Barbados understands why we were deprived of any housing solutions under that regime.

Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party walked around this country and trumpeted solutions for every condominium owner in Barbados. They trumpeted solutions for all those who may have large sums of money to invest in our lands, and to use our treasured beaches almost at will.

Sir, we have to understand that along with a programme which would see that kind of development, there must be a programme that deals with the housing needs of the average Barbadian and that is the characteristic of the programme which the Democratic Labour Party has put before us.

The Auditor General's Special Audit pointed out that a fundamental step is the question of vesting the land. The Minister of Housing was at pains this morning, Sir, once again to point out that the process of vesting land in the

National Housing Corporation is a necessary and urgent step.

The Honourable Member for St. James North feels that you should take two years to vest land in the National Housing Corporation and he feels that it is excusable. I say it is inadequate and it will never form part of an urgent solution to housing in Barbados. I thank God for the change that the people of Barbados have made to put this Democratic Labour Party in charge of their business.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, more urgent than that are the kinds of comments the Auditor General had to make about the way business was being done by the Barbados Labour Party and why too, along with the question of vesting, though important, there are other basic irregularities practised by the Barbados Labour Party's Administration that caused the solutions not to occur.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. This Auditor General's Report did not say a single word about the Barbados Labour Party. If you could find a single word in this Auditor General's Special Audit about the Barbados Labour Party then I would sit down, therefore, Mr. Speaker, he is misleading the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I will ignore the comment because, you know, this is a serious debate. The Honourable Member on That Side, in his lonely movements may want to get up and try to interrupt me as I make my point, but we have a team of speakers on This Side, who are going to deal with this Special Audit, in the fullest. The Auditor General is at pains to speak to the fact that while the Barbados Labour Party was seeking, in a most unguided way, to set up joint venture programmes, one of the features of the way they did business was that the due diligence on their capacities was not conducted.

The Auditor General was speaking on page 1 of 45, paragraph 5 to the fact that the due diligence that should be carried out with businesses seeking to work with Government was not being carried out. Sir, the due diligence should be carried out by the Minister, on direction to the National Housing Corporation and direction from Cabinet.

I do not know if you need any clearer indictment of the Barbados Labour Party, without calling it by name, having placed the dates clearly before the people of Barbados as the activities that the Auditor General is criticising. These are serious times and the people of

Barbados must understand why they could not get what they wanted in housing, why they could not get it in our road works, why they could not get it in anything that the Barbados Labour Party had to touch because they had their friends and families, who had to be satisfied first and the Auditor General speaks to that. They had friends and families who had to be satisfied first.

Sir, on page 11 of 45 of the document, we actually go through development by development. We speak of Blackman's development, we speak of the fact that the project at Blackman's Development, St. Joseph was designed to provide 48 houses and 65 lots. Four contractors were assigned to this Development. At March 31, 2008, this Development had achieved very few of its objectives.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I have the document in front of me, page 11, paragraph 2.7 says and I quote:

"Blackman's Development (St. Joseph)

2.7 ...Four contractors were assigned to this Development. At March 31, 2008 this Development has achieved its objectives with the sale of 65 lots and construction of 48 houses..."

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Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: However, there were delays in the work by one of the contracted entities which abandoned 10 houses it was working on. Buckeley Meadows was the same scenario. There was complete and total abandonment of the programme set out and no leadership. That is the important thing. Of course, there is also the famous Lower Burneys. Again, Sir, the failure of the Barbados Labour Party Administration to administer the business of the country in terms of delivering these house spots.

They speak to the fact that the few lots the developers built numbered 52. This is at 2.17 of page 12 of 45 which says that:

"It should be noted that the developer did not draw on the list of applicants at the Corporation when allocating housing solutions, instead selection was based on those persons who had applied directly to it."

These are the friends and families. The Barbados Labour Party at work.

“These applications were then forwarded to the Corporation. This is not the procedure which the Corporation generally follows when allocating lots. Persons are normally chosen from its database of exiting applications”.

The conclusion and the audit comment on page 13 of 45, which is important, says that:

“There seemed to be no logical reason why the Corporation with a waiting-list in excess of 29 000 applicants, would give these entities the right to allocate these 52 spots. In addition there is no evidence that these companies had any proposal for the Corporation to consider.”

Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General is careful to ask the question... Even in a case of 29 000 persons waiting for housing solutions, the Barbados Labour Party Administration saw it fit to select from among their own the 52 persons who would occupy the provision there. Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, sorry to interrupt you but I need to have the Deputy Speaker take over for a moment.

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

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Continue, Honourable Member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, the Audit comment is important and I will repeat it for emphasis. There seemed to be no logical reason why the Corporation - that is the National Housing Corporation under the Barbados Labour Party Administration, let me make that point so that the Honourable Member for St. George North is clear of whom I speak - would give these entities the right to allocate 52 spots.

The point must be made that this Special Audit on the National Housing Corporation speaks to a total out of control situation under the Barbados Labour Party Administration. The Honourable Member for St. George North can jump up as much as he wants. We will tell the people of Barbados what they were getting under the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, if they were so minded as to follow the almost ridiculous arguments being proffered by them now, to think that you would want to return to this kind of nonsense, unsatisfactory mal-Administration by the Honourable Member for St. George North and his team... They have to face the facts.

This Honourable Side, under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, the Honourable Member for St. John, and the Minister of Housing and Lands, will make sure that the programmes we undertake are transparent, that they follow the Financial Rules and the Rules of the

National Housing Corporation where there are obviously methods of doing things so that the people who apply and who come to see us at our clinics and speak to the length of time they were waiting, can look forward with some hope that things are happening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak a little to the massive dent the Democratic Labour Party has made in the whole psyche of hopefulness to the people in Barbados who want houses at Workhall, Marchfield, Constant and Coverley. Sir, these are persons who can go and touch the walls of these houses and open the doors with a key and enter. You can use the lavatory facilities which are working.

These are not model houses. Nobody is inviting you to the National Housing Corporation to view a model house. We are talking about real, real houses. I have had the almost ecstatic pleasure of watching the faces of some of the persons when I take them to Coverley. There may be criticisms, because in starting these projects, we need sometimes to engage with persons who would make it happen for us. We will address all those criticisms. We have applied the zero lot line technology and we have about 50 houses at Coverley ready to be occupied.

The Honourable Member for St. George North can go to Coverley on his own if he knows his way or...

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: We have to bring to an end this nonsense on That Side about they started this and they started that. They started everything under the sun. They started a land bank from which you could not withdraw. They started a land bank which the Honourable Member for St. James North made clear this morning would be two years before you get anything out of it anyhow.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: That is a fixed term deposit, I agree with that. At Coverley, there lies the real McCoy, a true true house, zero lot line application. Sir, you should see the expression on the faces of those potential home owners. I just wish they were 29 000 of them and not 50.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that with the determination of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and the methods that we are applying to making sure that these housing solutions occurred, those 29 000 would be significantly dealt with. Sir, you have to do the proper auditing. There are some names that have to come off the list.

I can think of the Honourable Member for St. Peter as one of the names that has to come off that list because I

am sure that I heard a discussion previously about satisfying land desires for the Honourable Member for St. Peter, so if that is so, his name should come off the list, that is my view.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because the Honourable Member for St. Peter has never applied for a lot at the National Housing Corporation. At the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not good to speak about an Honourable Member in that tone and in that nature. I think that is unfortunate and the Honourable Member should be careful when speaking.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as we carry on our programme, there is a new excitement among landowners.

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2.50 p.m.

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Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are offering as one of our solutions is partnership with the National Housing Corporation. Sir, the beautiful thing about that list at the National Housing Corporation is that you bring to the table a ready-made market. I do not understand what the difficulty would have been.

Here you are, you have thousands of people who have applied for housing under the National Housing Corporation, who are prepared and ready to qualify to pay for their loans and an automatic market to any investor. Therefore, there are partnerships that could be made. There are partnerships that need to occur in Barbados between the National Housing Corporation and these landowners, which would see the landowner realising his or her benefits at the end of the project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it could be dealt with in any stage. It could be a situation where we pay the landowner up-front and own the land outright, or go ahead with the vesting and deal with it to suit; or the landowner can be prepared to come in with the Government, through the National Housing Corporation and partner with the Administration and help to bring the solution.

Sir, there can be ways of gaining extra benefit for that investor because obviously a person who is prepared to share in the risk of the investment, who is prepared to wait for the actual life of the investment to accrue, must be entitled to a greater benefit than those who would want to take their benefits up-front.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all over Barbados and in the Constituency of Christ Church South, which I have the honour to represent, we are already trying to work with landowners in this kind of venture, to put to the National Housing Corporation and to the Government of Barbados, projects which could meaningfully pay for themselves; projects which could provide low income housing, middle income housing and in some cases, maybe high income housing. The point is that we in the Democratic Labour Party have sought to cover the full field.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, before those words could drop from my mouth, I am going to hear the Honourable Member for St. George North saying that was not a Democratic Labour Party idea.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Barbados know it is something new. It is the first time that is happening. I spoke just now about a real house, with a real door and with a real key that you could open and enter. The people of Arleigh Heights have some of those houses. They have some of those homes that you could sit and share with your family. You feel the pride of owning a place and you pay a rent which is calculated to be bearable, which, at the same time, contributes to the payment.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: It is more than anything that the Honourable Member was able to build.

Aside.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people at Arleigh Heights and Stuart's Lodge are having that opportunity to share in the economic development of the country, where they are being asked to partner with the National Housing Corporation, to walk hand-in-hand with this Democratic Labour Party Administration, as we make sure the social programmes that we have determined to be essential are completed in this country.

Sir, we will be committed to this programme. We will not be distracted. We will advertise to the people of Barbados why it was impossible under a Barbados Labour Party Administration, an Administration that was caught up in satisfying its lackeys, rather than dealing with the issues of the 29 000 people on the list at the National Housing Corporation. Sir, they could not deliver. We will continue to let the people of Barbados know why they could not deliver and in some cases, why they would not deliver.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will deliver real housing solutions to the people of Christ Church, St. Peter, St. James, St. Michael and over this country. We are committed to this programme. The Honourable Members on This Side support it. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, as Minister of Housing and Lands, has made it clear it is his daily work. He is a young man. He has been properly selected to deal with this matter and to bring joy to the faces of the adults of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is great about this is that last Thursday, when I had finished speaking with one of my visitors, I asked her to bring her daughter in so that I could have a word with her. Sir, there was pleasure on that 13-year-old's face which spoke volumes to the programmes of the Democratic Labour Party.

It gave me even greater focus on what we have to do in this country, in satisfying the ordinary Barbadian needs and making sure that they can look forward to an Independence and to a Christmas in 2009, that they could look forward to many more Independences and Christmases to come, that they could feel proud about this great rock and that they could feel proud about what the Democratic Labour Party is doing for them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you. I am much obliged.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I speak in this debate based on a history of housing in this country. Sir, I must say today that I stand here a proud man to see the Minister of Housing and Lands coming to vest land in this Parliament, which I know will go toward poor people.

I was also in this Honourable House, on many occasions, where I had to forewarn this Honourable House about the dangers of the Land Acquisition Act and about what was needed to be amended in that Act to protect the rights of citizens.

Sir, on many occasions I felt that we were acquiring and vesting land in this Parliament and that those lands that were being acquired and vested were not ending up in the hands of those persons whom we thought would have got them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I remember speaking about a piece of land at Tweedside Road. We would have seen a famous piece of land at Kent. Sir, this has assured me that we need to move swiftly to change the Land Acquisition Act to ensure that those masses of people in Barbados, whose interests we as a Parliament have pledged to look after, are the ones to get that land. We cannot come to this Parliament, acquire land, vest that land on their behalf, then for other people who could afford land elsewhere to come

and get that land that we are vesting on behalf of the masses of Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to say that might surprise you but it should not surprise the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, nor myself, because we were on the Board, in 1994, when we encouraged the Board not to sell land any longer to land developers. We made it clear to the Board, at the time, that it was the duty of the Ministry of Housing and Lands to vest land in the National Housing Corporation to house poor people in Barbados, instead of the National Housing Corporation taking large tracks of land and passing them to private developers who, in turn, made money from the land, while poor people were not able to get any of those house spots in any of those developments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I speak of this, I speak of that land going across Husbands Road, toward Queen College. This is a good example of land that was acquired by the Government of Barbados for the National Housing Corporation, to be passed on to the masses of people in Barbados but which ended up in the wrong hands.

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His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not saying that the National Housing Corporation should not sell land to those who can afford to pay higher prices for it but I think the crime comes about when the National Housing Corporation receives the land and instead of carrying out their mandate and instead of increasing the amount of revenue for National Housing Corporation, they pass it to private developers to make the money instead of them making the money.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am shocked. Sir, you might not have been in here but you might have been listening to the radio and I have always said that there is no logical reason why the National Housing Corporation should be in overdraft, should be in the red, or should be in anything because it is the only department in the world that I know of, where Government buys all the land and then passes it on to the National Housing Corporation without a cent being passed by National Housing Corporation to the Government, yet still, when that transaction is completed it shows a loss.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you think about it, the National Housing Corporation does not have to buy one piece of land in this country. It is bought by the Government of Barbados and it is passed to them without any cost to the land. Sir, the only cost the National Housing Corporation has to incur is developmental cost, which they should get back, along with a profit but, yet still, every time

we come to this Chamber, we acquire large tracks of land but, Sir, the more land we give to the National Housing Corporation, the greater the losses.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this needs to be a case study because I cannot understand how you could have no expenses except developmental costs and yet still you have a problem. We also have to look at this thing. How could the former Government, for 14 years accumulate land, put it in a land bank and not look after the needs of the masses of people in the country and not expect the masses to starve for that? Sir, it is like being at home, cooking a large pot of food, putting it in the fridge but not feeding the children. Sir, that is exactly what the former Government did to the masses of people in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would have to ensure that it does not occur on This Side because the same argument I made over there, I am quite prepared to make over here because this Minister should not fall prey to the policy of the Barbados Labour Party and not be enlightened by those great policies of the Democratic Labour Party, left by the Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, of which we should all be disciples.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I were in your position today, as Deputy Speaker, I would be happy to know that we are going to be vesting the land in the Ivy, so that the poor people there could own the land. Sir, you know what also happened at the National Housing Corporation and, Sir, it all has to do with policy. I hear people sometimes saying that the two Parties are the same but, Sir, that is utter foolishness because it cannot be.

Sir, I was also in here and you heard about all sorts of loans that can be borrowed from the National Housing Corporation. Sir, when the loan limit was raised, no poor people could borrow that kind of money that it was raised to, money that poor people should have been able to go and receive.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would have heard the former Minister of Housing talking about providing \$5 000 loans to poor people for repairing houses but, Sir, what could they repair, a window? Yet still, I was in here when the limit was increased to \$250 000 and much more. Sir, when you increase the limit to \$250 000, you cannot be increasing that limit for poor people, you have to be increasing that limit to include persons who could easily go to Broad Street. Sir, you know the interesting thing about it? The interest rate was only 6.5 per cent.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy is misleading the House. The General Workers limit was never \$250 000. The limit had moved from \$45 000 to \$100 000 and I do not believe it has ever gone to more than

\$100 000 in any case, so the Honourable Member is misleading this House.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never said the General Workers limit. I said that the Minister of Housing came to this Parliament and increased the amount of money that could be borrowed for a mortgage.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, and was the Barbados Mortgage Finance not controlled by the National Housing Corporation and the Barbados National Bank, which were all Government? Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North is saying that it was controlled by the Ministry of Housing too, so he is admitting that I am telling the truth? Well, thank you then, you have been gracious.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying the money was put there so that the masses of people could borrow it but, Sir, it was diluted and instead of 100 persons being able to borrow, they have four persons going to borrow the money so that you could not have any money available for the masses of people in Barbados. Sir, when we should be having numbers, we had quantity and that is what the Barbados Labour Party is good at, Sir, looking after the big loans.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that we should not only criticise the Barbados Labour Party but it is clear, based on our policy, that we are here now to demonstrate that we are not going to make the same errors. Sir, that is why, as you walk around Barbados, you are seeing house spots and houses. I am glad that at least in two parishes you might not see many houses but that you see a lot of house spots.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I honestly believe that the National Housing Corporation should move away from house building and I have said that over there. Sir, for the simple reason that any Minister of Housing needs to get money in his hands quickly and he should easily be able to turn it over. Sir, if you get involved in house building, it takes too long to roll over that money. What you need is to be able to roll over that money quickly and help as many people as possible.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the National Housing Corporation and the Minister of Housing have to be about helping numbers and not being tied up in red tape. Sir, my good friend has to be warned, that you get in bed with many joint ventures but there is a history to them. I heard the last Minister of Public Works, who was also Minister of Housing say that they left no debt but, Sir, that is not true.

I knew of contractors like Des Hall and all those who were owed millions of dollars and that was left on the plate of the Democratic Labour Party to settle at Fairy Valley. There are many of them and I am now hearing all sorts of names being called as contractors but I do not know if this Government would go to bed with that sort of contractor based on what they are now saying.

Asides.

His Excellency D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that housing for the masses of people in Barbados must be exactly what we talk about. It cannot be about the contractors or it cannot be about persons who want to develop land or anything like that. Sir, once we have a policy where we are prepared to zero in and deal with the problem as it relates to the masses of people in this country, we will solve all the problems as it relates to the masses of people in Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is nobody who could convince me that any Government would be able to build a house for the poor man. Sir, Government would be able to solve the poor man's problem in getting housing because once you give him a house spot at a reasonable price, the poor man would look after himself, but once you seek to get involved in building a house and have land, you have control over the cost of the land, but you do not have control over the cost of the house. Sir, you do not know what the economic forces out there will be and you do not know when they will change to take it out of the costing that you would have budgetted for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I have always advised my comrades to let us stick to the land and that is why I am happy that the Minister of Housing had the foresight to bring this \$5 per square foot project to Barbados because already there are many persons who bought their land and, Sir, they are building on it. If they had to wait on another project with the house and land, they would not have progressed at the rate that those persons would have been able to progress.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only that. It does not make sense for a Government to build a matchbox on a piece of land and give it to somebody.

H/A48/15:10 Sequence 24

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His Excellency D.St.E. KELLMAN: It is better for that person to build a match box for themselves because they would feel happier.

Sir, do you know that if you build a match box, even though it is out of stone, and give it to a poor person they

would not feel as happy as if they were to build a plywood house and live in it, because, at least, they built what they wanted. Too often we as politicians believe that we understand the needs of persons. We have to be very careful not to follow blindly what was left to us.

Sir, I am saying, today, that this question of housing has been dealt with by the Democratic Labour Party for years. We have corrected it previously, and we are now battling to correct the same errors. I will tell the people of Barbados that if they remain with the Democratic Labour Party, we will be able to deliver them out of their housing problems. The Barbados Labour Party has left problems for us to correct before we can start our programme.

Sir, for example, today I heard a former Minister arguing that to sell a house is the same thing as to give a house, and how it was their policy to sell the house. We have gone past that stage. We are not about selling the house. We are about giving the house and the two can be compared.

Sir, what is wicked, they sold the houses to new owners, and now they are arguing that the Democratic Labour Party is now to give people houses, when the crime was in the selling of the house, not the giving of the house. They are now saying that the giving is right, so the crime could not have been committed by the Democratic Labour Party, it would have to be committed by the Barbados Labour Party.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to participate in this debate. The truth is, I have listened to all kinds of things, today, and it causes me to wonder whether we recognise that in the conduct of these debates, there is a listening and discerning public outside. We have constructed a political debate in Barbados over housing over the last few years that seeks to divorce the content of that debate from the reality and people's circumstances, and the reality of how people provide for their housing needs in this country.

One of the things that I found instructive, in examining the Special Audit Report on the National Housing Corporation, was something that perhaps did not go deep enough, because when we came into Government we always heard that there was a waiting list of 10 000/15 000, in 1994.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew was Minister of Housing at the time, and

would have found a tremendous waiting list when he came. When we start to look at the data and we start to ask ourselves the questions, and when we buttress that by our own personal knowledge of driving around this country, we will recognise that in a very real sense we have done a lot, but there is still much to be done.

Sir, the debate ought to take place in that context, recognising that the social and economic circumstances of our people have changed over time, and the strongest possible evidence comes not from the Barbados Labour Party but from the Auditor General's own comments, which at Paragraph 2 of the Report says, that at March 31, 2008, the Corporation had a database of over 29 000 applicants for land or housing solutions. The database has grown at a rate of 2 400 applicants per year during the 10-year period to March 2008.

Sir, if a database has grown at 2 400 per year, 2 400 by 10 is 24 000; 24 000 from 29 000 is 5 000. It therefore stands to reason that there has been a substantive and substantial reduction of the numbers of persons on that database, from the early stages from when the Honourable Member for St. Andrew became the Minister of Housing, but I go further.

Sir, one of the realities... and if the Minister of Housing wants to be frank with this House, he will also admit it, because he too would become a victim if he is not careful, that there is no system in the National Housing Corporation, once again, as reflected by the Auditor General, to appropriately update that waiting list according to the circumstances of people as people's circumstances change. Some may go away, some may get houses on their own from private developers, some may have parents who may have passed away and left houses for them and some may have died.

There are a variety of reasons that may cause that list to substantially drop, in relation to the numbers that are bandied about as a public mask in relation to the impact and the needs on the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, I say that not to deny that there is a substantive need for housing in Barbados. I also make the point it is significant that the way to growth, as evidenced by the Auditor General, is that 2 400 per year, approximately, for each of the last 10 years.

Part of the reality of our circumstances, is that once people started to work and once people had money coming into their pockets, people therefore felt that it was their legitimate right to exercise choices in terms of moving out of home, or making different arrangements for their own accommodation. What has happened in Barbados is, there has been an explosion of demand driven by a number of reasons, one of which is the improved economic

circumstances of individuals. If unemployment drops from 24 per cent to 6.7 per cent, it would be natural to expect that the demand would increase substantially.

Secondly, the cultural profile of the country has changed significantly in the last two decades of what it was 30 or 40 years ago, where people were prepared to stay at home, having left school. They worked from home. They mainly stayed at home until they got married. In Barbados today young people upon leaving school want to find their own accommodation and there is nothing wrong with that. That is part of the consequence of the kind of material development we are seeing.

Let us not create a false political debate in relation to the issue of housing such that we ignore the cultural realities in Barbados. What are the cultural realities? Both before and since the National Housing Corporation has existed, and its predecessor the National Housing Authority, people found alternative means of providing housing for themselves in this country. There was a famous song that the Minister of Housing, who is a musician, may be aware of, "Who aint building wall in front building wall behind", I think it was Gabby Scott or Satch Moore who would have done that song.

It was a commentary on the transformation of houses across the landscape where people took existing chattel houses and did as we know, bought blocks, as circumstances would permit. In fact, in these days they did not go for mortgages, and fixed up their own houses according to their own circumstances.

H A48 15.40 p.m. Sequence 25

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House A48, Sequence 26, 3.20 p.m.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Quite frankly, there was wisdom and there remains wisdom in that approach because it leaves you out of long-term debt. Having said that the role which money plays in the transformation of this society, is now such that people can have access to long-term debt.

I think many people forget that in the mid 1980s you could not get a mortgage from a commercial bank in Barbados, and you had to go to a Trust Company. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened in the last 24 years or so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has been a veritable explosion of access to capital.

Sir, one of the decisions we took very early on was the provision of 100 per cent mortgages in 1998 and indeed some may argue that the access to 100 per cent mortgages has helped fuelled the tremendous demand that we now see

because prior to that, you could only get a mortgage if you raised 5 per cent or 10 per cent of the purchase price, or the construction price of the particular house and that immediately excluded thousands of Barbadians.

One of the decisions in relation to the 100 per cent mortgages were not only to provide it but to recognise that Government would have to subsidise the difference at which the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation would borrow the money and lend the money. It is that subsidy that the Government has carried, first the Barbados Labour Party Government and continued now by this Administration.

I really feel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if we are to be serious about treating to the issue of removing the demand for housing in this country, one of the first things that has to be done is to be able to explain to people, the dynamics of the programme. Apart from self improvement, who is not building wall in front is building wall behind. There is also the issue of the access to tenantry lands.

The Honourable Member for St. James North reminded us today that one year from now will mark the 30th anniversary of what I certainly regard, as the most revolutionary piece of legislation in this country since Independence and one certainly that stands out in the entire hemisphere, the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, which was effectively, particularly on the plantation. The Plantations Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act was a form of redistribution of land to those who previously had no access to land and by extension no capacity to borrow, in order to improve their circumstances and, Sir, that has been responsible for thousands.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, whose Constituency has many plantations that would have benefitted, whether he has not seen the difference from the time he was a little boy, in terms in the change in the housing stock on many of the tenancies in St. Philip. I asked the Honourable Member for St. Andrew the same question and I asked the Honourable Member for St. Lucy the same question.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The point is that over the 30 years we have seen a transformation of the rural landscape of Barbados where we have seen people take advantage of the fact that they could buy a lot, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for cheaper than they could buy a pair of sneakers in Broad Street today. Sir, you can buy 5 000 square feet of land at BDS\$500 and there are pairs of sneakers that youngsters are buying that are more expensive than that, once they are brand named. Now, when you tell people from other countries about this they are amazed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when President Kardosa was coming to the end of his second term in Brazil, a country that for all intents and purposes is really a black country. It has approximately 150 million people and a large majority of its citizens were slaves when they had slavery. Sir, one of the key things that President Kardosa implemented but could not succeed in bringing about, was the titling of land to the descendants of ex slaves. Now, that is no different from what we have done in the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you want to get real, the Honourable Member for St. James North traced the development in here today. The work on the development of tenancies started with Grantley Adams, was continued by Errol Barrow and got a great leap forward under Tom Adams. The truth is that the last Barbados Labour Party Administration under the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter would have been responsible for putting in place, the urban, a non plantation tenantry extension, which recognised that you could not ask small landowners in the urban corridor or the non plantation tenancies like Bournes Village, to subsidise the lots in the same way that we asked the plantation owners to subsidise what, effectively, was rab land, hence, the \$2.50 per square foot, which this Government, liking the notion of the sound of the \$2.50 extended to non tenantry lands, by making the promise that they would sell 500 lots to Barbadians at \$2.50.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if there is not a common thread moving through the Administrations of both Parties across 50 years in this country, as it relates to the provision of housing and the recognition that the National Housing Corporation cannot be the sole provider of housing solutions in this country, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, something is wrong and I have misread the whole situation.

The evidence in relation to the exploration of mortgages moving from more than \$37 million at the beginning of 1990 to \$1.8 billion at the end of 2007, mortgages where people were responsible for going and getting their own housing solutions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where people bought their own land, where people bought houses from private persons, nothing at all to do with the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we want to continue the honesty, the Minister has now been in position for 22 months and he can now tell you that he has only been able to complete projects for which the planning had started by the previous Minister. He hopes to bring on Bushy Park but he cannot bring Bushy Park in here because he has too much planning work still with Bushy Park.

He hopes to bring 500 lots as promised, enthusiastically to be done in 100 days, unrealistically so, and in today's newspaper admitting that he is only now in a

position to settle the vesting of 100 of those 500 lots. Sir, for the purposes of partisan political behaviour, we would want the public to believe that there is much more in the mortar than in the pestle, and it is wrong.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central in an aside is suggesting that I look at the Audit, but I want to show him the Audit too. Around the corner from where I live, the Minister came and launched Arleigh Heights. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North made that request for Arleigh Heights and the previous Minister of Housing would have put it in here. It falls to the current Minister to do the launch, but that is the reality of governance when there are changes in Government.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South will have the distinct honour of opening the Halls of Justice but hopefully, they will resolve the other problems there, which are unfortunate and which clearly are a result of a rush to use the building for the legal year but that is the reality of governance in a democratic society. There is also the Grantley Adams International Airport, the Deep Water Harbour, and we can go on and on.

What I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we cannot have a 20th Century Government and a 20th Century politics for a 21st Century population.

House A48, Sequence 26, 15:30:14

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: What I am saying to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we cannot have a 20th Century Government and 20th Century politics for a 21st Century population. You cannot practice the politics that obtained when people were not educated and ask them to believe in things simply because it sounds good to be the basis of a divide between political Parties.

The issues that we need to be addressing in housing in Barbados are more fundamental because there is unlikely to be a return to a reduced demand. Economic progress at the individual level will continue to put pressure in relation to the demand on housing in this country.

The Honourable Member for St. James North made the most fundamental point in here today in relation to the role of Government in terms of intervening to be able to keep prices down for those whose incomes do not allow them to readily access low income housing in this country. If you do not have some kind of governmental intervention, you would get what happened on the West Coast with the

explosion of construction permeating itself into the rest of the domestic economy.

I say so, Sir, cognisant that it would happen again whenever growth returns to this economy if we do not have a dedicated programme to assist those who are least capable of assisting themselves.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now when the Minister is on television touring the houses and showing us the houses, what is not being said, and I would like him to say it... I would argue and urge that we would work together on housing solutions for low income persons because a person earning \$1 500 or \$2 000 a month in a single income household, a police constable, a maid or a general worker, with two and three children - all of us represent persons like that in our Constituencies - cannot get a mortgage to buy any of the houses that are currently being built. That is one of the reasons why we support the Rent-to-Own programme.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Rent-to-Own programme that the Minister has now branded was the same rent programme that the former Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central would have brought to Cabinet. In fact, if we go back, two former Ministers of Housing and Lands, the former Honourable Member for St. James North, the parish as it was at the time, I am talking about Mr. Craig and the former Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, Mr. Delisle Bradshaw for the avoidance of doubt, would have been responsible for something called a Sites and Services Programme, which is a programme that recognises - and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North is aware of this - that there would be people who do not have access to a lump sum but who still need to live somewhere. These persons were given access to lots in Parish Land and we could come down and go right across Barbados.

Our position has been that those people who have been renting for decades ought to be allowed to purchase with the amount paid in rent being considered towards the purchase price of the houses, or for a small price thereafter, because the truth is - and this is the point that I would like the Minister of Housing and Lands to speak to - the Minister cannot undertake an aggressive housing programme in this country unless he deals with the financial health and situation at the National Housing Corporation from the public housing perspective. The joint-ventures and the private developments would take place. The mortgages would be given. The urban tenancies programme, which I hope they would now start back with because it has been virtually dead for the last two years...

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, perhaps, needs to come for a tour in urban Barbados to see that tenancies and tenants have not been able to get their

subsidies moving at the Urban Development Commission. Similarly, those on the non-plantation tenancies - the Minister can check this - are being told that the Ministry of Housing and Lands does not have the money to provide the subsidies for the non-plantation tenancies like Bourne's Village which falls outside the urban corridor but which are not scheduled under the Act as a plantation tenancy.

I am not sure whether or not the Minister is aware of the programme but if they have the funds, they are telling the people that the funds are not there and therefore the people are not getting movement on the subsidies for the non-plantation tenancies.

I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we can address the fundamental issues of housing and land use in a serious way that is reflective of the continued approach over the last 50 years in this country, that does not seek to use it as a political prop for division but that recognises that there are serious issues in respect of any country that is 166 square miles. Thirty years ago, the demand for separate housing simply was not there as it is today. It therefore means that there has to be creativity.

More importantly, the role of Government in terms of intervention to be able to keep prices down and to provide for those who can least provide for themselves is critical. I am not sure, but I am willing to await the results, of the success of this programme called the zero lot line programme because I know the cultural realities of Barbadians.

I also know, like the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, that other than drug cases, that one of the major reasons for a lot of the wounding and assault cases in Barbados over the last 20 to 30 years came as a result of boundary disputes of one sort or another. Our people are very protective of the areas which they call their own around their home and, therefore, very often the development of a housing policy is not only about what is technically and engineering possible but, also, what is culturally palatable to the people for whom you are providing housing.

One of the reasons why blocks have developed, in my view, across this country has also to do with the lack of space for public recreation and proper ventilation in a lot of the low income housing developments that we have done over the years. At least there is recognition now, I think, by all Sides that no new public housing development should take place without there being an appropriate provision for public recreation for those who are required to live in the houses.

If the houses are too small and too hot, people are going to go outside and find spaces to occupy, and if they are not developed for them, they would make those spaces

and they would become commonly known as "blocks". We have, therefore, to take all of these things into consideration because the planning for housing is not simply a construction, an engineering or an architectural exercise, there must be a sensitivity to what is culturally palatable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I trust and pray also that the Minister of Housing and Lands would be frank with this Chamber because the National Housing Corporation would have seen its financial circumstances restructured. On December 11, 2007, a Resolution was passed in this House in relation to the provision of a guarantee for \$33 million to allow the National Housing Corporation to take out a loan to restructure its circumstances. The Auditor General's Report refers to the fact that at the end of March last year the overdraft was \$23 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been said that there have been a number of employees taken on at the National Housing Corporation without the provision of additional revenue or subsidies being made to the National Housing Corporation. I would ask the Minister of Housing and Lands to let us know by how many persons has he increased the staff at the National Housing Corporation - I can go slowly for him to take note of the questions - and what is the additional revenue.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will not take on the Honourable Member for Christ Church South who might be a little upset about dismissals and hirings in recent times.

House A48 Sequence 27

3.40 p.m.

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Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Sir, the reality is that it is a fundamental point of concern that if you increase the number of persons employed, without increasing the revenue that you have to pay those persons, it must materially affect your ability to be able to function. That is a fact.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to go as far as those who would want to suggest that the National Housing Corporation has been renamed "Lashley Enterprises". I am not in a position to do so. What I will say is that we have a concern as to what is the true financial state of the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all that has been planned, including what the Honourable Member has inherited,

where the planning has been completed for almost 3 000 lots, what is the ability of the National Housing Corporation to undertake and complete these developments, given the perilous financial circumstances of the Corporation? It is not a secret, the Honourable Member must be aware and if the Honourable Member is not aware, it means that as a Minister, he is not getting his information.

Sir, it is either that the Honourable Member knows and wishes not to share it, or that the Honourable Member perhaps needs to take some guidance as to what is his responsibility as Minister who is in charge of a statutory corporation. The Honourable Member should be seeing the Appropriation Accounts on a regular basis and indeed I am sure that his Permanent Secretary would ensure that the Honourable Member is kept up-to-date on this kind of data.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also would like to know, and the Honourable Member for St. George North asked it, what is the state of the General Workers' Loan Fund. The General Workers' Loan Fund was that fund that really made a critical difference in the lives of ordinary Barbadians, who invariably could not get a loan of maybe

\$5 000, \$10 000 or \$15 000 from the bank, in order to do urgent repairs or home improvements and who, invariably, the default rate of the General Workers' Loan Fund is extremely low, just like the default rate with the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation is, I believe, less than 3 per cent because poor people are faithful in repaying their loans when they are given the opportunity. Sir, the ability to get the money from the bank is constrained by their lack of security, their lack of collateral and by a bureaucratic process that anyone who tries to go through it to borrow money to do things that are urgent, would turn mad.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also believe that it is critical that legislation be brought to deal with the question of the extensions that have taken place on the housing units. Sir, it is not a matter that would go away. Equally, we believe, as we raised it in the Estimates, that the National Housing Corporation needs to bring the amendment, in order to legitimise its giving away of the units.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, finally, and I say this for the tenth or twelfth time in this Honourable House, we believe it is morally wrong and reprehensible for persons, who would have already paid deposits, some 500 or 600 persons, in the honest belief that their housing units would be conveyed to them. I am talking about people in Silver Hill, Gall Hill, The Farm, Grazettes and Haynesville, who would have all paid down money and who want the policy for the free units to become operational, as articulated by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West and the Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Sir, these people were not aware that they would not get back their deposits until the letters came from the National Housing Corporation saying that despite the fact they had already paid money, while their neighbours have not paid, they would not get back that money. Sir, it means that others who did not pay will get an absolutely free unit and that if they have already paid \$1 000,

\$2 000, \$5 000 and in some instances \$12 000, they would not be getting back one cent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party has committed itself to giving back those persons their deposits when we return to office. We believe it is morally wrong. We believe it is inappropriate for one person to get a benefit, in circumstances where the next person who paid is to be disadvantaged and told that had they waited and not paid, they would have been okay but the fact that they have already paid, they would not get back their money.

Sir, it is wrong and I hope and trust and pray that the Honourable Member for St. Philip North would urge his Cabinet colleges to correct the situation, as a matter of urgency, in the same way I know that the Honourable Member would make a case for the people of Church Village to get free units before he leaves the Ministry of Housing and Lands. Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I am obliged to you.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER vacated the Chair. Mr. SPEAKER assumed the Chair.

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

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I join this debate in support of this Resolution and certainly to join in this very important debate on housing. Sir, coming after the last Honourable Member who has just spoken, I have also entertained a number of revelations in relation to housing. One of the key lessons, I believe, from the speech of the Honourable Member, was that it is usually very interesting and marvelling when one sees and can see an action, an enlightened housing policy after all.

I think the Honourable Member connected, in a small measure, with the Resolution by, in many ways, denouncing their own policies in relation to housing. The Honourable Member has cleverly distanced herself from many of the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto initiatives in housing that never came to light. Mr. Speaker, that, to my mind, was the full extent of the speech I heard.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard a quote from the Honourable Member, when she said, and I quote: "I hope that we can approach housing and land use in Barbados on the basis of the last 15 years." Sir, I would not advise the

Minister of Housing and Lands to do that, certainly I would not.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to examine the findings of the Special Audit by the Auditor General, certainly I could never advise my friend, for whom I have a lot of respect, who is doing a very good job in the Ministry of Housing and Lands, to follow that kind of advice.

Mr. Speaker, before I touch on a few local issues pertaining to those persons in Christ Church West Central, for whom I have the honour to represent, I think a debate on housing is important. Sir, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East that we need to get to the point where we elevate housing in Barbados in a national manner, as a significant index of development. It no longer becomes a political football but before we can do that, it is important to examine what has happened and what has gone wrong before we could plot the future path.

Sir, prior to that, there are a number of telling observations which boggles the mind. I believe that if we are serious in terms of moving housing forward, we should never get to that point ever again. I hope that if there is only one thing that the Auditor General's Report does is that it teaches us a lesson in relation to the kind of pitfalls that could befall a Government if that Government follows bad practices.

3.50 p.m.

Tuesday, November 1, 2009

Mr. S.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I refer to the Executive Summary, paragraph 5 of the Special Audit, where the Auditor General said, and I quote:

"In relation to the Joint Venture Programme, several firms were selected by the Cabinet as Joint Venture partners. The Audit Office was, however, unable to obtain the specific criteria used in the selection of these firms. The due diligence on their capabilities was not conducted and it was later discovered that some developers lacked the financial capabilities to proceed with the project, as mandated by Cabinet."

Mr. Speaker, this speaks to lack of central control systems and mechanisms, which I feel we have to grapple with, if we are going to involve a national housing policy that will be elevated beyond the partisan issues which the Honourable Member would have referred to.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch very briefly as I support this Resolution on a number of observations, which I believe we need to take into our grasp as we plan housing. Sir, several of them relate to the housing developments and the housing units in Silver Hill and Gall Hill. Certainly, as

the Minister wraps up his speech, I would want him to connect to the very critical concern, which persons who live in Gall Hill and Silver Hill communicate to me on a daily basis.

One pertains, essentially, to the slow pace of the conveyances of those units. I believe the Government does have plans for this, but I understand there are some issues in relation to illegal structures; structures that have been developed without the necessary Town & Country Planning permission. I daresay, that is not a major problem in Silver Hill and Gall Hill. It maybe that there are issues pertaining to the global picture in Barbados in terms of the National Housing Corporation development. Sir, I believe that we need to move very quickly to bring this particular problem to a fitting solution.

Mr. Speaker, there is just the observation of overcrowding in the National Housing Corporation development but this is something we have to grapple with. I believe that while we speak of the plan to ensure that new developments would so develop, that there is adequate space for recreation and so on.

I believe that the plan going forward should not exclude fixing what is now in existing developments, that we look to even creating areas for recreation in developments such as Silver Hill and Gall Hill and other housing developments in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, if we do not do that, and we only focus on doing it in relation to new housing developments, we would not have done our duty in relation to fixing these issues in the National Housing Corporation developments, which I believe are cause for potential concerns.

Mr. Speaker, then there is the ever burning issue of overgrown lands. There are several overgrown lands that impact on housing developments. We have some in Silver Hill and we have some in Gall Hill but I believe that we have to move forward by ensuring that existing National Housing Corporation developments become the standard bearers; the examples by which we would go forward by ensuring that they are kept clean in relation to proper and frequent debushing, and that we ensure that the amenities are improved to the extent that they become symbols of excellence. Sir, the examples should be set by proper National Housing Corporation management within the housing developments themselves.

Mr. Speaker, it should not escape this Parliament in relation to a debate of such importance as to the future requirements that I think we have to adhere to in the planning of housing. I believe that we have to conceptualise and we have to put in place a plan of action that sees the development of economic hubs both in the National Housing Corporation's housing developments that

exist now and in potential National Housing Corporation housing developments that we are working on.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak of economic hubs, I speak of ensuring that we bring and that we develop right within the National Housing Corporation developments access to shopping; access to various services such as welfare, National Insurance and, of course, access to utility services such as electricity and water service providers, and that we build our housing developments in a manner that make sense to the persons who have to live in these developments.

We have not paid attention to it in the past. I feel we have to deal with it now; we have to ensure that there will be no further housing development under the umbrella of the National Housing Corporation without thinking of the kind of economic space and economic power that we could infuse into communities and into neighbourhoods, if we put in place the infrastructure immediately and that those housing developments that exist now, that we find ways in which to incorporate the hub of economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, there are issues that we face as well. I have had some concerns raised in relation to repairs. I know that the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation have started the rewiring programme in some areas of Gall Hill, but I feel this needs to be accelerated because of potential fire hazards and that we move to a stage of ensuring that we check, on a periodic basis in relation to the electricals in these housing developments.

I do not think we can risk tragedies as a result of poor electrical wirings and malfunctioning of electrics precisely because of the fact that these units take the form of condominium style units where there are really separated from the next door neighbour by a wall and any fire or any such calamity would, inevitably, impact on the next door neighbour.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like the Ministry of Housing to accelerate the infilling programme which has been promised for Silver Hill. Sir, many of the residents are excited about it because it is going to mean additional housing for persons in that catchment area. It is an excellent idea, which I support wholeheartedly, but we need to focus on bringing that programme on board quickly.

Mr. Speaker, I have discussed with the Minister a number of housing solutions in the Constituency. We have been looking at the land opposite Kendall Hill and Rose Hill and I hope that the planners within the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation would move speedily towards ensuring that legal work is

completed and the structural work is completed to ensure that these projects could be brought to fruition.

There is also the land over in Briar Hall, which was occupied by a cow farmer. The Minister is very much aware of that land and I hope that land would be targetted as well for housing.

Mr. Speaker, then I wanted to also touch on this issue because it has far-reaching implications in relation to housing in Barbados. We have talked a bit about rent control and so on but we have to look at this issue very seriously because we have a number of landlords, who need to be controlled in relation to how they manage their rented properties and in relation to how they increase rent on tenants.

H/A48/15:10 Sequence 29

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Mr. S.A. LASHLEY: We have - I would not want to call them by any particular word - a number of landlords who need to be controlled in relation to how they manage their rented properties and in relation to how they increase rents on tenants. I believe we need to focus very quickly on some kind of rent control regime, to bring some sense to what is going on.

The stories sometimes are chilling, in relation to the amount of rent that some landlords would wish to charge, but, at the same time, do not want to improve their properties. There must be something fundamentally wrong with that.

In addition to that, we have to get to the point of establishing basic minimum standards, in relation to houses and units put on the market for rental. It cannot be as it currently exists where anybody could put anything anywhere and demand a very high rent for it in an environment where I believe we all agree that housing is perhaps the number one social issue we have to face. We have to focus.

While the Government has to be given time, because I always say to my constituents that solving the housing woes in Barbados will not occur overnight. The issues facing the National Housing Corporation, and I am sure the issues which the Minister is grappling with and doing such a good job, have been issues around for many years. The lack of a forward-thinking housing policy by the former Administration has created for us a significant backlog of persons who are in need of housing. Therefore, the housing challenge will not be solved overnight.

Sir, I want to issue this challenge because I believe that in trying to grapple with the housing problem, we have

to avoid making errors of the past. One of those errors relate to the whole question of allocation of housing to perspective homeowners.

The system of allocation of housing needs to be reviewed, and reviewed urgently in a manner that the system does not unfairly discriminate, and that persons who have legitimate expectations and an entitlement to housing, who have been waiting for lengths of time, will not be frustrated by seeing persons jumping the queue. It is a big problem. It is a problem that has been relayed to me over and over again. Persons who have been in the queue for many years and they just see somebody jump ahead and get housing. I think we need to arrest this problem, now, so that we can assure Barbadians of a policy that is fair, and free from discrimination.

In the Report of the Auditor General's, the Special Audit in the Executive Summary, paragraph 12, the Auditor General refers to this same issue, which obviously related to a policy of the past. I hope it is not a policy now. The Auditor General in that report made the observation that, "Overall they did not seem to be any consistent manner in the allocation of lots, since it could not be determined the rationale for their distribution."

Sir, this creates significant challenges, I believe, for every Member of Parliament during our clinics and interacting with constituents, because there are many persons on that list. We are aware and do know that all of those persons will not be able accommodated at the same time. However, persons in the queue should feel confident that once there are in the queue and do qualify, specifically housing, that their turn will come.

I just want to issue my advice on this issue in relation to how we evolve our housing programme.

Sir, I wish to find a way to have national programmes designed to beautify our national housing developments, the existing ones. I call on the Minister to look carefully at working closely with the Ministry responsible for development to recommence a programme designed to beautify and bring that breath of greenery and flowers to the housing developments not only in Christ Church and its surroundings, but across Barbados.

We need to find a way to revitalise the physical landscapes of the housing developments. We need to find a way to ensure there are properly kept, the Lawns are trimmed and we can have a sense of ongoing maintenance in the housing developments.

Finally, I wish to also commend the Ministry of Housing and the Minister for accepting the concept of the need to establish Residents' Associations across the housing developments. I raised this issue in Silver Hill, at a

Town Hall Meeting, where I invited the Minister and his staff to address the residents there. I believe that the dawning of Residents' Associations in the National Housing Corporation developments would mean improved quality of housing, improved quality of service from the National Housing Corporation, a closer bonding and a community kind of approach to how we manage housing in Barbados.

I hope that this initiative will soon be launched and we will even see over time, if not immediately, a standard practice whereby a member of the Housing Association will inevitably be appointed to the National Housing Corporation Board. I believe we have to infuse that kind of proactivity onto the Board of the National Housing Corporation.

Sir, with those few remarks I certainly believe that we need to somehow find the parliamentary time, to engender a full national debate on housing. I personally welcome this opportunity to share some of my views and to join in support of this Resolution.

I am obliged to you.

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

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in the debate in relation to the vesting of the lands for the purpose of housing. I want to complement the Minister of Housing for his efforts in trying to ensure that this Government makes every effort to ensure that we provide Barbadians with the opportunity to obtain affordable housing.

I want to focus on this matter of affordable housing, especially at this time in Barbados where people are actually being forced off lands that they have occupied sometimes for over 30 years by landlords, who before paid very little attention to the lands, but now seek to remove the occupiers of those lands without paying regard to the fact that those persons occupied the lands for over 30 years. These are issues which the Tenancies Act cannot deal with.

Sir, at this time in Barbados, the fact that the property value has reached the level at which it is, it is even more necessary that Government undertakes a process which ensures that Barbadians will have access to affordable housing.

H A48 16.10 p.m. Sequence 30

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House A48, Sequence 31, 4.10 p.m.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, we have situations where we had tenants on the land, who were there for a long time and they indicated to the landowner that they would like to purchase, but sometimes the price at which they are being asked to purchase, they cannot afford. With those kinds of circumstances obtaining in Barbados it becomes necessary for Government to intervene in order to try to, at least, bring some sanity to the situation that we are seeing in Barbados today.

Sir, even within the Constituency of St. Michael West Central, I can identify large tracks of land that in many cases you cannot identify the owner. They are nowhere to be found when you make every attempt to try to reach them and they do not come forward. These lands sometimes, Sir, cause tremendous problems in St. Michael West Central because many times they harbour vermin. There is a problem with mosquitoes because they do not take care of them and any time you start to do something, somebody comes forward.

As a matter of fact, I want to praise the fact that the Minister of Housing is very alert and I know at this point in time that he is investigating a particular piece of property in St. Michael West Central, with a view to see whether or not Government can acquire it for housing purposes.

Sir, I think we have to praise the Minister when he takes that kind of initiative in terms of trying to identify plots of land within a Constituency, especially like St. Michael West Central, that would help to solve some of the difficult issues that ordinary Barbadians are facing today, in terms of trying to ensure that they can get the housing, which they can afford. Sir, again I want to praise the Minister of Housing as far as that is concerned.

Asides.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Sir, I also want to say this and I agree with my colleague, when he looked at the question in terms of the lack of fairness, for the allocation of housing. I have situations in my Constituency where people come to me and say that they have made an application to the National Housing Corporation, sometimes for 10 to 15 years, and they do not know what is the status of that application. Sir, there was no transparency in the process in terms of the allocation of the units.

Sir, this is a situation which we, as a Government, came and found and it is something that we need to deal with because, Sir, when we understand what is happening in relation to housing, and that Barbadians at times feel frustrated, we have, at least, to ensure that we bring some measure of transparency to this situation.

Again, Sir, I want to complement the Minister of Housing in his efforts because at least now we can see a

situation developing where we can give greater assurance to Barbadians that first of all, their concerns in relation to matters of housing will be met by this Government in a very real and disciplined way and, also, that their individual interests will not be treated lightly. I think that is extremely important.

As a matter of fact, Sir, one of the problem areas that I want to bring as we move forward is that we have a situation in this country where, at one point in time we had one-bedroom units being built and, at another time, we had three-bedroom units being built. In many cases today families who were put in a one-bedroom unit, those families have expanded. They have grown, so it is clearly not suited to them.

Then there is another situation where a family has been placed in a three-bedroom unit originally, and in many cases that family has declined through death, or people leaving the household and, sometimes, only one person lives in that unit. The other point I want to make is that even in cases where that person is the only person there, they might have family living some place else.

I think we, as a Government, need to give ourselves flexibility where we can transfer residents who live in units which clearly they have outgrown and place them in units which another person cannot make full use of, because I think we have to pay careful attention to ensuring that we utilise our housing stock in a manner that benefits everyone.

Sir, in this age where sometimes we tend to want to hold on to things as much as possible, the Government should retain the right for at least a certain number of units to be able to move persons around in a way that suits the demands of the particular family, so that we do not continue to have a situation that exists right now, where you may have a person who is staying in a three-bedroom unit and sometimes he has to climb stairs to the bedroom, and he is on his own many times, there can be a situation where you can transfer him to a one-bedroom unit so that the stress is not as great to him. Then, move that family in that one-bedroom unit to the three-bedroom unit where they would be more comfortable.

Sir, I really think that it is very important that we retain a certain percentage of our housing stock, in order to enable us to deal with that particular situation.

Sir, another point I want to make as we move forward on the question of housing is this. Our financial institutions in this country play a very critical role in terms of determining the cost of housing. One of the things that we see, as we look around Barbados today and the tremendous cost of housing, is the level of interest rates that we have, as it pertains to loans for housing. Sir,

sometimes we do not appreciate the impact of high interest rates on the cost of housing.

One of the things that I think we need to explore, is the principle of the Cooperative Movement. The Cooperative Movement in Barbados has proved to be the good example of how people mobilise their own capital in order to service their own needs. Sir, not only that, but when you look at the fact that the loans provided by the cooperatives are at a lower cost than other financial institutions, it means that we can actually use institutions such as the cooperatives, mainly the credit unions in terms of mobilising capital by people themselves to provide themselves with cheaper loans. Sir, as a result of that, we can have a situation where loans can be made more affordable to persons, who might wish to construct houses.

As it stands now, Sir, I think that sometimes when you go to a bank, a lot of people do not understand that there are hidden charges when it comes to loans. Sir, when you look at it, that is one of the main disincentives of persons who are working for relatively small salaries from actually getting a loan from the bank. Sir, by the time you pay fees of \$5 000, you have very little to make a down-payment.

On the other hand, the approach that is taken by the credit unions, is that the money you save within the credit union is used as your down payment so that you do not have to look for any further down-payment. Furthermore, the credit unions try to ensure that the amount you have there in terms of the fees is also very much lower than the banks.

I really think that we need to explore, or be more creative in trying to ensure that those persons who have modest incomes who cannot afford the kinds of fees that are being placed upon them by financial institutions, and that those persons are allowed to develop financial options which take their means into consideration.

I want to say this too, Sir. One of the things I think that we should not do to poor people - and I want to make this very clear - is that we should not assume that because of the fact that someone who is poor does not want housing of a certain standard. Sir, one of the perceptions that I find that we have in Barbados is that we have a situation where certain people, because of the fact that they have a certain level of income, they get a certain level of housing.

House A48, Sequence 31, 16:20:14

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Mr. J. D. PAUL: I want to encourage the Minister of Housing and Lands, in terms of the new developments that we are looking at, to ensure that persons get the standard of

housing that Barbadians are normally accustomed to. We do not want to have a situation where we just throw people in a landscape and then tell them be happy with that. What we want is a situation where when you look at it, one can feel proud being part of the communities.

Sir, that is why again I want to complement the Minister in terms of the initiatives that he is taking in respect of the new housing options that he is looking at in terms of the development of communities which are self-contained and which provide the requisite services, whether or not they be educational services or recreational services. These are the kinds of things that we are seeking to develop.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this is something we can support in terms of the initiative that we are trying to look at to ensure that Barbadians get affordable housing and housing that they can be proud of.

Sir, I also want to look at another issue when it comes to the whole question of housing. Sir, some of those people who have recently benefitted from the transfer of houses to them at relatively reasonable prices, especially the housing units from Government, are turning around and asking sometimes in many cases, ridiculous amounts from persons who are now actually living in them.

I have a case in my Constituency where an individual bought a house from Government and now they are renting it to an individual. Sir, you have a situation where the individual might want to buy and then they are asking sometimes 30 times what they actually paid for it. Sir, those are the kinds of things that are happening in our society.

Sir, this is why the initiative that we are undertaking would help to resolve some of those very difficult issues. Sir, when you find these kinds of things happening, Government has to play a role because unless we have some balance, we would have people who are least able to defend themselves being taken advantage of by those persons who seem to behave like Sherlock, wanting a pound of flesh.

I want to emphasise the critical role that the Minister of Housing and Lands is playing in terms of the steps that he is making. I also want to encourage him to continue to undertake the initiatives that he is currently taking in respect of St. Michael West Central where we have identified lots that we can actually work on, as far as trying to research who the owners are, in order to provide housing that is affordable to ordinary Barbadians. Sir, in that regard, I support the Minister in terms of what he is doing and the motion.

I thank you very much.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Attorney-General.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a very brief intervention in this debate on the important issue of housing for the less privileged people in Barbados. Ever since this Government came to office, we have had to, as it were, feed Parliament on a very steady diet of land acquisitions and vestings. That has become necessary because of the pressing need on the part of Government to meet the equally pressing demand for housing for Barbadians at the low income level.

Mr. Speaker, it is tempting to believe that these problems are of recent vintage, but they are not. Problems of housing in Barbados for the least fortunate segment of the society had their genesis not only during slavery, which we could easily understand, but in the post-slavery period where plantation owners were largely responsible for the quality of housing that persons attached to the plantation would enjoy.

That situation of very low quality housing continued right up to the 1930s as a result of the fact that the bulk of the population were plantation tenants and, therefore, had to make do with the quality of housing made available to them by the very low wages they were being paid and by the physical conditions under which they worked.

Sir, at some stage, the State had to get involved in this exercise if balance was going to be restored and if improvements were going to be brought. The State's involvement came in the year 1936, the year before the disturbances, which we have come to call the Riots. In that year, the Bridgetown Housing Act was passed and under that Act, what was called a Housing Board was established. What was significant about the Housing Board was the fact that its remit so far as housing was concerned was restricted to the urban areas of Barbados in spite of the fact that there was poor housing in the rural sections of the country.

Mr. Speaker, the Housing Board limited itself to minor repairs. Of course, when it did build houses, it built low quality chattel houses. There were no water-borne facilities and latrine facilities were separate from the house. This continued right down until 1955 when Hurricane Janet paid a visit to Barbados and wrought devastation of a kind that rendered it necessary for a Government to take other steps in relation to housing.

The Housing Board was dismantled, as it were, and replaced by a Housing Authority. The Housing Authority had a remit that was much larger than the Housing Board. Whereas the Housing Board's remit limited its activities to urban Barbados, the Housing Authority had to be responsible for all of Barbados. That had to do with the fact that Hurricane Janet had destroyed so much in Barbados

that they had to be a national effort in that regard, but still the quality of housing did not improve significantly.

Persons who remembered Janet and the kind of houses produced by the Housing Authority would recall a very small house that was called a prefab house with very limited facilities. To those prefab houses were scarcely attached any latrine facilities and households had to look out for those things for themselves.

Of course, before Hurricane Janet happened, the Housing Board, the predecessor to the Housing Authority, had taken on to itself some lands in the parish of St. Michael.

House A48 Sequence 32

4.30 p.m.

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Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I speak, for example, of areas we now know as Deacons, Bayland, Belfield and the Pine. These were some of the areas that the Housing Board had taken unto itself and had begun to develop before Hurricane Janet in September, 1965. After the Housing Authority was established, since its remit spread across Barbados, areas like Sayes Court and Gall Hill, Christ Church; Cave Hill, St. Michael; Thorpes, St. James, then engaged the attention of the Housing Authority.

Mr. Speaker, because of the pressure being put on the Housing Authority to have to look after all areas of Barbados, the Democratic Labour Party, in 1965, passed an Act establishing what was called an Urban Development Corporation Act. Sir, it is interesting to note that we talk about the Urban Development Commission now, but we had a Urban Development Corporation in 1965, that was established by the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, the focus of the Urban Development Corporation was to zero in on the requirements of the urban corridors in Barbados, since the Housing Authority had to look after all Barbados as a result of what Hurricane Janet had done, and the limits that had been placed on the scope of the Housing Board.

Mr. Speaker, what the Housing Authority inherited from the Housing Board were problems. They were problems of an asymmetry between the demand for housing and the supply for housing. The Housing Authority carried that burden with it from 1956 until 1973, when the National Housing Corporation was established by the Democratic Labour Party. Of course, the Urban Development Corporation legislation was repealed. It went

out of existence and the National Housing Corporation then became the executive arm of the Ministry of Housing.

Sir, all of the problems that both the Housing Board and the Housing Authority had ended up in the lap of the National Housing Corporation; therefore, the National Housing Corporation did not start with a clean slate that would make it a viable entity and that would give it the kind of elbow room it needed to answer all of the housing requirements at the low income level in Barbados.

The National Housing Corporation inherited all of the problems of its three predecessors and always confronted the issue of an asymmetry between the demand for housing at the low income level and the supply that was available. Of course, the limited economic resources placed particular strictures on the National Housing Corporation since it came into existence in 1973.

Mr. Speaker, that, of course, is not another way of saying that there is any excuse or that there has been any excuse for the mismanagement of the affairs of the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I join my Honourable colleagues, who have spoken before in this debate, in expressing my regret that the Auditor General should have to write a report like this on the National Housing Corporation in the year 2009. It is a matter for regret and I hope that we never have to face this kind of situation again.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud the present Minister of Housing and Lands for the efforts which he is making in the direction of trying to bridge the gap between supply and demand. It is a mighty challenge and I think he is confronting it with courage, with determination and manfully. I hope that we could, at least, break the back of this very serious problem.

Mr. Speaker, temptation is great, of course, whenever we are discussing this issue, to conduct the debate in a kind of very arid manner, as though we are only discussing bricks and mortar, or lumber, or plumbing fittings, when, in fact, what we are discussing is the welfare of actual real life human-beings.

Sir, I speak with a certain authority on this issue as the Representative of a Constituency in the parish of St. Michael. I am sure if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, the Honourable Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development had to speak in this debate, he would have the same story to tell, as if you, Mr. Speaker, had to speak in this debate, you could tell a similar story like that told by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, or any other St. Michael Constituency.

Sir, even when you are not discussing units provided by the National Housing Corporation, and most of us have

National Housing Corporation units in our constituencies, there is a very serious problem of housing shortage for low income and the very poor people in St. Michael. Sir, that is not just an economic statement. It is also a social statement because, as a result of this shortage, there is a horrendous amount of overcrowding in low income housing in the parish of St. Michael.

Sir, overcrowding can lead to a whole set of most unsavoury consequences. Sir, most of us, in our clinics, have to listen to these horror stories. Overcrowding leads almost inevitably to sexual exploitation of females and, in some cases sexual exploitation of males also. The result of all of this is that people walk around Barbados having to nurse these unfortunate secrets because of the fact that circumstances beyond their control have placed them in a situation where they have become victims of sexual exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of incest taking place in our overcrowded homes at the lower income level in Barbados. Unscrupulous men are committing incest in many of our poorest homes in this society and certainly in urban Barbados. I am not suggesting that it is limited to urban Barbados but what I am saying is that one comes face-to-face with it as a Minister of the Crown and as a Representative of an urban Constituency.

Mr. Speaker, this creates challenges for the Ministry of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment, the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, and for the Government as a whole because when these occurrences take place, they create distortions in people's lives. These distortions take years to repair.

Sir, a lot of the problems we see around us are as a result of some of these challenges posed at the very lowest levels of our society by overcrowding in our homes, homes that by no elasticity of language we can describe as sanitary or habitable.

4.40 p.m.

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Hon. F.J. STUART: The other peril is the peril of domestic violence. No matter how much members of families may love one another, situations of overcrowding invariably lead to frayed nerves from time to time and, as a result, there are explosions of domestic violence, which sometimes reach the court and sometimes do not but, certainly, they keep the police very busy. Sir, that is, again, the kind of occurrence that flows naturally from overcrowded homes in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges that we have been facing is that this overcrowding is traceable, not to one person having a large family, but to the fact that sometimes two and three different families live in the same house and, we all know, we have come along and heard it, Mr. Speaker, that two bulls cannot sleep in the same pen; that a house can only have one mistress and one master and when those Laws are exceeded or violated then we have problems of domestic violence and that kind of thing.

Mr. Speaker, all this poses challenges for the victims who did not choose to be here, but who have to make peace with all of these misfortunes, the children of Barbados. Sir, again, children living in overcrowded conditions, no matter how eager they are to do school work; no matter how enthusiastic they are about study, they do not make the Laws for the house, adults make the Laws for the house and if they are adults who want to watch a television programme, that child who wants to do homework cannot do it.

If adults want to have a quarrel, that child, who want to do his homework cannot do it and a lot of our children, therefore, leave on mornings to go to school having had very hard nights, either unable to do their homework, having to listen to prolonged quarrels; having to listen to loud music being played in the house because that catches some adults' fancy and that then creates problems for the Ministry of Education; for principals in schools and for teachers in schools.

Sir, very often the ZR bus and minibuses cause a problem but the problems start even long before the children get on to any of those vehicles as well and, these are some of the problems that flow from our low-income housing problems and the fact there are poor people trapped in this quagmire of poverty and unable to get out of it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands faces challenges of a mighty and sometimes intimidating type. Let us be very frank, Mr. Speaker, I know them and you know them and all in this House know them. There are people in this country who, not want but who need housing, who cannot afford to pay for it either at the level of rent or at the level of purchase. They do not work for the kind of wages, if they work at all, that would allow them to purchase any of the houses being built by the National Housing Corporation and they are not in a position even to pay the rents being charged by the National Housing Corporation because a lot of the young women who have children and who are desperately in need of low-income housing are, unfortunately, unemployed.

Sir, the question that we have to ask ourselves is: Are they to be denied access to housing because they find themselves the victim of this misfortune? Sir, that is the

question the Government has to answer. I do not think the Government can answer that question in the affirmative, but it is a challenge, which the Honourable Member for St. Philip North and his establishment at the National Housing Corporation, and in the Ministry of Housing and Lands, have to answer.

Mr. Speaker, this low-income housing challenge is in the nature of a kind of hydro-headed monster. Sir, however you look at it, there are challenges that threaten to intimidate you. I am pleased that the Government, through this Minister, is not phased by what confronts it in terms of this housing challenge, but that the Minister is doing his very best to wrestle it to the ground and to bring it under control.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have to make a public plea to a lot of parents in Barbados who are not sufficiently sensitive - I know that I have said earlier that a house can only have one mistress, but when your daughter and your grandchildren have nowhere to go, and you are telling them that they have to leave your house by a certain time, that certainly does not make things any easier for them.

It calls for a certain amount of patience; it calls for a certain amount of co-operation on the daughter and the grandchildren as well, but there are too many of these stories where mothers and fathers want to put children and grand children out, making the case, of course, a case that would have been relevant in the 1950s and 1960s but, certainly, not relevant now that if they have children they should be on their own.

There was a time in Barbados when, if the average young man impregnated a young woman, he felt himself under some obligation to go and find a house to ensure that he had somewhere to put the woman and the child. Sir, that Barbados is a Barbados of yesteryear.

Nowadays, that same young man, having impregnated woman No. 1, is looking for woman No. 2 to impregnate and the result usually is that four or five different persons have him in court for maintenance, none of which he is paying and all of these people then become the responsibility of the State; of the Welfare Department; of the National Housing Corporation and so on.

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the very knotty problems with which we have to contend. This is what makes the Ministry of Social Care so important in the architecture of this Government. It is why we have put family, the preservation of family and the promotion of family as one of the centre-pieces of our forward and developmental thrust.

Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Minister is doing today, the vesting of this property at the Ivy in the National

Housing Corporation with a view to transferring the units there to those who are entitled to have them, is a forward step, deserving of this House's commendation, but there are many other challenges we have to meet in this society if we are to recapture the level of stability that we consider desirable for a society of this kind.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of the problems we have with social deviance; a lot of the problems we have with crime and indiscipline; a lot of the black culture has to do with the fact that home is not a pleasant place to be because of overcrowding; because of the inhospitality that people find there and these are some of the issues that we have to confront if we are to wrestle this problem of the asymmetry between supply and demand to low income housing to the ground.

H/A48/16:50 Sequence 34

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Hon. F.J. STUART: I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip North for the efforts he is making in this regard. I think listening to the debate today, that all Honourable Members on Both Sides of the House have a sense that this is an issue that if not properly managed will consume all of us. Our ability to enjoy our own homes, to walk comfortably on our streets and to feel safe in this society is going to depend on how we deal with this housing problem, because the people who are most desperately in need of housing are the ones who are causing problems in our schools, who are making schools war zones and the ones who ultimately become frequent visitors to the courts and who ultimately end up either incarcerated or terrorising the society.

Sir, I really think that when we are discussing housing, we have to get past discussing bricks, mortar, lumber, plumbing and so on and look behind all of this to see what are the real problems and whose problems we are trying to deal with.

I have no doubt that this Honourable House, in the month of November, 2009, is sensitive to this reality and we will all put our hands to the wheel and ensure that we can get this problem brought under control. Sir, I give this Resolution my wholehearted support.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, I rise to wrap up this debate and express my gratitude to all Honourable Members who contributed to this debate today. Sir, I first want to deal with the contribution, or lack thereof, of the

Honourable Member for St. George North. The Honourable Member was the principal spokesman from the Other Side. He spoke long and made some pointless points. He reminded me of a man who had already plead guilty and is trying to put a case to defend himself. The Honourable Member made mention of the Glebe and Parish Land.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, and as I said before in this Honourable Chamber that I have never seen so many Form 1 Notices coming to me to be signed, from way back. In fact, I recall only last week receiving a letter from the Honourable Member for St. John, the Honourable Prime Minister, of an outstanding tenantry matter going on for approximately 10 years, but for the signature of the Minister to declare a tenantry. I remember signing off on Bourne's Village and a number of other tenancies to declare them tenancies. The question we have is, what was happening before?

Sir, persons who qualify under the Law wanted their conveyances and wanted to be empowered. In fact, I must say that at this time I received a number of Form 1 Notices from the Urban Development Commission, in terms of urban tenancies to declare them tenancies.

Asides.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: I have to sign every one of them manually. Sir, a lot of them are being worked on. In fact, I have more than five different large, thick envelopes on my desk. I have to go through them and hopefully will complete them by next week. I will complete every one of them.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North said that they had a building boom and they had small contractors. He mentioned all those things. Sir, the Honourable Member knows full well that the first project by the National Housing Corporation at Marchfield small contractors were utilised. Small contractors were also utilised at the project at Constance.

I do not know if the Honourable Member wants us to employ the small contractors that they employed. I know that if you read the Special Audit on the Urban Development Commission and what was said, in order for someone to become a small contractor. Under their watch the Commission, at Page 8, conceded that it erred in allowing persons to remain on its Register of Contractors including those persons whose only claim to being a contractor was that they were unemployed, unemployable, homeless, vagrants, criminal deportees and those who frequented the yard of Parliament. Sir, if the Honourable Member wants us to fit into that qualification, then this Administration is saying a loud "No" to the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Further, the Honourable Member for St. George North said that he does not know what is happening to the Tenancies Programme, what is happening to this and what is happening to that. All of a sudden we have abandoned the Tenancies Act, Cap 239 (B).

H A48 17.00 p.m. Sequence 35

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

House A48, Sequence 36, 5.00 p.m.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the tenants can still expect their benefits under this Administration with the programme that was in existence.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North also tried to make a point that they left the National Housing Corporation debt free.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Yes, he said that but, Mr. Speaker, the Special Audit on the National Housing Corporation states that the National Housing Corporation has debts in excess of \$120 million owed to developers, its pension fund and a former contractor.

Mr. Speaker, we have inherited the fact that the former Administration engaged in services of their contractor at Coverley Phase 1. Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we had instances at Buckeley Meadows, where the work was done so badly that we had to call in a quantity surveyor and a structural engineer to look at the problems that were complained about and, in fact, we had issues again with that contractor and, Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on about issues, including the Warrens Building.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. George North stated today that the National Housing Corporation is debt free, and I am respectfully submitting that he really stretched it very far on that particular occasion. Sir, he said he is a student of language and he would know what that means in terms of stretching far on that particular occasion.

Mr. Speaker, he also mentioned the General Workers' Loan Fund and it is known that during the year 1999, the Government of the day introduced a programme of loans making \$5 000 available to the public of Barbados. He is saying Promissory Notes, but he called it promiscuous notes at the time, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member was corrected by the Honourable Member for St.

James South who said it is not promiscuous notes, it is Promissory Notes.

Mr. Speaker, when we checked the information there were no checks and balances put in place on this programme. In fact, Sir, the order of the day went at the time that you walked into the National Housing Corporation and you received a cheque in two days. There were challenges to that programme.

The challenges were that the Corporation could not verify the information presented by that person who came in for a loan. They could not demand adequate security, and the Corporation was not allowed to verify whether the monies were being spent for house repairs or for any house related matters. Indeed, Sir, the Corporation was not allowed to check on the applicants' employment status.

The resultant effect of this policy was that the Corporation moved from having a surplus fund of \$12 million to make available for legitimate projects to a situation where in 2000 to 2001 they had to sink an injection of funds in the General Workers' Loan Fund.

Sir, the Corporation, in a space of six months, made some 2 500 loans under the \$5 000 Loans Programme, all on Promissory Notes and to this date, some 10 years later, a significant amount of these loans are still outstanding. The reason being that the persons who were lent the money cannot be located or the addresses given were fictitious. Some were never employed with the employers stated, and the Corporation had no leverage against defaulters. I thank the Honourable Member for St. George North for raising the issue of Promissory Notes and the programme.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, that is what happened so when the Honourable Member for St. George North got up and tried to put a case, then the Honourable Member for St. George North as he pleaded guilty, aided and abetted in the state now of the financial position of the Corporation.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, again a lot of talk was raised about the deposits. In fact, every time we have a debate, it is the deposit. I know it was not this Administration that introduced the Hardwood Housing Company to Barbadians. Mr. Speaker, we know full well that some Barbadians paid deposits to the Hardwood Housing Company, and not a house was delivered to them. Now that this Administration is seeking to empower poor Barbadians in relation to a 20-year programme, I heard the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, mention that it was morally wrong not to give back the deposits, and we should give back deposits.

Sir, it was not morally wrong, knowing full well that the Corporation could not vest proper title, could not give clear and absolute title, that no Town Planning was given, that no surveying works were completed, but the deposits were collected. Sir, the question is: Is it morally right for the then Administration at the time to take deposits from Barbadians knowing full well that they could not give them a clear and absolute title, or give a conveyance to anyone of them?

House A48, Sequence 36, 17:10:14

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Sir, now that we have decided to empower Barbadians, they are now using the argument that it is morally unjust but it was not morally unjust before. They had ample time to get the Town Planning permission, to vest the units and to bring the special pieces of legislation that they talked about. Sir, nothing was in their way, so I am saying that they have no moral right to speak about housing in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North asked about the structural soundness of the houses. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North should not even open his mouth in respect of Country Park Towers. For 10 years, that said Administration knew full well that the people in Barbados and around St. Michael were asking for rental units. They started the project and abandoned it.

When you visited Country Park Towers, it was full of steel, rust and vines when poor people were up and down Barbados asking us in Opposition for rental units, and his statement today is that he wants to question the integrity of the structure. If you do not have a case to put, you should shut up.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Honourable Member is saying that I should not speak in this House. I am an Honourable Member of this House. I never questioned whether the Country Park Towers was not to be built. I asked the question whether the section of PreConco is sound. I asked the Honourable Member to satisfy the public about what they have been asking. That is what I am asking. It is not that I am against Country Park Towers. The Barbados Labour Party opened Phase 1 of the Country Park Towers.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please continue.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, the National Housing Corporation, by direct labour, built Phase 1, that is a fact, but I am talking about the second phase of Country Park Towers.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, he also asked about the removal of asbestos roofs in terms of Kensington Lodge. Again, the Honourable Member for St. George North should not even speak to that issue in relation to the removal of asbestos roofing. Sir, all we hear from the Other Side is that we had plans, it was in contemplation, it was in draft, we were about to do it and all of these statements. Sir, the question is: Why was it not done? The Auditor General's Report speaks to the problems in vesting. In fact, the Honourable Member for St. James North mentioned the fact that the vesting process has to take two or three years.

Mr. Speaker, since we came into office, we have acquired land at Branchbury, Clifden, and Woodbourne by private treaty and we have already vested them in the National Housing Corporation. Sir, that statement that was made by the Honourable Member for St. James North is not an excuse that should be used. Sir, you have to move swiftly and you have to acquire those lands and make sure that your officers work to a time line so that you can vest the lands in the National Housing Corporation so that you can get the conveyances over.

Mr. Speaker, the vesting process is important as the Honourable Member for St. Michael South said. We are here to empower Barbadians and to ensure that those tenants at the Ivy can get their conveyances.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North also made mention of the Condominium Act. Sir, page 29 of 45 of the Special Audit states that:

"4.9Housing constructed under the Condominium Act must conform to certain conditions, and is subject to the approval of the Chief Town Planner. In order to sell housing units constructed under this Act, one of the criteria required is the establishment of a management company."

"4.10In 2001, the Corporation built a number of condominiums at Flat Rock, St. George, and Brighton, Black Rock. When the Corporation offered these units for sale, it was not in a position to sell them since they had not established a management company as required. These units were built at an average cost of \$95 000 per unit. They were offered for sale to successful applicants who were to occupy them and pay occupancy rent until they acquired a mortgage."

“4.11 The Audit took a sample of seven of the persons who may now pay occupancy rent, and found that a number of persons have paid between \$40,000 and \$70,000 on these units.”

“4.12 It is recommended that the Corporation establish this management company, so that these persons can complete the purchase of their units.”

Sir, that would be done. The question is why was it not done by the persons who built them and by the former Administration?

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member raised that issue not knowing that he had failed to carry out his duty under the Condominium Act. That is why I have to point out to him that he has no case. He pleaded guilty early up front but he then began to bamboozle himself and his whole Party. Mr. Speaker, that is testimony to the fact that between 2003 to 2008, 113 houses were completed.

Sir, the statement was made that less land was made available to the Corporation. In fact, it also stated that 80 acres of land was sold to private developers contrary to the direction of Parliament, making less land available for the housing programme of the Corporation.

House A48 Sequence 37

5.20 p.m.

Tuesday, November 10, 2009

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, once again, to show the recklessness of the previous Government, if we look at page 13, paragraph 2.2.3. - This is the Husbands Garden Project:

“Under the agreement between the National Housing Corporation and the bank, houses were to be constructed on lots at approximately 200 000 acres each. These houses, together with the lands, were to be offered for sale to prospective purchasers at a price of approximately 250 000.

The Corporation subsequently entered into a profit and loss arrangement with the bank for the development of land and construction of housing at Westwood Gardens, which is part of the Husbands Garden project.

Under this arrangement, the National Housing Corporation was to be paid by the developer for each lot and another one-third on the house upon completion. This arrangement was contrary to the Joint Venture Programme set up by Cabinet. The bank financed the entire project for both infrastructural development and housing construction. When the houses were completed, the bank and the Corporation found difficulties finding purchasers for these

properties. Of the 24 applicants which the Corporation submitted, only two qualified to purchase the property which was supposed to be offered for sale at \$250 000 but were being sold at an average of \$400 000 by the bank.

This prevented the majority of applicants from the National Housing Corporation any chance of qualifying. The bank reported that it suffered a loss on the project and as a result, the Corporation did not receive any monies from the sale of the properties.”

Mr. Speaker, this is a manifestation. Sir, I am saying that is the reason the Honourable Member for St. George North should have got up this morning and in two seconds should have said that he supports the Resolution and that he rests his case.

Sir, when we speak in relation to deposits, there is a classic case in relation to deposits for the National Housing Corporation. Sir, that classic case is that some time in June 21, 2007, a 67-year-old pensioner, who lives in one of the estates, was asked to pay a deposit of \$4 000 towards the purchase price of a unit for \$43 000. She was subsequently told there was an outstanding balance of \$31 000. She was advised to proceed to a financial company with a view of securing a mortgage. Sir, this is a 67-year old pensioner whom we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, that pensioner had already paid \$10 000 from her pension and gratuity. She was then asked to pay a lump sum of \$10 000 and an increased monthly payment of \$500. That is part of the programme of the then Administration, where a pensioner was asked to pay \$4 000 deposit, then to look for a further \$31 000, and to proceed to a bank to secure finance for a mortgage for a unit, after living in the unit for 20 years or more. Sir, that is the difference between the two Administrations. Mr. Speaker, it was then proposed that the pensioner would be charged 6 per cent interest on the outstanding balance.

Sir, someone who would have contributed to the development of this country was being punished in the evening of her years by the policies of the former Administration.

Mr. Speaker, with those words, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF THE PARCELS OF LAND, THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT COVERLEY IN THE PARISH OF CHRIST CHURCH IN THIS ISLAND FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution is similar to the one that was passed, where we are asking for the land as described in the First and Second Schedules, to be vested in the National Housing Corporation at Coverley in the parish of Christ Church for housing development.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition has no objection to the Resolution. In fact, it was this Party that started the Joint Venture Programme at Coverley Phases 1, 2 and 3. Sir, “Settlement 2000” started some years ago but I am not sure where we are at, in relation to Coverley. Sir, we on This Side have no objection to the vesting of this large stretch of land in the National Housing Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for St. George North for supporting the Resolution and for supporting the housing policy of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now adjourned until Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House be now adjourned until Tuesday, November 17, 2009, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

5.30 p.m.

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EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)
INNIS, Hon. D. O'N. (St. James South)
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MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M.A. (St. Michael North East)
PAUL, Mr. J. D. (St. Michael West Central)
STUART, Hon. F.J. (St. Michael South)
TODD, Hon. P.M.T. (City of Bridgetown)

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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. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Dates in the text. The source gives ‘Tuesday, November 1, 2009’ (1 November 2009 was a Sunday). The weekday and date do not agree; printed as in the source.

Q3. Papers. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce says that ‘this morning the Minister of Housing laid on the Floor of this House, the Special Audit of the National Housing Corporation which is dated August 2009’, and Hon. M. A. Lashley calls it ‘now a document of this House’, but the list of Papers records only the Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 5) Order, 2009 and the Annual Report of the Fair Trading Commission. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 4, Hon. M. A. Lashley’s reply. The passage read from the Special Audit on the Husbands Garden Project says houses ‘were to be constructed on lots at approximately 200 000 acres each’ and sold ‘at a price of approximately 250 000’, with no unit given. The figure in acres seems unlikely. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 4, Mr. G. A. Clarke. Mr. G. A. Clarke begins one point of order ‘Mr. President, on a point of order’ although the House is sitting under Mr. Speaker. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Speech labels. His Honour K. St.C. Best’s second speech is labelled ‘Hon. K.St.C. BEST’, and the PRESENT list gives Hon. D. O’N. Inniss’s portfolio as ‘Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade Union Movement and International Business’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 10th November, 2009 at 10.15 a.m., with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. Mr. Speaker asked Members to observe the customary bow at the start of the Sitting. The Minutes of 27th October were confirmed. Hon. R. D. Jones laid the Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 5) Order, 2009 and the Annual Report of the Fair Trading Commission for the year ending 31st March, 2009. Hon. D.

O’N. Inniss moved the first reading of the Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 2009, and Standing Orders were suspended.

Under Order No. 4, the Minister of Housing and Lands, Hon. M. A. Lashley, moved the Resolution under section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, vesting Crown land at Ivy, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation. He explained that the Corporation could give good title only to land vested in it, and that Deacons, Rosemont, Fernihurst, the Ivy, Maynards, Kensington Lodge and London Bourne Towers had never been vested. Ivy Estate had 61 three-bedroom units built by direct labour in 1985; 41 tenants qualified under the 20-year free transfer programme and 39 had accepted. Quoting the Auditor General’s Special Audit of the Corporation, he cited a waiting list of over 29 000, a target of 1 300 houses for 2003 to 2008, and 85 acres capable of producing 750 lots sold to developers, and said 50 houses had been started at Coverley with permission for 300 more.

Mr. G. A. Clarke supported the Resolution, said mortgages had grown from \$293 million to \$1.5 billion between 1994 and 1996, put the cost of the free transfers at about \$67 million, and said the Corporation’s overdraft had reached \$23 million against a limit of \$7 million; points of order were raised against him by Hon. M. A. Lashley, Mr. D. St.E. Kellman and His Honour K. St.C. Best. Mr. R. C. Eastmond traced tenantry legislation from the Security of Tenure of Small Holdings Act and called for review of the Town and Country Planning Act, Chapter 240. His Honour K. St.C. Best, in whose constituency Ivy lies, spoke on tenants who had paid landlords who later died.

After the luncheon suspension, Hon. P. M. T. Todd spoke on Kensington Lodge and the asbestos roofs and on the Inter-American Development Bank programme; Mr. Clarke withdrew a charge of deliberately misleading the House, and Mr. Speaker ruled against commenting on a Member’s absence. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce read from the Special Audit on the Blackman’s and Buckeley Meadows developments and the allocation of 52 lots by developers. Mr. Kellman spoke on the General Workers’ Loan Fund and land at \$5 a square foot. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, the Leader of the Opposition, argued that the waiting list had grown more slowly than expected, that mortgages had risen from \$37 million in 1990 to \$1.8 billion by 2007, and that 500 or 600 persons who had paid deposits of \$2 000 to \$12 000 should be repaid.

Mr. S. A. Lashley and Mr. J. D. Paul spoke on landlords, rents and fairness in allocation. The Attorney-General, Hon. F. J. Stuart, traced public housing from the

Housing Board of 1936 to the present and linked overcrowding with domestic violence. Replying, Mr. Lashley said the Corporation had debts of over \$120 million, that some 2 500 loans of \$5 000 had been made on promissory notes in six months in 1999, and described a 67-year-old pensioner asked for a further \$10 000 lump sum. The Resolution passed.

Under Order No. 5 the House agreed, without debate beyond Mr. Clarke's support, to a similar Resolution vesting Crown land at Coverley, Christ Church, in the National Housing Corporation. On the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones the House was adjourned at 5.30 p.m. until Tuesday, 17th November, 2009 at 10.00 a.m.