
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, June 18, 2013

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 18, 2013.

PRESENT

The full list of Members present is to be inserted from the Votes and Proceedings. Members identified from the record of this Sitting:

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON (Speaker)
Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON (Deputy Speaker)
Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P.
Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN (Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development)
Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P.
Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE (Minister of Health)
Hon. S. D. BLACKETT (Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development)
Mr. J. D. PAUL (Chairman of Committees)
Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE (Minister of Drainage and the Environment)
Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS
Mr. E. G. HINKSON
Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW
Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members, this House is now in session. Members, I am not yet in receipt of any minutes, so I ask that the usual motion for the deferral be moved.

MINUTES

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the minutes referred to be deferred at this time.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. SPEAKER: By way of announcements, I acknowledge the presence of the 18 pupils of the St. Luke's Brighton Primary School's Kids Clubs, ages eight to 11, and their teacher, Mrs. Anita Bradford, along with Mrs. Pamela LaLonde, the Kiwanis advisor to the Kiwanis Club. Of course, we are always very happy to see young people and students joining us, and we hope that you find the experience enlightening.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's sitting.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Those Standing Orders are now suspended. Government Business is the order of the day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. CLERK: Order Number three, Sir, in the name of the Honourable Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development, to resume the debate on the passing of a resolution that Parliament take note of and approve the White Paper on Ageing.

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION – WHITE PAPER ON AGEING

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I want to start the morning's proceedings and join this debate and the resolution to take note of the white paper on ageing as presented in this honourable chamber by the Minister of Social Care when last we met. And so I want to start by congratulating him, Sir, on and his team at the Ministry of Social Care for what I thought was a very thorough document, which Sir seeks to present to Barbadians our choices as we look forward to the continuing care of the elderly in our community. So I therefore want to congratulate the Minister and his team, as I say, for what I thought was a very thorough document and I want to congratulate him again, specifically Sir, for his presentation last time.

Sir, I also want to take note of the contribution of the Honourable Member for the City, who I think again added to the presentation of the Minister, Sir, and indeed demonstrated a very careful knowledge of the kind of experiences which the elderly in our community often share and the kind of facilities and the kind of strategies which we would necessarily have to have in place to adequately deal with these members of our community. And indeed, I think the point was made in both presentations, and I want to repeat, and especially as Minister of Health, I want to repeat the fact that Barbadians must now be accustomed to the reality that the demographic distribution of our age groups tells us, informs us that we are an ageing population. We are living longer, Sir, and the life expectancy of Barbadians, I believe it ranges somewhere in the high 70s today.

Indeed, we celebrated as a small island state the highest - one of the highest concentrations, if we can use that term, of centenarians. And I, too, want to join in celebrating the life of Mr. James Cisnet. The late Mr. James Cisnet, who passed away recently, but until then was, I think, the third oldest person in the world. There is always some question as to second, third, or fourth records there, but I think that it is testimony to what is happening in our country. And indeed, while we were at the recently concluded World Health Assembly, the Barbados team made the point during our deliberations on NCDs that we indeed boasted this fact that we had a number of centenarians. And I don't want to steal his thunder, but a member on this side told me he has to go away this morning again to celebrate another centenarian. When he is back I am sure he is going to be able to relate to this honourable chamber maybe some special stories about this centenarian. And all of us in our constituencies I am sure from day to day encounter these realities.

As Minister of Health, I am probably directly involved in the care of the elderly in the structured sense, in that we provide a number of facilities around the island for the care of those elderly who can no longer be treated at home. There is of course a separate debate which ensues in

respect to how this comes about - whether the care at home is too costly, is too disruptive - but you know, Sir, as a nation we must be proud of the fact that we can offer this facility to the people of Barbados. And I am confident that the Barbadian population as a whole and Barbadian families as a whole do treat the question of the care of the elderly seriously. And wherever possible, they have endeavoured to keep their parents at home. And I certainly have personal knowledge of this reality.

What however is also true is that we need to commend the work of our nurses, our doctors. I believe the profession referred to is gerontologists, the doctors who are specially trained to look after the elderly. And the accompanying team at our geriatric institutions, our managers of the geriatric hospitals and of course those very loving, caring staff - our nurses, ancillary staff, cooks, our security at these institutions. And only last Friday we visited the Elaine's Canterbury Centre which was once located in the beautiful parish of St. Andrew, but it has now been relocated to St. Lucy with the St. Lucy Geriatric Hospital. The specific name eludes me at this time. But the point I want to make is I was extremely touched, and I want to record this at this time, by the kind of selfless care that was being meted out to these residents of these institutions by our doctors, as I said, nurses and general staff of these institutions. And I want to go on record, as I say, and record my deepest appreciation, the appreciation of this, the Government of Barbados, for what is clearly an outstanding performance by those who are responsible for this care. And Sir, we will endeavour to improve these facilities from time to time.

They have fallen behind in terms of the quality of maintenance. My predecessor has done tremendous work at the geriatric hospital here in Bridgetown, just around the corner, and even then we still have a lot of work to be done. We recently did a survey at this institution and we have the view that we need to tackle this particular facility from two points of view. It is a wonderful piece of architecture, the structure of this geriatric hospital at Beccles Road. And indeed it would be a travesty if we were not able to include aspects of its historical architecture in any redevelopment or any refurbishment of that facility. And that certainly will be the objective of the Ministry of Health once those funds are available. So that is the route we want to take, and again we need to expedite the actual improvements. And again the staff at this institution, the geriatric hospital especially at Beccles Road and in St. Philip of course, have been having a testing time - and I put it mildly - in respect to the conditions which exist. And we are committed as a government to making sure that there are urgent improvements and that wherever possible the staff is kept abreast of the goings on, the works that are contemplated, and certainly the works that are to be executed.

Sir, the onset of an aged population has brought with it the other reality. The other reality being that we have largely, as a people, as a developing country, as a developing island state, largely been able to conquer the scourge of communicable diseases. These are of course the famous malaras and those infections which are contagious. But we have largely conquered these diseases - typhoid and these kinds of things. But our lifestyle, which again we have inherited, it is said to be associated with a measure of affluence, of fast foods and diets with a lot of fried provisions in whatever form and our moving away from the traditional ground provisions - if I may use that term to encompass all the legumes and the vegetables. If I can use ground provisions as broadly as that, I don't know if the Minister of Agriculture would permit me that kind of liberty, Sir. Or you even, Sir. But the point being that we have moved to an environment of processed foods largely in the developing world. And this - all indications are that this has brought with it the onset of, in some respects, new diseases. And these have been lumped under a grouping called non-communicable diseases. And these refer specifically to things like high blood pressure, clinically referred to as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, and of course the whole issue of strokes, the onset of strokes generally.

And this has been occupying the minds of caregivers and it has been occupying the minds of those who are charged with preventing sickness in our country. And we have seen sometime around 2009-2010 the establishment indeed of the National Non-Communicable Disease Commission. And I have in my hand, Sir, a recent report of this Commission, which once I finish with it, I am prepared to make it a document of this honourable chamber so that members can have an opportunity to look through and disseminate the information available in this document. It speaks, Sir, to the work of this very important Commission. And this Commission, Sir, is charged with promoting healthier lifestyles throughout Barbados and setting plans in motion within the Ministry of Health so that we can directly attack and champion those habits or those practices which bring about the onset of these mentioned diseases.

Why would we want to do this? And it is very simple, Sir. The facts will show that the cost of health care, as we continue to grapple with it, will increase significantly if we continue to see growth in terms of the incidence of these diseases. Traditionally, the cost of treatment of these diseases is expensive, and I say very expensive. And indeed, in many cases, our people - where these facilities are not available here in Barbados - have to seek medical attention overseas. And of course, when this prospect is faced, then the cost is quadrupled, and one has very often to spend your entire life savings in trying to recuperate or recover from the onset of these diseases. So it is very important and it is viewed in the Ministry of Health to be critical in our health programme going forward that we

deal with the question of non-communicable diseases and the prevention thereof. It is no point waiting until one has contracted these diseases to say, well, let us now deal with it. Because, as I said, that is a cost which we cannot contemplate for our country. And as we continue to move in a world where the view is that health care should be available to all persons, the reality is that this has become even more urgent.

And therefore the work in terms of, as I said, looking at the entire diet as to what we eat, the question of smoking - because there is no question that it has been clearly demonstrated that smoking of tobacco increases the onset of lung cancer - alcohol abuse, Sir, the whole question of alcohol abuse again and the repercussions of hypertension, diabetes in our older years, is something which we must be fully aware of. So this Commission, Sir, is set up under the chairmanship of Professor Hassel. And this Commission is set up to especially look at the question of preventing these diseases. The actual date of the Commission is January 2007. So it dates back to the time of the Barbados Labour Party Administration. But, Sir, the work that they have been able to carry out, either directly as a Commission or by participating with the private sector in Barbados, is worth noting. And almost weekly now we hear of some health fair or some physical activity, be it simply a fun walk or an exercise walk sponsored by the private sector, business people, or our unions, our schools, Sir, our constituency councils, and all over Barbados. We at the Ministry have welcomed and tried to participate in any activity which will see the promotion of good, healthy practice in Barbados.

If we don't maintain this programme, if we don't indeed intensify our efforts in this direction, we can be contemplating a health cost, Sir, of the future which will be unbearable in Barbadian society. We already have an expansive debate taking place in terms of the costs of providing health care in Barbados. And the Ministry of Finance is constantly having to grapple with the demands of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the other institutions which I have mentioned earlier. So one of the strategies that we have employed in this regard is to try to emphasise the benefits of, as I said, prevention and indeed the benefits of treatment of our population at the primary stages of the onset of any of these diseases. And I speak specifically to our polyclinic institutions. There are five of them around the island - in Christ Church in Oistins, the Randall Phillips, the recently renamed Brantford Tate at Deacon's Road, the Spikes Towne named after Dr. Morris Byer, the St. Thomas District Polyclinic, and then there is of course the Eunice Gibson Polyclinic and the soon to be completed St. John Polyclinic in the lovely parish of St. John.

As I said, Sir, what we are emphasising in the Ministry of Health is that this is an opportunity, Sir, to introduce health care at the primary stage, at the least cost

stage, and to practise our population in early detection, first of all, of any diseases, but then of course being able to treat them outside of the environment of an institution like the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where of course accommodation at the hospital alone starts to skyrocket the cost of health care. And we will continue to expand the services at these polyclinics and we will continue to integrate the activities of the polyclinics so that the hospital, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and our secondary institutions generally, have the opportunity of accessing information about our population whenever it becomes necessary. So in this regard, of course, we will embrace technology.

And if there is one aspect of this exercise which I view as extremely urgent and something which I think we are on the cusp of delivering but seem reluctant to want to put in place because of what I call an insistence on perfection at onset - and I believe firmly in the view that we need to start from somewhere - so we need to make that information that is collected in our databases at the polyclinics immediately accessible, under proper security of course, Sir, to those who may have to make decisions at another time, whether in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital itself or at geriatric institutions or indeed in our private doctors' institutions. Because whenever it is said and done, Sir, we are all in this together. Our private doctors and the institutions which they work, the public institutions like the geriatric hospitals and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and our polyclinics and any other private or public institutions which from time to time seek to offer this care. So I think that the Ministry of Health is on good ground to seek to promote what they will eventually term a health card in the Barbados population, to be made available so that a patient member of our community who has this card in their possession immediately allows access of the professional - whether it be a nurse, a doctor, chiropractor, whatever - on making the correct interventions, allows them access to their health history.

And this, sir, will bring about, I think, a more effective, a more efficient way of diagnosing our health problems and treating these problems at the earliest opportunities possible. So my call is for the Ministry of Health, the officers in the Ministry, to lead this charge, excuse me, in making sure that this health information system is taken on board and that this health, the health card so to speak, will allow immediate access to specific data about the patient from time to time. Also important in our deliberation, sir, as I keep referring to the cost of health care, is the question of who pays for this care? And I think that, as I mentioned,

we subscribe to the edict that health care is due to all members of society, and indeed by convention, even to visitors, so that we have to put in place a system which effectively looks at maximising our opportunities to defer, to move some of this cost directly from the state to the

individual wherever possible. And of course, this charge will be led by our insurance companies, and indeed I had the pleasure of opening a workshop held by one of our larger insurance companies, Sagicor, last Friday morning. And we spoke to this question that we have to encourage Barbadians to help us in dealing with the cost of health care by participating wherever possible in health plans with our insurance institutions, and our insurance companies at the same time need to explore the most effective, efficient ways of passing on good, adequate health care cover so as to offset the cost of treatment when that opportunity arises.

I think, though, sir, that the Minister of Social Care led this debate and the point must be made that the responsibility of an institution like the Ministry of Social Care is exactly to take care of those members of our population who may, in the circumstances I have described earlier, as they say, fall through the cracks. And from time to time, we will have these situations to deal with. And that is why we have such an important ministry and why we have that kind of obvious interaction between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Care, and all other relevant ministries in this regard.

We have, as a nation, to face the question of the cost of our health care and we need, therefore, to develop a system, a financial model which allows us to be able to offer that care in the future and not to, as I say, destroy what has been up to now and continues to be. And we are committed to maintaining what is really a healthcare environment which is the envy, the envy of our neighbours. And I want to pause and make that point because sometimes when we listen to some of our commentators, especially those who may from time to time find it convenient to go overboard with their criticism, you would think that the sky is falling, sir. The truth is that Barbados continues to offer some of the most sought-after health care procedures in the region. And we are open for business.

As a matter of fact, I had a chat with the CEO of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital this morning, and we took time out to talk about this issue. Very shortly we will be unfolding our cardiac suite, which is now a centre of excellence in the region and available to Barbadians and available to members of our region, the Caribbean, the CARICOM region and further afield. We also have that specialty in the area of eye care. Again, we have discontinued the programme now where our Barbadians have been having to go to Cuba for their surgery. And we offer the finest state-of-the-art eye surgery interventions at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

And I want to pause a moment to recognise the efforts, as I said, of my predecessors in this regard as Ministers of Health in this country, sir. And more directly and more recently, the work of my immediate predecessor, the Honourable Member for St. James South, and those

private sector donors who have come on board with us at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in what we term our philanthropic programme. And they have been part of building up that new specialty at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. And these new facilities, as I said, continue to allow Barbados to shine like a beacon in terms of regional health care and be sought after. And a number of specialists and consultants come to our country from time to time to carry out these procedures, as I said, either in eye surgery and cardiovascular surgery. And that is the reality, sir. So we are ahead, well ahead of the curve in terms of these treatments. And I really want to congratulate again the team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and, in general, sir, the entire medical fraternity really in Barbados for this tremendous work they are doing.

Before I sit, sir, I want to also mention, because we are talking about the aged, very, very importantly, the emergence of what I call the private elderly care institutions in Barbados. And ever since being appointed Minister of Health, I have been working with the team at the Ministry to expedite this whole question of licensing of these institutions throughout Barbados and encouraging them as a business, an area of business. And indeed, there are very encouraging signs in respect to how this programme can grow. We want to remove some of the bureaucracy which has grown around the evolution of these institutions, and indeed - and this is a call from the owners of these elderly care institutions themselves - to remove some of the bureaucracy, as I said, without, of course, contravening any of the regulations so importantly developed throughout our country in terms of where we set up certain institutions and what facilities must be available in terms of quality care and indeed safety. But the objective is to make that process of licensing of these elderly care institutions a much more user-friendly process which can be accessed easily.

And government will continue to play its part in respect of farming out some of the business - the responsibility for the care of the elderly - where funds are available to help in providing this care. And there is already a programme in place, as I said, sir, to allow persons who are in private health care institutions to access some assistance from the Government of Barbados, the Ministry of Health, by way of paying for their accommodation and treatment there.

So, sir, I felt bound, sir, as I said, to join this debate and to support this resolution to approve the White Paper on Ageing and to take the opportunity to bring Barbadians up to date in respect to what we are grappling with in the Ministry of Health and more directly in our primary, secondary and tertiary care health institutions in our country, and to assure them that we continue to ensure that Barbados is ahead of the curve in this regard. And I can respectfully submit to you, sir, that this is the reality and

we will continue to work with our teams to make sure that this lead is maintained and Barbadians have access to good health care whether young, whether middle-aged or old. I am obliged to you, sir.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I feel compelled this morning to spend some time looking at and examining this important debate. It is true, sir, that diabetes has come a long way over the past 50 or so years. We have been able to improve our health service. We have been able to improve the care for the elderly. We have been able to improve our infrastructure for the elderly. In essence, over the past 50 years, I would say that Barbados have stood out as a beacon and we can be proud of what we have achieved.

But saying so, Mr. Speaker, one has to look at what is happening in our society today and see where we are going over the next 50 years or so. Because even though we may say 50 years is a long time, I am now over 50 and years ago I did not expect to live this long. But the reality is that when you look back over your life, it is not very long that I was a little boy. Just the other day. And I still do boyish things. But the truth is we have to look at our society where it was before and where we are going at this juncture.

It is true. The Minister of Health spent this morning praising the Ministry. I looked at a number of services for the elderly and said that we are above the curve. You said that you pay glowing tributes to the Ministry of Health and its health care providers. And we are happy that at least we can say that the health provided for Barbadians is generally acceptable. But we have to look beyond this acceptable standard or satisfactory standard. The Minister must call for excellence in providing for the health care, not only for the elderly, but for the various segments in society.

I believe that we spend a lot of money and of course the cost of health is increasing every day, every year. We see millions of dollars being spent. I know 50 years ago we were spending less than \$100 million in health. Today we are spending over, I believe, half a billion dollars in health and it is getting wider. But are you satisfied that we are being provided with the services to meet the cost? Now we have to look at this very carefully and this, therefore, this debate is important from the standpoint that I believe that we are duplicating many efforts. And we have to look at this duplication of effort not only for the elderly, not only for seniors, but also throughout the segment of our society. We are duplicating in terms of the visits to doctors by persons, the drug service. We are duplicating lots of effort because we made fundamental errors over 50 years ago.

There was a call 50 years ago for a national health service in this country. And it was called for at a time when we were going through the changes in our population, when we see a change where we said we were becoming an elderly society. Because number one, you look at the birth rate, you look at the fertility rate and so on. You see that we were living longer, but yet at the same time people were having less children. And it was a call to look at and to diversify the health sector, not only in terms of providing more polyclinics, not only in providing, getting rid of the arms service, but we did not at the time look at a National Health Service that was debated in the early 80s. I believe at that time when we were looking at the National Health Service, it was a call then to cut out the duplication of service where you have polyclinics serving certain regions.

Today we have polyclinics in almost every parish now. We have a number of services that the government is providing. The state is now providing, I would think, two-thirds or more than two-thirds of the health service for our population. And we have to look at the role of the state. Do we want to encourage this perpetuation of the state over the next 50 years? Or do we want to have an encouragement of the private sector? And how do we do it? How do we encourage the private sector to get involved in providing an efficient health service, not only for the elderly, but for the population as a whole?

And therefore, this whole notion of improving through technology is important. I have made a call many times, many times in here. Whenever the health debate came up, that was it - in first world countries, be it Canada, North America, Europe, you have a system where you can use technology, where you can bring up all your information through the swipe of a card. You can do it in the banking system. All the banking system in Barbados is related through the providing of the various services at the banks today. But we cannot do it in health. Do you realise, Mr. Speaker, that you can go to the Ministry of Health at any one time and let us suppose your name is John Brown. John Brown - there may be several John Browns within Barbados, yet the records in that Ministry or in the Ministry of Health are not really for the John Brown who may very well be getting attention at the same time. So we definitely need to improve technology.

And I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have to bite the bullet at this juncture to see where we are going in the next 50 years - to streamline the cost of health service, to cut out the duplication and of course to improve efficiency in providing health care for not only the elderly but also our population. I believe that the state has a role. The role of the state must be seen as the umbrella organisation where we direct policy and we see where the private sector can interface with government. For 15 years, the last government was talking about private sector health care for the elderly. We are still at the very beginning stages of

where we are. Where the Minister is saying he has talked, but we have not seen any action, any positive action, any direction of providing facilities for that private sector initiative that was started over 15 years ago. We want to see, we want to go beyond conceptualisation. We want to see going beyond conceptualisation and into providing the opportunity for people to invest in that facility.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that as we look at this white paper, there are a number of recommendations that have been made, whether it is a physical recommendation, recommendation in health service, recommendation for improving our buildings and so on. But we need to go beyond that. We need to go beyond those various recommendations because there are recommendations that have been made before. There are recommendations, Mr. Speaker, that we can speak about. But what about the implementation of these recommendations? Who will implement these recommendations? This white paper was a green paper in 2003. It was a green paper over 10 years ago. We have now come back to a white paper less than in a 10-year segment. So what about the implementation?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, and I want to speak primarily because the Minister of Health was talking about the elderly and the treatment of the elderly, especially at the hospital setting. And all of us know that from time to time, persons in Barbados abandon the elderly. And we have to ask ourselves the question, is our society really a society that promotes the caring of the elderly? Or do we look at it from the point of view that the state must provide the care for the elderly? I am saying that in today's society, the state is providing more money per head than it used to do 20 years ago, maybe 20 times more. And where is it? Where is it that we have not been able to teach our young people the values of caring for the family? Where is it that our society has come a long way yet we have not been able to teach young people that the family itself is important? The extended family is important as well.

Where is it that we have not been able to teach persons in our society that in order for us to provide and protect life, in order to protect that family environment, we have to live as a family? Where is it? And I asked myself the question today because I see in our society a situation where we have a number of deviant persons. And I want especially today to speak about deviant men. We have - and I have spoken on this before - men must be able to support their children. And at the end of the day, men must be there for the family. And I am saying this because a lot of men expect at the end of the day that the children that they neglect 30 years ago, that these same children will come back to help protect them in the evening of their years. So we have to be able to address this. And I hear many people come to me from time to time and say, look, my father abandoned me as a child. Why? Tell me, give me

some reason why I have to help protect him when he is 50, 65, 70.

So we have to be able to teach this. I think we have, as a society, not been able to teach proper family values, even though you talk about the extended family, even though you talk about family life, the role of the family. I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, that enough is being spent on the family environment. To help those persons, especially in the lower echelon of society, we have not been able to teach that family life and family values as we ought to. More has to be done. We have to spend more time to encourage our youngsters, our young people, to get involved from early years into how do you treat the elderly?

I believe, Mr. Speaker, the role of the state is not to provide housing for everyone. The role of the state is not to provide a house for all the elderly. The elderly at some point of time was an adult, went through the adult stage. The elderly has a house, the elderly had resources. What is it that has happened over that period of time? And what is it that the state feels that they are duty bound to provide resources for everyone? The less fortunate - how do we provide for the less fortunate and what is it that children must do to help their parents? I feel that as a growing adult, I have to take care of my elderly. It is the duty of every adult to take care of his or her parents. What has caused me to move away from that situation? What has caused the state to intervene? The state intervenes if that family life has broken down. I am saying it is the duty of the state to help repair that broken family tradition.

It is the duty of the state. If we continue to have a situation, Mr. Speaker, where the state believes that they must provide housing, they must provide welfare, we are becoming now, Mr. Speaker, a welfare society. If you look at what has happened over the past 10 years, the state is now at a point where they are providing welfare grants for electricity, welfare grants for water, welfare grants for going to school, welfare grants for everything. Who is paying for all of this? I am saying that the society has broken down because we are not teaching values today. And therefore, since we are not teaching values in our system, the state must provide the resources. But we have to put a full stop. We have to be able to teach our youngsters. We have to be able to teach family values - that we must provide for our parents. And we must teach the parents that they must provide for their children as well. So it is a society thing that has to be done. And I believe more has to be done, Mr. Speaker, not only from the government point of view, but from society.

And there we have it - the role of a church. What is the role of a church in this society? Is the role only to preach Christianity? Is the role only to preach religion? I am saying the role must be to preach values of family life

as well. We need - and it becomes wider, the gap becomes wider now because of what is happening in our society today. As the economic situation weakens in our society today, we are going to find a system where a breakdown in family life will continue and it will get worse and worse. But how do we protect them? It is the role of the state to intervene in providing employment not only for the family but the role of the state is to encourage employment in the private sector as well. The role of the state must not be to be everything to everyone. The role of the state is to provide the umbrella group where you provide the enabling environment to create employment within society to help the family.

And by this I mean that a family will be able, Mr. Speaker, to have enough resources to help not only the elderly, but also those persons in that family structure that need support. It is not only the elderly that will need support. It is those persons who are sick from time to time. We have in the family structure a number of persons who, because of some things within the environment, become sick. There are a number of persons who are mentally disturbed. And the family must be there for everyone. You cannot now say that the mentally challenged must always be a burden of the state. The state must hold itself responsible for making clear that it cannot be everything to everyone. The state must throw off this whole atmosphere at this time and set the stage where we support initiatives within the family structure. Support initiatives - employment must be guaranteed where the family will move from that structure into understanding that the role is to protect all in society.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at this physical environment, we have come a long way. In the physical environment, we have built better roads. We have built better houses. We are looking back at where it was before. Almost every community now has better facilities for the elderly, for our family, for the people in our society. There is still more to be done, but we can be justly proud that we have been able over the past 50 years in developing a physical built environment. We must go beyond that. We must provide now for the disabled in our society, those persons who are physically challenged. We must be able to provide for them. We must be able to provide for those persons in society who from time to time become deviant.

And that is why when I hear members sometimes on the opposite side - I have not heard it recently - talk about us providing a nice prison, a big prison, at cost. To me, it is a nonsense because we had to provide a prison for those in society who are deviant. And it must be provided at the point in time. You cannot provide the same quality prison as it was

100 years ago. It must be quality. I visit there from time to time. I'm very proud that we were able to provide a

decent prison for the deviant people in society so that at least those persons can be reformed. And I'm saying to you that we as a people must be able within the family structure to help those persons who are weak, those persons who are prone to bad behaviour. Now, I visit from time to time as I said in prison and sometimes you go there and you see the level of the young people coming out there behaving very badly. Now again, that is a breakdown in the family life. Family structure has broken down. Whenever it happens, family structure has broken down and you say, this is the type of people that will be in prison. I am saying that we have to go back to that value where we teach families that if there's a problem, let's deal with it. Let's call the family together and deal with these structures, so that you don't have the problem.

And to my mind, Mr. Speaker, I see the next 20 years as challenging, not only for the elderly in terms of health care, in terms of providing of the various facilities for them, but we as a society must teach young people to respect the elderly and also not only to respect them, but to understand the history of what it is. I am fortunate that my family was able to teach me from early, from very early, about what it was in past generations. And I believe a knowledge of history will teach you what we encountered before, where we are now and where we are going.

There are still a number of people in this society, Mr. Speaker, who do not know where they're going. Where are we going as a society? Where are we going? Mr. Speaker, where we will provide welfare for the next generation? Or are we providing an opportunity for young people and families to understand that they have to protect and provide for their families? And these are the questions that we need to ask ourselves. We are here as government and opposition. We are here to manage and therefore this white paper is important at this juncture because it sets a tone to understand the family structure and how do we see it? It speaks about providing opportunity for encouraging participation among diverse segments of society. But it stops short by not saying, looking at how are you going to recommend? Recommendations are there, but they have always been there. They have always been there for 10 years. A green paper, now a white paper. Are we going to wait for another 10 years to bring legislation to implement some of these recommendations that are here? Are we going to wait for another 10 to 15 years to tell us about the changes in technology?

For example, we have a technology programme for the elderly some 20 years ago. It has not been continuing with any alacrity, Mr. Speaker. The community technology programme - where are we on that? Where are we implementing these things for the elderly? The government some time ago, based on - I know that was the Prime Minister's initiative - providing treatment for men who are deviant and not paying their way. For example, a

programme in which you are providing help for those persons in society who did not get money when they go to the court. Where are we on this? And again, there's a breakdown in that system because too many young people come to me and say, look, I have a case, and the Attorney General must tell us something on these things. Where are we on this? Too many people are saying my father is not supporting me. Too many young people are saying these things. And when I go to the court, they have to remain. I support mine always. But the question is, where are we on this?

And I believe fundamentally, Mr. Speaker, that there must be a situation where fathers and mothers are told that you have to protect those youngsters and you have no choice. There's no choice in the matter.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: And therefore, when this happens, it is a breakdown in society. And the Honourable Attorney General must bring legislation here not only to ensure that fathers support their children, but there must be some form of - I mean, this happened - we are behind the first world by almost 100 years. 100 years ago there was a garnishing of wages. Where are we on this? And when you get to the court, people ask the question, is it the bailiff that's not doing the job? So you have a situation, Mr. Speaker, where the family is bringing it, and the state now must provide those resources for those children. And that's why I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, we have to go beyond these recommendations and implement something. We've got to go. So there are a lot of recommendations. I will encourage all Barbadians to read, because the government has not encouraged anybody to read this. It started as a green paper, it is now a white paper, but they have not encouraged. I want to see more discussion on these things, these recommendations. We need people getting into looking at new recommendations and seeing how we can implement them, not only for today, but for the future.

We need to encourage, Mr. Speaker, the family structure so that the state does not feel the obligation that they must provide everything. And it really, when it happens like this, the economy becomes weaker because we have to pay for those dividends in society. And that's what is important, Mr. Speaker.

So finally, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this white paper is important for us. We see it as necessary, but there must be something more than a white paper. We must see the implementation process start at this point in time. I'm obliged to you. I'm obliged.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Members. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I take great pleasure in participating in this debate. I do so, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the messages emanating from both sides of this honourable House, our first messages to ourselves, in a way we are having a conversation with us as policy makers, because by the grace of the good God Almighty, should we be given the extension of life, we all will become recipients of the measures that we seek to put in place through this policy. I would first wish to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Social Care and his able staff at the Ministry of Social Care for a well put together document informed by a sound philosophy and capturing the realities of a progressive developing country, one that has always been striving to provide the best for its people even under the worst of circumstances.

As a matter of fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, the DNA of our nationhood speaks to us through the national anthem of Barbados, when it talks about in plenty and in time of need. And it captures the ability of all Barbadians of all walks of life to be able to be possessed by a sense of resilience that really makes us who we are. That really defines us as a unique population in the middle of the Caribbean Sea, that have willed over the years to set a pathway of progress that allows us to move from strength to strength and to build from pillar to pillar.

And speaking of pillars, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party's government has established four central pillars for its drive for sustainable development. One has to do with economic viability. Another has to do with environmental soundness. Another has to do with good governance, and the fourth has to do with social balance. The creation of a socially balanced society is the goal of any democracy. The drive to create a society where all men and all women of all walks of life have the ability to strive for their maximum human potential, what Abraham Maslow calls self-actualisation.

And he pointed out in his theory that self-actualisation is the movement towards the attainment of goals. He didn't see it as a shelf, as a threshold, but the continuous striving to achieve significant goals in one's life. And when those goals would have been achieved, that one would have self-actualised. That's the basis of such a theory. And the bedrock of our philosophy, because we would have to admit, Madam Deputy Speaker, that policy grows out or ought to grow out of a philosophy. There must be some guiding philosophy that causes us to contemplate what policy initiatives we wish to bring on board. And out of those policies then grow our programmes. And this document is a document that reflects on philosophy, it reflects on policy, and then of course it reflects on a number of programmes that we intend to put in place or that have already been put in place on the behalf of our older citizens in the society.

Yes, we agree that Barbados is becoming an older population. And that in of itself really is a triumph for Barbados. Obviously we are doing some things right where we are providing an enabling environment for our citizens to have a longer life, and they are experiencing a greater journey of longevity in the society. And that is important, I do believe. But it goes beyond that. It reflects also on the government's intention, commitment to create what I call a domain of dignity for the elderly. We can't get away from it. I do not wish to because I hope one day to become much older than I am. I am sure all of us in this room look forward to enjoying a long life.

There was an emerging view in our society not too long ago when young people were saying they're not too interested in living long. But we now have flourishing examples of Barbadian men and women on whose shoulders this nation has been built. We have flourishing examples of our parents who gave their very best, sometimes in the most difficult of times, to build a strong and resilient society so that today we as policymakers can look forward in building a platform of policies to help in the latter days of our lives to ensure that we will have a restful, peaceful journey into the great beyond.

And I believe that if we take pride in who we are, if we understand who we are, and if we embrace all of the virtues of human dignity, and if we focus our gaze on what needs to be in order for us to have a society where men and women of all corners of this island can look forward to working towards building out their own sense of hope, that virtue of hope that is so important to any thriving society. Then we would have done our part and we would have laid the carpet for we ourselves to walk on into the twilight of our years. And that's what we're about.

As policy makers, we can criticise. But it is always wonderful when on both sides of the aisle we can agree on a policy such as this one that, by the member for St. George North's admission, had its genesis in the previous government under the Barbados Labour Party. And we do not fight over those things because a society cannot by one party be built. All of us have to build a society because a society really is a conglomerate of our families. That's what it is. It is not a journey of strangers. It's a journey of villages that morph themselves into what we know now as the modern Barbadian society, where there are members of the farther reaches of the East and the West, and the North and the South who have now become part and parcel of this great thing we have in Barbados called progress.

And that is why this policy document is so important to me. It is important because it begs us to look at ourselves, it asks us to examine our own personal dispositions about ageing, and it asks us to question the role of the state and how the state must in fact participate in ensuring that there are certain values cemented in the

consciousness of our citizens, where the protection of the elderly and the mobilisation of their worth is important as they move across the years in this great land of ours. For we the people believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have to do our part in ensuring that we do the best for our elderly, for ourselves, and for our children.

I ask myself a number of questions, because if you are going to develop a policy like this, you have to begin with asking yourself about your own personal philosophy of life and humanity. How do we really feel about people? How do we really see ourselves in the greater mix of our society? Is it us versus them? Is that the message that we choose to propagate? Do we want our children to grow up believing that there's a different world for the older people and a different world for the younger people? No, there is an enmeshment of our peoples across the societies and a policy is intended to bring forth those perceptions of self.

There are a lot of us in this world who don't know who we are. We have never come in contact with our authentic self. We do not understand the virtues of pursuing a path that is not guided by people's expectations. We really are pursuing a lifestyle, our life ambitions, that are influenced by what people think of us, what people want of us, and how people want us to be. The truth of the matter is that we have to ensure that we are pursuing a path that is grounded in our own belief about ourselves as the products of God, as the created beings of the Most High. We have to tell ourselves that the path we are following is a path not flurried with people's expectations because there are always people who have expectations of you and very often those expectations do not line up with who you are.

And I think all of us have walked through life with people telling us what we ought to be and who we ought to be and what we will achieve and what we won't achieve. At the end of the day, it is really about the self-examination of who we are and the self-affirmation of who we are. And I am proud to say today as a Barbadian that I know who I am. I know from whence I came. I know why I am here, and I also know where I'm going. And all Barbadians, especially our younger ones, they need to be taken down that path so that very early in their lives they can make decisions that are commensurate with their God-given ability and their God-given destiny. And that is what a policy is really about.

So that there are some developmental indicators that characterise this period of human growth and development. Older persons change physiologically. They're not as physically vibrant as they used to be. They can't take on the kinds of physical tasks that they used to take on when they were in their 20s and so on. So that any policy framework has to take into consideration that policy is responding to a population that is different from where they were or from when they grew up in their 20s and 30s. So

their physical features have changed, their abilities to do certain physical tasks, their sexuality has been adjusted. All of these things have happened with the passage of time into that domain of age.

Secondly, they have to contemplate their psychosocial changes. How socially and emotionally they have changed. Their friends have changed. Many of their peers have died off. They're not the same people anymore. Some of them are separated from their homes and their families, unfortunately, and they're placed into environments where they have to start new friendships at the later stages of their lives. Any policy developed as is this one has to respond to those critical issues.

So that when you see the average older person, you're looking at a person who has to make adjustments in terms of health and wellness. You're looking at a person who has to make adjustments in terms of their social, emotional, spiritual self and how they respond to the environment. Where matters of faith very often become more important because they can no longer rely on their own ability, their own physical ability to get them everywhere they need to go. As a matter of fact, during this age group, they tell you that you move as a child from the give me, I want, help me stage, and you go around the entire cycle where you come back to please give me, please help me, I need. It's a journey, and we all must take it. And anyone who thinks that it is a joke to seriously contemplate these issues has really missed the boat. That person has really told him or herself that I don't really care what happens to me after I reach my 50th birthday or sometimes my 45th birthday.

So that there are gerontological challenges that come about during the period of ageing. And of course, this has to do with the whole notion of care and the Ministry of Social Care. I had the honour of leading that ministry earlier in my ministerial life. The Ministry of Social Care has been so created to ensure that Barbados, not that the government, that Barbados is constantly outfitted with a menu of responsive services to address the needs of our older population, but they also cater to the needs of younger people as well. So when you talk about care and you talk about care of the elderly, when you talk about physical requirements for their habitats, when you talk about different respite homes and so on, when you talk about how we home and shelter these people, this is all part of the contemplation of this policy.

This policy really is guiding us down a path that says to us that in order for us to be able to ensure a high quality of life even into the later years, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have to ensure that we understand the people that we are trying to reach in that regard. And laws, yes, laws are important. And laws are important because we have to combat matters like ageism, which is a perception, a social

perception and social attitude that looks upon the elderly with scorn. And sometimes ageism happens in the home where younger members of the family no longer want to tolerate their grandparents and their older parents. And they want to shuttle them aside and make them feel as though they're not wanted. They take them to the QE and they literally dump them there, and then go back to the homes that these people built and then enjoy all of the social and economic perks that they should be enjoying in the comfort of their homes.

My prayer always has been and will always be that as my parents, both of them who are still alive, thank God, my mother who will be celebrating her 80th birthday in a matter of months, and my dad who is somewhere around 77. And I've always prayed that there must never come a time when my mother or my father, as far as I can help, is extracted from their homes and placed in another place that they're totally unfamiliar with. Now, I know people will argue that sometimes they have circumstances that force them down that direction. Well, I'm blessed to have nine other siblings, and all of us try to take our turn in looking after our parents. And I think it is a virtue.

I heard the Honourable Member for St. George North talking about a society of values. But this is more than a value. This is a virtue, and a virtue emanates from the very recesses of the heart. It is about us understanding that beyond the listing of values, values that can be adopted or rejected, a virtue is a condition of the heart. Deputy Speaker, it is a condition of the heart. It is a disposition that seeks to place at the disposal of those persons who depend on us for care, a level of love and resilience, a stubbornness of love that will always cause us to give the best to those who have given the best to us.

Barbados is what it is because of the many men and women over the years who have given their all. Barbados is what it is today, not because of all the new systems, economic systems, and the new social systems. It is not because of that. Barbados is what it is because of those who have lived selflessly during the most difficult of times in this country's development to ensure that us, you and I, can sit in this chamber where they never sat, to ensure that we can be part of this mix imbued with intellectual capacities driven by our own understanding of what we could achieve because of the pathway that they've cleared for us. My grandparents - I had the privilege of having a family luncheon this week and sat with many of my aunts and others, and chatted about our history.

My grandfather and his father, my grandmother and her mother and father. And how they built a village. And that's what's wrong with us today. It's not about the prison. If we do what we have to do, the prison won't matter. If we give what we have to give, the prison becomes inconsequential. It is about the resurrection of those

inherent values and those virtues that make us who we are. That makes us proud to be Barbadian. That makes us proud to be African. That makes us proud to be who we are. And that's the journey that we're on. That's the journey we must take our kids. The young people in our society. They will never respect themselves unless they understand how they got where they got. And that is the journey that we wish to take. So we want to - laws are important in the mix. But ageing is a fundamental developmental pillar of life and of the society. And of course in ancient biblical times it was the elders who really called the shots in the communities and in the villages and in the tribes. And they grew old and full of wisdom and were respected for their worth. Nowadays you have young people who sometimes wish to walk by older people without even acknowledging them that they're there. And that's not what we want in our society. We want our young people to grow up and understand that one day they may

also become old, and the treatment that they mete out to the elderly now is the treatment that could be meted out to them at that time of their own life journey. So the policy has to address that fundamental pillar of the culmination of developmental stages of one's life journey. It is a prime characteristic of a stage of human development. And if we understand ageing, ageing falls in three broad categories. There is young adulthood, which is catalogued from 18 to about 35. There's middle adulthood - and these are artificial demarcations set up by theorists who believe that they understood human growth and development sufficiently where they could catalogue how we grow and how we develop. There's middle adulthood from age about 40 to 65, and then there is late adulthood, which is from 65 and on. Those are the artificial demarcations. In truth, in fact, if you examine them carefully, you will discover that there are certain significant developmental milestones achieved during those periods of life that are distinct in one stage from the others. And that's the reality. So young adulthood is what Erik Erikson calls stage six of the developmental chart. And he talks about a stage where you develop the virtue of love, where you're looking to become more intimate with other people and share your intimacy and so on. Some people are - I always see the Member for St. George South looking at me and smiling broadly. I think he's still trying to find that path himself. Still searching. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is a vital area. Some of us are early starters, some of us are later starters. And I will allow him to talk to you. But the truth of the matter is that is a fundamental stage of beginning the settling down period or the settling down process for human beings. And there are certain challenges there. For example, they talk about developing the virtue of love during that stage of your development. And they talk about intimacy versus isolation. If you don't develop intimate relations, then you sometimes end up having very isolated paths for yourself in that area.

And then there's the middle adulthood era, 40 to 65. The developmental milestone is what they call stagnation versus despair. If you do not develop a healthy life during this stage, you become bound by feelings of despair, being left out, having failed, not achieving, not having any sustainable success in your life, and so on. Just imagine, Madam Deputy Speaker, taking those characteristics into your later life, into late adulthood, 65 and plus, and marching into that developmental strata with a sense of despair because you have failed, you've been neglected, you've been abandoned, and so on and so forth. And that's why a policy such as the one before this House becomes important not only in its script but becomes important in its implementation, because that is the roadmap that we are choosing to lay out for the people of Barbados in that wonderful category of age that we call the aged. And it is important that we do that.

Late adulthood is what they call stage eight of development. And that's where you develop what they call ego integrity or despair again. Now, ego integrity is where you are in full possession of who you are and you're looking back and reflecting on your life with a sense of gratitude to God for having given you the chance to live, but more importantly, a sense of satisfaction with self because you've done the best that you can do. It is a time of sharing. It's a time where you want to pass on values. It's a time where you get great pride and gratitude and gratification in persons coming to you and saying - have you ever seen how grandparents sit around and become all so imbued with energy when the grandkids are around? You know? Or when the kids come in from overseas, from far and away, and they're spending time with mum and dad, and mum and dad are in those later years, and they become exhilarated by the energy from the relationship, from the exchange, and they look on their children with so much pride. They look on their offspring as their trophies of life. That's really what it is about. And I hope and pray that as we continue to move forward in this society, in the construction and further development of this society, that we have a place for all. That there is a place for all, so that even the private sector and their commercials and advertising of products - I long to see some older and graceful Barbadians who would have helped build some of those same companies having a time to say we were there and we're still here. That's what I'm talking about. That's what it's really all about, you know.

At the end of the day, we pass through this hall, we spend any number of years in here, we help make policy and so on, but at the end of the day, the real gratification of life is to be able to look back on our trail and say, I'm so happy I passed that way. Because life did not begin 20 years ago. Barbados' development did not start 40 years ago. It has been a continuous endeavour where collective governments have been seeking to push the society forward. I am so grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be

part and parcel of this wonderful occasion in looking at this policy. And in spite of the fact that ageing means it's slowing down, it means that you have to redirect your motor ability, your motor skills. It means that you have to restart your relationships because several - I find myself now, I never used to do it before - almost every single week I chase the obituaries, looking for people. I remember there was a time when my mother would always say, bring the part of the paper where they have all the ads. And when I thought she was looking for ads, she was looking for dead people who passed away. Oh my God, I know him. We grew up together. And then I slowly see that inspection grow into a deep contemplation and consideration of her own mortality. I'm doing it now. I'm only - yay years. Yay, yay years. I'm still growing. My colleagues say 60. I'm not there yet, but I'm one who looks forward to getting older because getting older means that you hopefully are achieving those things and you're leaving markers along the footprint of life that other people can stop and say so-and-so was here. I look in the halls of this Parliament when I come upstairs almost every single time to check for my name because 25, 30, 40, 50 years from now somebody will pass there and say Dennis Lowe was here.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have five minutes left.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: And on that note, being here means that I have to do my very best to lend to discussions that will help enrich our society. And our society indeed is a rich society, but it is richer because of those older people who have made their contribution to this way. I am standing here, as I believe are all of us. We are standing here because somebody 50 years ago, 60 years ago, decided I'm going to give it my best shot so that generations to come could have what I didn't have. I am now living the values and virtues and returns of those sacrifices. I believe it is simple - it's a simple mathematics. If we put in the things that we ought to put in, at the end of the equation, we are going to be able to get out of it what we deserve. Let's be good to our older people. Let's regard them, let's respect them, and let's do all we can to make their journey into the twilight years the best journey they could have ever expected. I'm obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. E. G. HINKSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate on the white paper on the national policy for aging for Barbados. And first, I would like to say that you need, at least I believe that you need to set out a philosophical framework which informs such a policy on senior citizens. And such a policy must, by nature, take into account the fact that these are our citizens who have helped build modern-day Barbados. As the last speaker noted, many are great personal sacrifice, selflessly, many with minimal

monetary compensation, many without the educational opportunities which our youth of today now have. Now that they are among the most vulnerable in society and at that phase of their lives where they are at their most dependent since their childhood, society both civil and government, Mr. Speaker, has a moral duty to make the later years as comfortable as possible.

As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, the background to this white paper is that the last Barbados Labour Party administration indeed brought a green paper to this Parliament which was approved in the year 2004, nine years ago. And therefore, Mr. Speaker, while of course we have to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Social Care for last week bringing this white paper to Parliament, we also have to really and truly wonder why it has taken as long as nine years between the green paper being brought and the white paper. And of course, I think we have to also note and commend the committee on the aged that the last Barbados Labour Party administration set up, headed by Dame Patricia Simmons, who was, I believe, in the other place at the time, for, of course, informing on the green paper, which has formed the basis to a large extent of this white paper.

As the Honourable Minister who presented last week, Minister of Social Care, also said, I wish to acknowledge the significant role that the Barbados Association of Retired Persons, BARP, has played in representing the rights and promoting the needs of the elderly, especially those who are disabled in our society. BARP, I believe, has close to 30 000 members today. I myself am a member of it, sir. I remember the Attorney General last year being in the paper, proudly informing the public that he was now a member of BARP as well. BARP has been able to gain a lot of discounts for its members by many of the service and consumer providers in Barbados as a result of their intervention.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to deal with some specific broad policy issues relating to the elderly, especially those who have physical disabilities, as well as the feeding of the elderly, disaster preparedness, housing of the elderly, their medication, pension framework, as well as tax allowances to improve the quality of life of the elderly. And I would want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, to the government that they seriously consider implementing some of my political party's proposals to the elderly.

The white paper, Mr. Speaker, reveals that 15 per cent of persons over age 65 in Barbados have some form of physical disability, including blindness and amputations. And of course this is a serious problem in Barbados to a significant extent because a lot of our people suffer from diabetes, which results, to some extent, in blindness and amputation of limbs. And these are people who represent some of the most vulnerable in our country. Many of the 20

per cent of persons who the study on poverty, which came out last year, showed live below the poverty line in our country fall into this category. And this shows the crying need, Mr. Speaker, for disabilities legislation to be brought before this Parliament, debated and passed.

We have had the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that was signed since the year 2007 under the previous Barbados Labour Party administration. It was ratified by this present political administration, I believe, a week after the last election at the end of February this year. And we need now, sir, to move on to bring disabilities legislation before this Parliament and provide a legislative and policy framework whereby the quality of lives of persons with disabilities, many of whom, Mr. Speaker, are over age 65, can be provided as a matter of right. The service organisations of which there are many assist in this regard in trying to make the quality of life of persons with disabilities and the elderly more amenable and comfortable. I mean the Lions Clubs of Barbados of which I am a proud member, the Kiwanis Club - with some members in here also members - Rotary, other service organisations, the Rotaractors, sir, all assist, but the government, the Parliament still has a primary role of creating the legislative and policy framework whereby service organisations such as these can be enabled to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

In terms of feeding of the elderly, Mr. Speaker, I believe that the government needs to find a way to ensure that at least one hot meal a day is provided for those senior citizens who live alone and who do not receive any meal at present. And there are still many such persons in Barbados in that position, Mr. Speaker. Again, non-governmental organisations such as the service clubs that I mentioned, in addition to the Salvation Army - of which, until recently, I was a member of the Advisory Board of Directors - the Red Cross, community-based organisations such as the Israel Lavelle Foundation, the Honourable Member for St. Michael East, Pilands Creative Workshops, all of these assist in this regard trying to feed some of the elderly on a daily basis, but there is still that cadre of persons who fall within the holes, so to speak, Mr. Speaker. And I think that the government needs to find a way to fill that hole. It has a duty to do so based on the philosophy that we have that these are the people who built this society and who have made life better for all of us.

In terms of disaster preparedness, Mr. Speaker, of course we are at the stage where the hurricane season unfortunately has just begun and we are always in Barbados susceptible to disasters of one kind or another. And I believe we as members of Parliament need to ensure that the district emergency organisations in our respective constituencies receive the necessary support systems at the political level in terms of disaster preparedness, especially for the protection of the elderly and for persons with

disabilities who live alone. I think it was mentioned two weeks ago by one of the authorities in disaster preparedness in Barbados that only in their estimation six of the 30 disaster emergency organisations in Barbados - one for each constituency - really are efficient, and that is not good in terms of preparedness. We really need, because if a disaster does come, God forbid, a hurricane, many of our elderly who live alone will be very vulnerable and we as members of Parliament need to ensure that they are in a position to have shelter and food in that very unfortunate case where we may have a disaster at any time.

In terms of housing, Mr. Speaker, I would wish to call on the government to bring to Parliament for implementation a national building code. Again, we are way behind on this. My fellow member of Parliament, the Honourable Member for St. George North, spoke earlier this morning on the failure by government to implement the policies that they bring to Parliament or that are formulated at ministerial level in the first place. And this is one case, sir, because the National Building Code again would have been set out when that member, the Honourable Member for St. George North, was Minister of Housing between 1999 and 2003 by the Building Authority, of which again I was Deputy Chairman at the time, and when our mandate on the Building Authority came to an end in 2003 we had a National Building Code in place, and now up to a decade after that it has not been brought to Parliament for debate or for implementation. This code, Mr. Speaker, would inform a policy on housing for the elderly as well as for a policy on housing for Barbadians in general, and I would want to urge the present government to look at bringing the National Building Code before Parliament for debate and implementation.

Government in the white paper, Mr. Speaker, I see that there is a 10 per cent recommended policy allocation for government housing for persons with disabilities and for the elderly. And I would really and sincerely hope that such a policy is indeed implemented. I know that the Honourable Minister, Member of Parliament for St. Michael Central, last week did say that the policy has been implemented at Valerie. I don't know in respect of the elderly. I don't know that anyone has moved into Valerie as yet. So we look forward to such a policy being implemented. I know that the white paper on persons with disabilities that was brought to Parliament under the last Barbados Labour Party administration supported a 10 per cent as well - implementing a policy percentage for government housing for persons with disabilities. And as we have said, of course, a lot of the elderly are disabled, and we really would want to hope that government implements that part of the white paper, as well as that part of the white paper on persons with disabilities in their allocation of housing to Barbadians.

Government, in my submission, Mr. Speaker, also needs to implement a programme whereby all the elderly poor have indoor waterborne facilities in their homes. I know, sir, that indeed some of my constituents in St. James North do not still have indoor waterborne facilities in their homes, and I am sure that all of us in here can identify some constituents still in that position. And one of the problems right now, Mr. Speaker, is that the government has not given the Rural Development Commission - I could speak in that case, sir, because rural, of course, is responsible for the constituency of which I am the representative - and I suspect very well, sir, that it is also the case in terms of the Urban Development Commission, that the government has not given them the necessary financial resources for such a programme to be implemented, or for that matter, sir, for house repairs for the elderly to be done. So you find that even though you may write the Rural Development Commission or you may intercede on behalf of these constituents who cannot help themselves, who don't have the wherewithal or don't have the family to assist them in placing the indoor waterborne toilet facilities or for repairing their homes, the Rural Development Commission says, well, we don't have the money. And I don't think that as a society, sir, that wants to become the smallest developed country in the world - certainly that was the policy framework and vision for Barbados of the Barbados Labour Party in its last administration - that we can be proud as a country, as a Parliament, to be in that position. And we really need, sir, to look at that issue and to give the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission, whatever relevant government agency, the financial resources and facilities to repair the people's homes.

There are even some, sir, whose homes have been damaged from Tomas three years ago and still remain unrepaired. The roofs still need fixing. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that the previous Barbados Labour Party administration created a fund of, I believe it was \$35 million Barbados dollars to deal with Thomas. And what you are hearing now from the agencies is that the money is no longer there, but yet there are still houses that are unrepaired, not only in St. James North, but I know in terms of my colleagues who have spoken, St. Joseph, St. Andrew, and I believe St. Thomas also - constituents of theirs whose houses have not been repaired.

Insurance, Mr. Speaker, of houses for the elderly is also a major issue that needs to be addressed. And this is, sir, a policy that has long exercised some members of previous Houses of Assembly as well. How do we devise a scheme whereby houses owned by the elderly and in which they live are insured so that in the event of a disaster, fire, tropical storm, whatever, the people are able to access insurance to repair their homes? The government - I don't know where this present administration stands on the issue - but I believe, sir, that the government needs to dialogue

with insurance companies on this issue. And we need, with our creative minds in this age and with all the financial facilities and tools that we have at our disposal in the second decade of the 21st century, to be able to come up with schemes to ensure the homes of the elderly poor, those who are unable financially to insure their homes.

The government, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, also needs to legislate provisions of wider tax incentives so that non-governmental organisations, financial institutions, and the private sector can be encouraged to provide housing for the elderly. As the Honourable Member for St. George North said earlier, there is absolutely no way that the government or the state can provide homes for all of those who require homes - the 30 000 or whatever it is now, people who have applications before the National Housing Corporation. The reality is that there is absolutely no way that the state,

whether it is being administered by the Barbados Labour Party or the Democratic Labour Party at any time, can provide housing for all of those who wish to access a house, and therefore the government needs to give incentives to the private sector, to NGOs, to financial institutions to encourage these organisations that have finance to invest in housing for the elderly and in housing for people of Barbados generally, sir. I don't think that it is good that only the Seroptimist Senior Citizens Complex - and I believe that houses only probably about 24 to 30 ladies - and praise must be given to the Seroptimists, sir, for their initiative, and you have the government's Vauxhall Senior Citizens Home. As I understand it, they are probably the only two homes in Barbados of their kind for the elderly. And on the philosophical basis that government, the state, can't provide all the houses, we need to give tax incentives to others who can afford it and see it as an investment to do so.

We need, Mr. Speaker, more daycare centres for the elderly in Barbados where they can go in the daytime - some of them at least - and be mentally stimulated. Because mental stimulation, as we know, Mr. Speaker, is a serious problem and a challenge for people in their senior years of life. We have the increasing prevalence of Alzheimer's disease in Barbados. I believe the last figures that came out a couple of years ago show that about 3 500 Barbadians suffer from Alzheimer's disease, and I suspect it will be a lot more. My father, sir - and I know about it personally because my father in his last few years suffered from it - and it is not easy to see your close relatives decline mentally because of neurological problems in that sense. So we need to create more daycare centres for the elderly, for their mental stimulation. And all of this lessens the cost of health care ultimately on the state for our senior citizens. Because if we can keep more of our senior citizens mentally alert and, consequentially, probably physically

alert as well, the cost of health care would be less on the state.

We need to consider seriously, Mr. Speaker, expanding the home and community care services in Barbados which are offered to the elderly. There are many young persons in Barbados - and I could attest to that certainly in my constituency - who wish to be trained in elderly care and maybe don't have the opportunities open to them to be so trained because there isn't enough space in the skills training programme or at the community college for them. And as a matter of policy, we need to look at this, as speakers and parliamentarians, to expand the home and community care services which are offered to our elderly.

In terms of our free medication policy and drug policy, sir, this of course has come up for debate in the last parliament where the present administration would have altered the free prescribed drug policy to some extent for chronic diseases. I believe, sir, that as a matter of policy that government should ensure that all persons over age 65 have access to free prescribed drugs for chronic diseases, once they are not the beneficiary of medical insurance and once their financial status indicates that they cannot afford such medication. And the government really needs to relook at this issue, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, to adjust the national drug formulary to accommodate such a policy so that none of our elderly would be deprived of the prescribed drugs that they require to medicate their chronic diseases - of which there are quite a few in terms of prevalence in Barbados - and that they should not be deprived of such a right just because they are not a beneficiary of a medical insurance or because they are impoverished.

In terms of pensions, Mr. Speaker, it is my opinion that the minimum contributory pension needs to be raised to at least the national poverty level. As we have said, many of the elderly are within that category of persons who are in the 20 per cent below the poverty range in our country. This government, this present administration, has not adjusted the contributory pension scheme as they ought to have done to bring it to at least the national poverty level whereby persons who are over 65, who are getting contributory pension, can survive in this harsh economic environment that Barbadians now find themselves in. The pensions have not increased significantly under the Democratic Labour Party administration, nor have they been increased to accommodate the 30 per cent increase in cost of living since the Democratic Labour Party came into office in 2008. My opinion, sir, is that government should take the cue of the Tom Adams administration, which indexed pensions to cost of living and instituted a cost of living allowance that would have made adjustments to the cost of living allowance when the rises came. That was a policy of the Tom Adams government.

And Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party's removal of the tax incentives which the previous Barbados Labour Party administration had on factors such as savings and credit unions has also acted contrary to the interests of senior citizens. Because this policy, sir, in fact informed the basis of senior citizens saving for their future, because when you had put money in credit unions, it was a tax incentive and a tax allowance. But the Democratic Labour Party removed these allowances - just as the previous Democratic Labour Party government in 1991-92 removed basically all the allowances that you had - and this is something, sir, that the government needs to look at. All of this would lessen the dependence of persons, senior citizens and other Barbadians, in fact, on the state.

We have, sir, the policy of the welfare department. I believe that two years ago the Honourable Minister of Finance brought before this Parliament - I believe it was during a budget - a policy of, I believe, \$6 million in electricity grants to the elderly, to the disabled, to the unemployed, whereby those categories of persons - the elderly, the disabled, the unemployed - were able to access electricity benefits, payment of electricity through the welfare department. And I believe, sir, that all the money is gone from that now too - no more money in that. And therefore, all of us, I believe, sir, as parliamentarians, are under pressure to provide, to pay electricity bills.

The Commission of the Elderly, sir, which I see mentioned in the white paper - in my opinion, sir, that is more red tape. We don't need any commission of the elderly. The statutory commissions, really and truly, we have enough of them and a lot of them are political footballs. The reverse mortgages policy, sir, which AARP has again been at the forefront in implementing - government needs to put in place a legal and regulatory framework for the introduction of this concept, a very good concept which would assist the elderly in terms of gaining capital, much needed capital in their old age.

And finally, sir, I would wish to urge the present Democratic Labour Party administration to seriously consider the implementation of two of the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto proposals. One, tax incentives for persons who contract their own health insurance schemes, which again would lessen the dependence of the elderly on state health if they have their own health insurance schemes. And secondly, Mr. Speaker, to have a tax allowance for persons to offset the cost of providing care and housing for their elderly and physically challenged relatives. Both of these tax incentives offered by my political party in the last election and in our manifesto, sir, are policies that ought to be seriously considered and implemented in terms of helping make the elderly less dependent on the state, helping them and their relatives to take their own livelihood into their own hands as they go into their senior

years - especially knowing that we are living longer than before. I'm obliged to you, Mr. Speaker. I'm obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is all, Honourable Member.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I beg to move that the House be suspended for lunch until 2.30 this afternoon.

Mr. SPEAKER: Right. Before I put the question, Honourable Members, let me take the opportunity to welcome among us as our guests today Mr. Dominique Wilkins, professional basketball player and former NBA - 19-time NBA All-Star - along with his charming wife, Sonnie. I think - I hope I got that right - who are themselves guests of Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Tanis. Thank you.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Good afternoon, Honourable Members, the sitting of this August Chamber is resumed. When the suspension was taken, we were on Order Three, I believe it is, and with that we shall continue. Yes, the Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Mr. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise and I wanted to begin, Sir, by congratulating - lending my voice to the, and echoing the series of sentiments of a congratulatory nature to the Minister, and perhaps I will save that for later on in my very brief address there so that he would be able to hear it firsthand. I thought that the document was a very comprehensive one and I was pleased to be able to note that a series of recommendations have been forthcoming which I suspect is expected for a white paper which of its very nature should give us an insight into what the objectives of the government are. But they were broad based in nature, Sir, touching on matters relating to the health of the elderly, housing, economy, the social environment, physical environment, and others. But what I was most pleased about, Sir, is that it conformed with an approach which has been taken by a number of other leading economies and societies internationally. This concept of a national policy on aging is something that has been embraced and followed by Brazil. It has been embraced and followed by Canada. The same thing has been done by India. It is now attracting the attention of the

European Union. Obviously, they move in a slightly different way because they try to do everything across the spectrum of the EU in a cohesive way. But Sir, it is certainly a concept which is engendering substantial interest and substantial debate.

And so therefore I was pleased, Sir, to see when I read the document - and the Minister is back in his chair, Sir, so I take the opportunity to say that which I began by saying - I was pleased, Sir, to see that it is a comprehensive document and I think, Sir, that it speaks very sensibly to a number of issues which should be attracting, in my judgment, the attention and consideration of the people of Barbados. There are, of course, one or two policy considerations which I would want to throw out and to share my own thoughts with respect to some of the direction that is being contemplated.

One of the things in the document, Sir, that captured my attention was the issue, Sir, of the phenomena of social exclusion. And simply put, that, Sir, is the process of isolation which is experienced by aging persons in the community and in the society, in their communities, when effectively they come to a point where they are feeling themselves, Sir, to be, and in their own experience, they are being shut out from social, economic and cultural inputs into this society. And the question has to be asked, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when once you are confronted with a situation like that, then what are the solutions?

Now, I think, Sir, that the policy document may have become a little slender when it addressed that particular phenomena. I do not think, Sir, that it was as fulsome as perhaps it could have been, but certainly what it speaks to in general terms I can agree with, which is that one is seeking to solve the problem or the phenomena of social exclusion by integrating elderly people more effectively into the society and into the community life so as to empower them, Sir, and to give elderly persons an opportunity to exercise more meaningful influence on those issues which impact on their daily lives and well-being. To translate all of that, Sir, into legislation, as I suspect will have to come when once the final policy paper of the government becomes a bill, it might be difficult. But there are steps and in the course of these submissions, Sir, I would want to share with the government my own views on steps that we might be able to take as a country in order to grasp some of the low-hanging fruit.

The issue of integrating more elderly persons, the elderly cohort more effectively into the community in Barbados, Sir, is one of those low-hanging fruit that I think we need to look at. We have, Sir, now, I think, in the fifth year of their existence or thereabouts, a set of constituency councils. We have, Sir, a set of responses to this same issue of social exclusion in other parts of the world. Brazil and Canada, for example, come to mind when I read their

policy document on the aging. And the point is, Sir, that those countries have sought to use local government as the basis within which you establish an office or set of offices in different districts as part of the local government administration, staffed primarily by elderly persons who are obviously therefore expected to be more familiar with some of the issues confronting the elderly, but they serve a dual purpose. One, they provide a forum for persons who wish to have someone to interact with in a counselling way, because many of the elderly in this society, as indeed in other societies, will come and complain - and the document captures this - come and complain about physical abuse, sexual abuse, abuses of their property, et cetera. And very often, Sir, they need direction and support. Counselling and welfare services for the elderly become as valuable an ingredient in the social cauldron as it is for any other affected cohort of the society.

And the recommendation, Sir, which I would want to suggest we could follow by way of, as I said, capturing some of the - grasping some of the low-hanging fruit, the achievements that we can make tangible for our elderly community without adding to the already burdened economic purse, would be to use, Sir, some of the existing civic centres, some of the existing headquarters for constituency councils. My own constituency does not have such an entity, but we do have a civic centre in Holetown. We have civic centres in Glebe, we have them in Oshawa. I think there is one in Six Roads as well. Where you have, Sir, as in Holetown, you have got a post office, you have got a police station, you have centres, Sir, where people are converging to do a number of aspects of their daily business, go to the licensing authority, et cetera. And to put into those pre-existing communities, Sir, an office which would effectively seek to be the forum where elderly persons can come and interface with either members of the relevant Department of Government or other entities so that they can not only have access to a place where their concerns can be heard and aired, but also where they can benefit from some sort of direction as to the way forward with whatever issues they have.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the document also spoke to the question of legal services to the elderly. It is an issue which I do not think has been addressed by many speakers before, and I would want to crave your indulgence to do so now. I am one, Sir, who believes that the legal aid - and let me start by saying this. I do not genuinely think, Sir, that there is a desire on the part - and I am not yet a member of that cohort of the society - but I do not think there is a desire on the part of those persons who are called, and who call themselves, senior citizens, who are called or who call themselves the elderly in the Barbadian community. I do not think, Sir, that they want for an existence in Barbados anything other than that which we all want. The Member for Christ Church East put it quite well, I thought. We all intend to walk that particular road as part of the chapter of

our life. And the only thing that quite frankly will stop us is the intervention of death. And what is it therefore that we want? We want to have a quality of life that is a little bit better. We want to have a facilitation with access to some of the things that make the quality of life in Barbados better.

And, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the question of legal representation in circumstances where, in an advanced stage of life, when you are no longer on a flexible income, when you may have lost a lot of your support structures of the family who were around you to nurture you and lend you assistance, but then you are confronted, Sir, with persons who have come to appropriate and misuse your property or your assets. Persons, Sir, who appropriate your bank account and the proceeds of it, your furniture and other chattel that you may possess, Mr. Speaker, Sir. People who inflict on you physical and sexual abuse. Those types of concerns, Sir, create victims in the elderly cohort of this society. And the reality is that their redress must be, among other things, a legal one. But that legal redress is hampered if they do not have access, Mr. Speaker, to the legal advice and guidance that helps steer any process of complaint through the courts of law in Barbados.

Unfortunately, the legal aid community - and I think that the document has spoken to this - the legal aid department does not have the type of reach at present that it otherwise perhaps could and should so as to lend a better level of assistance and a broader base of assistance of a civil nature especially to potential litigants who are in that elderly part of the society. We have often felt, and it has been discussed in this House now from time to time immemorial, that the legal aid services in Barbados should be expanded. I am not one, Sir, who believes that you just expand it so as to access a wider degree of assistance for persons who are criminally accused. I think that to make sense of what the department must be about, you have to try to embrace, Sir, those people who are vulnerable groups and the poor - especially the poor who are elderly - are a legitimately vulnerable group in this country. And I think, Sir, the range of services that they may need to access is something that we would do well to look at as well.

I am also satisfied, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the country has to now begin to talk the language of cost recovery. We know, and we have all seen in our constituencies, situations where persons who might otherwise be of some means, but who have been mistreated by their next of kin. Sometimes the same next of kin who will benefit after the demise of the elderly person - after the elderly person has become deceased, the next of kin usually benefit from the property. But as has been made clear in this debate, it has happened time after time: you take that elderly person and you mistreat them, you deposit them at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in some instances dumping them. We know of situations - I certainly have come across one, Sir - where an

elderly lady was living in virtually a hut in the backyard of a two-storey wall house which she built, but no longer had access to because her next of kin had virtually taken it over, and she is forced to exist in subhuman conditions.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that in circumstances of that nature, when the state is forced to intervene in order to restore a sense of balance, in order to give, to resuscitate, and to give life to the dignity of the individual, then, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the cost that is involved in that type of intervention, I think properly should be a cost that is recoverable by the state. It is part and parcel of making this country as a whole come to the understanding that the well-being of the elderly is something that we must all now look towards supporting and uplifting.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that is to speak fairly generally. There are some specific policy concerns that I do have. And one of the things that I am concerned about, Sir, is our capacity to gauge the extent to which society is finding a balance between a cohort of younger people in their economically productive years and, Sir, that cohort of more elderly age groups who are no longer in economically productive stages of life, but who are perhaps depending on the younger cohort of more economically productive persons to carry them. It raises, Mr. Speaker, Sir, what the economists call a dependency ratio. That ratio, Sir, is the balance between the persons who are no longer working and the persons who are working but have to carry the rest of the society.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when you have the tilt of the balance going towards the aging society or the aging cohort, you have a society that is growing from the bottom. It is aging from the bottom. And that requires conscious and deliberate policy responses. And it is to those policy responses, Sir, that I think this debate must to some extent speak. My concern, to be very candid with the House, Sir, is that - and this is not the Minister's fault, the Minister has come with a useful document, and we are engaged in what would otherwise be a useful and productive debate - but we do so in a very hamstrung way, because we do not have at our disposal the most recent social investigation or the most recent returns of the relevant social investigation which should be able to guide and direct the shaping of any policy. So that recommendations, Sir, as laudable as they appear to be, recommendations as useful as they appear to be contained in the policy document on aging, may actually not be entirely appropriate because we do not have the most recent social investigation findings published and at our disposal.

Now what are those findings or what would that investigation be part of? The document itself speaks to previous population censuses. And if you follow the trend in 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, you see that Barbados has a pattern which suggests that we are an aging society. The

empirical data of previous censuses of the population, Sir, support a trend of population growth between 8 000 to 10 000 persons every decade or so. But we cannot extrapolate from those previous censuses to say that those are the specific figures that should be guiding us today. And what we really therefore need, Sir, and what we should properly speaking have had to assist us in this debate, is the critical tool of the most recent population census conducted in Barbados in 2010.

As I say, Sir, that it is not available is not the Minister's fault. But I do think that the government benches, especially in non-contentious debates such as this, must now speak to the country about where we are with respect to the census returns. We were told in 2010, in October, I believe it was, Sir, that we would have the figures and data available by early 2011. Later, in October of 2011, a year later, the Director of the Statistical Services Department, Acting Director as he then was, indicated, Sir, that it would happen in 2012. We are now in 2013.

The purpose of the census, Sir, is very relevant to the debate we have today or the discussion today because its purpose was to provide comprehensive data, Mr. Speaker, on the characteristics of the Barbados population at a fixed period in time, and that period of time would have been May of 2010. So that three years later, we are speaking about projecting a policy direction on the way forward, but we are doing so in a context in which our most recent published data is a 2000 piece of information. So that it would be useful, Sir, to have an update as to where we are with respect to that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I also feel that there are some other areas of a policy nature where without waiting for a final document, the government can intervene, not necessarily in a piecemeal manner, but to intervene so as to create that better society, that better facilitation of life in Barbados for the elderly, to which I previously referred. We have, Sir, and I'll give you an example. We have many persons in the private sector now who make significant investment in Barbados of a commercial nature. Maybe a supermarket, it might be a bank, it might be a restaurant, and they make provision, Sir, for parking facilities. And they designate those parking facilities for disabled persons. The document makes it clear, Sir, that a substantial percentage of the elderly community carries some form of disability. But let us not divorce the disability from the elderly. The point is, Sir, that the provision which is made for something as simple as ease of parking near an access to a place of business is something which is not backed by force of law in Barbados. But yet, the world over, this almost elementary step has been taken. So that we invite upon an aging community a level of discomfort and inconvenience which is entirely unnecessary because a simple, low-hanging fruit has not been grasped in order to make that aspect of their lives a little bit easier.

And Sir, you can go on and on - you think it through - this document speaks exceptionally intelligently to the question of public transportation. And it speaks, Sir, to the requirement for the government at some stage to invest in more buses which have the hydraulic facilities which will assist the elderly. Well, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the reality is that without having to spend a cent, we could have already made provision on existing buses for greater comfort to be accorded to elderly passengers just by simply saying with a stroke of a pen that the first two or three rows are reserved for elderly citizens. But we all know that is not the case. While if you take a trip down any part of New York City, Sir, by bus, you see that the exact opposite to what we experience here entails, where the first couple of rows of the buses is set aside. The fact of the matter is, Sir, that there are some easily reachable, as I say, low-hanging fruit that can make the quality of life for elderly persons in Barbados substantially better.

I am concerned as well, Mr. Speaker, Sir, with the question of reverse mortgages. It is no secret that both political parties have associated themselves at a manifesto level with this concept. It is a concept, Sir, which economically says, look, the government will give a financial backing, but that a person can take a house which he or she owns, and at a late stage in life, they can then take out a loan on the property, do repairs to it, Mr. Speaker, Sir, and then the persons who inherit that property from them assume the responsibility of paying back the money borrowed. But laudable a concept though it is, again it is one of those things, Sir, which for some inexplicable reason continue to escape us in Barbados. So that the idea of the reverse mortgage, Sir, the idea of prioritising in a legislative way parking facilities, facilities, Sir, in public transport, facilities, Sir, even in places where you simply go to conduct business and pay a bill - as happens in other parts of the world where there is a special line set aside for persons above a certain age - these are things, Sir, that do not cost a lot of money. These are things, Sir, which simply mean that we put into practice all of the good things that we are saying about building a better and more age-friendly Barbados in this place today.

I have, Mr. Speaker, Sir, to also share a view on the question of pensions in this country. And I want to red flag the concern I have that public pensions represent a category of social expenditure which is most susceptible to demographically induced increases. Put otherwise, Sir, as our society ages, the country will have to devote an increasing share of its economic output in order to support a larger and more dependent elderly population. Now, this is a concern, Sir, that is affecting the entire Western world. I suspect, Sir, that the Ministry of Finance in particular would have had to agonise over this for a long time because we, Sir, in Barbados are at a stage and in a situation which quite frankly is not unlike that being faced by continental United States or even Great Britain, where

you have what is appearing to be a permanent state of contingency arising out of constantly unfunded liabilities. And those liabilities, Sir, are due to the value of future pension obligations exceeding the value of your present revenues. The bottom line is how do you fund those pension obligations in the long term without increasingly creeping to a stage where you compromise the well-being of the total economy.

The Honourable Member for St. George North, when he spoke today, Sir, raised this matter indirectly when he spoke to the question of the need to reduce the level of dependency on the state. And I feel, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that even though he did not use the analogy with respect to pensions, I feel that it is entirely applicable to the question of our ability to fund pensions in the future. We have to come to an understanding that a greater degree of capacity for self-sufficiency is vitally important. It may mean, therefore, Sir, that persons make their own personal investments in retirement funds. It may mean, Sir, that a culture be created in this country so that you do not rely entirely or exclusively on the National Insurance of Barbados. It means, Sir, that we sit down at policy-making level with insurance companies and other relevant entities to see how best we can not only educate, but make accessible to a wider base of this population the opportunity to look after themselves into their twilight years and to be self-sufficient even as they reach the closing chapter of life.

But what we cannot afford to do, Mr. Speaker, Sir, is to fail to give serious thought to the way in which we plan and provide for the funding of public pensions in the future. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that across Europe they are now looking at rethinking the system of public pension financing. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that it is a concern that I can only red flag. But I truly feel that is one of the things that will hang in the balance for us on the way forward, because of all the things that we do, this country cannot afford to have an aging society in which that aging society is also financially compromised. I'm obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for Christ Church West.

AN HON. MEMBER: Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the Minister of Social Care who led this debate and on a wonderful document. I also would want to give kudos to the prior document which would have been debated here, which would have been the green paper on the elderly. I think the two documents combined, Sir, set a broad policy framework that should allow for the appropriate legislation to be developed and various management operational systems to be put in place at the institutional level in time to achieve many of the aspirations of the policy documents.

I think that as a policy document, the critical feature that we ought to be concerned with is that a policy document sets a framework as to what it is we want to see in the future regarding a particular concept, what we aspire to achieve in relation to a particular concept and in relation to a particular set of activities. In this case, Sir, those activities revolve around the elderly within the society. The angle I would want to develop, Sir, in this discussion is that which looks at the changing set of values and virtues in three distinct periods of society that underpin how the elderly would have been seen in society, and then relate that to some of the modern concepts of aging in a modern scientifically driven society.

and to start with, sir, some analysis of the early developments of mankind, early civilizations, that development, sir, even though when one utilizes modern metrics to evaluate those societies and you give them descriptive terms as primitive and underdeveloped. These societies, sir, always have established within them a set of values and virtues, sir, that define the elderly in high esteem. There were always, sir, the knowledgeable ones. There were always the builders. They were the guiders of society. These were the persons whose knowledge would have been amassed by experience alone. And it is that concept, Mr. Speaker, that would have been underpinned by some of what demographers would call characteristics of an underdeveloped society, which would include elements, sir, like a large young population, young age cohorts being the larger parts of the population, very small elderly population age cohort. Elements involving that, sir, and those so-called primitive and underdeveloped societies being very high maternal mortality, high fertility rates, high infant mortality rates, and very high dependency ratios would be significant characteristics of those types of societies. And historically, those societies would have access to education, would have been a premium from our experience within the Caribbean, and within other societies, African societies and other developing societies.

Mr. Speaker, within that context, the health paradigm was then that in relation to communicable diseases. And as a result, life expectancy usually would have been very short, most of the time under 55 years of age, and most families, densely, would have either been hunter-gatherers, farmers or fishermen or something thereof. Within that concept, however, the elderly was well established and defined in society as at the pinnacle or the hierarchy of that society in those types of so-called underdeveloped societies. However, sir, that characteristic continued up through probably the 16th century, 17th century. And by the 20th century, Mr. Speaker, the characteristics have changed, and many of the value systems have also changed in regards to how those societies were designed and how they looked at the elderly in terms of the values within the society. So we went from a situation where the elderly would have been cherished to

one where the elderly was seen as a burden to society, unproductive, essentially not useful, and essentially to be discarded from the productive processes within what we call the post-enlightenment period of development.

Mr. Speaker, why that is important is because the juxtaposition of the two becomes critical in helping us to understand what our policy document ought to do in regards to what is the synthetic pathway we intend to create, Mr. Speaker, in relation to what a modern society ought to be guided by and what are the metrics that define that modern society in regards to the demographics of that society. I say that to say this. We would have moved, sir, from the position of the early society where there is abject poverty, to elderly persons being at the pinnacle of that society in terms of respect, regard, and so on, to one where we speak today, as many members would have spoken, about abandonment, ageism, abuse, et cetera. And what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that any modern evolution therefore must seek to determine which one of those two positions the elderly really ought to have. And I am of the opinion now, sir, and clearly so, that we need to revisit several of the older values that would have been established in the context of those so-called underprivileged and underdeveloped societies, where the elderly, sir, is held in the highest regard and in the highest esteem and not necessarily, sir, being dependent.

So it means, sir, that how we manage the society, how we determine what our fiscal policy is, how we determine what our social policy ought to be are not necessarily defined in the sense of a handout, but in the sense of having the elderly contribute profoundly to the development of that society. But what we have done is created a system where you say, look, all right, you have reached age 55 or 65, and this is how much money you are going to get. You live upon that whether your house falls down upon you or not. And that is it. And therefore the social systems will provide their social safety net arrangement for you. And I want to thank both our governments for having in Barbados a set of systems that are probably the best within the Western Hemisphere. We are one of the countries that have so many support systems for the underprivileged, and there are several for the elderly, ranging not only from the National Assistance Board, your welfare systems, your councils, sir, all of the provisions within the national derivatives of the National Insurance Scheme and other provisions. And then we also have within our private sector a series of pension systems.

And why I start within that context, Mr. Speaker, is that in the modern society, with what we consider to be all of its development markers, and some of these markers, sir, which would include Barbados demographically would have similar markers to that of the United Kingdom, or the United States, Canada and so-called developed countries. Our characteristics, Mr. Speaker, of population growth -

and a member for St. James Central identified the critical characteristics of population growth - because as the population ages, it is which cohort of your population that grows. And why that is important, because it juxtaposes how the society's values relate to those extremes. And I would want to see that the modern concept of the society identifies vulnerabilities, those being at the level of maternal mortality, infant mortality, and elderly care as being some of the critical, critical metrics that help us define elements of the modern society. Not just the sterile metrics, sir, of low fertility rates, low infant mortality rates, and other elements like low dependency ratios, sir, and those types of metrics that really, really do not set within them a concept of justice, fairness, and equality.

In other words, the modern society within which the elderly systems are put in place ought to be therefore underpinned by equality, must be underpinned by a lack of ageism and equal access. And as a result of that, it must necessarily mean that how we consider what or when a person retires, and then we do not create the opportunities for that person to determine what would be the monthly remuneration that they really need to maintain their own sustenance and their families. I think a modern society must be able to create these macroeconomic dynamics, Mr. Speaker, in order to be able to have the elderly infused within the productive structure of that society. And a modern society that now speaks of elderly care in terms of longevity and in terms of active ageing.

And, you know, we have come so far that there is even a new direction in medicine that a lot of professionals are now seriously considering. And that consideration, sir, would be not to look at chronic non-communicable diseases as a critical characteristic of modern developed societies as opposed to communicable diseases as being a fundamental characteristic of underdeveloped societies. But part of the modern dispensation is even now to challenge the whole concept as to what ageing actually is. And the Minister of the Environment, when he spoke to the biological changes and those physiological changes, would have been aware that there is a school of medicine that now considers that those physiological changes that are now driven by hormones and are now driven by enzymes and so on are replaceable. And as a result, what used to be considered as abnormal or now normal for you at age 75, which may be a fraction of what it would have been when it was 25, there are now schools of thought saying, no, we are going to put it back to what it was at 25 and keep it there. What happens, happens.

Now, I say all that, sir, to say to us that this whole knowledge and these changes become important and it is critical that we keep an appreciation of them because they will have profound impact on the type of service and care that we provide. Because 75 years ago, sir, there would not have been a concept of chronic non-communicable disease.

All you would have known about was typhoid, malaria, syphilis, and possibly a few other diseases that were carried by rats and some other vermin. But now we can speak of every cancer in the book. And now we are developing all genetic treatments and this and that and so on. And I say that, Mr. Speaker, so that we understand we keep an open mind as to what is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, my concluding statements therefore are that as we proceed to modernise - and I define that utilizing some of the international metrics for that - what are the demographic characteristics of a modern society? What type of social services you ought to have? The quality of health care, the quality of transportation, the quality of housing, what infrastructure and so on. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those are monuments to nothing unless we redefine the importance of looking at the characteristics that make us human beings in the long run. And the definitions that we spoke to earlier, Mr. Speaker, that brought the elderly in the society in early civilizations to be cherished, to be respected, to be honoured, respected for their knowledge, ought to factor in significantly, sir, within our modern paradigm of our documentation policy and our operations, sir.

And once we do this, I am confident in the context of speaking on elderly care in Barbados that the social services provision and all of the other services provision in Barbados - once elderly persons are not seen as thrown away, as valueless, and when we misunderstand the importance of experience knowledge, knowledge that is strictly not reasoned knowledge but knowledge of empiricism - and we begin to understand the importance, sir, of that knowledge, we would understand the importance of the elderly in Barbados and other societies within the Caribbean to the development of our countries. And as a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to give my concurrence to this white paper. And I would want to say to the other members on the other side, who would have supported this white paper document, that do not expect specifics because it is not a strategic document for implementation. It is a document that tells us what we aspire to see in the future for the development of our elderly within the population of Barbados. I thank you. I am pleased.

Miss C. Y. FORDE: I would like to add to the debate, sir, and of course my warmest support goes towards this resolution. I know that it is often said once a man, twice a child. And many of us have witnessed that expression come to reality, especially with our parents and friends who have become aged and really require much attention. Attention in the truest sense, for the care, understanding, companionship, and everything else that goes with it.

Indeed, sir, the Bible in Psalm 90 verse 10 speaks about those persons who might be privileged to live three score and if there be ten more years than any others then they know that they have been blessed by Almighty God. Our seniors, sir, as all of us know, have given of their lives, their blood, sweat, tears and their contributions to help to build this fair land of ours which we now enjoy. And there is no way that any money could pay them for the outstanding contribution they would have given to the growth and development of Barbados.

Indeed our pledge speaks volumes of the contribution made by our forefathers when it speaks to in plenty and in time of need when this fair land was young our brave forefathers sowed the seed from which our pride is born. And therefore, it really is significant that we laud the efforts of our seniors and we continue to praise those who have pre-deceased us because of their commitment and dedication to the building of Barbados.

I witness, sir, how in other countries seniors are always lauded. They even take prominent roles in the countries where they live. When you look at the Chinese, the Africans - right now Nelson Mandela is one of the icons from the African states. When we look at the Japanese and others, they always try to uphold their seniors and to make them feel wanted and welcomed in the society. And it is sad, sir, that at times in Barbados, many persons seem to want to heap scorn on the aged. They tell them it is time to go home, give up the work, let somebody young do it. And all kinds of disparaging remarks are sometimes meted out to some of them, and it is so unfortunate when it comes to that stage.

I have had the privilege, sir, in my short life of having been close to no less than 20 centenarians from the parish of St. Thomas. On the 5th of May, one of our centenarians celebrated her birthday and she died in the early hours of the morning of the sixth. And then on the 24th of May this year again, last month, another centenarian from Shop Hill, and she died exactly one week later. And of course last week there were two - one 110 years old, another 105.

And I want to take this opportunity, sir, to really express gratitude to all caregivers who would have been in the vanguard of helping with the nurturing of senior citizens - some family members, others caregivers in the institutions such as the governmental and non-governmental institutions, and indeed other friends and families in the communities who have the time and interest to look after aged family.

I can mention, sir, the Gordon Cummins District Hospital and at least five centenarians that were in that institution over the last five to ten years. It speaks volumes, sir, of the quality care that would have been meted out to

them to help them to have longevity. And I think that it is extremely important - and I know that the other district hospitals and other caregiving institutions, or the majority of them, have been really doing an excellent job - and I don't think that they get the praise that is due because many of us cannot tolerate all of our family and relatives and friends because of our heavy schedules, because of the emotional strain, and indeed the financial strain that it places on families.

It saddened me at one point, sir, when we had approached the Anglican Church for an open space at Rock Hall, right opposite the district hospital, because we wanted for the intergenerational links to take place in that village known as the Freedom Village. And we were all turned down, having cleaned up and tidied up, just to make a simple recreational area so that the residents of the district hospital could cross the street, link with the residents, and to be able to share their knowledge, skills, experiences, and to be able to develop appreciation and relationships from the others.

I also want to include in that package, sir, the League of Friends. We call it the Association of Friends of the Gordon Cummins District Hospital, for the excellent work that it has been doing under the leadership of the president, Mrs. Leila Gibbs. It is a wonderful community project that I will encourage all of the other district hospitals, if they have not yet gone to or started projects to do with the leagues or the association of friends, to assist in that respect. It is when you get into it and get to see what is going on behind the doors of the district hospital that one can appreciate the dedication, the commitment, the love and affection that most of the workers at those institutions have for the residents.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be associated with the Barbados Labour Party and the initiatives that the Labour Party would have taken quite a few years ago in relation to policies and programmes that were implemented to help to meet the needs of the aged. Indeed, in the early 1980s, the Barbados Labour Party administration under the late, Right Honourable James G. Tom Adams and his leadership was able to launch the National Assistance Board. There were some aspects of the services put in place before, but it was not in a cohesive way to be able to determine outcomes that we can now today measure because of the continued efforts of governments and successive governments thereafter. But I think that the visionary approach was associated more so with housing and the delivery of services to the seniors in our society and indeed the indigent among us.

And we know, sir, that despite whatever we do, there will still be quite a few thousand persons in our society who are living below the poverty line, who will require that hands up and that opportunity for some linens, some furniture, beds, food and housing, of course. And therefore,

that void would have been filled to an extent where the National Assistance Board would have been offering quite a few of our citizens and their families a shelter over their head and the thought that some assistance would be given to help to make sure that food would be on the table and that care would have been made available.

I am happy, sir, to have learned of the various institutions that would have developed. Indeed, in the 1990s we saw the alternative care programme because the then government recognised that the district hospitals could not carry the load. They still cannot carry the load till today. But of course there were other homes established - meaning senior citizens homes - to be able to assist with the needs of the seniors who would have been better served having been given the opportunity to live away from the home where there would have been nobody to supervise or to care for them. I saw the alternative care programme where, as far as I recall, pensions of the same senior citizens were put into the pool and the government would have done the subsidising for the care of those seniors. And I am happy to know that would have made an impressive step forward. I am not so sure what is happening currently, but I trust that this government will continue to look at subsidising the care for senior citizens in those institutions.

There used to be a daycare facility at the geriatric hospital where seniors would go. I trust that is still going. Again, I know, sir, that in the time when the Honourable Member for St. Philip West would have been a practising physician, that there was a project there as well as when Dr. Gaskin was there, and the seniors would go down to the district hospital in the mornings and then their relatives would pick them up in the evening, and they would get involved with persons who had similar interests - that they could talk about the good old days, and that they could do a little sewing, and a little occupational therapy, and so on, to help to keep them in tune.

My parents - especially my mother - she suffered Alzheimer's. But my father became so disillusioned after she passed, and so many of his friends, and he kept saying, what am I going to live for? Ashley is now dead, Douglas Worrell is gone, Mr. Marshall is gone. All the men in the Men's Fellowship and the other organisations that he was a member of - because he did not have that opportunity to go to an institution where he could continue to pursue his interests. All his friends, as far as it was going on in his mind, had passed on. And he was now a lonely old man - no wife, no companions in the line of his friends. And so there are many of the seniors who go through that phase. Taking them to the daycare centres for them to be able to interact and interface with others helps to add to their longevity because they feel wanted. There are some other people out there with similar suggestions and ideas and interests as they, and it can help to make a difference.

I know, sir, that there were a couple of institutions that the government developed. We heard earlier, sir, of the Vauxhall Senior Citizens' Homes. We know of the home care programme that has been expanded, and I want to publicly laud the leaders of the department and the various ministries - the last ministry under the Barbados Labour Party, this ministry under the Honourable Member and Minister - for the continued effort. And I learned last week from him that over 1 000 of our senior citizens are given treatment and services through the Home Care Programme from the National Assistance Board. And I don't think that we perhaps laud their efforts enough, but it is when you go to homes and see how they perform their duties that we really must give them the kudos that they deserve for jobs that are well done.

The recreational programmes - some of them do continue. Indeed, the Senior Citizens Games which are coming up within the next few days, and I thought that was a really very excellent programme to engage seniors so that they did not have to just lie at home in a recliner, twiddle their toes, pick at their fingernails, read a book, read the Bible. They needed to come out and socialise. And therefore, the exercise that will lead up to that day and the continuous exercise from the seniors will help to go a long way in preserving their bodies. I say hats off to the continuation of the senior games. We know of the senior choir. We know of

the senior drama group. We know, sir, of the community technology program, where there were seniors all the way in the 80s and 90s who were boasting about the skills they developed as a result of being engaged in the technology program, and they were making their own postcards and sending their own letters. And I am happy for that to continue because when the young people are into the technology, they don't even communicate with anybody. They're just on the iPads, on the fire, they're on the little games that the children play, some of the names don't even register. In my head now, that too goes to show, sir, that I am getting into that phase with the forgetfulness, if one might want to call it that. But the BPSPs, that's what I wanted to say. And sometimes the young people are so much in their own little cocoons that they do not even remember their parents that are young, father, more granddad and grandmummy and others who are in the household. So when I learned of the seniors getting the chance to be engaged actively in the technology, that too says tips off to the respective ministry at that time, social transformation, now social care and constituency empowerment for helping young older people to know you are valued, you are special, you have made a contribution, we are caring for you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members spoke about the national certification. I think that is more significant in Barbados. In the past, I know that a number

of people would have come to say, I want to work at the children's home, I want to work at the senior citizens home, and so on. And indeed, when the program was developed, for the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic to be a part, to have in its curriculum the care of the elderly program that took off, Mr. Speaker, with speed. Yes, there were a lot of young women and men who wanted to get employment, but even though different forms of employment were offered to them, they preferred the caregiving because they had that kind of nurturing component within their hearts. And so we know of thousands of individuals who have done the caregiving programs and the care of the elderly program from the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic. And there are indeed some private educational institutions that offer the service for persons to be well trained to be able to look after the needs.

Now I have the distinguished honour, sir, to with your permission, speak to a book that has been prepared by a senior person who would have had more than 40 years of training in London and then returned to Barbados to give of service. And if you will give me the permission, sir, Mrs. Joyce Niles. And the reason why I have referred to her book, which was recently published, is because I heard of the minister's call for the continued training of his staff, and that is important, but not just training, because sometimes we train as teachers, we trained, but then we did so many of the supplementary aspects of training to make us current to be able to meet the needs and the current situation. And so, Mrs. Niles' book called *Caring for the Elderly in a Controlled Environment*, I found it to be extremely powerful, Mr. Speaker, sir. It is a book, I believe, that should be used and kept in every household because we know not when the young people among us, some I am told, as early as 35 and 40 years, are now being triggered with dementia and Alzheimer's. And the Alzheimer's - the minister who is a trained physician will be able to correct me if I am wrong, but I've been hearing of a number of young people who are now down with dementia and Alzheimer's - and any household that has this book should be able to pick up some tips that would be useful in helping them first to be able to identify the challenges that the family members that they so love experience, and even to be able to pick up from some of the chapters, some of the work that can be done with them, with bodily movements and when they have what we call bedsores and when they are agitated so easily or when they are forgetting. And so I really would want to recommend this. This is not trying to get sales, but because I consider it to be such a comprehensive document, I believe that all Barbadians should have this in the household, just as we have a first aid box. Because it has all the information that I consider to be necessary to be able to detect and then how to treat the patient when that person is in the household or in the community, because a lot of community work needs to be done.

It would be remiss of me, sir, if I failed to acknowledge the roles of the NGOs, the community organisations, the faith-based ones as well. I knew that at one point in time, a lot of churches were into opening up institutions that will help the aged with the daycare, but there are some that have attached to some of the institutions some homes to accommodate the needs of not only their parishioners, but others. And so I can speak of the St. Barnabas Centre. I've been over to St. Jude's for independence in 2011, and I saw an excellent program that goes on there with the individuals from the community who are retired, and they bring their food, but they come and they do meaningful things. They do craft, they do a little woodwork, they do some preparation of meals and so on to keep the mind turning over and to keep those persons, especially those living alone, in tune with what is happening and letting them know we still love and care for you. You are not going to be discarded because you are a human being. I think that is most significant.

So there are a number of things going on. Now in our really very home communities, there are some individuals who have never worked before and this is something that I've been pushing for a little while and I think that some consideration will be given to it over time. By the time we recognise that persons are living longer and the numbers will be growing all the time, I believe it will come in useful. There are persons who grew up who were in the neighbourhood as adults when I was a small child, and I have witnessed them out of the kindness of their heart, out of the milk of human kindness, we call it, who would go to the neighbour's house, especially when the neighbour did not have children and close family with them. And they will pluck the hair. They will make sure that breakfast was prepared. They will ensure that the house was swept and cleaned. They will make sure that there was Bible reading and some form of medication administered, and Mr. Speaker, they did it. Every community in Barbados would have done it. I can only speak for rural communities because that is the person I am. I've not been so close to the urban communities in the same way. But there are still women in St. Thomas who go next door and ensure that the breakfast, the lunch, the dinner, what they call the tea and the slice of bread and cheese or whatever, before they fall asleep and that the house is secured, they are still doing it.

You know what, Mr. Speaker, they do it as a voluntary service. They look for nothing. They spend the pension wisely. And I would like to suggest that it would be a good step forward if the government could work towards a stipend - I call it unwaged labour. Unwaged labour. A stipend for those individuals because those are the same persons who go and they clean, they change the diapers, they bathe the old people, and they do all these things for no funds from the families or from the individual. To my mind, if we can get more of that

happening, it minimises what will happen when residents and families are in the hospital. They are ready for the discharge, but families do not come back to pick them up. And a lot of families do not come back because, not because they want to abandon their families, I don't think that is the case all the time. But when we look at this harsh economic time now, and even before this happened, there are families who just do not know how to cope. Sometimes it's an only child. It is a son alone. His mother is ailing. No son wants to go to bathe his mother. There's no neighbour whom he can call on. He's the only breadwinner. The house needs repairs, but the Rural and Urban Development Commission are not facilitating the requests as adequately and therefore the families don't know where to go or what to do. It might be an amputee. How do you wheel the wheelchair through a house with the broken floorboards? And sometimes it is that serious.

Then the individual may have to leave home as early as six in the morning to get on the construction job, to get to the hotel to work, or to get to the health institution. And then they do not return until six in the evening and it leaves some of the seniors in a position that is compromised because the food is in a flask. The flask may be tight and so tight at lunchtime, the individual can't get it open because you find muscles are not as strong as they should be to be able to grip and open it. Sometimes they need the pampers changed, but there's nobody. Some of them have bedsores that need cleaning and a male will seldom do it for his mother because there is that pride that he has in his heart. There are others who know I cannot meet the maintenance. Pampers are so expensive. Incontinent pads are so expensive they just cannot meet the cost. And that is why I believe in situations like that our social agencies having investigated should be a little more accommodating when requests are made for a financial grant to be able to assist those seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make mention and to indicate that I highly commend what is happening in the Ministry of Social Care. Most of it, there's little areas that are grey, but that is what will happen as the times go on and different personalities are working and you always have to keep reminding people you're not here for the money only, you are here to offer a service and that's a quality one. And so there will be little niggling problems that will come through from it.

The other thing I wanted to make mention of is the cost of the care at some of those institutions that are private institutions if the alternative care programme is not in place. And you're talking as much sometimes, sir, as \$2 500 a month. \$2 500 on a person that's working for \$300 a week and then a pension of \$284 really would not be able to meet that kind of cost. And so we really need to look a little closer at what is happening with our seniors and to be able to make further provisions.

Now I have a problem, Mr. Speaker, with the vulnerabilities of some of our aging. I was appalled last year to learn of an old woman, 84 years I think it was, who was raped by a young man. And I think she was a virgin. And it goes to show sometimes the older folk out there, they want to assist, they want to give a little talking to the individuals who come and beg, but then they take advantage of them sexually. There are others who beat them, sometimes their own family and grandchildren, because they want the pension to buy some drugs. They want the money to go and gamble. They want it to buy jewellery, and then the senior citizens are there with hardly anything to eat, little health care, and all the challenges that will impact on them.

There are others whose checks are taken from them, even when they're in the district hospital. People come, they take the check, they get somebody to sign it, they withdraw all the money. Some of them come with a lawyer when those senior citizens are at their lowest ebb to want to take away the properties that they have when they are at that stage of their lives. And I think it is so wrong for that to be happening.

Now I have a constituent, sir, who is very upset because the health care system where the medication has been changed in some areas and what used to be one pill, they now have to use three and the side effects are so difficult. This one individual came and he brought a bill and said, look what we have come to. And I said, what is the problem? He said, ma'am, I get only a little pension. I have family who are getting two that will help me, but one of theirs was cut. But now lo and behold, I've got to pay \$44 and some cents at the Eunice Gibson Polyclinic for a medication called Comvaxin, that is an inhaler. \$44.11. Now when a person, sir, is getting \$284 as a pension for non-contributory, and they have to pay that for an inhaler, it goes to show another difficulty, especially in these harsh economic times. People are paying more than 33 per cent for the cost of living, for electricity and water and light and so, and that pension that has been taken away was going to help pay the bill, pay the water bill, pay the house insurance, pay the land tax. That is now missing. So we need, sir, to make sure that our seniors are given a better deal in respect of it.

And my final comment, sir. I would wish, sir, to ask for more of the housing and the Honourable Member for St. James North would have mentioned it earlier when he spoke about waterborne facilities for more of those senior citizens in Barbados, especially in the area where I live. There is rain every day, two and three times a day. I went outside this day to go for seniors who are amputees, who are disabled and so on, to have to go out into the rain, into the backyard. It really is very difficult. Many more of them need ramps as well to help to facilitate their movement in and out of the homes. And I trust that as the ministry

continues its work that there will be a special interest in helping to make sure that those kinds of critical areas are addressed to make the senior citizens, let me say, a little more comfortable in their homes.

I encourage all Barbadians, all children in school, including the tertiary institutions, the Community College and the University and the Polytechnic, to get involved because the generational links are pertinent. They are critical if we are to continue to carry on the history of Barbados. Those values, those mores, those lifestyles that our seniors would have known and developed and would have wanted to pass on. I believe that the tithing of time in these institutions will give us a broader base of what we call education rather than the bookie that young people will be able to tear off or record stories and experiences of these senior citizens who have played their part, that they will develop an appreciation, love and care for the seniors, that they will show the respect that is necessary for them and that they will continue to look after the seniors in our society who have made that tremendous difference and who will continue to share their knowledge and skills as long as we look after them in a manner that is important so that at the end of the day we can say we have fulfilled our role as looking after our neighbour and showing love, sharing love and letting it overflow to the seniors as well as to the youth and every other Barbadian if we are to all live in this just society and to give our own contribution. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this resolution and that says to take note and approve the white paper on aging and to say, Mr. Speaker, that one has to appreciate the contribution of our most experienced people because, as you know, I've always said that I do not see them as being old. I see them as being experienced. And the longer I live, the more I can appreciate their contribution. And I am very happy to hear the contribution from the honourable member for Christ Church West, because it is no doubt that had we followed the teaching that they had given us in our foundation days and we had continued, we as a country would have been much further. But we have allowed ourselves to divert from that educational base and that practical base. And we sometimes inherited and accepted the theoretical opinions of people who did not understand the cultural patterns of our country. And we tend to follow the cultural patterns and we give up on that good foundation that was left for us.

For example, we all came up and we saw what we used to call the yard fowl, and some of us as politicians bastardised the RFOs by giving the impression that RFOs was the worst thing in the world. We did not understand the underpinnings of why the experienced people kept them and we moved from the RFOs to the broilers. But those

senior people and experienced people kept the yard fowl not only for the eggs and for the flesh that they provided, but they also used them as the process to keep the termites away from the buildings. So what we have today - we are so bright that we go on for the broilers and we are telling people that we have this nice soft tasty meat, even though the substance is not the same. And we are now every month or every three years spending thousands of dollars and also criticising the quality of the wood without recognising that the RFOs used to protect the houses by scratching. We saw them scratching and we never could appreciate why they were scratching.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, there are some people in here who would never learn and for years would have seen the old folks doing and could not appreciate the point. And for all those, Mr. Speaker, who cannot appreciate the point I'm making, I want them to take a trip to the farm in St. Peter. I want them to take a trip to the farm in St. Peter, where Mr. Tim Walch has over 2 700 free range chickens and many pear trees. Those of us who are rural Barbadians and who can appreciate the experience and the understanding of those people who created an educational base that we have ignored would understand that once you had a pear tree in your backyard and you did not have those yard fowl, you used to see your lands nest and so on. But now Mr. Tim Walch has many pear trees, many free range chickens all over the place, but not one sign of any wood ants on his farm. And because the free range chickens continue to do their jobs.

Another thing - we came up and we saw them having the backyard farming and the backyard animals doing this, doing this slaughtering and so on. And I remember while we came to this House and we ignored the cultural patterns of those old people because we felt that in order to support a commercial venture that we had to dampen the spirits by telling them that we could not continue their cultural patterns, that we had to stop what we were doing for hundreds and hundreds of years, and that is having the slaughtering in the backyard. And we had to go through the modern process of slaughtering by sending it to the abattoir. The word sounded pretty, but we did not understand that we were interfering with that cultural pattern that was left to us by our most experienced people in Barbados. So when we see the reduction in the production of the country, sometimes we have to ask ourselves whether it is not because we have given up on those good cultural values that these senior citizens have been able to provide for us.

I've heard two honourable members on the other side with their lamentations giving the impression that rural and urban are not satisfying the job and the remit given to them. I want to say that cannot be true. I was in this House, Mr. Speaker, and the records will show that on this side we made the point that these people work very hard and that

they deserve better. Then at one point in time, there were people who were telling you that you should set up institutions to support old people, but if that old person had a person living in the house that was young, their house could not be repaired and certain utilities could not be paid for them. I am saying that system has passed and we understand that it is better to keep an experienced person in the house and allow a younger person to come into the house and help them, because at least the person will be able to continue in those cultural patterns and within the society and continue to build the society.

The biggest problem that we have in the society today is that we do not have those older persons within the community or at the street corners with young people. When we were growing up as young people, everywhere we went, every time we were playing the game, we had senior people to direct us and to give us that experience, and to teach us and to guide us. You go to the street corners now - young people leading young people. And what is lacking about it is that experience. So I have all the time and effort for these experienced people because they built a foundation. And you know what is also amazing? Could you imagine that these experienced people were able to take one industry, one single industry - the sugar industry - and they were able to build the whole of Barbados? Could you imagine that? Now we have many industries and we cannot contribute to Barbados the same way that they have contributed.

But they were smart. You take another example of how wise they were. They had animals and called them stocks. How many people thought they were stupid because they could not understand why they were looking at a cow and calling it a stock? But they understood the economic value of the animal. And from that animal they got milk, they got the meat, they got manure, and they got clothing. But everything - everything - when they had a crisis, they did not go to the bank. They went in their backyards and they selected the stock that they wanted. Whereas the rich kept theirs in banks and so on, they kept theirs in the backyard. But you know, we are so smart now we cannot admit that we were wrong and that we have wronged them.

But you know the stable manure that we used to talk about - we are now back there, but we cannot call it stable manure. You know what we are saying now? We are now involved in organic farming because we cannot admit that the fertiliser that worked well for us previously, that we gave up on it, and we are now returning to those good old world values. And that's the problem. That's the problem. So we have to understand that those senior citizens have laid a foundation that we are now returning to. And I laugh because, you know, I hear things about green economy and all that fancy talk - you know, all they are doing is telling us that we have got to reuse what we had previously.

You know, when we were growing up, we saw them taking the Milo tin can and making a tarka out of it. And that tarka was used for drinking. Now all of a sudden, we got smart, we got so educated that we didn't want the Milo can anymore to make a tarka. We dumped it. But where are we now? We are now back there. And we call it recycling. We call it all sorts of things. You know, I remember well also when those smart persons used to take the bottles out from out of the garbage and so on. And the garbage workers used to take these things. People used to call them dirty. Now it is the biggest industry in the world. So is it - was it the problem with them, or is it that we, instead of learning what our senior citizens taught us, were more impressed by the international press and the cultural changes?

And you know what is killing the world? That thing called the television. Because everything we see on the television we want, and we give up everything that was good for us to go for those things. And we sometimes wonder why these people are living so long. But check it - they're still eating sweet potatoes, yams, cassava and others. But you know what we are eating? We are eating the English potatoes and so on. Whereas they are eating to keep themselves away from the doctor, we are eating to go and pay doctor money. And we are supposed to be bright and brilliant and they are supposed to be dumb.

You know, I want to say that those senior citizens used to communicate across the fence and across the palisade, and they used to walk and go by the standpipe and communicate. All of a sudden now, we are telling people how hard and how tough things are. And every second, we are turning up at somebody's place to buy a phone card. You ever tell you to communicate - things tough, things tight. But we still paying for our cars every day, \$20 per day. And if you're on your computer, don't be surprised that some lady or somebody doesn't turn around and ask you to put the phone card on his or her phone. But we are smart, we are bright.

And you know, we have to be very serious about this here. Look, rural Barbados - and we need to bring some more old people now to lecture to young people. Because the grass that they used to be able not to cut, because people saw it as important and stopped them from raising the sheep and so on and feeding the cows - you can go anywhere in Barbados and find the grass. But now we got the grass and it's free. You don't have the cows, the goats, the sheep or anything. So you know what we have to do - we now have to learn and go back to the beasts, and teach the young people that if we want to correct economic problems in this country, we have to get back to the stocks.

And that the greater the number, the greater the volume, because the more animals or stocks we keep, the less we have to import. You know, and this last one we

leave as an example for you that when I was growing up after the month of June and July, you will hardly find a fishing boat in the sea. All the launches were hauled up and they would have been worked on so that by November they would be ready to be launched again. And by the rest of them, if you find half of them hauled up, you are lucky. And we do not even realise that by not allowing the space for those boats to be hauled up, that we are depriving. And those old people understood that, you know, that in order to maximise the catches, you had to be able to launch all your boats at the same time, so that you get greater catches and so on.

I am saying these are the things that we have to correct and these are the things we have to understand that they are not new. They were left there by those senior citizens and that is why you have the greatest respect and those are the only people I quote because the truth is, when you quote them, you are quoting common sense.

So we are not going to do any abandonment on the elderly. This party on their own - we understand the foundation and the base that they have laid. And that is why we are so passionate. And that is why we do not tokenise them. And that is why we are greatly without fear going across Barbados and importantly, everly, because we understand that if you want to impress the younger ones, you must be able to treat their sicknesses because if you do not treat them well, you cannot treat the young ones well. And if you want the young ones to appreciate what you are doing, you must set an example for them. And that is why this Government, through all the difficult times, held the hands of the senior citizens of the country and also the younger people of the country, because that is why we can stand boldly and make the point that a country more than economy is also the society, because we understand that it is the people that make the economy and not the economy that makes the people. And that is the most important thing.

And any political party that has its social dependence led on that basis is a political party ready to go and to fight any economic crisis. And that is why we as a party can stand tall and can speak in this crisis time as we relate to the same problems as the world. At least we have given hope to the people and by giving hope we did not segment it. We recognised that we had to deal with a total picture and that is why we dealt with the society.

So, Mr. Speaker, I said to you that we also have to appreciate the contribution of the programme and I want to thank CBC for the foresight, even though they did not give credit for a community programme like Q in the Community. It is no doubt that Q in the Community is a good programme and it allows senior citizens in this country to come together in one place and show their appreciation and their love. They are so committed to this

Q in the Community programme that they even tell their family that if you have to bury someone, do not bury them on Thursdays. And it is a fact because that is their day - senior citizens there between the 11 and five o'clock. That is their time. And they come out, they socialise, they enjoy themselves and they appreciate the contribution that CBC is offering. And what is even better now, that they are now able to see themselves every Saturday night on television.

And there are no movie stars too, but you know, CBC, they said they do not listen to song, but it seems like they are listening to the right people. Because I remember when I addressed the Morning Glory programme dinner at the garden, I told the people in the Morning Glory: let me tell you something - demand that CBC show be shown to the people of Barbados in the same way that they can show them all the cultures from the cultures of other countries. And I was very glad to see that CBC took the advice. And now it is one of the most popular shows on CBC. Everybody runs on and says to watch it because they run to see who can sing well, who can sing out the key and to see who went where and where not. So we do not need anybody's soap opera. We got our own. We do not need anybody's culture - we got our own - because we have been able, and it has demonstrated, that once you take local things and do the right things with them, how far you can take your local products.

And I am saying that once we continue to understand the importance of using what is local and appreciating what is local, we can take this country forward and we can have an appreciation. Biblically, shelter, food and clothing are supposed to be three of the most important things, along with religion. And you never forget religion.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you, I want to congratulate every experienced person in Barbados. And I want to make the point - I am proud of the example they have left and they continue to live, because they have demonstrated, everyone that you interview, they can tell you what the good foods are in Barbados. They do not tell you anything but no stupid food in the can. They tell you what is good ground provisions and some good fish. It shows that the army of Christ Church does not know good food. I mean, side by side. My opponent said St. Michael East - no, the army of Christ Church. So it says he knows good food; he knows about sea cat and things like that. The Honourable Member for St. Michael East is too accustomed to the canned food. He would not know about sea cake and cassava and those things and dolphin and sea eggs. He only knows about sea eggs when a certain person on the other side tells them about sea eggs - even out of season.

So, Mr. Speaker, sir, we also want you to understand that we will continue to unlock land in Barbados by using roads, et cetera. And that is why this party understood that

it is not only old people's homes, but frame that land at the right prices so that the younger ones can build quickly and keep their loved ones at home with them and to create the enabling environment to ensure that they have happy lives and happy retirement lives. And that is why the Honourable Minister for Housing has been able not only to build parks but to ensure that in building the parks he has created an exercise element in it, so that the senior citizens now do not have an excuse of not being able to exercise - they can now go into the parks and exercise. And in those parks, they have the display of diverse exercises and how we can do them. And it shows that we understand that if you want to keep your people healthy, that exercise is also important.

So what we are offering is a total package, Mr. Speaker, and an understanding and appreciation for those people who have worked hard in this country. And I thank you very much, sir, for those two minutes that you have given me.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Usually when I rise to speak in debates of this nature, I usually start often by saying that as the youngest member of the chamber, I usually rise in that capacity. And as we debate this particular resolution on aging, I rise not in the capacity as being the youngest member alone, but also taking a view of this particular document on aging, that at some point in the foreseeable future, I too will fall into the category of one who is aging, hopefully gracefully aging. But nonetheless, I take this particular document and this resolution very seriously, given the statistics which have been outlined throughout the policy document.

One of the things, however, that concerns me and that continues to concern me in these debates is the amount of time that it takes for important legislation and important resolutions of this nature to come before the chamber. And I say that because dating back from 1998, we would have had the first response by the Barbados government to the Population Ageing Challenge, where we set up the first national committee for the International Year of Older Persons. Now, this is some 15 years later, and we are now having a policy document, a white paper, being laid before this chamber.

There is obviously a long history which has been recited by other honourable members as it relates to the contribution which has been made by not only the current administration but previous administrations in relation to the preparation of this particular document. And I too would like to congratulate all those persons who over the period of those previous years would have made some contribution in some way or the other to assisting in the preparation of this policy document before us.

But it really does concern me that the document is dated the 31st of January of 2012. We are now debating it in June of 2013. So we are some 17 months later in bringing it to this chamber. And this seems to be a common trend that takes place whenever we have to debate matters which I believe are of serious national importance. We know that we have had, and I am sure it will come to this chamber in due course, but we have had similar scenarios in relation to the cultural industries where legislation would have been in draft form under one administration and taken several years to actually reach a process where it has been approved by cabinet and then come to the chambers for approval. And we have also had situations in tourism where we hear about a tourism master plan, but even in spite of having a tourism white paper, we are still no further in terms of having that particular policy document being debated in this chamber.

And so against that background, I seek not to cast blame on either political party, but really to ask each and every one of us to reflect on why it takes so long for not only the consultation process to take place, but also the process of bringing this legislation and these policies to Parliament. Because it strikes me that 15 years have passed and we are now at the stage of talking about a white paper on aging. There is a lot of time that has been lost in terms of policies that could have been implemented and action that also could have been taken.

And what is perhaps even more glaring is that when I look through the actual policy paper, there are timelines which have been affixed to the document which speaks to periods of implementation - both things that will happen urgently, things that will happen in the short term, in the medium term, and in the long term. And when you reflect on the timelines that have been given, again, there is cause for concern because while some things are ongoing, I think the Honourable Minister responsible for this area would accept that six months to two years for the short-term implementation, or two to five years for the implementation of things which are considered medium-term, and more than five years for things that are considered long term - for a document of this nature, I would humbly submit to this chamber, is a considerably long period of time for a number of the action things which need to be done in this particular document.

And I say that because the statistics concern me, and I believe they should concern members of both sides. When we look at the fact that we have an aging population with a life expectancy of 77 years, we have seen persons living beyond that period, but I am pretty sure that there are a number of factors which will contribute one way or the other to persons maybe not living as long as we would like over the course of the next few years. And the other statistic which is particularly worrying is the fact that by 2025, the number of persons over 65 will increase from

13.7 per cent to 20.4 per cent. And that may seem like a very serious jump in time, because that is only 13 years from now. But at least a quarter of our population are going to be over the age of 65. It certainly means that we cannot sit here anymore and just simply talk about putting policies in place, but we actually have to take serious action to be able to put systems in place to deal with the aging population in this country.

I know in St. Michael South East, for instance, there is at least a third of the eligible voters in the constituency who are currently over the age of 50. And therefore, when I look at the facilities in the constituency of St. Michael South East, and across Barbados, I have to ask myself if some of the institutions and the resource centres that we have presently available to us are adequate to service a number of the elderly people in the various areas.

I also want to point out as well to those that are paying attention and listening to this debate that we have also seen a situation arising in this country where we are now faced with a number of chronic non-communicable diseases. And things like Alzheimer's seems to be creeping in at a rapid rate in this country. Not a lot is said about it, but there are persons who have been affected and their families who have been affected in this country. And it is a serious illness which I believe that we need to have more discussion on and certainly more debate on in this country as to how to deal with not only the persons who are affected, but also the persons who have to care for the individuals who are affected by the actual disease.

It is interesting though that as we sit here today to debate this policy paper on aging, that even within the halls of Parliament and within our very own political parties, we often hear debates about how persons are too old to continue to serve. Just a few weeks ago, I remember reading an article in one of the leading newspapers where it seemed almost as though certain members who were currently serving were being retired in time for the next election. And to my mind, I do not know of any mental illnesses or physical incapacities which any of these members may have. But there is a general perception at the highest level in this country that many of our citizens are too old to lead or to serve in this country.

And I firmly believe that if we as leaders on both sides are to take this policy document seriously, then we also need to ask ourselves whether we take our elders in the respective political parties seriously. And if so, I am sure that when we reflect on the fact that even the current Prime Minister is approaching the age of senior citizen, that those who may want to be eager and want to remove him should think twice when we look at examples across the Caribbean of other persons who are in the over-65 age group. So those who are eager to remove him must certainly reflect on the trends that are happening not only regionally but also

internationally as well. Because when we look across - whether it is in the U.S., when we look at even Hillary Clinton who is tipped, no doubt, to be the next President of the United States - I believe Ms. Clinton is age 65 and probably will be about 69 years by the time that may actually come to pass.

But the point is that if we, as people who are responsible for policy making in this country, are to tell the rest of the nation and to engage them in a discussion on aging and age discrimination in this country, then we also have to lead by example. And therefore we have to respect within our own political parties and within our nation persons who have contributed to the development of this country, and persons who despite their age still have it within them to continue to contribute in some way.

I often sit in this particular seat and watch as persons come through the doors to go into the public gallery. And I notice often that there are several older persons who traverse the steps to go into the public gallery. A number of those persons are actually quite old. They would fall into the qualification of the aging population in this country. I saw one old lady earlier today come up the steps with her walking stick. And I am sure that if we had the facilities to allow members of the aging population to be able to use the lift, as members of parliament also do, I am sure we would see quite a few more of them in the public gallery listening to the debates. Because believe me, the debates not only are educational, but sometimes they offer some serious comic relief in this chamber. And I am sure many of them would enjoy listening to the debate in this chamber.

But it is also the responsibility of any government to be responsible as it relates to the messages that are sent out. And I recall in the last election campaign there was an advertisement on the television and across the social media in which an elderly lady was used to send a message to this country that if the Barbados Labour Party had regained office in this island that it would privatise the transportation system. And whilst members on the other side may smile, I take it very seriously. I actually quite like the old lady who is in that particular advertisement because she often is in the public gallery and as I have been brought up to be very respectful of old people, regardless of which side of the political divide they may be, we often have cause to exchange some niceties on occasion.

But I will say to members on the other side that we have to be, as policy makers, careful of the messages that we send. And the same old lady could be used to educate persons in the population about aging and about active aging and about diseases that affect the elderly population. So whilst we may use an elderly person for a political gimmick, knowing full well that these things are not true, at the same time I say that it is the responsibility of those who have the well-being of the population at large in their

charge to also act responsibly when they are disseminating information in this country, utilising our elderly population.

But you know, we do not have the legislation as yet on elder abuse, and I am sure that if we did, there may be grounds for some elder abuse for using that said old lady in the way which the Democratic Labour Party may have used her. But that is another issue.

It also though brings me to the issue of legislation and I believe the Honourable Member for St. James North may have mentioned it earlier, that we are bringing this policy document to this chamber. But it would have been useful to hear from the Honourable Minister as well where we are as it relates to the stage of legislation in this country. It is not the first time that we have had resolutions brought before the chamber. And then we find ourselves in a situation where there are recommendations in a particular document which speak to the fact that legislation is urgently required in order to give teeth to the very legislation. But then we find an absence of explanation as to when the legislation is coming or even what stage the legislation is at.

And this document is full of examples of where legislation either needs to be amended or in some cases where legislation needs to be drafted to be brought before the chamber in order to give the necessary weight to this particular piece of legislation. And I would just want to refer to some of the areas that have been highlighted in the document in relation to legislation which is necessary, because the document specifically sets out that the Community Legal Services Act, for instance, needs to be amended to enable older persons to be able to access funds within the system. And I think that we understand fully in this chamber that for those particularly who practise in the legal profession, that the legal aid system needs to be extended to persons who are most vulnerable.

But we also must urgently - and I note that it is in the document that it requires urgent attention - but we have heard nothing as to what stage this particular legislation is at. It is noted that there are legal mechanisms that need to be put in place to protect the assets of older persons, to prohibit inappropriate use of such assets by family, friends, or caregivers, and assist the elderly in accessing legal representation in relation to the above. So it is not a situation where the document has not highlighted what is required, but rather it is a situation where we still continue to hear very little about what steps will be taken by the current administration to bring this document into a reality.

There is also mention that legislation is required to address elder abuse which we have heard time and time again this morning exists in this society, but for which there is very little research being done to identify how many older people are being affected by this development.

And in speaking about research, I think we have to also engage a discussion as to what resources are going to be applied to enable persons and departments to have the necessary resources to be able to pay for the research to be done. Because whilst it is accepted that we need to have a closer relationship with the statistical department and we need to bring the census up to date, at the end of the day, if the financial resources have not been allocated to engage persons to carry out and to seek the necessary data, then we will not be able to fulfil a number of the provisions in this particular document.

that we've all sat here today and spoken so glowingly about. And this is a common failing that appears, as I said before, in every single debate. A lot of what needs to be implemented depends on the political will, but it also depends on having the financial resources to be able to give effect to a number of the policies. We are also told in the document that there is also required a new operating legislative framework to replace the existing dated legislation, which is the National Assistance Act, and also to allow for effective treatment of matters relating to older persons in accordance with the proposal in this particular white paper on aging. So whilst the document speaks to this particular matter being addressed in the short term, the short term is six months to two years, but yet we are here saying that this is a priority that the current administration recognizes needs to be addressed. And I say to this chamber that six months to two years is simply not good enough. There are a number of things that we need to take action on now, and it would be interesting to hear from the Minister responsible for Home Affairs and responsible for the drafting of the legislation. What is the position as it relates to giving effect to this particular legislation? Urgent, as far as I'm concerned, means that we need to be in a position to either say that we already have it drafted and it is not good enough to say that there are persons who are simply working on it, but that we can give some concise timelines and deadlines as to when the necessary legislation will be brought to this chamber. We have met quite infrequently since the last election, and I would love to be in this chamber debating legislation on elder care or elder abuse within the next few weeks. But we meet so infrequently that it just seems as though there are serious pieces of legislation that really should be coming before this chamber, but they are certainly not.

All six priority areas that have been addressed in the policy document - I would like to endorse they've been identified as financial and economic security, health and health care, physical and built environment, the social environment, the legislation and research. I've spoken already to the legislation and to the research, but I just want to turn my attention a bit to the issue of financial and economic security. Because whilst we recognize that we are all facing very difficult times across this country, and I'm sure if many of you are in your constituencies, you

would realize that we're perhaps facing even a more difficult time than many of us would like to accept. It is clear to me that the elderly population stands to be affected in the worst way by the current economic situation that the country is facing. And I say that because a number of them, obviously, are surviving on their pensions, but the cost of living has risen in this country and whilst there may be increases from time to time in the amount that they receive, I find that in the constituency and across Barbados that people are finding it difficult to be able to afford basic food items. And if you suffer with certain diseases, obviously the cost of maintaining a particular diet becomes very expensive for an older person.

There's also the issue of electricity. I had a situation recently where an older person had not been able to pay her electric bill and she was a diabetic. So it meant that the insulin that she required for daily use was not being placed in the refrigerator, and obviously put this elderly person at risk. Fortunately there was intervention from the welfare services, but the fact remains that this old lady would have been - no doubt she was in her most vulnerable state - would no doubt have suffered significantly if there was not intervention at the time that we were able to catch her. And I therefore say

that whilst we may talk about this policy, I don't think we can talk about it in isolation. The fact that we are seeing an aging population also means that we need to address the cost of living in this country. And the high electricity, the high water rates, the VAT in this country affects the elderly population as well. And we've not had that issue of the value-added tax revisited despite promises that it would be in the short term. And I therefore say that those are all things which, whilst the government in this policy document calls on the private sector to be able to alleviate some of the burden of the cost of dealing with the elderly, there is also a bigger responsibility on the government of Barbados to themselves also ease the cost and the burden to a number of the persons, not only in the elderly population but also across Barbados.

Both political parties have made much bold comment on the issue of reverse mortgages and yet it seems as though this particular administration, whilst it supports it in its manifesto, seems to believe that it will happen by the various institutions just simply deciding one day that that is what they're going to do. And I say to this government that more action needs to be taken. You have to lead by example, and if you need to put the legislative framework in place in order for that to happen, then we need to hear from the administration that this is happening. But it is not enough simply to recognize that reverse mortgages would ease and benefit the elderly population in this country. And it is not enough simply to say that a previous administration spoke about it, because we are not the administration of the day. So with all due respect to

those on the other side who often take that position, the fact remains that the current administration has demanded from the people of this country a mandate - small as it may be. But the fact is they have the mandate from the people to ensure that if it has said in its manifesto that it will address the issue, then it will address the issue.

Mr. SPEAKER: There's a point of order, please. Honourable Member, please.

What the Honourable Member was saying was that she has a small margin to be here. I don't know why the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has decided to rise. She said small. She did not say short. So we will move on.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: On the issue of health and health care, I know from the document that there are several persons who are receiving medication free of cost from several government institutions. And obviously we've had the tinkering with the drug formulary in this country. And I believe that a government needs to be sensitive to the changes that were made because there are a number of people, particularly the elderly population, who would have become accustomed to taking certain medications and who, as we all know, a lot of the elderly when they are asked to change medication or do things differently, they are often resistant to the change. So while best efforts may have been made to reduce costs in the system, the fact remains that we've had to deal with a number of older persons who, because of the change in medication, have been fearful of the side effects that a lot of the medication may have on their bodies.

I can tell you that from visiting the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, I too would have experienced a situation where I've seen a number of the elderly persons being left abandoned. Whenever I've taken my grandmother there - who is a diabetic and also partially blind - it has been interesting as I walk around the hospital, in the accident and emergency, to realize the number of persons who are elderly and unattended. And as I asked a number of the doctors what is the situation with a number of them, it really did concern me that a number of them are repeat elderly persons in the system. And they're repeat because particularly at the periods of Christmas they're obviously left unattended as younger members of the family tend to go out to various parties and other events and leave them unattended. And I think it is a sad situation where an elderly population, which no doubt has given so much to this country, is often left unattended.

I understood on the last occasion I was in the hospital - I think it was the end of last year - that that is another critical time when a number of older persons are left in the hospital, or they even turn up in the hospital for care, because they are mindful that they need to get a meal, because things are very difficult at home, or in some cases

you find that a lot of them fall off of the beds because they're left unattended during the night when persons go out. But what I found was interesting was that there was a system in place for those persons who had not been collected by a younger person - in a lot of cases the hospital has a fund where they would facilitate getting the elderly person back to their home. But it still concerned me that obviously when the person goes back to the house they're left unattended once again. And I think we really have to work very hard to ensure that our elderly citizens are not left unattended and that the resources of the National Assistance Board are increased, and also the Welfare Department and the Social Services, to ensure that we don't just try to solve the problem temporarily, but we try to look at a more holistic approach to finding what the real solutions are to the problems that a number of our elderly population are facing.

The issue of mental health as well has certainly been engaging the attention of the hospitals and a number of the doctors. And the issue of Alzheimer's keeps coming up in our society. I think we don't recognize how much of a support system persons who have individuals affected by Alzheimer's actually require, but we need to enter into more discourse on this particular issue because it is one - and in this particular document it is one of the diseases that is mentioned repeatedly - that should be of concern to all of us in this room, particularly as little is known about it, little research is being done on it, and also because the cost of care for persons who are suffering with it is excessive and therefore the cost of the drugs is also excessive. So as we have a population that is no doubt increasing in its numbers, we have to certainly address this as a matter of urgency. Because these elderly persons often suffer with changes in their personality, they lose their memory, they can't remember who close family members are, they obviously lose their judgment. And I think it is a serious loss to the community and to the individual when they're unable to recall faces and also places as well.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have four minutes in which to conclude.

Miss S. J. O. BRADSHAW: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other thing that also is worrying me as I interact with people in the constituency is that I'm coming across a number of persons who have a certificate in the care of the elderly, but a number of them seem not to be able to find work having received certification in care of the elderly. And I noticed that the document speaks to incentivizing persons to enter into private arrangements to encourage the private sector to get more involved in caring for the elderly. And I wonder if more cannot be done to engage persons in communities at the various community centres, for instance, who have these qualifications to assist with caring for the elderly. Because we may have to move to a situation very quickly where we also address the issue

of night care, because a number of our older people are also left unattended during the night. So while we speak about daycare facilities for the elderly, I think we also need to urgently look at that issue - it affects us not only in daycare for the young, but I believe we also have to look at it as we have an aging population.

Just quickly, Mr. Speaker, the issue of housing. I know the current administration often speaks a lot about its housing policy, and I think we hear a lot about provision being made for the elderly population in the housing accommodation. I'm not sure what the statistics are in terms of how that programme or process is actually working. But the fact remains that a number of people in the constituencies across Barbados have aged in their neighbourhoods and the homes in which they live are either susceptible to the asbestos roofs, or they are also susceptible to damage - whether it was Hurricane Thomas, the repairs have not been carried out to the particular property after all this time. But I do believe that urgent attention needs to be given to the issue of housing and retrofitting a number of the properties to ensure that elderly persons can remain in their home and within their community for as long a period of time as possible.

Our attitudes towards aging are very important and as I said before, it starts here in this chamber because we cannot set a policy for people on the outside if we also don't take what we do seriously. I would ask the Honourable Minister responsible for this area to just tell us a little bit about what is happening with the Jarvis-Dunne home in the St. Michael South East constituency in Golden Rock. I know some elderly persons had been moved out of the home with the understanding that it was being renovated. And to date, I am not aware that those persons or anyone from the elderly population has been placed back into the home. It was actually, I think, taken over by a few homeless men at one point who were moved from one location there. But it seems like an ideal location for the community and for the elderly population given the number of persons in the surrounding areas who are aging at this point in time.

Just finally, I think we have a responsibility as well to enlighten persons about preparing for old age. A lot of people don't like to talk about death. A lot of people don't like to talk about growing old. I come across in the legal profession persons who don't want to make wills because it seems as though it's such a final chapter in their life that they fail to make provision for the time which will inevitably come. And I do hope that as policy makers we encourage persons to take responsibility for their lives, but also not only their young lives, but also as they age and to take the appropriate action to put persons in a responsible position to be able to look after them in their most vulnerable position as they age.

Finally, I would just like to endorse the white paper on aging and urge the ministries that are responsible for giving effect to this document to really move with some degree of urgency. It is not just the younger people whom this document will impact on, but we have a serious aging population that we also need to address as a matter of course. Thank you.

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

Mr. J. D. PAUL: I rise to participate in the debate on the paper on aging. And, you know, sir, may I listen to the contributions? One of the things I am told that one of the great African traditions is the fact that there is a healthy respect of elders. As a matter of fact, it is so important that they recognise that really this society depends on that the elders. The elders hold a very sacred position, sir, in African society. And when I listen to some of the contributions in terms of the impact of the media, the fact that as a nation, what we impacted on - you could understand, sir, that in many areas that tradition of holding our elders, sir, in deep respect is something, sir, that can benefit the society even now at this stage. Because when we look to see what is happening in our society, it really begins, sir, from the fact that we have very little respect for our tradition. For those age-old traditions, sir, which has helped to make us into the type of society that we are now.

You know, when I, Sir Alex Ferguson, sir, who was the former manager of Manchester United Club, sir, he retired sir just earlier this year and I think, sir, he will be over 70 years old, continuing to play football. I am sure, sir, that if he was in Barbados, he would not have been allowed such a long period in charge of a club because we have a habit, sir, in our society in writing off talent even when the talent is there.

And, you know, sir, when I listened to, sir, to the earlier presentation that was made by the member for St. Michael South East - and when I was hearing from the opposition benches constantly the fact that action needs to be taken - that is why sometimes you have to wonder where exactly is the opposition, whether or not they are in Barbados or whether or not they are living in some place else. And sir, whether or not they actually did read the paper, because sir, if you look at the paper, the paper contains sir recommendations. And if you go through sir, the list of recommendations, you have some sir that are listed as medium, as something that you know, something that you want to do, and some sir that are ongoing. So when I listen sir to the presentation, I said we need action. I really did not understand sir what was the point that was being made? Because sir, we seem to think and you know sometimes we as politicians seem to think too that the society is waiting on us. Because what we do not seem to recognise is that in a sense what the white paper is trying to

do is to basically encapsulate what is happening in our society today and then of course suggest things that we will want to do for the future.

And, you know, sir, even in the constituency that I represent. I want to say, sir, that we seem to think we sometimes like to picture things in a manner that justifies what we believe is there. And I see on a constant and daily basis in this society a situation where the elderly, sir, receive assistance. And I want to say that, you know, sometimes we have to be very careful that we do not project a picture in which everything is falling down. We do not try in order to sort of create some type of usefulness for ourselves. And I am saying that we are useful, but we also have to position ourselves in the problems so where we are most useful. We do not need, sir, to create an impression that nothing is happening when in truth and in fact quite a great deal of things are happening. And maybe by the actions that we take we might even compromise the existing things, the good things that are happening. So I just want to bring that, sir, to the attention of the member of St. Michael South East.

The other point I want to say is this, sir. You know, we use technology in today's world in a big way, in a very big way. And one of the things, sir, I know that, you know, in Google, you have this thing, the Google circles, where you have friends and what you do, basically, you organise your relationships in a way that you can at least get action being taken. And one of the things I think that we need to do, sir, in terms of our society today, is to utilise the strengths that we have in our society, sir, to help to assist the elderly. Because one of the things, sir, I believe, that is very important that we recognise is that because of the fact that resources are scarce - and let us admit that resources are scarce. This is not something that we are trying to hide. It is a known fact that the resources that are available to the government of Barbados today, sir, is much less than what was available in the past. It is much less because we are in these times and what we need to do is to mobilise the resources that are available in our society to get action.

Because again, sir, I want to say that the cooperative movement has always shown to society that where other methods fail, the cooperative approach there can help to at least solve some of the difficult problems that we are facing. And in that regard, I want to say this. I see a situation in our society where you have church groups, you have community groups who have actually mobilised support in order to solve some of the difficulties that are facing older people in our society, and especially, sir, in relation to our church groups. I see on a constant basis, sir, that there are church groups who go out there on regular feeding programmes and the resources there are mobilised through fundraising by various means. So we recognise, sir, that we have a society in which dependence on government is not the only thing. We have a society in

which, sir, they are also prepared to look at creative means in terms of trying to solve some of the difficult problems that they are facing.

And, you know, one of the things that in recommendations in 451, they talk about the right to work - the right to work. In that, for instance, we have a situation in which we are trying to encourage older people to work. And it is not because of the fact that we are trying to take advantage of older people. But the fact of the matter is that very often we want to live - I suppose all of us want to live a life in which we feel useful, in which we feel that we are not just there as a burden to our families. Because many older people, sir, one of the main things that sort of discourage older people is the fact that they feel as if they are burdened. You go and visit them. I do not know if the members in the opposition visit these older people and talk to them. But when you say that, you know, I do not want to be a burden on my son or daughter or my grandson or granddaughter, that is what they say. That is what they say. And this particular policy paper, this particular approach suggests that what we are going to try to do is to try to ensure that people live useful lives. Useful lives. And we do not use age as a means of determining whether or not a person can contribute or not contribute to our society.

Because today we like to go with the numbers, but sometimes we do not recognise that there are people who even as they approach greater years, they can also make contributions in other areas and we need to utilise that talent. Because even today we recognise that because of the fact our society is going through the problems that it does, we need every single talent on board and we should not refuse, sir, to utilise that talent, sir, once it is available. Because, you know, I firmly believe, sir, that we should not seek to use the wisdom of some of the people, but we should seek to use the wisdom of all the people, sir. Not just some.

Because, you know, sir, in a bourgeois environment, that I know the opposition, they seem to revel in that particular environment. Because in that kind of environment, it seems as if only some are allowed to participate or some are thought to be sensible. Only some can lead. Because, you know, when I listen very often to the opposition, they seem to suggest that they alone possess the solutions to everything in Barbados. They alone. They alone, I tell you, to lead. That is what is coming out each time when you listen to them. They alone. And we have to be careful, sir, that in a society in which we are trying to bring all together, all involved, that we utilise all the policies that are available to us. That is what we need to do. And again, many look at the recommendations, sir. We cannot but support the recommendations totally and recognise that action is actually happening. Action is ongoing. We are actually doing things, sir, to try to address that particular problem.

One of the other things, too, sir, I want to say is that we are also looking to encourage and facilitate education and retraining of older persons who wish to upgrade their knowledge and skills, because we recognise again age is just a number. I understand the member for St. Thomas does not understand these things. So that is why you get these trivial things coming from her because she does not appreciate these things and that bourgeois environment that she is in, she cannot help it. Cannot help it, sir. So that is why we have those kind of silly things happening across the floor. But sir, I keep on going. I keep on going. Keep on going.

So we have therefore, sir, to understand that in an attempt to help our people, sir, we have to be careful how we picture our people. And we have to educate the people. Because one of the things we need to recognise again, too, in an environment in which we have limited resources - limited resources - what we need to do is to see if we can mobilise all. And one of the things, sir, I firmly believe that we need to do is to work, sir, with our families in terms of developing, sir, a greater understanding of the problems of each other. Because generally, when we look, sir, at what is happening in our society and the treatment of older people, it is because of the fact, sir, many of the families, sir, have fears. Many of the families, sir, sometimes, sir, do not understand what is happening. And sometimes it also speaks to, sir, our family relationships, our family structures, because that is what is going on. And I think that one of the things that we need to do at the state, both opposition and government, sir, is to help families here to cope, help them to bring new thoughts and new directions. New directions, sir. That is what we need to do. And in that regard, when we go out there, we should be helping and even in terms of helping families to cope, sir, with the situations that they face.

Because I can think of at least a number of families that I visit with the Francis of Mercy Central, in which in some cases you have young people having to care for the aged. In some cases these people are suffering from strokes. But the thing is, sir, that they are coping. They are coping. And one of the things I firmly believe too, you know, we have a tendency of saying the state can solve a lot of the problems because we seem to think that building more institutions for the aged sometimes can help solve the problems or put them in home. But you know what I recognise, sir? And a lot of people that they talk to up there very often will tell you this, that sometimes you actually kill the spirit of older people when you take them and put them in those homes.

You know what? Sometimes when you look at it, we talk about how older people interact in our society. I want us to imagine this. You know, years ago, if you go to a picnic in Barbados, you will see a large set of older people who would be there, but they are mixed up. They are part

of what is happening in our society. In a picnic, you had the grandparents who were there, you had the parents, you had the children. So it was that general mix - everybody in society mixed up and everything else. Today, you know what we seem to be? We are getting to a stage in our society where we seem to want to segment, where we do not seem to understand that generational mix is important, where we need to ensure that we build institutions and activities that encourage that generational mix. That is what I am talking about, sir, about utilising the wisdom of the people. Because very often, unless those older people are available to those young people to guide them and direct them - because do not dismiss the experience. Do not dismiss the experience.

That is why the member for St. Lucy spoke about the fact, you know, when you went on the block in past days, you had both the young fellas and the old fellas there. And that time, when you went as a young person on the block and you went to do foolishness, those older fellas would guide you. They would guide you in terms of leading you right or leading you wrong. They will tell you - in other words, they played a role. But today, what we are seeing is the kind of segmentation of society that seems to make people feel that they cannot contribute. And very often, the people who feel most of it are the old people. Those are the people who feel most of it. And I think we need to find a way to involve those older people, sir, in our society, and action is happening. So I want to make the point, sir, that there are actually creative things in this paper that seek to tackle these issues.

One of the things, sir, that we need to recognise is the question - and I want to speak to this, and I know that it was spoken to before - the question of the chronic diseases that arise, especially in older people. And I think, sir, that we need to recognise, of course, that our eating habits when we are young very often determines the type of diseases that we get when we are old. And to that extent, again, we can, sir, play a role in trying to minimise, sir, the type of diseases that affect our older folk, our senior folk. And in that regard, sir, I am also encouraging the minister to also support the Minister of Agriculture in terms of trying to ensure that we continue to produce the types of foods as a nation that will ensure that we have a healthy population - not only youngsters, but also an older population at the same time that is healthy. Because we seem to think sometimes too that we cannot have a population that is old, but at the same time maintaining at least a good state of health.

And that is one of the things, sir, that we should aim to arrive at, sir, even in terms of trying to make sure that they eat properly and that they afford the types of food, sir, that help them to eat properly. And even in that regard, you know, there were some things, there were some foods that older people would utilize. That even as younger people,

sir, that we were given the benefits of utilizing. But you know, even today, a lot of the art of preparing certain foods, a lot of that is being lost. A lot of that is being lost, sir. And largely again, because of the fact that we are not facilitating that kind of interaction between our younger people and our older people. You know, we need to recognize that. That is important, and that is why sometimes when I see young people wanting to visit, for instance, people's homes to visit them and talk to them, and when you sit down and listen to how the young people interact with those older people, and two things it does, sir. One of the things is that the young people tend to gain knowledge. They tend to gain knowledge. And the other thing, sir, that they tend to do, sir, is this in terms of the older people, older person, it makes that older person at the same time, sir, feel useful. They feel useful in terms of at least they are serving a purpose. And again, I want to emphasize that we need to develop a strategy that encourages that interaction of older people in the community with young people so that whatever talents that they have that we are able to make use of it, because you know they always say that the easiest way, sir, to get stops on for working, sir, is not to use it. Is not to use it. And very often, sir, that is what is happening, sir, to our older people as we see in our society today.

The other thing too, sir, I want to say - we talk about the whole question of, again, action not being taken. I know for instance even in relation to credit unions, one of the things in 451, sir, of the recommendation they speak to it, they talk about encouraging banks,

credit unions and other financial institutions to create mechanisms to facilitate older persons and remove age discriminatory practices. Sir, it is, and to that answer, it is ongoing. In other words, this is not something that we are hoping or we would have hoped that until we pass this paper for it to continue, it is ongoing. So I think, sir, it is a bit silly, a bit silly to suggest that everything, all of these recommendations was sitting down here waiting until we, going to Parliament to pass this paper so that the government is not doing things in the meantime to try to ensure that we address the critical problems of the aged. We want to say that, and I repeat, it is a bit silly. It is a bit silly, sir, to suggest that government was inside here waiting until we passed, approved this document, sir, in order for any action to be happening out there in our society. The government has, sir, been actively working on the strategies inside of this white paper, pursuing them actively in order to get things done.

You know, sir, that is one of the things. I want to say, sir, that even in respect of the question of the prices that we have, we know that older people live in the community too, sir, and they will be impacted, sir, by what is happening in our economy. Again, the government has not been sitting down there, not taking into consideration,

sir, what is going on. And not only that, recognizing to the youths, it would have been, it would be using even now the resources of the welfare department, the same UDC, the same Rural Development Commission, to do these things. This has been ongoing. I want to say to Barbadians, do not be distracted. Do not be distracted by persons who might want to prove a cheap political point. Because when I say that, what I mean is that when you go to state that these things are not happening, that is what I mean. That is what I mean when you are trying to score a cheap political point, because basically they are trying to mislead the public that the things that the government are doing are not happening.

I know that there are welfare payments going to older people living in houses who might be challenged. And they are going, and in addition to that, you have our social welfare agencies trying to also come up with creative ways of trying to help the aged. And I can see the member for the City of Bridgetown - he can agree with me because he can actually see even in his own constituency an example of the government at work helping the aged in the community. So do not give the impression to the public of Barbados that the government of Barbados is not doing anything when they are actually doing something, in order to score cheap political points. That is the point I am trying to make.

The other thing that we are trying to look at is the question of trying to educate our people. For instance, even in credit unions, and again even in banks, we have always talked about the question of these reverse mortgages that we have been trying to push. And the government is prepared to facilitate that in as many ways as possible. Again, action happening. It is not inaction. It is action happening. And do not even talk about the question of pensions. I mean, this government actually took the decision - correct - to actually increase pensions, when the previous government had failed miserably in the past to at least try. We are actually even now, even now, this government is actively trying to search out ways in which we can better assist the aged in the community. So then let me tell you, what inaction are we referring to? What is the inaction?

You know, sir, I also want to mention something, and there is an experience I can tell you. I went, I think about three weeks ago, to a meeting at the Grazettes Community Centre, the Grazettes Community Centre just up there, in which when I went there, what they do is they gather around the older people in the community, just in terms of talking about disaster preparedness and what you should do during a hurricane. And it is a government initiative again - government initiative. What they are trying to do, first of all, is to create a database - create a database of, first of all, who the older people are. You are encouraging them at the same time to learn that in the event of a catastrophe like a hurricane or so, where are you

located? What are the things that you could be doing in order to help yourself? Because sometimes again we tend to treat older people as geriatrics. Again, I want to say that older people have pride, because sometimes when we are having this discussion we seem to have it in an environment in which we seem to think that these people have no pride, they have no concept of what they were like or what they were not like.

As a matter of fact, you know, when you go to the hospital - the hospital is a very interesting place - when you go to visit older people when they are sick, they might be sick, but they have a certain sense of pride. And you can see it. And we have to be very careful that when we watch situations, that we do not misinterpret situations. And sometimes what we come up with as a solution very often is not the solution. Respect people's feelings all the way. That is the point I am trying to make. Respect people.

I am going back to the point about disaster preparedness. What they are trying to do, sir, is to - how do I - [Inaudible.] What they are trying to do, sir, is to try to encourage older people that during the event of a disaster, what are the things that they can do for themselves? Because, you know, very often when a disaster strikes, what we do not understand in our own society is that the very people who can help you are the people closest to you. Because it might take long for the state agencies to get into action. So in any emergency, the persons who are most helpful to you are the people who are the closest to you. So what are they trying to do? They are trying, sir, through a programme to enlist the support of the community in terms of helping the community understand the things that they need to do. And you know, very often we do not understand that a lot of those older people, ageing people in the community, went through hurricanes already. They went through disasters. They know the things that they need to do. So what they are doing is utilising those very strengths that exist in the community in order, at the same time, to help to ensure that the community can survive the disaster or emergency as it is.

And, you know, sir, I will conclude by again saying this. Let us understand that the challenge of trying to create the kind of environment in which all of us can live a life, a full life, in which whatever age that we get to, that we would have lived a life in which we can feel comfortable, is not something that is easy, but is a challenge that society has to accept. And I think, sir, that when I look at this paper, National Policy and Action Plan for Barbados, this Democratic Labour Party has made a step in terms of understanding, or trying to understand, sir, what are the challenges facing the aged. And also, too, what are some of the solutions? Because we cannot say this is comprehensive. It is an ongoing process. And not only that, too, sir, at least it has also started certain steps to try to ensure that the situations that the aged face in our society -

somehow that we provide them a cushion within the limits of the resources that we have available to us, sir. And with that, sir, I thank you very much. And I support the paper, sir. Thank you very much.

SUSPENSION

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, all right, Honourable member.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for half an hour until a quarter to six this evening. Thank you.

The question that the House be suspended until 5.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue.

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT: Yes, Honourable. Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my brief wrap-up I would like to thank all Honourable members from either side of the aisle for their contributions. By and large, Mr. Speaker, it has been a debate free from contention and any acrimony as a debate like this should engender. But I want also to say that there were several worthwhile and plausible contributions from both sides, and I want to thank especially the Honourable Member for the City who led off for the opposition in this debate.

The elderly are special people, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that they are our nation builders, people I like to refer to as the salt of the earth kind of citizens, in most cases unsung heroes and unsung heroines, and therefore we should pay tribute to them whenever we get the opportunity.

The Honourable Member for St. James North queried whether or not the Commission of Elder Affairs would be a new agency, but I just want to reassure him that the agency now titled the National Assistance Board will actually be renamed. Its nomenclature will be changed to the Commission of Elder Affairs, so there will be no new agency, just a renaming of the existing National Assistance Board to the Commission of Elder Affairs.

The Honourable Member for St. James Central also placed a number of worthwhile suggestions on the table which I will take to heart. The legal aid for vulnerable groups, including the elderly - that is of course a plausible suggestion which I will have some discussions internally in the ministry and see of course how we can weave that into the fabric of the policy. Social inclusion was another one that he also proffered regarding the civic centres and the

centralised parochial services. And I do agree with him that we can use not only the civic centres but the community centres and resource centres that are placed throughout the length and breadth of Barbados to provide this kind of centralised parochial service that he asked for.

And also the question of the census - the absence of a census from which we can extract evidence-based information, empirical evidence to inform our policies. That is of course absent at this time, but we have within the Ministry of Social Care the CALP, which is the Country Assessment of Living Conditions, which we did in January 2010. We extract the empirical information from that census and use that for the time being until the other census which we are waiting for comes to hand.

The Member for St. Michael South East queried what is happening with the George Dennis Centre, and that centre is in the Pine. It was used for the accommodation of the homeless men for a number of months. Since then we have refurbished the Clyde Gollop Centre in Hindsbury Road and that centre is now fully refurbished, fully reconditioned, and we have moved those men from that centre at George Dennis back to Hindsbury Road where they are fully accommodated. We have plans of course of refurbishing the George Dennis Centre to accommodate either for day care or for a long-stay arrangement for our elderly. So that is very much a working process and I will be able to speak more fully to that arrangement for the George Dennis Centre in a couple of weeks.

Now, over the last weekend you would have heard some concerns raised by the committee who has the responsibility for the planning of some activities for the elderly, and the concern was that no progress was made with regards the furtherance of the Elder Abuse Protocol, which is a separate protocol from the national policy. It was fashioned by that particular committee. And mention was also made of the draft report on housing of the elderly - these were two reports, one protocol and one report, that were actually given to me last year around the same time on Elder Abuse Awareness Day. These two documents were presented to me at Jubilee Gardens last year.

The Elder Abuse Protocol was designed really to create a mechanism to strengthen the protection of the vulnerable older adult, to also engender some interagency collaboration and provide a framework for empirical best practices. The document aimed to provide professionals with the mechanisms to meet the challenges of preventing, reporting, and managing elder abuse in the absence of a mandated protection agency and legislative statutes. That protocol is still very much in our ministry.

The draft report on housing was also presented to us, and this takes into consideration the fact that the National Assistance Board between 1980 and 2002 had a housing

portfolio that addressed principally the needs of the elderly with house building, repairs and relocation of houses, and recognises that there is no agency now dedicated wholly and solely to addressing housing needs specifically for the elderly. In that particular paper that was presented, we also recognised the Government's commitments to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Older Persons and acknowledged that the housing stock of most elderly persons requires ongoing maintenance.

In addition to that, the current efforts recommend that there be ongoing collaboration and greater synergies among the agencies such as the National Assistance Board, the NDU - which is the National Disabilities Unit - the National Housing Corporation, the UDC, and the RDC. The draft report also recommends the development of a protocol to address the key housing challenges of the home care recipients, the elderly who live alone, the disabled elderly, and those who also earn an income through old age pension.

So both of these documents that were presented last year - the Elder Abuse Protocol and the draft report on the housing of the elderly - as Minister, I very much appreciate the formulation of these two documents, but will hasten to say that the subject matter raised in the two documents was comprehensively dealt with in the body of the National Policy on Ageing, and where there is any inadequacy in addressing some of the fundamentals or the concerns identified by these two documents, the policy is, I believe, flexible enough and supple enough to broaden its scope and speak and act frontally to those issues, if there are issues to be raised in those two regards. So I want to assure all those persons who have concerns that we will spare no effort to fully ensure our elderly are adequately insulated from the wilds of elder abuse and also the provision of adequate housing for them when the time comes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am really excited and so is my ministry about the implementation of the recommendations in the policy. As I said at the beginning of this particular debate, I believe it is a watershed period in the history of our social planning. And because of the wide-ranging nature of the recommendations in this particular matrix, we have prioritised the implementation process into four separate categories. We have the immediate, the short term, medium term, and long term. Immediate refers to a start date within the next six months. Short term refers to the period over six months and up to two years. Medium term covers a period longer than two years and up to five years. And long term refers to a period longer than five years.

Now we have deliberately selected to go for the immediate, and what we will do in the immediate process - that is within the next six months - we will be implementing for our elders over the next six to eight months: support for the continued involvement of older

persons in economic activities; to encourage and facilitate education and retraining for older persons who wish to upgrade their knowledge and their skills; to encourage the insurance sector using some moral suasion to provide terms and conditions that do not discriminate against the elderly and consider allowing groups in individual life and health insurance premiums deductions for tax purposes. And this was touched on also by the Honourable Member for St. James Central.

In the next six months, we will also encourage employers and employee organisations with the assistance of the trade unions to provide on-the-job preparation prior to retirement for those who reach retirement age. We will also work with the Ministry of Health to emphasise prevention and control of all acute and chronic diseases and improve the reception of elderly persons in the public health care institutions, taking into consideration the principles of ageing set out by the United Nations. We also endeavour in the next six months to encourage proper and balanced nutrition for older persons with emphasis on local produce, and also include Alzheimer's disease on the list of CNCDS to heighten the level of attention to that particular disease, Mr. Speaker.

We will also increase the use of fire alarm systems, fire blankets, and extinguishers for individuals, groups, and communities. And as I said earlier in the debate, some of our agencies - including the constituency councils and also the National Assistance Board - are already embarking on providing some of these fire alarm systems and fire blankets and extinguishers to some of our elderly throughout the constituencies and also the communities.

On the question raised by the Honourable Member for St. George North regarding the legislation to give the policy its legal legs - the legal framework has already been established through the many international and regional declarations and conventions that we are compelled to conform to. So these particular international and regional declarations really give the legal legs to most of what we are endeavouring to do in the policy itself.

So as I said earlier in the debate, Mr. Speaker, a country that provides for its children and for its adults is a well-ordered society, I believe. And I am pleased to say that Barbados certainly fits that bill. As Minister, I am mindful that my ministry offers services that touch really the lives of all the demographic groupings in Barbados - the child, the disabled, the indigent and the poor, the unemployed, the family, and certainly the elderly. This time we are focusing on the elderly. And I intend, Mr. Speaker, with the assistance of the officers in my ministry and all of the agencies and divisions under my ministry's purview, to relentlessly pursue the goals, aspirations and recommendations of the National Policy - ever mindful, Mr. Speaker, that our senior citizens and nation builders

must at all times feel that they are worthy of consideration and figure prominently in the priorities of this Government. They can be assured, Mr. Speaker, that they have a reliable friend in this present administration. And with those words, Mr. Speaker, I therefore beg to move that this resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. CLERK: In the name of the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands, to move the passing of a resolution to approve under Section five of the Crown Lands Vesting and Disposal Act, Chapter 225, the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of the parcel of land, the property of the Crown, situate at Dalkey in the parish of St. Michael on this island for the public purpose of housing development.

RESOLUTION - CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225

VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF LAND AT DALKEY, ST. MICHAEL

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the resolution before this House seeks the permission to vest 12 107.6 square metres of Crown land at Dalkey, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation for housing development. This was considered at the statement of the Cabinet on January 13, 2011, sir, and it was agreed that the land at Backers Road, St. Michael, would have been acquired.

The land that we are vesting today, sir, are two parcels of land - one belonging to Mr. John Inks and the other belonging to Sagikah Life Inc. It was agreed, sir, that the land was to be acquired and that area will be used for a public purpose and that 80 units will be built. A survey plan was carried out, sir, by Mr. Michael Banfield and has been recorded by the Lands and Surveys Department as Plan 805/2011. It shows that the combined land to be vested is 12 107.6 square metres.

The resolution for vesting the 12 107.6 square metres of Crown land at Dalkey, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation for housing development has been certified by the Attorney General and is now before the House. With these remarks, sir, I beg that this resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, sir, with that we have come to the end of Government business for the day and I beg to move that this House be adjourned until 10 o'clock in the morning on Tuesday, June the 25th.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, June 25, 2013 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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RESOLUTION - CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND
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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 correcting and preparing this report. Members are named as in the 2013–2018 Parliament.

Q1. Front matter. The source does not record the PRESENT list or the officiant at Prayers. The Members listed are those identified from the record; the time of meeting, 10.00 a.m., is as stated in the source. Please supply from the Votes and Proceedings.

Q2. Throughout. The bracketed time-checks in the source are out of sequence (for example '[01.00 a.m.]' and '[2.30 a.m.]' during the day's sitting) and have been omitted.

Q3. Suspension of Standing Orders. The source reads 'Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44'; the recording has '42-5'. Printed as Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44, the list moved at other sittings. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 3, Mr. G. A. Clarke and Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe. The time warnings 'The Honourable Member has five minutes to conclude' and 'Honourable Member, you have five minutes left' appear in the source as unattributed lines inside the two speeches; they are printed under the Chair. Mr. G. A. Clarke addresses Mr. Speaker throughout, and the call of Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe is headed 'MS. DEPUTY SPEAKER', whom he addresses as Madam Deputy Speaker; the change of Chair is not recorded.

Q5. Order No. 3, after Mr. K. D. Symmonds. Mr. SPEAKER called 'the Honourable Member for Christ Church West' (twice in the recording), and Hon. D. St.E. Kellman later refers to 'the contribution from the honourable member for Christ Church West', whose Member was Dr. M. M. Agard. The source and the caption label head the speech Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, Member for St. Philip West. As the evidence conflicts, the speech is printed under AN HON. MEMBER. Please identify the Member.

Q6. Order No. 3, Miss C. Y. Forde. No call is recorded before this speech; the source heads the words 'I am pleased' Mr. SPEAKER between the two speeches. They are printed as the close of the preceding speech. Later in the speech the Speaker's remark about the time remaining is only partly recorded and is omitted.

Q7. Order No. 3, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman. The opening words 'Mr. Speaker, I rise to' are headed 'MR.

PETER R. PHILLIPS, J.P., M.P.' in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013-2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for St. Lucy and the speech continues under Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, so the words are joined to his speech.

Q8. Order No. 3, Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw. The call reads 'Member for St. Michael South' in the source; the recording continues 'East', and the Member speaks of her constituency of St. Michael South East. Corrected.

Q9. Order No. 3, point of order during the speech of Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw. The Member for St. Lucy rose on a point of order, but his words are not recorded; only Mr. SPEAKER's call and ruling ('She said small. She did not say short') appear. Please check against the recording.

Q10. Order No. 3, reply of Hon. S. D. Blackett. Part 3 of the source begins with Mr. SPEAKER's 'Continue' and the Minister's reply. The resumption after the suspension to 5.45 p.m., and any speeches before the reply, are not recorded. Part of the debate may be missing. Please check against the recording.

Q11. Resolution, Dalkey, St. Michael. The Clerk's reading gives no Order number, and names the Minister of Housing and Lands. The Order number is not printed; please supply from the Order Paper.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, June 18, 2013, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. No Minutes were available and the motion to defer them, moved by the Leader of the House, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, was agreed to. Mr. SPEAKER welcomed pupils of St. Luke's Brighton Primary School, and Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 were suspended for the sitting.

Under Order No. 3 the House resumed the debate on the resolution, in the name of the Minister of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Community Development, that Parliament take note of and approve the White Paper on Ageing. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, as Minister of Health, spoke on the care of the elderly in the geriatric institutions, the growth of non-communicable diseases, access by health institutions to the information held at the polyclinics, the cardiac suite and eye surgery at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and the licensing of private elderly care institutions. Mr. G. A. Clarke called for an end to duplication in the health services and for stronger families

so that the state did not have to provide everything. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe set the policy within the Government's four pillars of sustainable development and spoke on the stages of human development and the dignity of older persons. Mr. E. G. Hinkson recalled that the green paper had been approved in 2004, said 15 per cent of persons over 65 had some form of physical disability, and called for one hot meal a day for elderly persons living alone, a national building code, a minimum contributory pension at least at the poverty level and two tax allowances proposed in the Barbados Labour Party's manifesto. Before the luncheon suspension Mr. SPEAKER welcomed Mr. Dominique Wilkins, the former NBA All-Star.

In the afternoon Mr. K. D. Symmonds spoke on social exclusion, legal services for the elderly, the absence of census data, reverse mortgages and the funding of public pensions. A Member called as the Member for Christ Church West traced how societies had regarded the elderly from early civilisations to the present. Miss C. Y. Forde spoke of the centenarians of St. Thomas, the Gordon Cummins District Hospital and private care costing as much as \$2 500 a month. Hon. D. St.E. Kellman said older persons should be seen as experienced rather than old. Miss S. J. O. Bradshaw noted that the document was dated January 31, 2012, some 17 months before the debate, and

urged legislation on elder abuse and reverse mortgages; Mr. SPEAKER ruled on a point of order raised by the Member for St. Lucy. Mr. J. D. Paul spoke on African traditions of respect for elders, the cooperative movement and the right of older persons to work. The sitting was suspended until 5.45 p.m.

Replying, Hon. S. D. Blackett said the National Assistance Board would be renamed the Commission of Elder Affairs rather than a new agency being created, answered queries on the George Dennis Centre, the Elder Abuse Protocol and the draft report on housing for the elderly, and set out the measures to be implemented within six months. The resolution was passed.

Hon. D. St.E. Kellman then moved a resolution under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, to vest 12 107.6 square metres of Crown land at Dalkey, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation for housing development. He said Cabinet had considered the matter on January 13, 2011, that the land comprised two parcels on which 80 units would be built, and that the survey plan had been recorded as Plan 805/2011. The resolution was passed. The House adjourned until Tuesday, June 25, 2013 at 10.00 a.m.