
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2013 – 2018

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2015.

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, Q.C. (Speaker)

Her Honour Mrs. M-J. M. THOMPSON (Deputy Speaker)

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART, Q.C. (Prime Minister, Minister of National Security, the Public Service and Urban Development)

Hon. R. L. SEALY (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER (Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Mr. J. D. PAUL (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE (Minister of Health) (Leader of the House)

Hon. R. D. JONES (Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE (Minister of Environment and Drainage)

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY (Minister of Transport and Works)

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE, Q.C. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS (Minister of Industry, International Business, Commerce and Small Business Development)

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Mr. SPEAKER: Good morning, Honourable Members. This House is now in session. Members, I have with me the minutes of our meeting held on Tuesday, January 13, 2015.

MINUTES

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the minutes referred to be taken as read.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

PAPERS

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded on behalf of the Minister of Finance to lay the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption (The Maria Holder Memorial Trust) Order 2014. I am also commanded to lay the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption (Barbados National Oil Fuel Services Limited) Order 2014, and I am further commanded to lay the Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption (Costless Barbados Incorporated) Order 2014.

Hon. D. O'N. INNIS: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Fair Trading Commission Annual Report of 2014.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the National Registration Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

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

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Statistics Amendment Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move also that the Constitution Amendment Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Representation of the People Amendment Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2015 be read a first time.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

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.

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. CLERK: Government Business is the order of the day. Order Number 15, sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Lands and Rural Development, to move the passing of a Resolution to approve, in accordance with Section 5 of the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Chapter 225, the vesting in the National Housing Corporation of a parcel of land, the property of the Crown, situate at Rosemont, Deacons,

Blackrock, St. Michael, for the public purpose of housing development.

ORDER NO. 15 – RESOLUTION – CROWN LANDS
(VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 –
VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING
CORPORATION OF LAND AT ROSEMONT,
DEACONS, BLACKROCK, ST. MICHAEL

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I move that this resolution concerning the vesting of 1.87 hectares of crown land at Rosemont and Deacons Road, Blackrock, St. Michael in the National Housing Corporation for housing development.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution before the House seeks permission to vest this area of land which formerly formed part of a parcel that was 7.881 hectares which runs next to the Deakins area. And this particular area has 69 units. As we seek to push forward our 20-year housing programme as it relates to the divestment of these units to the tenants.

As you are aware, Mr. Speaker, that this Government made a commitment that we will be divesting these units to the tenants and we will not only divest them, but we will ensure that we put them in proper state - that is to upgrade the buildings, protect firewalls, do electrical work, do the surveying and also the legal work. And also we were asked, based on an amendment we made in here, to ensure that those additions that were attached to the property, that we hired engineers to ensure that the additions that were made were sound and fit for human habitation.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that as we go back as far as biblical times, it was always felt that shelter was one of the main factors in focusing when one seeks to develop human life. And this Government, cognizant of that, and previous governments have always sought to ensure that the people - especially the masses of people in Barbados who could not help themselves - that we find solutions that would have been fair and reasonable. And we recognised that these tenants have not been paying rent for over 20 years or more. We felt that they had made a significant contribution to these properties that they were living in. And also we felt that we had a social commitment to ensure that these persons have ownership.

When this ownership is passed, Mr. Speaker, it is no doubt that the empowerment given to these persons will be so great that one would not be able to challenge the reason why any government would think of passing this to the masses who now occupy the same. It is not only passing real property to the tenants, but the ability for the tenants then to move on and use it as collateral to help their

children. And instead of passing the possibility of one solution, there is a possibility that this one solution can also create other solutions because it can be used by the new owners as collateral to enhance their families.

The piece of land that we speak about is dated as far back as October 7, 1892, when it was bought from a James Goldburn Williams by the Government of Barbados. And Mr. Speaker, we seek to ensure that those persons who would have contributed to the development of Barbados have a right to have a piece of the rock.

Mr. Speaker, as we move forward with our housing programme, we have to understand the importance because we are not speaking about 69 units only. This only forms part of the total programme that we are seeking to divest, which can total, Mr. Speaker, over 2 629 units. In other words, once this policy is put in place, with the stroke of the pen, this will be one of the largest housing applications that this Government or any other government would have been able to do at any one time. So it is very important for us to move forward this programme.

And we have recognised that instead of seeing this project as a revenue expenditure project, we will seek to make it a capital expenditure project. In other words, there will be no piecemeal approach, but we will take it on as a total project to ensure that we empower over 2 629 persons directly. And one can easily, when considering the location of this, see that this can easily come to about over 20 000 persons or more that will be affected by this policy. So it is important for us to seek the necessary financing to ensure that we capitalise it and seek to ensure that we deliver these as promised to these persons.

It is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that it has taken some time. But one must appreciate that in dealing with these matters, you are not buying a car - you are dealing with real property. You also have to ensure that you comply with the necessary regulations put down by the government agencies, whether it be town planning, EPD, or the Ministry of Environment, of which EPD is part thereof. And we have to ensure that what we are delivering is a deliverable that the persons can benefit from.

We could have been a reckless government by just saying yes, we are going to give the units. We could have given the units because the persons receiving the units would not have been paying a price for them. And we could have said to them, look, take the unit and do the repairs yourself. But we recognised that there were some units that required firewalls, that electricals had to be upgraded, that the sewerage had to be done, and that environmental considerations had to be taken into account and things like that.

So I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that one has to recognise that this Government, being a caring government, did not just pass anything to the tenants, but we are ensuring that it would not cost them in any substantial or significant way. So, Mr. Speaker, one must appreciate, sir, that this Government has recognised its social responsibility to the public of Barbados - one, by first offering these units; and two, by ensuring that they have a good deliverable. So we will seek to ensure that what has to be done will be done. And we have entered into discussions on the possibilities of the fastest way we can do it. We will look at what financing we have and how we can make the necessary shift to ensure that this project is delivered. Because as you would appreciate, sir, 2 629 units in total is not a small project. Yes, the cost is great, but the deliverables will also be great. And we will ensure that we make these deliverables.

Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about something that is piecemeal. We are talking of something that runs right across Barbados. And there are many locations and the numbers, especially in some areas, are very high. For example, Mr. Speaker, we speak about 30 units in Baigatel, 85 in Belleville, 18 in Belplain, 106 in Bonnets, six in Colleton, St. John, 320 in Deakins, 351 in Eden Lodge, seven in Farm Gardens, 154 in Ferniehurst, 148 in Gore Hill, three in Genswick, 234 in Grazettes, 323 in Haynesville, 64 in the Ivy, 68 in Kensington Lords, 16 at Lammens, 59 in Manors, 818 in Pinelands, seven at Pleasant Hall, 34 at Pondsides, six - as we are dealing today - at Rosemont, 32 at Sueds Court, 240 at Silver Hill, 36 at St. Stephen's, 15 at Waverley Court, 459 in Ridley, 120 in Wharton. And the total transfer to these will be over 3 885, which means that some would have been dealt with previously. And that is why we only have 2 629 now to deal with, which is a substantial amount. And it shows that this cannot be treated as a piecemeal thing.

And the suggestion that I have proffered, I think, is the most feasible one - that we recognise the magnitude of the project and that we capitalise it and ensure that we are attainable. Because, as I said, it is not only the persons that we are passing these units to, but the indirect effect it can have is the power that we are giving people. Imagine these persons were tenants just paying small rents, wake up one morning and recognise that they are now owners. But when they get ownership, they are getting ownership without having liability, which allows them the opportunity to take their conveyances to the bank and empower their other families. Nowhere in the world would you have seen a government empowering people like this has been done by the Democratic Labour Party.

We are aware that others have tried, but in trying to do it, they did not see the social ramifications as we did. Because what they did, they committed other persons to a cost. But the Democratic Labour Party is doing it without a

cost to these persons. And I am saying that those persons who continue to raise questions about when it will be done - because I have always heard it from the Hon. Member for St. Michael South, whose party put a charge on these people and were charging them for the units. And I did not hear them pressing themselves to give back the people their money or anything. But now that we are giving them free and upgrading them, you hear all sorts of noise. And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados are not ungrateful. And they would recognise that the Democratic Labour Party continues to empower the masses of people in Barbados - a party that has given free secondary education, school meals, free textbooks and many other things.

But one of the interesting things - and I have always said, and I always make the comment - that Mr. Barrow, when he brought free school meals, he ensured that people paid 10 cents for it. Because he always wanted people to have a contribution to what they have received. And there are people who speak to these issues and they tell you about the policies of the Democratic Labour Party, and they have always felt that you must make a contribution to your meal and you can make a contribution to anything. These persons would have made a contribution because they would have paid rent previously and the rent that they have paid has been taken into account. So we are not giving them totally free. We have acknowledged that they have made a contribution.

So when people hear us asking people to make contributions, we are acknowledging that Barbadians are not dependent anymore, but we have empowered them to be independent. And that is why we took the country to independence, because we understood the importance of independence - not only to country, but to man. But how can you walk around and say you are independent and then want to depend on someone for everything? So what is happening as we move towards our 50th year of independence - we are now demonstrating to the world that our people are truly independent because we are now asking them to demonstrate and to show the world that they are truly independent by making a contribution to their lives. How can you fault one for proving to the world that they are truly independent in the 50th year, by making a contribution not only to education, to free textbooks, to free secondary education, but also to housing? This is what you call consistency of policy. Consistency of policy.

And those people who do not understand and believe that they must continue to treat Barbadians like how other people treat blackbirds - where they take an appointed time to throw a scratch grain at them - we are saying those days are over. That Barbadians are equal to politicians and that the same contributions that politicians can make, the masses of people in Barbados have moved from the field to the schools, to the jobs, and they have a right to make a contribution.

I have made the point that it is unfair for persons who have received free secondary education at no cost these days and have empowered themselves not to want to help to educate their own children, especially at a time when the country needs their help. How can you ask your sick mother to continue to support you when you are working? And that is exactly where we are today. Because the country is like our mother. And if the country has a problem and we are now empowered, it is for us to make a contribution to our children and not for the country to continue to make the full contribution.

And you know what is interesting when one listens to them - one gets the impression in Barbados today that the Government is not paying 80 per cent of these fees. One gets the impression that the Government is asking everybody to deal with the full cost. You know, there are some people who do not understand social policy and do not recognise that housing and the whole social policy is a package. So I am saying, Mr. Speaker, what we are dealing with here today is only part of the total social policy of the Democratic Labour Party. And housing, as we are dealing with today, is only a part thereof. And that is why it is important for us to ensure that we continue to point out these things and to show the connection between education, housing and even the possibility of how one can clothe oneself.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we go through this debate today, I want to make the point that we will continue to ensure that we have the deliverables. The cost is great, but we understand the empowerment of the policy.

Mr. Speaker, you would have heard in the housing debate how we are not building any more houses and nothing is going on in housing. That is not true. One gets the impression that there are some people who would like to see the present Minister of Housing stop all the projects that were there when he came to the ministry and to start up new projects and leave projects as works in progress. That is not how a government that is together operates. If you are switched from one ministry to another ministry, you do not stop what you have found in the ministry and go to set your own policy. The policy is set by Cabinet. So it is a continuum. So what you do, you continue the projects that you have found and at the same time you look to see how you could tweak them and how you can ensure, if possible, they can be done more efficiently. But you just do not stop projects just to say you are doing new projects.

And that is why when I came to the Ministry of Housing, I found a lot of work in progress. I found stock and it was very important to ensure that I completed the work in progress and also that I got rid of the stock. I am happy to report, sir, that not only have I tried to get rid of the stock, but I have also acknowledged that unlike a car that can be sold in a matter of hours or a day, when it

comes to property it takes time. And that is why I sought permission from the Cabinet and that is why the board sought permission to be able to enter into arrangements at the National Housing Corporation so that persons could easily move into the house before completion.

And we came up not with the policy that was found already - the rent to own - because as you can appreciate, rent to own is a policy which means that you continue to pay rent until you have the right to own later. But we came up with a policy to rent houses until you can complete your mortgage. And what we did is ask persons who might have been paying \$1 000 in rent a month, or who might have been renting somewhere, to come to NHC - once you have qualified to purchase a house - to come and pay us \$500 a month, move in, start doing your landscaping while you are waiting for your 100 per cent mortgage, and only pay \$500. And most of those persons would have been paying other persons over a thousand dollars a month, which meant that they would be saving themselves over \$500 or more on a monthly basis, which could have been used to help build the cupboards in the houses that they are seeking to purchase or help with their landscaping, et cetera.

And some people try to frustrate the effort without understanding. Some people try to tell them no, try to see if you can get a rent to own. How can you get a house that is on the market for a full sale on a rent-to-own basis? Because rent to own is a different policy. And that is why we are going to be ensuring that people fully understand the policy so that any new housing units or housing solutions that come on the market for sale, people will understand that they can move in quicker and that they can be able to settle in. So that by the time the document is signed on the dotted line, they would have already landscaped the house, moved in and felt at home. What is wrong with that? They would have saved a lot of money - over \$6 000 a year - and NHC would have gained \$6 000 a year too. So it was a win for both.

So those persons who do not understand the policy and who cannot appreciate it, or who felt that they had to badmouth it because it came from me - that is up to them. But I am telling you, there are persons at Lancaster Warren right now who are very happy with the policy. And it is a policy that we will seek to carry right through the

ministry as long as is acceptable. So, Mr. Speaker, we were also able to have discussions with the engineers and we are seeking to get some solutions. They have accepted what we have proffered to them to move this 20-year programme forward and we are seeking to find some solutions also. With the land surveyors, etc. But as I said, we will try to capitalise this project and put it on the front burner and ensure that any funds that we have for low income housing, that we convince the financiers to have a look into this to see that this is all about low income and

that we are seeking to empower a far greater number of persons so far.

So Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that this policy, once completed, will be a very serious social policy and is one that will empower not only the person who buys the units from us, but also their families, because they can then use them as collateral to go and buy other lands or properties to help their families, et cetera, as we move.

Mr. Speaker, we are also ensuring that we have some deliverables not only at Lancaster, but with the project at Constant - which should be finished, I am told, before the end of April. We are moving forward with One River. We have completed the one at Grotto and we are now seeking to complete the one at Parceland, et cetera. And we are also working on the one down at Durance, West Terrace Durance. So there is no doubt that we are not ignoring the social needs of persons, but at the same time we are also looking at our land.

Because I have said from the time I was in opposition that the National Housing Corporation has always lost a lot of money when they enter into joint ventures. And I am happy to report that the joint venture that we have at Durance, the one that we have at Coveley, are not joint ventures that will cost us any money. For the simple reason we have ensured that the land is sold for us and that we get a share of the sales from the buildings. So we have protected ourselves. But when one looks back, prior to 2008, one would have recognised that the NHC has been able to accumulate a lot of losses because of joint ventures that were not in the interest of the Corporation.

And what we are seeking to do - we have recognised also that we have to look at the cultural patterns of Barbados. And that is why it is going to be very important for us also to not only frame solutions, but to also look to put some locks so that we can make some quick sales and we can create some cash flow. There are a lot of people who believe that you can run an organisation on deficits alone. That is not true. One of the things you have to do is to ensure that you reduce the deficit and that you create the necessary cash so that you can have the necessary working capital to do the building out you want to do.

And that is why we also came up with something called a commercial law. Previously, the NHC was focused only on selling lots to persons who did not have a piece of land. Now we have allocated certain prime lots so that whether you have a piece of land or not before, once you have the money to pay the market price for it, we will sell you that lot so that we can then use that money to empower the persons that we want to see - as we would have said, the masses of people of Barbados - so that we can continue to subsidise the cost to them. If we do not do that, then as the cost increases, we will also have to increase the cost to

them and we would not be able to make the deliverables. So we came up with a solution that for some of our prime locations, that people will want to come and live, they will also pay the price and ensure that we have the cash to continue our social programmes.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we are not just talking housing, but we are also studying and thinking about what we have to do in housing and to ensure that we make the deliveries to the masses of people in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it will also cause us to make some sacrifices. And I have to personally, as minister, make a personal sacrifice also - by identifying a piece of land that was previously identified for one particular thing, I had to give it up. I had to lead by example. But at the same time, by giving up this fine piece of land, I will also have to seek to find another piece to replace it. And it is only fair. So when persons give the impression that the minister might be seeking to acquire land in the interest of himself, one must first recognise that it is not in his own interest, but in the interest of the Corporation. One must understand that the parcel of land that I am prepared to give up in my constituency must have a replacement piece of land, and that the proceeds from the one land will be enough to pay back for the land and also to contribute to a larger piece of land which will bring a lot more money for the National Housing Corporation. So we would be able to do the social programme and we would be able to have some deliverables at a higher cost because of the magnitude of the acquisition.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that we understand what has to be done and we will continue to ensure that we do those things because it is in the interest of the public of Barbados that these deliverables are delivered and that the masses of people continue to be empowered by this Government. Because this Government has always and will always continue to ensure that the masses of people are empowered. And Mr. Speaker, it is not only at Rosemont - it is places like Deakins, et cetera, and Haynesville and many other areas that we have to ensure that we do the retrofitting to ensure that those persons are empowered.

So Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I beg that this resolution do now pass.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, in supporting this resolution, I want to start, sir, by certainly congratulating the Honourable Minister of Housing, Member for St. Lucy, who led this resolution off and clearly articulated the policy of this Democratic Labour Party Government vis-à-vis housing. And indeed spent

some time on the social aspect of this very important work. This, of course, was a resolution promised by the Democratic Labour Party at the 2008 general election. And the progress to date has been carefully outlined by the Honourable Minister.

Furthermore, sir, the potential of releasing some 3 885 new homeowners into Barbados and allowing those new homeowners to be able to use property - clear titles of property - as assets going forward is a goal worthy of our pursuit. The Honourable Minister has been at length to point out the fact that even in this drive to create this new group of entrepreneurs, we cannot ignore at the same time the very important regulatory obligations under which our development has to occur. And this administration is constantly mindful of these realities. Because we are not about creating a shanty town. We want to create something which persons can properly access, which persons can have free title on, and which our lending institutions, our banks, etc., will be able to work with. Other than that, we really would have achieved nothing.

And we all know some of the realities that exist in these housing communities, where common services have never been properly separated - as a matter of fact, common services sometimes serve even more than one block. So we will have a well, for instance, being dug and then all the units are piped up to this one well. Similarly, electrical supplies, etc., are not distinguishable and unique. So we have to sort these issues out beyond just the simple conveyance and location of the plot size, et cetera, so that persons - the owners - have that very important independence that they can carry on their business and that they can take advantage of the changes.

Our policy must be juxtaposed against the policy of the Barbados Labour Party where, when we came to office, the Barbados Labour Party would have been in the middle of their move towards collecting payments from these tenants, sometimes in the region of \$20 000. Deposits were made to the National Housing Corporation in pursuit of these titles. We felt, and we still feel, that having lived in these properties for 20 years or more, these tenants would have truly already completed what would be equivalent to paying for these households - sometimes two or three times beyond the \$20 000 demanded by the Barbados Labour Party administration.

So we have, at the onset of this debate, to clearly separate the two policies. A policy in which the Barbados Labour Party insisted that tenants who would have lived in these units for 20, 30 years had to pay for them. Still, the policy of the Democratic Labour Party is one where we said: the truth is that these tenants have made significant contributions to the cost of that unit and we will transfer those units to the occupants and make them owners for no further charges. And that is an undertaking which is being

pursued and which will see itself, as I said, bring about some 3 885 solutions at the end of the exercise.

And you know, sir, if this were the only thing being attempted or being pursued by the Democratic Labour Party in terms of housing solutions, I could understand some of the static you would hear. But our record in housing - and I am sure Honourable Members on this side will continue to develop on the programme of housing which we have embarked upon - our record of achievement in housing is really light years beyond anything that the Barbados Labour Party can talk to the people of Barbados about. And we continue, sir, to demonstrate to Barbadians how these solutions have been brought about. And some of them are not all directly National Housing Corporation projects, but we have sought to partner with the private sector to create some of these solutions.

Now, a lot of these solutions have been bitterly criticised by the Barbados Labour Party and their operatives, as if to say that Barbados should be deprived of these opportunities that we are creating - of having their own not only roof over their head, but their own piece of the rock. Owning their own piece of the rock so that they can, as they say, leave it for their inheritances, their children and their children's children. And this is something which is at the bedrock of Barbadian society - the ownership of that piece of the rock.

As a matter of fact, we recently had a discussion on this whole question of reverse mortgage, Mr. Speaker, sir. And this feature of Barbadian society took a very prominent part - was high on the agenda - in terms of the design of a Barbadian reverse mortgage. I am comfortable, however, that when that exercise is through, we would have designed a reverse mortgage portfolio for Barbados which would be especially tailored to the kind of habits, the kind of practices which Barbadians are accustomed to. So that is under further consideration by this administration and the private sector parties who have an interest in that operation.

So, sir, as I said, the transfer of the housing units named by the Minister - and today we are dealing with Rosemont. Rosemont, of course, is only one of the many, many, many housing units spotted all over Barbados. And even so, Rosemont is only one of the many housing units in that very area. I believe it occupies essentially the area of the Honourable Minister of Finance, the St. Michael North West constituency, and of course the adjoining constituencies of the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central, et cetera. And the story goes on.

The point is, we are not only talking about the transfer of ownership to these tenants, but we have put in place since 2008 a number of housing solutions which

Barbadians have been able to take advantage of. And I will list them because we need to repeat the catalogue of success of this Government. If we do not trumpet this success, no one is going to trumpet it for us. As a matter of fact, I dare say even as we trumpet our success, there is no guarantee that those who are responsible for publishing these stories will necessarily publish and make sure that all Barbadians get a full handle on the extent to which the Democratic Labour Party has been able to achieve in housing for all sectors of Barbadians. They like to look at some of the housing solutions and say, oh, that is for the middle class or persons who earn more than four or five thousand dollars. But I want to demonstrate that the solutions that have been put in place for Barbados will redound to the benefit of all Barbadians.

And I speak specifically of places like Marchfield in St. Philip, where 32 units were passed over to Barbadian citizens. And the persons who occupy those units are postmen, post women, policemen, policewomen, clerks, gas station attendants, maids, security guards - the whole works. So Marchfield provided 32 opportunities for ownership by Barbadians. Workhall, not very far away - 44 more solutions for ownership by Barbadians. French Village and Four Hill in St. Peter - two villages very close to where I grew up, in my own quarter - 17 and 44 solutions respectively for Barbadians. Greens and Constant in St. George, 51 and 64 solutions. And then we go to Lancaster where again 40 starter homes have been rolled out - Lancaster One, that is 40 starter homes. Lancaster Two, another 45 starter homes.

We look at Bushy Park where the project will entail the erection of some 3 000 units for Barbadians in a public-private partnership arrangement. In Coverley there are some 2 000 - upward of 2 000 - housing solutions for Barbadians again, who qualify under the arrangements of the 1 200 solutions at Coverley, who qualify under the arrangements of the persons responsible for the construction in partnership with the National Housing Corporation. It is important to note that these units are being provided through the National Housing Corporation organisation. So the thousands of applications in the National Housing Corporation for housing solutions will be taken care of by these kinds of interventions by the Government of Barbados.

So we want to distinguish ourselves from the record of the Barbados Labour Party and we want to explain to Barbadians that indeed part of the problem facing the National Housing Corporation is absolutely because of the policies of the Barbados Labour Party who in 1998-99 came to this Honourable Chamber and changed the arrangements for the National Housing Corporation - to have them construct office buildings at Country Road. Amendment of the Housing Act so that the National Housing Corporation would get involved in the

construction of offices at Country Road and the famous Warrens Tower. And these are the kind of contradictions. Let me stay focused on the message I want to bring to Barbadians today.

In 1999 or thereabouts, the Barbados Labour Party amended the Housing Act so that rather than concentrate on provision of housing for low-income Barbadians, they would get involved in constructing first of all the National Housing Corporation building at Country Road and then what is now known as Warrens Towers. And we know the kind of catastrophe and the cabal which has surrounded both those projects. I believe at the end of the exercise, Barbados may have paid for the building at Warrens at least three times, if not four. They made the initial payments to the contractor. They subsequently paid the Chinese to complete the building. I know we have judgments to deal with and burdens for the Government of Barbados which sometimes reach as much as, I hear, \$70 million. That is the kind of offset, Mr. Speaker, which the Barbados Labour Party were able to burden the National Housing Corporation with. And now they come in here and try to pretend that they can lecture to the Democratic Labour Party on housing. We say, no, sir. We say that the record of the Democratic Labour Party stands on its own and distinguishes itself - distinguishes itself from the kind of confusion, the kind of hypocrisy, the kind of inconsistency, sir, that was associated with the approach of the Barbados Labour Party. So we will need to continue to make this point.

And I want to add, besides all this - and the Honourable Minister, in his introduction, spoke to the question of being able to dispose of some of the land that the National Housing Corporation now owns, dispose of some of this land in a way as to generate new revenues for the National Housing Corporation so that they can indeed expand their programme. And I certainly want to support him in this venture. And of course, we can add to that the transfer of so many lots - I think there were 500 lots to be transferred at a cost of \$5 per square foot to Barbadians. And these lots were identified - they call them the strips of land on the road's edge. They are each about 4 000 square feet of land. And this transfer continues to Barbadians at \$5 a square foot. And this again is an important solution for Barbadians. It helps, as I said, to continue to create that class of Barbadian landowner which is so very important for a stable society.

And I want to make a plea, sir, obviously for my constituency, Christ Church South. There is not a lot of land in Christ Church South owned by Government. As a matter of fact, we are really at pains to identify anything significant. But there are private lands which we believe negotiations could take place in some cases. Of course, we have attempted some negotiations, but you know the market - I spoke about the constraints of the National

Housing Corporation in respect to finance and, of course, the market demand for some of these lands is still extremely high. And that is the reality with which we deal.

But however, the point must be made that because a person lives in Christ Church South or St. Philip North or St. Michael South, it does not mean that they cannot find a housing solution elsewhere in the country. After all, the truth is there is nowhere in Barbados that you would not want to live. That is my position. There is absolutely no place in Barbados that I would not enjoy living. We are a small island. We have a very tidy and efficient network of roads, first of all. And we have a reasonably successful and reliable public and private transport system. So Barbados can get around with much ease. Indeed, we have a well-developed infrastructure in terms of water - water being available to almost every area in Barbados - electricity and the like. So there is really not much of a problem in terms of setting up shop, setting up house anywhere in Barbados. So we need to continue to pursue these solutions.

And another very exciting solution which the Democratic Labour Party has embarked upon is of course our high-rise facilities at places like Tweedside Road - that is, I think, about three storeys. Tweedside Road provided a number of solutions, I think in the order of 22 solutions for Barbadians. We went to Country Road - of course, Country Road was left by the Barbados Labour Party to rust. Thank you very much for the correction. The Country Road housing development was left to rust, like they left the St. John Polyclinic to rust away for 14 years. So we came back to office, rescued the Country Road project, and now there are a number of Barbadian families living comfortably in very - to my mind - exclusive conditions at Country Road. And this again is testimony to the policy of the Democratic Labour Party in Government and testimony to the kind of housing policy which we embrace and the kind of solutions which we know must come.

We then had the three units, I believe, at Valerie - again the introduction of the high rise. The high-rise unit at Valerie would have assisted again in finding housing solutions. We are not for one moment blind to the fact that there are social issues which arise out of any housing solution that is derived. If we go into one of our posh areas, we may say, oh, if we go into Sunderland and create a house, it may be likely that crime may be a problem. If we go into Valerie, of course, because of the crowding, because there are certain social issues which we need to overcome. But that is where our communities - that is where our people themselves - play a part in making sure that not only the physical structure is satisfactorily completed, but the social bond that is required for a community is adequately developed around our schools, around our churches in the area and around our social groups. So I want to encourage Barbados, especially in the areas where these high-rise solutions have been developed,

to move back to a time when we will encourage the mobilisation, the development,

the rolling out of as many community groups as possible to help us work through that social challenge that is associated with high rise buildings. And there are solutions that are there for us to pattern ourselves on. All over the United Kingdom, the United States, these things have been done successfully. And indeed, in our sister countries, these solutions have always had to be sought. And in Barbados, we have examples of the kind of social development that has accompanied the housing units, the older housing units, like I have mentioned before, that need to be part of the developments at Valerie, the Grotto, Country Road and Tweeside, just to name a few. So I feel that we need, sir, as a government, to continually indicate to Barbados where the difference lies in terms of the approach of this administration, as distinct from the approach of the Barbados Labour Party. We want to empower Barbadians. We want to make sure that these homeowners, Barbadian homeowners, can use the collateral of their investment to continue to develop themselves in whatever way they choose. To borrow money, for instance, to send their children to school, to send their children to university, to send their children overseas for further training, even to take a holiday, sir. These are things you can do once you own that piece of the rock and once you have clear title, the lending institutions will cooperate with you in this regard.

And specifically today, sir, I want to commend this resolution to this honourable chamber so that 69 more families, 69 more families can join that group of Barbadians who can now boast this opportunity which I referred to. And these 69 families can look forward to the day, coming soon, when they too can use that free title of ownership at Rosemont to continue their development and to continue to strengthen the community of Barbados as we have become accustomed.

Sir, I believe that this is a good resolution. It is a resolution which will find the support of this honourable chamber. And I want just to commend again the Minister of Housing for bringing the resolution, for the work being done in the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation in respect to rolling out these solutions. Because it is important work and indeed the cooperation and the clarity of the regulating bodies who are part of this solution to make it effective, to make it meaningful, and to make it something which we in Barbados can be proud of. Sir, with those few words, sir, I beg to move that this resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you. The honourable Member for -

AN HON. MEMBER: I beg to second and to support the resolution.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Hon. C. P. SINCKLER: Mr. Speaker, sir, thank you very much for the opportunity to join this debate. Of course, I have a particular affinity to the matter before the House. Clearly, because this vesting is for a portion of land at Rosemont in Deacons Road resolution. And of course, it is indeed within the environs of the constituency of St. Michael North West. And therefore I have a very close affinity to it. And of course feel quite satisfied and elated that the Honourable Minister, on behalf of the Government of Barbados and the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the National Housing Corporation could bring this measure to this honourable chamber for execution. A measure which I have no doubt will accord with the affirmation of the House. And I do so because, not just because I am the parliamentary representative, but also because I believe that as part of the overall policy of the government to empower those who live among us in working class communities to own a piece of the rock, as they say, for want of a better terminology - to use that tired cliché, but tired, but still very relevant cliché - to own a piece of the rock, to establish themselves as homeowners in Barbados and to utilise this asset that has been placed within their hands to uplift themselves and their children and of course, generations yet unborn as these units and as the land on which they are situated continues to pass down from generation to generation.

It was many years ago, of course, as a boy growing up in Deacons, to have seen the work which was being instituted at Rosemont, which of course formed part of the old Jenkins plantation land, which were attached to what is now known as the psychiatric hospital - where persons who have challenges mentally go for evaluation and treatment. And it came behind a furthermore substantial housing estate development by the government of Barbados, which was an older housing development, as in at Deacon's Farm, which of course we know constituted over 300 units. And it then was sandwiched between that and one previous to it, immediately previous to its construction. This is Rosemont at Ferniehurst. So you had Rosemont nestled within two fairly large NHC housing developments. Ferniehurst, if you are going downhill, on the left hand side, and of course Deacon's Farm on the right and Rosemont in between. Indeed, there is a linkage between the Deacons Farm area from the Deacons Court section of Deacon's Farm through the back, as we call it, and up through Rosemont and onto Deacons main road and Back Rock generally.

So in that cluster, Mr. Speaker, sir, comes three well known and fairly substantial NHC housing estates. And if we add to that, of course, the St. Stephen's - what we call

Golden Acre, the St. Stephen's housing area - it will constitute four NHC estates within the constituency of St. Michael North West. And I do not believe any other constituency in Barbados carries as many NHC housing developments as St. Michael North West. So I come to this not only from the Rosemont perspective, but from the entire gamut of housing solutions that found their way within that now geographic space, that political geographic space, called St. Michael North West, that I have the privilege and honour to represent in this honourable chamber.

I also come to this, Mr. Speaker, sir, with a certain degree of sensitivity and elation because I am one of the persons who championed, to some significant degree in the Democratic Labour Party, when we were in opposition, the whole question of moving the units from NHC to the tenants for those persons who would have met a particular threshold in terms of their living in those units. I am not going to, sir, take entire credit for it because it was not originally my idea. Indeed, I believe it might have been the idea of the previous representative for St. Michael North West - my immediate - no, no, no. Not him. The other person who occupied this seat for a short period of time. Of course, the tragedy of it all is that when he left this great Democratic Labour Party institution and went and joined the other one, he changed his view on it. And he felt that the people should not be given the unit free, that they should be made to pay for them. And that was the very unfortunate part of politics. But to what it is, it was one of the things that he felt very strongly about when he was in the environs of the Democratic Labour Party and properly blessed with a social conscience proportionate to the task at hand.

But I am not here to talk about that. I am here to say that today this is a significant step forward in the realisation of that policy which we cradled and developed in the bosom of the Democratic Labour Party to empower people. And when I consider the fact that with four NHC housing estates in my constituency and the numbers that you are talking about, approaching more than 500 persons can be significantly empowered as land and homeowners in Barbados by this policy, it really puts you on pause to reflect and to feel a sense of gratitude and achievement that the Democratic Labour Party and of course myself as representative for St. Michael North West has played an ever so small part in ensuring that those persons can move towards this.

Now, you would have heard from the Minister and also from the Leader of the House in relation to some of the challenges that we have had with this programme over time. As Mr. Speaker said, we would have heard before, and we do not hide from that. I think if nothing else, perhaps in our enthusiasm to push the programme forward, we may have underestimated some of the issues that could

have confronted a programme like this. I recall in the very early days of the programme when we first got into office, we were able to identify the persons who would have qualified on the 20-year threshold. We were able to iterate properly how you would qualify. We looked at the numbers, we started giving out letters and indeed we started to convey in relation to some of the estates which were part of the programme. However, we also know that over time there were some challenges that cropped up - challenges some of which were frankly beyond our control in terms of their origin, but which fell right within our space to mitigate and to negate eventually over time, that have caused delays in the execution of this programme.

But, you know, a good idea, as one person may put it in a different context, is not like milk - it does not spoil. If you have a good idea and you keep plugging away at it, you will eventually get it done to the eternal benefit of those who are supposed to be the beneficiaries of the programme. So issues pertaining to the illegal extensions which we had to come to Parliament to pass the law to cover the town planner, things pertaining to the electrical upgrades and the costs associated with doing those across the estates - I believe over \$30 million for a corporation that we came into office and found practically insolvent in relation to having resources to do a lot of these things. Matters pertaining even to the administration of qualification in terms of sorting out who in fact were the right beneficiaries of this programme, because some of the people who would have originally had these units obviously would have passed on and their estates may not have been properly settled and so forth, and other people would have come into the space and lived, and we had to establish that those persons were duly entitled to inherit the space and so forth and so on.

And with all of that, Mr. Speaker, sir, the good idea has not spoiled. It is still very much alive. And we are pursuing this with the vigour I believe that it deserves because it is a transformational programme. And I make the point because people say, well, you have not given the conveyance. And that is true in some instances. We have not been able to do it because of some of the issues that we have had - issues of surveying, engineering, issues of common space management and those types of things that we have sought to work through. But one fundamental thing that we also give, that a lot of people have not focused on, is that once you were selected and everything was clear that you are the person entitled to benefit from this programme, you were immediately excused from the payment of rents to the NHC. And whilst that may have cut the NHC's resources in terms of inflow, it was a tremendous benefit in a difficult economic period to those persons who would have had three or four hundred dollars lifted off of their shoulders, particularly in the challenging experiences that we have had over the last few years. And that is not something to scoff at.

Because it said to people two things. One, that we appreciated the fact that you were able to stay with the NHC for over 20 years, that you were able to pay your rent and be on time and to live within the confines and the rules established by the corporation for persons who live within these estates. But it also said to people that we did not believe that after 20 years of contributing to this exercise and to your home, that you should then turn around and have to pay an additional sum in order to secure the space. And I know members on the other side felt that it is something that we ought not to do, that people should pay. Indeed, they instituted a paid programme and they received deposits, and in some instances they received the full amount into the NHC from those persons who they were selling the units to. Of course, it could also be said that they received those monies knowing full well that things had to be done to ensure that the process could be completed. But as I said, I am not going to be political on this today. They proposed one course, and we proposed an entirely different course. And our course was to say to people that if you live in a unit for 20 years or more, you were paying rent for 20 years, that you or your beneficiaries - your children or whomever you choose or thought best should inherit - should get the opportunity to be able to have that space as theirs going forward.

So when we come now to the stage of doing this, we knew, for example, that there were the challenges, as in this case, of some of the land that NHC constructed these units on many, many years ago not being properly vested in it. And therefore, you know, there is a maxim in law - I believe it is, I am not too good with the Latin, but it goes that a man cannot give what he does not have. And therefore the NHC could not properly convey, even by deed of gift, if they wanted to do that - they could not convey these units to people and the land on which they are situated because they did not have proper security of the title. The land was not vested in the NHC, and this Rosemont, as well as parts of Deacon's Farm and I believe maybe also Ferniehurst, were not properly vested in the National Housing Corporation to permit for the transfer of the title and of course for the conveying of the lot. And that is the principal reason why we are here today.

It has taken some time. I have had to apologise on many occasions and explain on many occasions to my constituents, particularly those in Rosemont who have asked repeatedly as I visited from time to time about when it was going to happen. And I assured them that it would happen, that the NHC was working on it. *Nemo dat quod non habet* - yes, I knew, but I just did not want to repeat it. I leave that to the Latin people, but I still learn a few little things around the place. But for those constituents who have been asking, particularly as we are dealing with Rosemont, I am happy and proud today to say that the paperwork is being completed. Now the Parliament - once it finds the favour of this House - will get a stamp of

approval on this vesting. And that clears a significant hurdle towards the conveying of these properties into the hands of those deserving persons there.

And I understand, Mr. Speaker, sir, that to date more than three quarters of the persons living in those units are entitled to have these units by way of the 20-year programme. There are some 69 units there. And of course a substantial proportion of those - I said more than two thirds - have already been contacted and the others will, I believe, come to qualification point in the not too distant future. And therefore I want to say to the residents, to express my appreciation to them for their patience in holding on as long as they have had to, to thank them and express my appreciation for their understanding in terms of the process that has had to be gone through to get us to this stage. And I want to say congratulations to them and to give the assurance that we will continue to work not only to see that this particular process is completed and that they get their papers in their hands, but that the others in Deacon's Farm - and I understand that one is coming soon - and for Ferniehurst to be completed in short order so that those persons we can get to convey.

Now, I want to make this point as Minister of Finance. I am going to get back to a couple of matters pertaining to the House. There is, however, a cost to doing this. It is not a cost to the persons who are getting. It is a cost to the government. And the Minister would have mentioned the surveying costs, the engineering costs, the legal costs, and the government takes on those responsibilities as well. It should. And some building costs as well. And I believe that this has risen to the appropriate level where the Ministry of Finance, through the Public Investment Unit and the Ministry of Housing and Lands, will work together. In fact, we have agreed that we will work together to seek the requisite resources to ensure that this programme becomes a systematised capital project and that the appropriate resources are provided to ensure that there is no further undue delay in relation to the execution of the responsibilities of the government. There are things pertaining to electrical upgrades. There are certain things that have to be done to the houses as prescribed by town planning before they are conveyed or handed over. And we are going to ensure that those things are done. And I give the assurance as Minister of Finance that those resources will be identified appropriately and applied.

As will be the case, Mr. Speaker, sir, for the Urban Tenantry Transfer of Property programme - that is one as well that is a major transformational programme for us. I also have tenancies in my constituency. Several of the members in urban constituencies have tenancies, and there are some rural ones as well that we have to continue to do. And it is the government's intention that under its housing every last person programme - because it goes beyond building a high rise here and a high rise there, or a set of

units here and units there - land and the possession of land also motivates people who can have their own resources or can go and get resources to do their own interventions without government help to be able to get a place of their own. And all of these things, we believe, need to be facilitated by the government and will continue to be facilitated as such.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, sir, I want to make this point. We know the NHC has challenges. As I said, when we came into office, the NHC was not very well capitalised. In fact, it was struggling and it has continued to struggle. Some decisions were made previously, frankly, that were not in the best interest of the corporation generally. Even though, if one wants to say, you could understand why some of it was done, it certainly was not the most efficacious decision that could have been made - not by this administration, by the last administration - but suffice it to say what is there, and we deal with it as it is.

However, I want to make this point again. And I go back to being an MP for a constituency that has the largest number of NHC estates. And I keep saying this to public servants all over the public service. Lack of resources, Mr. Speaker - and I want to make this point very clear - lack or insufficiency of resources cannot and should not be used as an excuse by anybody to ill-treat or to treat less than favourably people for whom you have a fiduciary responsibility or a relationship with in some way or the other to look after their interests. I want to make that point. You know, there are people in Barbados who can only manage when they have got a lot of money. They love to have a lot of money. People like to have money and they like to spend money that they do not have. There are a lot of people who like that. They can only function when the larder is full. But a lot of us came up when the larder was not full and we managed. And a message has to go out to people at two levels, that a scarcity of resources - because that is really what economics is about after all the fancy things - is managing competing demands for scarce resources. That is really what it is. And you have to use your creativity and your common sense and you have to use your conscience and your discretion in dealing with matters of this nature.

And I make the point and I say this to NHC staff on behalf of my constituents - I am switching back now from Minister of Finance to MP. Lack of resources or whatever the case may be, or insufficiency of resources, does not give anybody the right to ill-treat people or to treat them less than they should be treated. And I make this point most seriously, not as a criticism, but I am saying that we can do a lot better. And when I get telephone calls or I meet people while in the constituency and they complain about how some people in the corporation, particularly in the Customer Relations Services department, treat them when they call about issues - whether you feel the issue is serious

enough or not, trivial or whatever - you do not have a right as a customer service representative or any other type of representative in any institution in Barbados to belittle people and make them feel that they are a bother to you. Because at the end of the day it is their taxes that are keeping you employed. And you should not feel it upon yourself, because you have been given a position high or low in Barbados, to ill-treat people. I do not function at that level. I keep telling people, so if you cannot do something or you do not have the resources to do it, there must be a polite, decent and affable way to tell people: we cannot do it now, we can do it later, or some other way in a humane fashion. Because a person may argue with you if you have not got the money to do it, yes, but one thing they cannot do is to say when they put down that phone that you made them feel unwelcome in terms of their inquiry to you. And I am saying this to people in offices generally. But as we are speaking about the NHC and speaking in this regard, because people do have legitimate concerns and some people are being told when they call in there that they are not getting any units fixed and all that kind of thing. I have complained to -

I've spoken to the Minister about it already, as I've spoken to the General Manager, that kind of thing. And I don't think it is widespread. I don't even think it is 1 per cent, perhaps, of the employees, but there are a couple of people who believe that they have been made by somebody other than God and that they should lord over people, as the Opposition will say, in a way that I frankly do not respect or believe is necessary in the circumstances.

Having said that, I want to go on the other side to say that there are some wonderful employees at NHC who get up every day and work hard on behalf of the tenants and people of Barbados. And I want to thank them for their work and to encourage them to continue, even in difficult circumstances where the Corporation doesn't have a whole lot of money, to do everything that everybody wants - to continue to assist my constituents and all of the others who have to call on the Corporation for solutions of one nature or the other.

So as I wind up this speech, Mr. Speaker, sir, I want to again congratulate the Minister, thank the Minister for bringing this resolution, to congratulate my constituents at Rosemont with the promise that we will do Deacons Farm and Fernie Hearst, those other areas that may have challenges shortly, and to thank them for their patience and understanding with the delays that we've had in relation to this. And I hope very shortly to convene a special meeting with the residents and the NHC staff so that they can be properly guided as to the next steps forward in dealing with this matter. I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much. I'm obliged.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I joined this debate because I believe that it gives us as a government an opportunity to kind of restate our whole thinking behind our housing programme. Now, of course, as the person who just took his seat indicated, there have been some challenges in the full implementation of this programme. And those challenges are being worked out. The message that we want to send to the country is that the government has not recanted on its commitment to institute this programme in its fullest form. Neither has the government softened its position on housing.

Now, housing, as we've said before, is a very, very important part of development, especially sustainable development. Shelter is a very important part of human development. As a matter of fact, shelter is one of those things considered a low-level need - that in order for an individual to develop and become a fully functional individual, that person must have the need of shelter fulfilled. So when you tie shelter and housing together, what it works out to is an important human development goal that translates itself into national development as it relates to housing every last person in a society. So it's a critical development need. It's also a critical social development need, because housing is an important empowerment vehicle. It allows people to realise their dream of owning their own home - home, which is a very important and strategic part of a human being's development.

And this government, in coming into office, revitalised its long-standing social democratic ethos that put a strong emphasis on how a society should develop, and that the full development of a society must always include the full development of its people. Now, any government that sits around and doesn't understand the important link between empowering its citizens and developing its society is a government that does not place sufficient emphasis on housing. And housing and development go hand in hand. As a matter of fact, in the Millennium Development Goals, particularly Goal Seven, if we want to address the issue of poverty successfully, we have to address the issue of housing. Because housing and poverty - or the lack of housing and poverty - has a strategic link. And in order to crack that code, a government must look to be progressive in its housing programme.

And I believe at the end of the day, if we are to evaluate this government, where it has journeyed so far, the country would have to agree that we have been extremely persistent and consistent in our housing endeavours. Yes, we know that we are currently entangled in a global economic recession. And thank God all the signs today are

pointing towards recovery. And that light at the end of the tunnel that we've been searching for and looking for - I believe that we're beginning to see the flicker of that light. And I have every confidence that as we continue to move ourselves forward, we'll be able to recover some of our economic strength and that once we do that, we'll be able to continue to perpetuate this programme on housing.

It is a vital upliftment vehicle, housing. It's not only empowering, but it uplifts people. And I remember my own journey, my own experience - people in my community would start with a one-shed house and they would build and build as the family developed and grew until they were able to accommodate large numbers of family members in that one house. And for them it was a significant symbol in the society that they had in fact made something out of themselves. As they would often say, they built something for themselves. Nobody started from a big wall mansion; they started small. And they grew and they grew.

And I remember a former Democratic Labour Party Minister of Social Care - it wasn't called Social Care then - Joy DaCosta Edwards, who went around this country building houses. There was a housing farm in Boozeville, St. Andrew, that was run in part by the Rockland Bus Company. They were involved in it. And they would build houses there, assemble them there, construct them there, then put them on trucks and move them around the community. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, when the Shore Village was flooded out back in the early 1970s, the restocking of that district with houses was primarily done through the Government of Barbados at the time - the Democratic Labour Party government. And it is a fact, and we know that.

And what they did - I remember you had fires. My family's home was burnt down to the ground. And it was that programme that allowed us to get a new house, a new three-bedroom house. And you pay it as you go. This notion of rent-to-own is nothing new. It was called something different then. But what you did was you paid what you had, you got a house. And as you continued to improve your economic state, you would pay on the house. Some people paid it off; some people didn't. So housing is strategic in our social development framework.

And that's why we established at the very beginning of the government that there are four strategic pillars to sustainable development. One is economic, one is environment, one is social, and one is governance. And we are proud of our record so far in that regard. So housing is important to empowering people, it's important to uplifting people. And it is also important to allowing us to achieve our social development ambitions.

People who live in the housing areas - I have one too in my area, Sayers Court, which is an old, very old housing

estate. And of course, yes, under the former Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, we were able to get a new section constructed in that community. But for the most part, that housing estate needs a lot of attention. And one of the impediments to the full actualisation of this particular programme that we're talking about today is the state of some of the estates. Because you have to redo the electrical systems, you have to redo the firewalls, you have to redo the plumbing systems - and you don't want to hand someone, after 20 years of living in a unit, a dilapidated structure. And what this government said is that what we would do is put in some transitional services that would allow you to be able to occupy your own unit - but your own unit in the state that you could be proud of. And I think that's important in this whole discussion as we deal with this particular programme.

So I believe that my folk in Sayers Court, as well as folk in other housing developments or housing areas that the Honourable Minister of Finance would have referred to as having the most of them - I want to make my case to the Honourable Minister of Housing to make sure that the Honourable Minister of Housing knows that in Sayers Court we have three blocks and some of them are not even in adequate living conditions. So that as you move towards the sale of these units and you get into my area, I will be keeping a close eye, Mr. Speaker, sir, to ensure that once you meet the 20-year threshold and you are in truth and in fact appropriate to inherit that unit, that what you inherit is something that you could be proud of having for your own.

So the government has a strategic philosophy that undergirds its activities as they relate to housing. And there's a reason why. Because if you would recall, the government said that there was a triple-A policy as far as our housing is concerned. One, is that there must be availability - and you can't quarrel with the government on having available housing. Two, that there must be accessibility and the housing must be within the reach of persons who need them. And three, that they must be affordable. And this particular philosophy has guided the government's programme on housing. And I believe that the Ministry of Housing and the National Housing Corporation have worked tirelessly to ensure that these objectives are met. And we see them all around the country.

I know we get criticised. And we get criticised by an opposition who has an abysmal record on housing. And it is amazing where, when people's moral conscience takes flight, they begin to chase like dogs chasing flying birds. How could you even sit in the opposition side - they're not sitting there - but how could you sit there and suggest that the government's programme on housing is one not to be deserved? I remember, Mr. Speaker, sir, when ordinary Barbadians ran around this country trying to find the

Firefly House, the Bumblebee House, the Sam Coochie and Duppy House, trying to find these houses that were promised. Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing that we don't suffer from on this side, it is a short memory.

And right now politics is bathed with persons of short memory, persons who have recanted their own sense of morality. I want to impose moral standards on other people. You know, in the Bible there was a term for such people and they were called hypocrites. You can't use that word in here - I'm just reflecting on the Bible, just reflecting on the Bible. Hypocrites, sons and daughters of perdition - that was the terminology used in the Bible, where it described a man who committed sins and rather than pointing at his own sin, he pointed at the sins of others. And it is not a gender designation; it is just to capture the humanness of the hypocrite.

But at a time, Mr. Speaker, sir, when we should be freeing ourselves of that kind of hypocrisy, you find there are people who have recanted their own realities and their own sins and now want to come and preach in white clothes, white gloves. They're now washed in the blood of something - I don't know if it's the lamb; might be a billy goat. They want to tell Barbadians, want to shape the opinions of Barbadians, to believe that they are the most suited ones to take the country forward. A terrible record on housing, Mr. Speaker, sir. And the record shows how many applications we found when we took over the government - and they went to the same old people that had been living in units for many, many years and imposed a charge on them to get a unit that they had paid for times and times over. That's not based in any social democratic, progressive philosophy. That's not it. And that's what separates us as a political institution from the rest.

And that's why I'm speaking in this debate, because I don't want the public to lose contact with what the Government of Barbados of today believes in as it relates to housing - every last person. So how do you raise your voice, lift your anthem to criticise this government on housing in any way, shape or form? How can you? When you go back over the annals of history you'll realise that the Barbados Labour Party has been a total failure on housing. Do we have everything right? Perhaps no. Have we been able to meet our targets and the time frames of our targets? Perhaps no - circumstances beyond our control have affected our progress. But at the end of the day we are still on a sprint to create affordable, accessible and available housing to ensure that every person who desires to have a piece of the rock has access to that. So that's our AAA standard and I don't want people to lose sight of that.

So delivering our programme has been a challenge with these housing estates, and we have itemised what some of the issues are - conveyance as it relates to engineers and surveyors, the transitional state of the units

in terms of trying to correct some of the electrical challenges in those units, and so on - upgrading and vesting issues, which we're dealing with today on this particular issue. And I'm going to challenge my good friend and colleague, the Minister of Housing, only in asking him to see if we can sprint ahead and prospect some of the other units and see what the status is relative to vesting so that we're ahead of the game.

Now, perhaps the former Minister may know, but the reason why I think that is important is: how could you charge people and collect their monies? Somebody needs to tell me if this equates into fraud. You know, we have some people around the place now who are very good at telling you who's stealing this and who's stealing that. And the reason why they're so good at it is because they're the masters of it. That's why they're so good. They are fixated on corruption, they are fixated on stealing. And have you ever gone into a fishing boat? I hear fishermen and they're arguing about the latest appliances - Frigidaire. Yes. The Honourable Attorney General didn't know anything about Frigidaire; he's still at GE. Yes. But the point is, when you become fixated on these themes, there is a psychology about that. There is a psychology about people who are always willing to raise expressions against other people. It is because their lives are sewn up in the same things that they're trying to raise against other people. As a matter of fact, I'll tell you something - some of them have so many skeletons in their closets that if there was a cracked door, these skeletons would overrun them. It's a fact.

And it is time that the Democratic Labour Party government stop thinking that we need to be nice people and that we are the clean-hands people. We need to go after those brutes. That's what we need to do. Mr. Speaker, sir, we need to tell them where to get off because we have a right to determine the policies of this country as a government. The only bell that I knew of growing up is the school bell or the church bell. I hang a bell at my house when somebody rings to tell me when to come to supper service. Mr. Speaker, sir, I am not familiar with that kind of bell. And you see, there are some people who believe that they have a right - a right to be in this place on their own terms. They don't even want to regard the rules of this place on their own terms. And when their terms are not being bowed down to by this government, they will go in the press and try us out there, aided and abetted by some who, if my two Jack Russells were to encounter them, they would run and holler for murder. Understand what I'm saying? I have a right to be here because of the people in my constituency who send me here. And I am not going to sit out of this Parliament and collect my salary under any conditions.

I sat out of here when I was ill. And you know, there were those who propagated my death. And that's the other thing about perverted people - they will attack the dead, the

dead who cannot defend themselves. They will go after it. And it is a sin of the highest level when you could go after somebody. They went after my mother too. They went after my dead mother too, you know. That's why they're my enemies for life. I will defend my mother. They're going after a decent man, a former Prime Minister of this country, and they're going after him. Now, you see, they can't win against the living. So they're now fighting against the dead. The next stage of fight they're going to have is with the devil himself. And that's when the prince of darkness meets the princess of darkness. And that's not too far from now.

So I want to make it clear and I want to defend the position of this government on housing and on other things like morality too. Mr. Speaker, I can't wait for the time to come when we have to go down that corridor. Because I came into the world bare, as I was told, and I didn't even have hair on my head. I'm probably on my way out of the world now because I've got the hair - neither now. But that's how it came, Mr. Speaker, sir. And I am prepared to defend those things that I hold sacred as the rubrics of my existence. That includes my faith, that includes my stance on morality. And nobody can turn me back. Whether you be glad or be sad, I stand on the principles of my faith, and that's how I intend to stand.

So I would hope that this government would never go there and take money out of poor people's hands to sell them a unit that they already bought and then tell this government that winners should pay them back. Just like the hardwood housing - you know where those houses are. And when the late Prime Minister, at a happy moment, perhaps from a happy hour, said, "I know where those houses are" - and telling us that we should pay back the people for the houses. But listen, Mr. Speaker, let me close by saying this, because I'm going on a road that I want to hold back for now.

Let me say this now, Mr. Speaker. Anytime this government becomes timid to defend its position on issues, it is not a government deserving of the support of the people. And if we fail to take up the position that if you attack one of us, you attack all of us, neither are we fit to be the government of this country. And we are proud of what we've done under serious circumstances and how we've kept this ship of state going forward. We are proud of it. And a day coming soon, we will be able to tell the entire record, and all of those persons who have been trying to tear down this government - bite it up. All of those people will have to face the music one day coming soon. I fully support this resolution, Mr. Speaker, sir. And I thank you for your time. I'm obliged.

AN HON. MEMBER: Mr. Speaker, Sir. I support the resolution and congratulate the Minister for moving to at least address issues which I know persons occupying

housing estates have. I think that the fact that we have done this in a humane way demonstrates that we do have the concerns of residents in these areas. I have one housing area located within St. Michael North, namely Grazettes housing area. I do know that already there are persons who have been living in those units who have already benefited from the facility that Government has offered. I really want to encourage Government that the units have issues because in some of them I have noted from my visits to the constituents that they will tell you the problem of electricity is well known, because of the period in which those houses were constructed. At that point in time, the electricity that was put in would not meet the modern set of inspection tests that are done now, and those are difficult.

The other point too I wish to note with the units that are there is that because it is an old housing estate, you tend to find that the whole physical surroundings tend to be rather worn. In that regard, I think that we have to at least also provide the residents with the encouragement to look to see if they can upgrade those houses on their own. I think that moving in this direction will help them to do that, because what you are actually doing is encouraging the residents to see that they have a stake in the houses which they occupy. The benefits that can be derived from the fact that it provides them a way of getting security for any loans that they might wish to use to improve those houses - it does provide that. I think it is wonderful that they are able then to use the property as a means of securing further capital to allow them to effect the repairs that they need to do on those particular houses.

Mr. Chairman, during this particular presentation I want to express my appreciation to the staff at National Housing Corporation, because just towards the end of last year, in December, one of my constituents in the area experienced a house fire. That happened sometime in December. We had a situation where a family - the unit was not completely destroyed, but certainly the walls were compromised, the roof was compromised. Some members from a church which one of the residents of the unit attended came forward; the pastor came forward and decided whether or not they could assist in the situation. They proceeded

to, first of all, clear the area. They were able to, through the help of the National Housing Corporation - NAC was able to provide the material which was then used to reconstruct the house. It is not fully completed. I really want to thank National Housing for the speed with which they moved on the issue, because when I contacted the General Manager of National Housing on the issue, they noted that the church was prepared to provide the labour, and that is what they did. They asked National Housing for the materials. I know that even at this time, when Government finances are so tight, I made a plea and they willingly consented to supply the materials to enable that

family to get back. The point is really that the children did not have to go too far to school from there. I think it would have been really unfortunate if you had forced the family to relocate somewhere else, when in fact quick action could have been able to put those people back in the house as soon as possible. I think it is to their credit that after we discussed the issue, they were able to come forward with the necessary materials to reconstruct the house. Now, although it is not fully finished, that family is already starting to occupy the unit. So I really want to express my appreciation to National Housing for responding in the manner in which they did. But of course, I want to encourage them that there are still some finishing things that need to be done in terms of the housing itself. I want to further encourage them to continue so that we can at least ensure that we have the family back inside fully, at least within another month or two. So I really want to express thanks and to demonstrate too that even in that case, you saw the kind of flexibility that you need when incidents like these occur, because fires will occur in some cases and we do not want it to occur, but it happened. What I was really pleased with is the manner of the response of the National Housing Corporation officials when a request is made - look, we can solve the situation in a very short period of time without dislocating the family entirely. In that regard, I think we are eternally grateful for the assistance.

Now on the issue of Grazettes - I remember Grazettes was constructed sometime when I was a boy in those days in Dickens Road, and it is a relatively old housing area when you look at it. One of the issues, I think, when we look at the whole issue of the existing housing areas, is that the fact that we are transferring the units to those persons who have occupied them for some time means we need somehow in the future to look at the physical conditions of those housing areas. Grazettes was an area in which you had a lot of activities, and I think the physical plant was extremely good. I would like to see, when we can find the resources to do that, that there are areas in Grazettes - in the roads adjoining Denton Road and Ulster Road - that could do with some repairs in terms of the roads. In that respect, I really want to appeal to the relevant authority to look at those roads which have been in that condition for some time. The physical conditions of those areas I really think we need to examine. The fact that we are actually passing ownership of the units to the residents in those areas allows them now, in terms of the investment that they are making, to actually increase the value of the investment of the new owners of those units. I think that in itself will be very helpful in terms of trying to ensure that we have a certain pride returning to residents of those areas. Because one of the things we have noticed is that whenever you have in urban areas a dilapidated surroundings, you tend to find that sometimes the residents tend to have less pride. I know in particular, Grazettes is one of the housing areas in Barbados where you had a lot

of activities. You had a lot of youth groups. In fact, when it came to volleyball, Grazettes is one of the areas that had an extremely good volleyball team in those days. I think that generally, if we can have a situation where this particular facility being provided brings a certain pride returning to those areas, you will see an improvement in the social conditions of residents who live there.

One of the things I would also like to say about Grazettes - I really want to draw the attention of the Minister of Youth and Sport to the fact that the Grazettes playing field needs considerable work. I know that they had an excellent football team there at that point in time. But today, one of the difficulties in terms of having a team at Grazettes is the condition of the field. Because of the problems of drainage and the field itself, it really needs resurfacing. We need to look at properly reconstructing that field so that the football team that was located there can return and we can have a team that is truly representative of the area. I think that sport plays a very important role in terms of helping to cement the community and to give it some form of focus. To the extent where many of the young persons in the area have not been able to utilise the field as they normally do, it is a problem, because you suffer the danger of getting a broken foot if you play on that field in its present condition. As a matter of fact, even in terms of sport, the Grazettes Primary School, which is located just north next to that particular field, has to go somewhere else when they have the school sports. I think that is unfortunate, and I am really appealing to the Minister of Sport to look at that as an issue, especially as it relates to the Grazettes area.

Also, Sir, in terms of the same Grazettes area, I know a lot of the units there have a lot of senior citizens - persons who have been living in that area for a long time. The units themselves need some improvement in some cases. I am not even sure that some of the oldest senior citizens there have taken advantage of the offer made by Government in respect of the ownership of the units. As a result of that, those units where the offer has not been taken up tend to have the electricity problems that plague these units go unsolved. I think this has been occasioned by the fact that there are limited resources available to the NHC in order to resolve those particular issues. I would just want to at the same time have the Minister of Housing address that as an issue, because some of these older residents are not even aware of their rights on the matter. We have to be very careful that they are not being taken advantage of. I think that is something we need to look at, because some of these units are actually one-bedroom units which themselves are like bed-sitters. Even in that regard, I believe that we need to look at maintaining some of them still under Government control, because in a sense, as we do know, they could actually serve as transition houses for families when they are starting out. That is something, Sir, that we seriously need to formulate a policy on in respect

of the retention of some of these units for strategic purposes in terms of helping to transition families. But more so, especially those residents who are senior citizens and who might not be aware of their rights in the matter - we can look to see whether or not we can at least address the electricity problems that are occurring as they relate to residents in those particular areas.

Just to start on another point, because we are talking about physical development - I want to emphasise that when you offer residents the option of actually owning the units, they have a certain pride in the area and the physical development that we have to pay attention to. Especially when we look at the Grazettes Community Centre. I have noticed that in itself has become a bit dilapidated. Again, I want to appeal to the Minister of Sport to look at that particular community centre. But one of the things I also want to appeal to the residents about is that we have a lot of young men in the area who it seems have chosen to vandalise the community centre. It is rather unfortunate that that is happening. I really think also that one of the things is that maybe we are not utilising the community centre as best as we could, taking into consideration where it is. Again, it has to do with the fact that the lack of a proper sporting field is not giving the young men and young women in the area something to channel their energies into. But still, that is no excuse for vandalism. What I would like to appeal for is that we look at and see how we can utilise those areas better. I think generally the lights attached to the community centre there are out of action, and I really think that we need to look at that to see how we can have a more secure lighting system to protect them from vandals that actually come into the area - and some of them are actually not from the area but come from outside.

So with that, Sir, I would like to in my brief contribution again express appreciation to the Minister of Housing and also to the National Housing Corporation for the quick action that they took in relation to the fire victim. And again, we want to applaud him for the fact that he is proceeding to at least enfranchise Barbadians - give them at least an opportunity to own some real estate that they could use as a means of helping, Sir, to develop the area in which they live. With that, Sir, thank you very much.

SUSPENSION

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: I beg to move that the sitting be suspended for lunch until 2.00 p.m. this afternoon.

The question that the House be suspended until 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without

division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the sitting of the House is resumed. When the suspension was taken we were on Order - is it number 14? 15? And with that we shall continue. Yes, Honourable Member for St. Philip.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, sir, I rise to enter this debate and to support this resolution - that is the vesting of Crown Land at Rosemont, Deacons, Royal, Blackrock, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation in accordance with the Crown Lands (Vesting) Act of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, sir, first let me say that this certainly is a continuation of the housing programme. Of course, it is a manifesto pledge of the Democratic Labour Party and I want to congratulate the Minister of Housing for bringing this matter to Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, sir, this goes back - in fact the former administration sometime in 2004 had launched a programme to transfer the NHC units to tenants. Mr. Speaker, sir, we have heard speaker after speaker mention what happened and the difference between the policy of the two parties - their policy and our policy. And I just want, Mr. Speaker, to briefly state what happened in relation to their programme.

Mr. Speaker, sir, the sale of terrace units as took place under - as happened under the former administration. The first thing that happened is that the cost to the tenant was extremely prohibitive. For example, Mr. Speaker, sir, in the case of Bonnets particularly, a unit cost - given all the valuation that was carried out by NHC at the time - the cost of the unit at Bonnets was \$55 000, and in fact ranged, particularly in the Pine, to \$25 000 and some \$15 000 and \$20 000.

But I do recall, Mr. Speaker, a particular case which really gives us a real account of the programme of the then administration. I do recall, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Housing, the National Housing Corporation wrote to a pensioner. The pensioner wanted to purchase the unit and they said to the pensioner that you have to go to the bank and get a loan for some \$50 000 in order to complete the sale of a unit that she had been living in for years. When I came into office, Mr. Speaker, sir, we had to deal with the matter and we had obviously that person fall under the Arrow Programme. And the difference between our programme, Mr. Speaker, is that if you have lived in that unit for 20 years or more then you qualify. And of course just the payment of legal fees - a minimum amount of legal fees - will then qualify you under that programme.

Mr. Speaker, sir, we then had to deal with the issue - before our implementation - of the deposits. The deposits that the National Housing Corporation received from tenants at the time. I do recall, Mr. Speaker, that deposits were received and NHC had no title to convey - no title to convey, Mr. Speaker, sir. And we had a Minister of Housing at the time - a Minister of Housing at the time, I believe - and she was a member of, or is a member of, the legal profession, Mr. Speaker. I think she went to a winning law school. Mr. Speaker, sir, I am saying that it was the same St. James South representative at the time who was the Minister of Housing who introduced this programme. And the problem with the programme at the time is that none of the estates were vested in the National Housing Corporation.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, sir, we had then to do the clean-up in relation to allowing the National Housing Corporation to transfer these units. Mr. Speaker, sir, I do recall coming to this House - I had to vest the estate at the Ivy, that I can recall, and a number of other estates we had to vest so that NHC now could have the title and could have the power to transfer those units to the prospective tenants and tenants who had a desire to purchase these units.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that as a result of the illegal extensions, the issuing of a certificate of compliance was the issue, Mr. Speaker, sir. And despite all the brains they had in cabinet and all the advice they got, they were informed that you need a special type of legislation so that the National Housing Corporation would be able to get around this encumbrance so that they could be able to give a clear title free of encumbrances, Mr. Speaker, sir, and so that you could get your certificate of compliance. That was the issue, Mr. Speaker, sir.

Then this government had to come to Parliament with a piece of legislation entitled - let me get the correct name - entitled the National Housing Corporation Transfer of Terrace Units Bill, 2012. And that Bill is now law. And as a result of passing that legislation, Mr. Speaker, it impacted on the delivery of these units to tenants. My understanding, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that so far, as a result of the passage of that legislation, sir, some 67 units have been transferred under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I do recall that when we launched the programme at the National Housing Corporation, we were able - because one of the conditions of that programme is that you had to make sure that you owed no rent to the National Housing Corporation - and as a result of that, sir, and the fact that people want to own a piece of the rock, we were able to see an increase in rents coming in to the National Housing Corporation because they wanted, at the time, to qualify and to get that piece of conveyance in their hand. And according to the Minister of Housing, so

that they can use that title to move on, even to use as collateral or to become part of the property owners of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, sir, we then instituted a programme so that we could speak to tenants because, as you know, the problem that existed before was illegal extensions. And we had a programme where field officers went out into the field, Mr. Speaker, sir, and we spoke to tenants in relation to the illegal extensions. Some cooperated. Some cooperated. And we also embarked on an educational programme in terms of what we would accept in terms of the national housing units and what we would not accept. And we reached some success in that regard, Mr. Speaker, sir.

And this programme was scoffed at by the opposition. I recall the Member for St. Michael South East constantly asking here when the people would get their conveyances. And it came across as if no conveyances - in fact, as if the National Housing Corporation had not conveyed any properties under the programme. Mr. Speaker, in the first tranche of this programme, I do recall over 150 units were conveyed. We conveyed over 150 units. But if the Member had realised what happened in relation to the pioneer estates and what challenges confronted the National Housing Corporation, particularly, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the surveyors - what I recognised when we started the programme, Mr. Speaker, sir, is that the previous government owed some thousands of dollars to the surveyors who carried out their work and they were not paid. Yes, as of 2003 we had to call them in, Mr. Speaker, sir, and made some arrangements to pay them by instalments. Some accepted. That is why we were able in areas like Bagatelle - and there is another one I cannot recall - but I know that we were able then at the Ivy and those areas to move forward with the programme to have the conveyances done.

But again, I repeat, Mr. Speaker, sir, the opposition had no moral authority to tell us about the rounds of this programme when they started - I repeat again - by taking deposits from poor people in this country, giving them the impression that they would get title within a couple of weeks, and it took years upon years for those same people to get title.

One Member said it is akin to - ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Just a minute, just a minute. I was just playing that in my mind - you know what you just said. I know the Members of the opposition have chosen not to be here. But I am not going to, in spite of that, allow you to use the guise of their absence in order to breach any of the rules. I am not sure that I like how you put that thing about it might be akin to a criminal offence. So out of an abundance of caution, I want you to withdraw that

comment. I have it stricken from the record and you can restate your point. Okay?

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Yes, sir, I am guided by your ruling, sir. I am guided by your ruling, sir. Well, I will not say a criminal offence, sir. I withdraw it, sir. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, sir, that one of these days, sir, hopefully, hopefully, sir, hopefully, sir, one of these days, sir, hopefully, it will be captured, sir, in the criminal lawsuit. That is all I can say, Mr. Speaker, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just withdraw that comment as well and let us move on, please.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, sir, I again thank you for your guidance, sir. Mr. Speaker, the legislation that was passed also protected the State in passing title to the tenant, sir, because we placed conditions in relation to having an engineer's certificate to make sure that the building is in a sound condition, sir. I believe that the National Housing Corporation is now going through that in relation to the engineer's certificate, having discussions with the engineers.

Yes, the electrical upgrade was started under this government, sir, because most of those units, as you know, were built a long time ago. And we had some issues in relation to fires, particularly in the Deacons area and the Fernie Hearst area. And we instituted a programme in relation to electrical upgrades of the units. So we had the challenges here and we started gradually to make sure that we confronted these challenges, sir. But by passing the piece of legislation, sir, that was a major step, sir, to ensure that all of those - because the policy got such a response - most of those tenants living in the units, we received letters from more than 90 per cent who qualify under the programme, sir.

And I want to say that this programme, along with the housing programme, provided hope for Barbadians to own a piece of this rock. I do recall in 2009 and thereabouts, the work on this project, particularly Rosemont - of course we had issues with the boundaries again with the surveyors - and we were able to ensure that we had all the surveyor plans ready so that we could bring it to Cabinet. I know the final step, obviously, is vesting this property in the National Housing Corporation, sir.

Mr. Speaker, sir, the National Housing Corporation, sir, in relation to the transfer of these units - the problem that the National Housing Corporation has is that the maintenance of these units was proving very costly to the National Housing Corporation. The maintaining of them, sir - the maintaining of these units. And of course we had an issue in relation to arrears. And one of the ways of encouraging persons to really pay the rent was to give them

an opportunity to own them. And that increased the person's interest in owning a piece of the rock.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I want to support the Member of Parliament, the Minister of Housing, for bringing this resolution to Parliament. Of course we have some other challenges to confront. Of course the Minister will also look at other areas too. And one of the other areas that I believe goes hand in hand with this, in relation to access to home ownership and access to land in Barbados, is the fact that under the Tenancies Freehold Act, we started that programme in the Ministry of Housing because we recognised that there were a number of persons living in tenancies here who never came forward to the Ministry of Housing to assert their rights under that piece of legislation. And what happened there is that the Ministry of Housing, in conjunction with the National Housing Corporation, embarked on an educational programme so that we could inform those living on the land, particularly in St. John, of their rights. I think Bath Tenantry was one - a long outstanding one. Long outstanding. And I could also take you to the Glebe Lancer in St. George because that is a very outstanding one too. So that other Barbadians can have access to title and access to property under the Tenancies Freehold Act. Particularly, sir, that is another area, sir, that I know the planning department in the Ministry of Housing allows - there are a number of Barbadians who have qualified under the Tenancies Freehold Act and they can benefit, particularly once they are informed of their rights and they come forward, sir, to own a piece of this rock, sir.

Mr. Speaker, sir, before I close my speech, sir, I want to - Mr. Speaker, sir, the programme of the Democratic Labour Party between 2008 and before the last election, sir, there was a lot of talk, sir, from members on the other side and members of the other side who were not members in here, who are not members in here. And they criticised our programme. They criticised our joint venture programme particularly. Mr. Speaker, sir, the one at Calvary, sir, which is a genuine PPP, sir, at no cost to the National Housing Corporation - at no cost to the National Housing Corporation - where the developer put in his capital and all his finance at no cost to the National Housing Corporation. And to this day, Mr. Speaker, sir, the National Housing Corporation is benefiting from that project at Calvary, sir.

But compare, sir, compare our joint venture programme to what existed under the former administration. Mr. Speaker, sir, I go through them, sir. Let me state, sir, that only two or three Sundays ago a remark was made by the Member for St. Joseph and it is a remark, sir, that questioned the type of contractors that were employed under my tenure as Minister of Housing at the National Housing Corporation. It questioned the character of contractors employed by the National Housing

Corporation during my time. But I believe, sir - Mr. Speaker, sir - I know that in the practice of criminal law, sir, that if you open up character, the other side can open up character too. It opens the floodgates, you know. And this, in fact, gives me the opportunity, sir, to really look, sir, at a matter that is troubling me, sir. I just laid the foundation.

Mr. Speaker, sir, I came across - and with your permission, sir, I would like to - with your permission, sir, I would like to call to attention that NHC, sir, and also a statutory corporation under the then government, sir, entered into a contract, sir, with a person by the name - sir, I try to get your name because your name is a very long name, sir, I want to call it right - a millionaire contractor called Hafiz Karamat. Yes, sir. Hafiz Karamat - H-A-F-I-Z K-A-R-A-M-A-T - that we were - Mr. Speaker, sir, a contract was entered with this contractor, sir, by the NHC, sir, in the year 2005. And NHC, sir - Adine Stone. Yes, Adine Stone. You got it right. Adine Stone - a dancer in the year - let me get it right now, sir. Craving your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, sir, I want to make sure I have it right.

In the month of February 2005 a contract was entered into by Hafiz Karamat for land at Deacons Town Heights. It was a joint venture programme. Again, Mr. Speaker, sir, BIDC entered into a contract with the same company - or it looks like the same company, speaking subject to correction of course - carrying the same name. It was approved to build and construct a building at Newton Business Park. It was approved in 1999, approved by Cabinet in 2000, and construction started in 2003. These are contractors employed by the then administration and the National Housing Corporation. So we had 1999 with the BIDC, approved by Cabinet in 2000, and we had 2005 with a contract entered into by Hafiz Karamat.

I did some research, Mr. Speaker, sir. I did not want the opposition, sir - I want the same Member who attacked me to answer me, to tell me whether it is true that between January 1, 1998 and August 25, 1999 in Trinidad and Tobago - I want to know if they are one and the same person. Because I have information that Karamat, between 1998 and 1999, conspired together in the criminal offence of conspiracy and with other persons to defraud the State of Trinidad with a view to gain for himself by dishonestly arranging a water supply contract. In fact, sir, he was also charged with two Israelis. But this is a contractor -

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, no, this is a citizen of Barbados and so on. I mean, because you know, there's still the rule with respect to names. And you know, the convention is, you know, that you - we try and refrain from calling names so as - because the persons are not here to defend themselves and so on. So I permitted you some latitude, you know, to see where you were going. But I think you've basically gone far enough so make your points and move on.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I'm not going to call any more, sir. I didn't get this because - are you saying that in relation to members on the other side?

Mr. SPEAKER: No. You are aware of the rule? That you basically cannot - that if you want to criticise people, you can only speak to them with respect to the public office. And then in regards to that, you need to indicate what it is and get permission beforehand. You have not done that. But I'm saying that in order to avoid difficulties with that rule, you know that the norm is that you refrain from calling people's names and so on. So let's see how we can move forward. I would first frame it differently.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I'll frame it differently, sir. Let me say, sir, I want to know, sir, if the same contractor, sir, is the same contractor, sir, that was charged for conspiracy, sir,

Mr. SPEAKER: Just to be clear, it's Standing Order Number 28, Rule 10A. No reference may be made in debate to the character or conduct of any person except in his official or public capacity. And then of course, any member who desires to do that should inform the Chair beforehand and so on. That is the rule to which I refer.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: I'm not linking or speaking about character, sir. I'm just asking a question, sir. And let me say, sir, that I reframe it differently, sir, and I will ask the question, sir. There is a contractor, sir, that was contracted by the then former administration, sir. And I'm asking, sir, if that contractor was ever charged for an offence, sir, in another jurisdiction, sir. And the question is, sir, if it is true that the same contractor - in fact, I even take it further - if it is a fact, sir, and I read this here from the special report on the Newton Business Park, sir, Chapter Five of the general report, sir, if it's the same contractor, sir, paragraph three, subsection three, sir, the year 2007 - if, sir, that \$18.5 million was then disbursed to the same contractor even though the project was not completed, sir. That's the point I want to make, sir. \$18.5 million, sir, was disbursed to the same contractor, sir, even though the project was not completed.

The point I'm making, sir - I was pilloried, sir, and all sorts of questions and statements were made, sir, about contractors that were employed at the National Corporation. But I will go further, sir, because evidence will support it, sir. Again, the UDC Special Audit of 2006, sir - the UDC Report of 2006. I will tell you what it says here. The UDC Report of 2006 stated that in order, sir, to become a contractor, sir, you had to be a person - a contractor under the Barbados Labour Party, sir. You had to be a person who frequented Parliament Yard. Who were persons of certain reputation and criminal deportees. That is what is laid in this Parliament, sir, in relation - so when they talk, sir, about contractors employed by this

Government, sir - oh, it's here, sir. Page 8. UDC Special Audit, 2006. The Urban Commission conceded that, urged in allowing persons to remain on its register of contractors, including those persons who only claimed to be a contractor, was that they were unemployed, unemployable, homeless vagrants of Bridgetown or criminal deportees, and those who frequented Parliament Yard, sir. This is how you had to become a contractor, sir, under the then administration, sir. This is the 2006 Special Audit, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: You need to wind up. I'll give you two minutes to wind up.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, sir, I'm saying to you that the Earth Joint Venture Programme, sir, was a successful programme, sir. And if you compare, sir, the Joint Venture Programme with what happened under the Barbados Labour Party, sir - I can name them, sir. I will name them, sir. Bartley Meadows, sir. Bartley Meadows - in 2008, sir, we had to order a special engineer, sir, and get a special report from the engineer, sir, in relation to the work that was done at Bartley Meadows and the fact that people got mortgages and the fact, sir, that the National Corporation - they weren't able to account, sir, in relation to the type of contractors that they had contracted. And the fact, sir, that we had some bad workmanship, sir, up there and we had to end up, sir, again footing the cost of the bad work at Bartley Meadows, sir. That's a fact, sir.

You go now, sir, you go to parts of Lower Burnie, which is supposed to be a joint venture programme. And don't even get into Lower Burnie Thompson, because that is another debate, sir. We had issues at Lower Burnie. The Member for St. Michael South East is familiar with what happened at Lower Burnie. She may want to go before the committee approaches. And, sir, we had to do a programme of cleaning up, sir, in relation to the Joint Venture Programme - the Joint Venture Programme as it was, sir. The fact is that we had no issues with local contractors. In fact, the issue that came up, sir - no due diligence was carried out, no due diligence in terms of contractors with the Joint Venture Programme, sir. Issues, sir, at Montpelier, sir. Issues at even Dean's Town, sir. We had to commit, sir, and we had to clean up that, sir. In fact, the Joint Venture Programme was in shambles. It cost the National Corporation millions of dollars, particularly the one in St. James with the BNB. Montpelier was another issue, sir.

So, you know, I am saying, Mr. Speaker, sir, that in conjunction with what we are doing in relation to the free transfer of units, a factor is the fact that we also extended the Joint Venture Programme to those who, sir, don't want to wait for 20 years. But they can come, sir, and before 20 years qualify through the efforts of this Government, sir. Through the efforts of this Government.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, sir, that again, what we are looking after, particularly with this programme, is also the issue of urban renewal, sir. And in terms of the next phase there will be infilling, sir - infilling the spaces here - and the factor that in urban Barbados there are Crown lands that we can utilise. There are Crown lands that might not be big lands, but of course we can put a two-storey structure. We can put there housing accommodation that can alleviate some of the pressures there and also save some of those persons who cannot, who will not fall into the category of buying a piece of land or even buying, sir, a house. There will always be some persons who can only rent, sir. And that is where we're going. So we have to make sure we accommodate that set. I thank you for your contribution. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the Honourable Member for...

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a short intervention here. I don't think that there's been any doubt over the last couple of years about the superiority of the housing programme implemented by this administration. That is a given. Even though you will hear some criticism from the other side and from other quarters. The reality is that there's no perfect programme. But certainly we can take some much confidence in the fact that the successful implementation of our programmes is far superior to what happened 14 years previous to 2008.

There are still some gaps, however, and there are a couple of areas that are of some concern to myself. Let me start in particular in St. Philip South where I am very concerned that we are unable to find a solution to that devilish problem at Rock Hall. And I believe that the Minister responsible for housing - I know that we have had dialogue on several occasions about a potential solution - and I want to use this opportunity to urge him to let us move forward with the solutions that we have been contemplating. Because it does my soul no good. In fact, it does my soul considerable harm when from time to time persons come to see me, living without electricity, without water, without the basic things that we have accepted should be the norm in terms of housing in Barbados. So that's where I want to begin. I want to begin by yet again urging my colleagues to see how we can put our heads together and find a solution.

The other area that I want to touch on briefly is how do we ensure that we get the right socioeconomic mix when we are having housing projects. This morning, for example, on my way down to Parliament from my office in Wildey, there were at least ten young men beside the street. A couple of them without shirts and they had the usual box container which looked like - well, it looks like sweets to the Member for Christ Church - but to me it looks like cigarette wrappers and the other little things that we know that they sell. And I thought to myself, well, here is an area

where certainly we need to have some kind of social intervention, because if we continue to group persons of a certain ill together, it becomes more and more difficult to see how we can transform their lives. And therefore it means that when we are doing housing development, I would like to suggest that we marry - that we understand the dynamics of who we are putting together - and try to ensure as much as possible that we do not only focus on one group, but indeed that we try to have a mixture and amalgamation of the best so that everyone can bring each other along.

Without doubt, there are some areas where there is a link between the poor standard of housing, the poor living accommodation, and the type of social ills that we are seeing reflected in those particular areas. And I would like to encourage us as an administration - I do not want to publicly identify the areas because I do not want to be accused of being snobbish or suggesting that only crime occurs in these particular areas - but there are some areas, and we know where they are, where the housing that people are exposed to is not the best. I am told in some cases there are still dirt floors or very poorly kept wooden floors where there is no distinction between the neighbour's wall and wood and the others. And those are the areas where we are finding challenges in terms of crime and, as I said, some social dysfunction. And therefore, without doubt, I would like to see us find where we are able to move some of these people out, to let them have some space, to extract some of the houses where we can.

I know my good friend the Mighty Gabby - I am allowed to call him the Mighty Gabby - he had his famous song, Emmerton. But there are some cases where, for persons' own good and for the good of the country, as a government and as a responsible government, we must look seriously at how we can move these individuals out of their poor housing accommodation, and in particular where the physical space does not allow the rebuilding of a home. The only reasonable thing to do then is to move them out from where they are. And there are several areas where, without doubt, that is what we have to do as a government. And I am pretty confident that, based on my discussions with the Minister of Housing, he is in agreement with me, and I believe that we are going to sometime soon have to make this decision in Cabinet - that there are certain areas where without doubt we are going to have to move certain individuals out from where they are so we can provide reasonable housing for them.

As I said, I am very concerned because without doubt there seems to be a link between the poor - and in some cases very poor - living conditions and the difficulties we are having in terms of young men in particular not abiding by the laws of our country. And if we have to borrow \$100 million or whatever the amount is that will be required, I will say to this Parliament, I will say to the

people of Barbados, that notwithstanding our challenges, it is better for us to borrow and invest and save and provide decent housing for these Barbadians and save many of them from coming into contact with the criminal justice system, than at the back end allow them to continue living in not the best of conditions. And then of course we have challenges in many of these areas. So I want to flag that and I want to suggest that whatever the cost is, we need to look at it and we need to address it.

I know that this is a bugbear of my colleague from St. James South. He is quick to say that one of the things that we are not doing a good job of is recognising that we also have a responsibility to provide housing for the so-called middle class in this country. That we have a responsibility to also ensure that there are opportunities for them. There is a development in Husbands. I am sure that the Minister responsible will update us in terms of what is happening with that particular development. I believe there were close to 100 houses that were being contemplated - I am being told 72, not 100. If I remember correctly, there was a potential for decent housing and an opportunity also for the National Housing Corporation in conjunction with the particular contractor to, as we would say colloquially, make a little profit at the time, so that we can provide decent housing for 72 families in this country and address that issue in terms of middle-class housing, because we tend to focus on what we consider to be low-income housing whilst not recognising that there are other sections of this community that have challenges as well.

Parish Land comes to mind. I note recently passing there and seeing that Parish Land in St. Philip is cleaned up and looking in top condition. I am assured by the Minister that work should start there soon, if it has not already started. And I raised that because at least a year or two years ago I made a point to the Minister of Housing at the time that Parish Land, with its proximity to the prison, that if there are opportunities for prison officers to be given housing at Parish Land, it would make a lot of sense - because it would, A, provide officers with housing; B, it would mean that they are close to work; and C, of course, if we have an event, a hurricane or otherwise, it would be easier for them to get into work than if they were living in Spring Hall in St. Lucy or somewhere else like that. So I look forward to the completion of these houses and I look forward to that promise that was made to me that we would see the allocation of a few of those houses in particular to members of Her Majesty's Prison staff, because it makes a lot of sense.

Again, I am also confident in the fact that there is movement at Constant. I flag these because they are being flagged by the media and other individuals in terms of where we were going with these programmes, and I am happy to see that there is movement. I am aware, and I want to support this - I am aware that the present Minister

of Housing is very keen on providing land. He is an advocate of providing land. He believes firmly that if you give a man a piece of land, he will build a house. In fact, he will build a better house, a bigger house, and cheaper than what would be provided by a contractor or by the National Housing Corporation. What we need to do is to provide the land. Over the years, when I was much younger and able, on Sundays many of our friends stirred cement - concrete, corned beef and biscuits and Esso field with some water. We did much of that on Sundays after church, of course, Mr. Speaker, after church. But the point is that the Minister of Housing, the Member for St. Lucy, is a staunch proponent of this - that we need to provide land for individuals and they will build their homes, and we need to give some traction to that.

And again, it is a simple mechanism because the NHC has to find a way to make some money. Without doubt, we cannot continue to subsidise the NHC. Yes, we have a responsibility to provide housing solutions for those who cannot afford it. But the other side of the coin is that we also have a responsibility to ensure that the NHC can survive and can sustain itself. So we have to implement a programme that enables the NHC to make some money to pay its bills, whilst at the same time subsidising those who are in need of subsidising.

Which brings me to another issue. And in fact, sir, there is a link between everything that we do. There is a link between our challenges in housing and what is happening in other parts of our society, and what is happening in particular within the family domain. Because there was a time - and yes, I am going to respect the fact that every man - in fact, you would hear me say that there is no better feeling than being able to put your key into your own door. Certainly, owning your own home is something that we all aspire to. But what we are seeing now is individuals at 16, 17, 18 being told by their mothers and fathers that they need to leave the family house. And they come to you and they say, well, Mr. Brathwaite, I need help. I have nowhere to live because my mother has just put me out. And that is why I make the point that the challenges we are having in housing are linked to other parts of what is happening in our society. And the whole issue of family, the whole issue of how do we work harder to keep our families together, does concern all of us and has been a concern for quite some time.

I saw recently - I have not read the article as yet, but I saw recently that the Anglican Church had a service on Sunday, I believe. I travelled back to Barbados on Sunday. And I saw there was a cry for us to return to our old values. And that is a cry that I have been echoing for the last couple of years. We are yet again our brother's keepers, where in fact there is nothing wrong with a family, including extended family, sharing accommodation until they can do better. I grew up, sir - there was a time when

three of us were in the bed together. And of course what you try to do is make sure you get in before your younger brother because then he has to sleep in the middle. But the point is that I look back at those memories with a smile because those were some good days. We spent lots of time chatting and being good brothers.

But nowadays I am told that cannot happen anymore. That in fact you have families who spend more time fighting each other. But it then brings me to another point, which is this: because it is all right on one hand for me to say that we need to strengthen families and encourage them to live in harmony, but then on the other hand you have a challenge of having 13 or 14 individuals in a two-bedroom house, and that creates its own problems. And I am calling on the NHC - I cannot call on the Minister because there is a misconception in this country that the Minister, whoever the Minister is, does everything. It is not true. Quite often you hear about things on the street going on at your ministry because the functionaries are the ones who have control. They are the ones whom the public comes to more often than not. And we have to create a policy that does ensure that where you have a household like that, where you have 13 persons living in a household, certainly that is a case where without doubt, if a member of that family comes to the National Housing Corporation and says we need some assistance with housing, they should be given priority. Those are the kind of cases, and that is why it is important to have the connection between the National Housing Corporation, the provision of housing, and what happens in the Ministry of Social Care, so we can identify the families that are most exposed.

We speak all the time about saving our young people, about saving our young men in particular. I speak all the time about saving families. And housing is but one component of how do we save our families. We need to look to address the other issues. Just yesterday I was shopping and I met someone shopping for one of the breakfast programmes that we have. I believe it is a programme put on by the Member for St. Michael Central. And in a conversation I was making the point that it is one thing for us to have a breakfast programme, but what we then also need to do is to target the families and see how in fact we can remove these children from our breakfast programmes. It is not enough for us to say, well, I have a breakfast programme and I look after 80 persons every day. What we really need to do is go into the households, go into the families, and say, well, is there a housing issue, is there a job issue, what issues do we have, and see how we can best address them - to reduce the number from 80 to 60, to reduce the number from 60 to 40, et cetera.

So the point I am making, sir, is that where there is a demand for housing, and particularly where there is a demand for housing at the lower socioeconomic spectrum, there are other issues that a caring government and a caring

Member of Parliament will look at and should look at. And I dare say that is one of the things that I have been saying to my colleagues - that we need to approach these things holistically. It is not just enough for someone to come into the National Housing Corporation and say, well, I need a rent-to-own, and let them go their way. We need to see, well, are there any other issues that we can address for them at that point in time?

Sir, I am aware that this resolution is to address housing - is it at Rosemont? And I believe that these are going to be terraced, these are single units.

Okay, that's good news because in fact I was going to make the point that without doubt that even though we embarked on a few high rise housing projects, the reality is that the time has come for us to relook at this policy. And I believe we have relooked at this policy and I don't believe that we'll be going down that road anytime soon again because of the astronomical costs involved. So it will mean, of course, that in particular in St. Michael, where there's not a lot of land available, that we will have to find housing solutions outside of St. Michael.

I heard the member for Christ Church South in his presentation making a call for housing in Christ Church South. But the reality is that there's space in St. Lucy, there's space in St. Philip, there's some space in St. John. We have to take people where space is available as opposed to, for narrow, parochial or sentimental - and I almost said political, but I'm going to say parochial and sentimental - reasons, identifying areas where in fact it does not make a lot of sense. It makes more sense to in fact establish communities in other parts of Barbados.

Let me end by just reiterating a point that I made earlier, and I'm not sure if I was as clear as I should have been. And I will illustrate this way. I have a young man who I go into the Valerie complex from time to time to see. And it does not matter what hour of the day or night I go into that complex - I notice that on the left there is always a group, and sometimes as many as 12, sometimes as many as 20 or 24 individuals of various ages. And again, from my observation, it looks like a group that is in need of some kind of social intervention, without doubt.

But the point I'm making is that in fact we need, with haste, to not only identify the areas where there is conflict, but we need with haste to identify the areas where there's potential conflict and try to take programmes to these areas to help transform the lives of the young men in particular. A simple illustration - much to my surprise, two weeks ago I found out that the YMCA was offering classes and I signed up a young man for a tiling class. Ten weeks, a beginner's tiling class. And, sir, if I had the time, I would take it myself. And if you have the time, sir, I would like to encourage you to consider it - a 10-week beginners' tiling

class, \$200. And if you can learn to tile for \$200, if you can do basic tiling for \$200, it is worth it.

And those are the type of programmes that in fact all across Barbados we should be implementing. We should find out - like I intend to - how do I get the teacher from the YMCA into St. Philip South so we can have a similar programme? And get programmes, sir, all across Barbados. And target these particular areas where, as I said, you can see that there is a need for social interventions.

I close, sir, by thanking the Minister of Housing. I know, sir, that he is very enthusiastic about his programmes. I know, sir, and I will say this, that in fact he has been taking a lot of flak, a lot of bad press - unnecessary. It is a bit uncharitable because at the end of the day, much of what the Ministry of Housing, much of what the NHC wants to do is conditioned on the availability of resources and the availability of financial resources. And if in fact the NHC does not have the financial resources, then much as the Minister would like to do, he would be unable to implement all the programmes that he would like to have implemented. So he may be shy about saying it. So I will say on his behalf that in fact, if left up to the Minister, he would have houses all across Barbados immediately. But unfortunately, government does not work like that. And unfortunately, there is no country of our size with our resources who can be all things to all men and who can provide the level of resources that we all want.

But that notwithstanding, I want to congratulate the Minister for bringing this resolution. I want to congratulate him for being able to find a way to once again kick-start those projects that I identified - like Paris Land, Constance, Lancaster. I remember the member for St. Andrew describing them as slave huts and how he was going to knock them down as soon as they returned to office. And I drove past recently and I saw lights and curtains and I saw people outside chatting. We implement policies to touch people's lives. We, unlike the other side, when we place houses, we actually place people in houses. We provide housing solutions so that real families, real individuals can go, can sleep, can touch, can breathe. And whether I pass there day or night, the reality is that I passed and I looked and I saw persons living in Lancaster and living there happily.

Again, let me congratulate the Minister for going in. The Minister said early on that he is going to ensure that mortgages are dealt with and conveyances are done. And that is what we are about. And we will continue to provide housing solutions for Barbadians - within the confines, within the challenges that we have in terms of our financial resources. So I just want to close by urging Barbadians to recognise that in fact we would like to do more. We certainly would like to provide more housing solutions. But

I am sure that under the able leadership of the Member for St. Lucy, we will be able to transform the housing landscape of this country. I close by saying that this resolution has my unwavering support. I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. The honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thought I should lend my voice in support of this resolution which seeks to place 1.871 hectares, or 4.6 acres of land under the jurisdiction of the National Housing Corporation. And I've been made aware that this is to assist in the conveying of the land to all of those persons who are part of that development at Rosemont. I am aware that over time the various political parties who occupy the seat of governance in this country would have built out many of this type of housing solution to satisfy the needs of our people. I believe just over 3 300 of these type of housing solutions were in fact developed in this country. And they're scattered throughout Barbados. Heavy concentration, of course, in the parish of St. Michael because to some extent it still remains the most populous parish in Barbados. And therefore there would be a need to house the citizens of St. Michael. But also in Christ Church as well, in the areas of Gall Hill, Silver Hill, Wharton Terrace, Sayers Court, you will find these housing developments as well. Sayers Court, of course, being the oldest of this type of solution, followed by Gall Hill, Silver Hill and Wharton. Wharton falls within the area that I currently represent in the House of Assembly. And in that area there are 120 of these housing units.

Not all persons would have occupied these units for the designated time, as identified in the very socially progressive policy enunciated by the Democratic Labour Party way back in 2003. But of course further enhanced in 2008 when the Democratic Labour Party came to the House of Assembly and came to the country as the government of Barbados. And it was a pledge made to satisfy those persons who would have been in these houses for 20 years or more. I've heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, I believe, speak to the cost essentially of some of these houses. And he is an engineer of some renown. And therefore, even though he's not a builder, he understands mathematics and all of the various techniques, all of the mechanical.

I am not. Mr. Speaker, would you ask for silence there - that these professionals do get up and argue with one another who is better. Those of us who educate them are proud that they would argue such. But at the end of the day, it is he who educates that is much better than those who actually receive the education. So let's have a little silence from them.

Sir, I'm making the point that this was a socially progressive policy. It was not set up to make persons who are in these areas vote for the Democratic Labour Party. The policies of the Democratic Labour Party are not orchestrated in that particular way. You recognise the need for a particular solution which would bring about a particular change in attitude and behaviour which would give a given response in relation to those persons. I mean, it's already been stated that there are several things which you can provide for an individual which can cause a change in behaviour of that individual. You can provide shelter, which is in this instance what we're talking about. You can provide access to food, you can provide access to clothing. You can even create the kind of environment in which love, in which the capture of the emotion appears quite significant. But they all cause people to raise their self-esteem. They all cause people, in other words, to raise their heads, to feel better about themselves. And this kind of socially progressive policy which was enunciated back then is one which essentially caused people to feel better about themselves for the first time. The person said, well, this has now been passed to me because I've been paying for it for 20 years, 30 years, 40 years. And the Democratic Labour Party just does not want to keep people in an environment where they are paying rent, where they are essentially renters and not owners of their houses, are not owners of their homes. Persons rent to own is a concept which means you own at the end of the process of renting. Again, enlightened policies.

I don't think in our society we spent enough time in analysing what it is that governments do and how governments create the kind of social environment to enhance the lives of their people. But more so the Democratic Labour Party - what is it we have done over time, having come to office? Well, election was in 1961, late 1961, but coming to office in 1962, the kind of progressive policies, the kinds of progressive legislation, the kind of social behaviour which we have encouraged to make persons feel, as I said, better about themselves.

There would be an argument which says that the conclusion to this exercise should have been done before. But we all know the difficulties and this happens. You can come up with the best policy, but then as you make that journey, there are many challenges which you encounter on that journey. And sometimes - I mean, let's understand what happened in many of these areas. We've seen them. A house was built in a particular way, but somebody would have made an extension to the back, somebody would have made an extension to the front, all of it without Town and Country Planning permission. People set up businesses in different areas. A whole plethora of different things happen. But we still wanted to pass these houses, these apartments over to those who have been in them for the specified time of 20 years and who would have paid up their rent, because that too was one of the other stipulations

relative to having the homes conveyed to the residents, to those persons who occupy those houses.

We came to this House in the period, I believe, 2008 to 2013, and passed the appropriate legislation to ensure that notwithstanding what could have been called encumbrances on these houses, on these facilities, persons would still be able to get a certificate of compliance to be owners of these facilities.

One of the things I believe, Mr. Speaker, which has made me relatively proud over the years, as you watch how persons saw these rental units as a place for shelter but did not simply rest there and say, I will live here forever and ever, amen - there are persons who eventually, by combining family incomes, moved on. Many of them moved into the parish of St. Philip, which at certain points in time was the largest parish in Barbados. Large tracts of land became available for housing development. Persons bought 5 000 square feet, 6 000 square feet, and that land rested as they paid off or paid down the cost of the land to those who had developed it. Eventually, because they had shelter within the housing areas, they were able to obtain a mortgage and build housing solutions in places like St. Philip, Christ Church, St. George, and those three areas particularly, and then move on, allowing the unit to become available to be occupied by other individuals. So that was a progressive mentality by many of these individuals.

There are some who were not able to do that. And that is where the government - that is essentially part of the role of the government, you know, providing that helping hand to lift persons out of the current state of their circumstances. It's facilitation. It is to give them an opportunity to feel, as I said, better about themselves. And this is part of that exercise.

When the previous government led by the Barbados Labour Party came up with their solution in that persons had to pay a certain percentage of the cost of the units, there were several persons who went forward to be part of that particular exercise. When we came to power, we said the other persons would be able to get theirs with only the legal fees paid as part of the transaction - minimal, because this cost is relatively minimal. I am not aware that any of those units have in fact been conveyed, because, again, we are working through many of those issues. But I look forward to the day when all of those persons in Wharton Terrace would say, look, I now have my - many of them, in fact, 20 years - I now have my document in my hand. My house is valued at \$110 000. I have significant equity. This is something that I own. This is mine. And they will be able to use it as collateral in the enhancement of the lives of their children or the lives of other members of their family.

We, as a government - I know we don't thump our chests often, and maybe we shouldn't, because we were not

placed in this House of Assembly to do so. Others might. Others might do that. But we go about the task. We go about the task of changing the circumstances for all people. I know we have hit some difficult times over the last few years, but one of the things that has in fact stood out between 2008 and even into this current period - and the Member for St. Philip South has in fact spoken to it - is that we found willing partners; the National Housing Corporation found willing partners to work with them to build out houses across many parts of Barbados. And many names have been called. I believe one of the first to be completed was at Workhall in St. Philip South. And I remember going to that opening and looking at the various properties. I would have sought to acquire one, but I believe at the time my salary range might have been a bit out of sync.

It is not - as the Honourable Member for St. Philip South passed a note to me stating that it would be better than you who ain't got no home. But I'm saying, Mr. Speaker, all of us have a home. Birds have their homes too, in the trees, in their nests. And they find comfort. They're able to provide the warmth for their young ones. They're able to do that. We're not homeless. We've even provided in this country space for the homeless. Foxes have holes. We are not nomadic. And the Honourable Member for St. Philip North was there whispering to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South that he seems to be all about Barbados - so he seems to be nomadic - but many of us do find shelter. I'm going on beyond that. I know a bit of humour sometimes is important.

I was making the point that between 2008 and even under this current period we are still seeking to provide housing for our citizens. There are parts of Barbados which are uncomfortable. Some houses - I don't think it is fine to have 18 and 20 people, 16 and 15 and 12 persons literally scorching a house. People sleep in rotation or just scattered across any available space. For Barbados in the 21st century, that is not a good sight. And therefore, along with the private sector, government has to continue to work assiduously to satisfy the needs of all, all of those who need housing in this country. Not a large population, but we have enough persons who are still very much in need of housing.

There's a cost to finding the money to pay for that. Part of it is all the legal fees, fees and other fees charged by banks in this country. If you borrow from a bank, I mean, it is horrendous. You know, you pay the attorney of the bank, you pay your attorney, you pay some kind of other fee. I mean, there are so many fees that as citizens we are burdened with so many fees. I mean, it is interesting that I'm coming to you - I want about \$100 000 - by the time I'm finished, it is somewhere in the region of \$120 000. The fees for the lawyers - I have nothing against lawyers. I think they are good men and women under the sight of

God. It is that there becomes - some of them become bad men and women under the sight of other men and women, because we always stand in condemnation one of each other. That's what we always do. So I would have been the best teacher for some and the worst teacher for others, because that is what we do.

The Honourable Member - I've only known the Honourable Member for the last seven years. And he is worse off for not knowing me before. Now he's going to go back. Mr. Speaker, this youngster is becoming an irritant. We beat you - I don't know who they beat - we beat you. And it wasn't in Roebuck Street, it was in Crockton Street. Those were in the good old days when there was a club called the Bluebirds Club. And good, strong and solid men - a naughty army officer in St. Philip South, he was a junior, very much a junior. There were leaders in business and government who were part of the Bluebirds and Crusaders and St. Bartholomew's who developed the skills of debating. Yes, I lost the debate. But it has made me a stronger and a better person. Because sometimes you lose, sometimes you win.

That's the reality with the Democratic Labour Party. The people of Barbados are always in a winning mode. Always in a winning mode. We have challenges. There are economic issues that face us. There are social issues even now that impact upon us. The educational issues that impact upon us. But we always stay constant. We always stay fixed, true to the philosophy embedded in the hearts of all of us, that the lives of Barbadians must be made better. This is what we say, this is what we practise, and this is what we do.

And you will find that in what I call now a vulture culture. You know, Mr. Speaker, what are vultures? I call it our vulture culture. You can't do anything right. There are people who pick your bones, who pick your flesh. If you leave this Parliament or you say anything, you are picked to pieces. The call-in programmes, the blogs, are even more insidious and dangerous. Yet we use them because it's an interesting technological development, but unwisely used - not to enhance the mind capacity, the intellect of human beings, but to decry and to bring down and to sully. That's what I call the vulture culture.

Rt. Hon. F. J. STUART: Many ways have been devised to try to deal with it. In the late 1930s, we started with something called a Housing Committee. When that did not deliver the goods, we went to a housing board. When the housing board did not deliver the goods, we went to a housing authority. And that housing authority was assisted by, for the purposes of urban Barbados, an Urban Development Corporation. That is UDC number one. We have UDC number two. Now that was a corporation. We now have a commission. And after the Housing Authority did not deliver the goods, we went to the National Housing

Corporation. We got rid of the Urban Development Corporation and we established an Urban Development Commission, along of course, with a Rural Development Commission to take care of challenges in rural Barbados. But we continue to play catch up because this is a stubborn problem which governments have to deal with and have been dealing with ever since universal adult suffrage was introduced in this country.

The acuteness of the problem also manifested in the tenancies of Barbados, where, because of the acuteness of the shortage of housing, landlords exercised almost well authoritarian power over their tenants. Tenants were subjected to all sorts of abuses because the options available to them were either limited or non-existent. In 1961, of course - before 1961, before the Democratic Labour Party came to office - let us be fair to the facts. The predecessor government of the Barbados Labour Party tried to confront some of these problems. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central mentioned, for example, houses that were built after the hurricane of 1955 - Hurricane Janet. I know the housing area at Six Roads was built around that time and there were others built as well.

But then the Democratic Labour Party came to office in 1960. Its manifesto made very clear that in addition to all of the other housing problems the country was facing, there was a peculiar challenge in plantation tenancies. And the manifesto made it very clear - the manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party in 1961 - that the government, a DLP government, would take over all of the plantation tenancies and put the spots at the disposal of the tenants. That was 1961. A committee was set up to look at the implementation of that promise. And that committee was chaired by a permanent secretary of that period, Mr. J. C. King. And it was discovered by that committee, and discovered many years later, that there was a problem in the implementation of that measure, in the carrying out of that promise. And that problem had to do with an acute shortage of land surveyors in Barbados - that getting the land surveying work done was a challenge.

But while trying to deal with that particular problem, other problems were surfacing in other tenancies across Barbados. I believe, Mr. Speaker, you know a place in Barbados called All King's Land? I believe it is somewhere near Eagle Hall. There used to be a tenantry down in that area called the Bossivigo Tenantry. And that was only one of the tenancies in which tenants were experiencing acute problems, because landlords could eject you from the land with the same kind of abandon as you would detach a hoe stick from a hoe and throw it away. That was unsatisfactory to the Democratic Labour Party at the time, and the party stepped in legislatively and passed the Tenancies Control Act.

Now, in addition to protecting tenants in those tenancies from the whim and the caprice and sometimes the ruthlessness of the landlords of that day, that piece of legislation, so far as house spots were concerned, made it very clear that landlords could not increase their rents - the rents for house spots - by more than 20 per cent, unless they got the permission of a magistrate. Well, I do not believe that in 1965 the figure might have been 20 per cent. I think it came to 20 per cent a little later. But a percentage was imposed, and you could not go above that percentage unless you got the permission of a magistrate. Because one of the techniques that was used in those days in order to get rid of tenants was to put the rent beyond the reach and then put yourself in a position where you could say that since the tenant is not paying the rent, you are justified in getting rid of the tenant. So the Tenancies Control Act dealt with two broad issues: controlling the ejection or the eviction of tenants from their lands, and also controlling the rental rates in those tenancies.

Around 1980, a Barbados Labour Party administration introduced legislation which would at last allow tenants in plantation tenancies to buy the lots on which they were living. That piece of legislation we know as the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act of 1980. Of course, by 1980, things had improved considerably. We had 20 years of free secondary education in Barbados. We had had university education, and there would have been many more land surveyors in 1980 than there would have been in 1960. So we were able to deal with some of those problems. And the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act was a good progressive piece of legislation. I have never criticised it because I think it responded to a need. What I always criticise, though, is the view that the idea had its genesis in the Barbados Labour Party. The idea, the promise, the commitment was to be found in the manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party of 1961.

Time has rolled on. We have got some problems sorted out in the plantation tenancies. The Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, of course, extended its reach beyond plantation tenancies to deal with other tenancies as well. And amendments have been done to that legislation over time to make it more user-friendly and more efficient in its functioning. We are now at a stage, of course, where in non-plantation tenancies, Government has committed itself to subsidising the cost of lots beyond a certain price per square foot. That has placed a very heavy burden on the treasury. And that is a matter, though, that government has committed itself to and has to discharge. But many other solutions resulted from the introduction of that measure.

But in spite of all of that, our challenges continue and have continued down to the time when we came back to office in 2008, when we had to complete work at Country Park Towers, we had to do March Field, we had to do Workhall, there is Coverley, there is Grotto, there is

Valerie, there is Lancaster 1 and 2, and there is Stuart's Lodge at 3 Side Road. And of course, I believe there is a development in Ford's Road as well. We have done all this work since we came to office, but the problems of supply and demand continue. And that is the context within which we have to evaluate the worth of the resolution which we have been debating today. Because provision of affordable housing in Barbados and in every other country in the Caribbean has been a challenge over the last 75 years.

I say over the last 75 years and not before, because before the disturbances of the 1930s, people looking like us did not control these parliaments. The owners of property in those days voted for the owners of property to promote and to protect the interests of the owners of property. That was the gospel according to the period before the disturbances of the 1930s. A limited franchise - and those who owned property, only those who owned property or earned above a certain income, were allowed to vote. So the owners of property voted for the owners of property to protect and promote the interests of the owners of property. Since the introduction of universal adult suffrage, the franchise has been extended, of course, and we have had a chance to tackle the problems that remained untackled for 100 years after the Emancipation Act was passed. There are some problems that remain and we have seen some of those problems surface in Barbados in some rather unfriendly and acute ways over the last decade or so.

Over the years we have talked about rent restriction legislation. And that argument has always been countered by the fact that if you impose restrictions on rent, it could distort the housing market and people might withdraw their houses from the rental pool and so on, and you could exacerbate a problem rather than cure it. I have never really accepted the argument, but I hear it often enough that I do not use the language of rent restriction anymore. What I would say is this, though. If you have, under the Tenancies Control Act, a provision that says that a landlord cannot raise the rent of his land by more than 20 per cent unless he gets the permission of a magistrate - and of course he cannot raise it every week or every month either, even if he is doing it below 20 per cent - and when he goes before the magistrate, and I have done some of these cases myself when I was practising at the bar, a landlord would usually tell the magistrate: well, my income tax has gone up and therefore the rent which I am getting for the land is now far below what I have to pay for income tax. And he gives a miscellany of explanations why he - or in the case of a landlady, she - has to raise the rent. But there really is not much you can do with land to improve it, apart from putting in a road where you can get to it more easily.

But even though you cannot do much with land to improve it, you still have to go to court if you are going to raise the rent by 20 per cent or more and get a magistrate's permission, and the permission is not just whimsically

granted - you have to satisfy the magistrate that the increase is justified. If that relates to land, I ask the question: why can it not relate also to houses? Now, if a tenant is renting a house from me, that house has to be maintained. It has to be kept, according to the law, in tenantable repair. I think that used to be around sections 156 and 157 of the Property Act, and of course the Landlord and Tenant Act and so on. So I have obligations as landlord to make sure that the house is kept in tenantable repair. I have to make sure that it is kept properly painted. It is my house. So at the end of the tenancy I do not want just to have a shell. So I have a duty to keep it in a state of tenantable repair. I have to make sure that the windows are well taken care of, that the flooring, the roof, the ceiling - everything is taken care of. And if I am receiving rent from a tenant, I really have no excuse for not keeping my property in tenantable repair.

What has been happening in Barbados, unfortunately, is that we now have too large a number of landlords and landladies who do not mind receiving the rent, but who are reluctant to spend much of the rent they are receiving on keeping the premises in tenantable repair. And over and above that, they can raise the rent to any level they want. In fact, Honourable Members will recall that there was a stage in Barbados not too long ago when rents were raised to such insane levels that tenants could not afford them and had to vacate. And then the landlords had that golden opportunity - they sought not to rent out the house anymore, but to rent out rooms in the house where they could maximise their returns from tenancies. I think the time has come, because it is still continuing, when we have to look at ways and means to control that form of abuse.

Now let me make it very clear. I do not condone, cannot condone, tenants living in people's property and not paying their rent. Landlords have a right to receive the rent which they have charged and on which they and the tenant have agreed. But if you are receiving rent, you have a duty to keep the premises in tenantable repair and in good condition. And that has not been happening. And in addition to that not happening, rents are being raised whimsically because you do not have to get permission to raise rent for a house, but you have to get permission to raise rent for a house spot. And that in my view is an anomaly which has to be corrected. So that this whole business of renting out rooms and strangers having to live in different rooms in the same house and share the same bathroom and so on - I think there are health and other risks attached to that practice that are not desirable in Barbados. We are going to have to look at it and see how best we can do justice by landlords, do justice by tenants, while at the same time protecting the welfare of the country in terms of health and security and that kind of thing.

But even when we have dealt with that, Mr. Speaker, the challenge of the provision of affordable housing to an increasing number of Barbadians continues. We continue to play catch up because demand continues to outpace and outdistance supply. The best that the state can do is to continue to provide as many solutions as possible. We are not going to get everybody satisfied. There are people who still say that they have had applications in at the National Housing Corporation for long numbers of years. In fact, when we came into office, there were people who were complaining. In fact, we were told that there were 25 000 outstanding applications at the National Housing Corporation. And that gives some sense of the size and the scale of the problem.

So I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for getting this resolution before the House, to congratulate him and his predecessor, the Member for St. Philip North, for the excellent work which they have done at the Ministry of Housing and at the National Housing Corporation in trying to deal with this problem, which from the point of view of modern Barbados is 75 years and growing. And we have not been able to bring that problem effectively under control. Mr. Speaker, our efforts will continue. We have to continue reassuring Barbadians that the work - the great work of producing affordable housing solutions to them - is a commitment, a continuing commitment of the Government of Barbados.

Now, we took a decision around 2000 - it was part of our commitment from 2003 - that a lot of the units being occupied by NHC tenants would be transferred to them at a minimal cost, just the payment of the legal fees, because if they were in the units for 20 years or more, we reasoned that they would have, by the payment of their rents, paid for the property already. And we have been able to transfer some units to former NHC tenants. But there have been some complications in some of the housing estates which relate to things like electrical upgrades, engineering complications, and there are still surveying problems with which we have to deal in the housing sector. But we are not walking away from these challenges. We have to apply our ingenuity to the difficulties which we face in this area, and we will deliver to the people of Barbados. As I understand it, in terms of electrical upgrades and readying some units for transfer to their owners who are entitled to have them, the NHC would now have to look for about \$32 million for electrical upgrades alone. And this has nothing to do with the engineering difficulties to which earlier speakers today - I believe the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and others - have referred. But it is a big challenge, a big problem. But we have to deal with it.

Because, as I believe the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said this morning in his opening speech, anthropologists agreed eons ago that man's basic needs are food, clothing and shelter. And shelter can only be

provided by housing. That is why governments across the world may not have a Ministry of Social Care or may not have a Ministry of Drainage, for example, but they all have a Ministry of Housing, because this is a response to one of man's very basic needs.

So I give my full support to this resolution, Mr. Speaker. And I want to assure the country and all the residents in these housing estates and all those who aspire to own their own homes, that the Government is committed to continuing this struggle to satisfy this basic need for as large a number of Barbadians as is humanly possible and within the constraints of all of the financial challenges which we have been facing in Barbados since the global economic meltdown in the last quarter of 2007, and which has affected Barbados in acute ways ever since then. Before there was that meltdown, we still were not solving the problem. And therefore it can be better understood how, with this sustained downturn, the problem has become even more challenging. But the Government is not daunted and we continue to do our best in all the circumstances to make as many aspiring homeowners in Barbados happy by the provision of as many housing solutions as we possibly can. I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, as I rise to close this debate, I want to share a piece of knowledge to this House. And there is no doubt that in 2003, when the Barbados Labour Party said that they were going to empower the people of Barbados, that they did that not because they wanted to do it, but they knew that as far back as 1963, two years after the Democratic Labour Party came to government, that a Cabinet decision was made by the Cabinet of the Democratic Labour Party to stop people from paying rents and to empower them of ownership. And that is why this morning, when I made the comment that we are not here to encourage people to be dependent on us, but to make them independent people. And I made the comment that in the 50th year of independence, I would like to see this policy in place. It is grounded, based on a fact that as far back as 1963, two years after coming to government, a Cabinet decision was made on this policy and to strengthen that, that by 1965, that policy was further put in place by the Democratic Labour Party, ensuring that places like Long Gap, Grazettes, Parkinson Fields, et cetera, were placed in the hands of the people of Barbados. And then again in 1987, another decision was made by the NAC, again to ensure that the houses were delivered to the people of Barbados. So no one hears the Barbados Labour Party giving the impression that it was their idea and that the Democratic Labour Party was stealing their idea. I want to say, sir, that is not correct, that as far back as 2003, in a Cabinet decision by them, they acknowledged those facts, that it was the Democratic Labour Party that as far back as

1963, brought that policy to a Cabinet decision. And they quoted. They quoted the Cabinet decisions in their document to substantiate what they were going to do. I also want to say, sir, that I agree with all those persons in the urban constituencies

and also in the rural constituencies. And I want to make the point that as far as when I went to Ministry, first went to Ministry, I had asked the officials there to look at the possibility, because I recognise that it is not only the units, because we have to find a way to get housing solutions in the hands of the people of Barbados as quickly as possible. And I observed that one of the problems, especially with the plantation tenancies and these urban tenancies, that the problem had nothing to do with Government per se, but something that had to do with the lawyers on the other side for the simple reason the fees collected are not high. And I have asked my officials to look at the possibility of looking at a two-way street where we also look not only at the purchaser and only at the vendor, but look at a two-way street where we can hire lawyers in-house to also complete that aspect of it. Because if we are going as Government to put these policies in place, we also have to ensure that these things are executed. And if the private sector is not executing them, then the public sector will have to execute them. And I am going to impress on the officials again to remind them of what I have said to them. It is true. I am aware that we had a lawyer working for the NHC and I am told by everybody what wonderful work she was doing. And I can see now that if the NHC cannot continue to hire this lawyer, that the Ministry of Housing, which will have this particular problem, shall hire this particular lawyer because of her efficiency to carry out this. Because we need to empower people. And we will not only be satisfying our goal as it relates to delivering units, but we also have to ensure that those parcels across Barbados that are being delayed now because the fees are not high enough for some people, that we empower them by using the Government agency to ensure that the mandate of the Government is carried out.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that a housing solution - when we think about a housing solution - is not only a canned solution, but I have always made the point in this House and I continue to make the point. Across Barbados, there are many persons who have chattel houses after they have completed the stone structures that would even like to give them away. And a lot of people cannot accept them because they do not have the piece of land to put them on. And I am saying that we have to find lots across Barbados and make them accessible so that when these solutions are there, people can take advantage of them. And I am saying that I think that we have the right solutions and there is nothing wrong with having the units, the high-rise units, but at the same time, when we seek to do the high-rise units, we also have to ensure that we have some lots available in all constituencies. Because I am still

a strong believer that there are certain cultural patterns that we must maintain. I was very happy for the contribution - not that I am not happy with the contribution at all - but when the Honourable Member for Christ Church South went back to the corned beef and biscuits on the weekends of turning concrete, then he has some corned beef and biscuits and you have some rum to drink, et cetera. Because I can tell you about that, sir, the persons who have built my house have always made the point that when my son comes to expand the house or take over the house, the first day he brings a bulldozer by one of the pillars in the house, he will find bare corned beef cans and biscuit wrappers. Because the troopers on weekends, that is what we used to eat. The guys will come and when I ask them what they want, that is what they used to request. And we deliberately bury the corned beef cans and wrappers in a particular location as a landmark. The biscuit wrappers. I said, I know you would hear the biscuits and not wrappers.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have to understand that empowering people - and you know, if you go through rural Barbados and you talk to the experienced people of Barbados, they will always tell you that the upward upliftment of the masses of people of Barbados came through ownership of land. And in rural Barbados, if you were to ask a senior or experienced person about buying his land, he would tell you, no, we do not sell land. We buy land because that is where we get our wealth from. Because unlike other things that would depreciate in value, land has a way of appreciating in value. And that is why I have always said to people that it is important to own a piece of land in Barbados. And I was very happy, sir, looking through this file today, sir, when I saw that as far back as 1963, that we were not only thinking about empowering people, but we recognised that rental is short term, but land ownership is permanent. And that is something that we should move to very quickly, sir. And I want it to be recorded, sir, that two years after coming to Government, the Democratic Labour Party sought to empower people through ownership and not through rentals because they saw rentals as short term and ownership as long term. And that is exactly what we are here today doing, Mr. Speaker. And that is why we are different to the other side, sir. And that is why we are here today, sir, debating this resolution. And they are outside because they cannot understand these social policies, sir. They speak about rental, they speak about dependency, while we speak about independence, sir. And what we are doing, sir, is ensuring that by 2016 we have empowered many Barbadians not only by giving rental units, but we also want to ensure that a large number of them have their own lot or plot of land so that they can speak to their children and tell them that they are truly independent. So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, 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.

Mr. CLERK: Order No. 20, sir. In the name of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and International Transport, to move the second reading of the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2015.

ORDER NO. 20 – CRUISE SHIPS (OPENING OF FACILITIES) AMENDMENT BILL, 2015

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please continue. Honourable Member.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Madam Deputy Speaker, the matter before the House is an amendment to the Cruise Ship Opening of Facilities Act that was passed back in 2012. That legislation was enacted to allow cruise ships to open their onboard facilities while they were berthed in the Bridgetown port. Specifically, of course, casinos, shops and bars. The purpose of the Act, of course, is to address the concerns raised in the tourism sector with respect to encouraging cruise ships to remain in port, thereby allowing passengers to spend additional time on shore making use of shore-based attractions and activities. The incentive of course for the additional shore time was that cruise liners could have the privilege of opening the said facilities while berthed to satisfy passengers who opted to stay on board.

Madam Deputy Speaker, you would appreciate that cruise passengers tend to be very anxious to get back in the port to make sure the vessel does not sail and leave them. So by extending their time here, it will allow someone who may have done a tour of the island during the day to perhaps go and have dinner at night, so the spend is greater. So again, that was the thinking. Of course the condition, as I said, is that you are allowed to open your facilities during the period 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. providing that you remain in port for at least 12 hours. So it is understood that it was a fair trade-off, if I could put it that way. We get some more time to have cruise passengers roam Barbados and spend, and they get the opportunity to have their facilities open. Previously, of course, they were closed.

However, having passed the Act, Madam Deputy Speaker, it came to light from our partners and so on that there were just a couple of matters that needed to be addressed. The issue of bars, for example. It was raised that the legislation appeared to restrict bars on ships that were not spending the 12 hours from opening. Because what had happened was that previously they were allowed to open their bars - it was their shops and casinos that had to remain closed. And in essence what was happening was that they were allowed to have their bars open. Now it was recognised that this was a practice that had developed and there was a suggestion back in 2010 that we should in fact amend the Liquor Licences Act, Cap. 182, to formalise this practice. But the whole question of dealing with all of the facilities arose and, as opposed to going down the route of

dealing with the Liquor Licences Act, it was felt that we should do the Cruise Ships Opening of Facilities Act in 2012. And in essence that Act was formally exempting persons who applied to it from having to obtain a liquor licence. So in essence it brought the whole question of bars under the ambit of cruise activity.

So the advice was sought from the Chief Parliamentary Counsel who advised that the Cruise Ships Opening of Facilities Act should be amended to facilitate the practice. So what we are doing here today is a series of amendments to in essence take bars out from this legislation and it will only apply to shops and casinos. But having come to Parliament to do that, it was also recognised that there were two other issues that required some attention in the legislation and we proposed to amend those issues as well.

The one was the application period for a cruise ship to obtain permission to open a facility. And we are going to reduce that application period from two months to one month, recognising of course that there is a possibility of an act of God, force majeure, and in those circumstances we would reduce it to even less than a month. And Madam Deputy Speaker, what I am getting at there is if, for example, a vessel that may not have been scheduled to have been berthed at Bridgetown Port, but for reasons of bad weather, for example, either could not leave or had to be here for a protracted period, they could apply even though they would not have the required one month lead-up period. So the legislation takes into account those unanticipated situations. Clearly we have no control over the weather circumstances. We are in a hurricane zone, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, and therefore we have taken that into account.

The other amendment - or should I say the other lacuna that the legislation possessed - was a question of public officers who board vessels and their ability to enforce or police the requirements of the legislation. The original legislation allowed public officers to enter vessels and to be provided with safe access to those vessels to make sure that the cruise ship was complying with the Act. But what it did not speak to is what they could do if indeed the vessel was not compliant. So this amendment, one of the amendments we are doing today, in essence allows the public officer to issue an order to the vessel that it will have to cease operation if they are not indeed complying with the Act. So that is also being dealt with today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So these are the issues that we are trying to deal with today. I am going to just go through the Amendment. It is only 13 sections and in essence, if you follow the legislation before us, it is not a large amendment and as I say it is more tidying up an existing piece of legislation. So

it is largely administrative, this whole process. But I would just, since it does not take long, go through it.

The second section of the amendment speaks to section two of the parent legislation. That is where the definitions are to be found. And we are changing the definition for facility. Basically taking out bar. Facility will not mean bar, casino or cruise ship shop. It will simply mean casino or cruise ship shop. And consistent with that, the licensed facility will also have its definition changed. Licensed facility means a facility licensed under section four or five. There is no longer a section six. Section six is going to be repealed and that also applies to the definition of a licensee. That definition also needs to be adjusted. It will only refer to section 4 and section 5 and not section 6, because section 6 is going to be repealed.

Section 3 of the Act is also amended. Madam Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned in my introduction, the application for the licence shall be filed at least one month prior to the date of the intended operation of the facility. The previous legislation had two months. So we simply are taking out two months and inserting one month in that section. I also mentioned we are inserting the so-called force majeure clause. So that one is added at section four. Notwithstanding subsection two, in case of force majeure, an application under this Act may be filed at any time prior to the date of the intended operation of a facility. So in essence that allows for those acts of God.

I mentioned as well the entire section 6 going to be repealed. Section 6 dealt with licensing of a cruise ship bar - that is no longer relevant. So that entire section 6 is repealed. Section 7 of the parent legislation is also going to be amended. A licence is granted basically under this legislation for a period not exceeding three years and is renewable. That is being changed to not exceeding two years. The reason for that, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that it has been recognised that cruise itineraries are usually planned 18 months in advance. So the three years is not really the industry standard. So by reducing it to 18 months, we are now complying with the industry standard. And so we are making that amendment to section 7.

The other amendment that we are making is to section 8 of the Act and that is again very simple - also taking out the reference to section six, as there is no section six anymore because we have repealed that section. So section eight, we will take out section six. That is fairly straightforward. And then of course we go over to section 10 of the Act. The question of a licence being made available on demand - that too is deleted and is replaced with a clause that does not have section 6 in it. So whereas the parent legislation spoke to a licence granted under section 4, 5 or 6, the amended legislation will just speak to section 4 or 5.

Section 11 also has a similar amendment - section 6 is taken out. Section 13 is also amended. And the question of the exemption from the application of the Liquor Licences Act - what that had done was that a cruise line shall be exempt from application of the Liquor Licences Act in respect of the operation of bars and cruise ship shops while that cruise ship is berthed in the port if that cruise ship has obtained a licence under section 5 or 6 in respect of the cruise ship. But by taking that out, it once again removes the whole question of this Act having any sort of authority over bar operations. So that particular clause, adjusting the exemption arrangements with the Liquor Licences Act, is actually central to what we are talking about.

The following section, section 14 in the Act, is again amended by adding a third subsection. It has two subsections at the moment. And in essence this has to do with inspections and the issue of policing. So the third subsection added will read in the amended Act: where an authorised public officer considers that any provision of this Act or regulations made under this Act have been contravened, that authorised public officer may by order direct that a facility operating on a cruise ship berthed in the port be closed. So this is in essence giving some teeth to the legislation. Before, that officer could enter the vessel and could ask to see the licence. But now with this amendment, the officer has the capacity to order that the facility be closed.

Section 16 is amended - in essence, references to the fifth and sixth schedules have to be taken out because there will only be four schedules. The fifth and sixth schedules actually dealt with cruise ship bar licences and applications to operate a bar on a cruise ship. So the fifth and sixth schedules are taken out. With respect to the other schedules, the first schedule will require some adjustments. The reference to annual calls is taken out and the reference to three years has to be changed to 18 months. And that has to be done in both the first and the third schedule as well.

So we have done a number of things just to in essence tidy up this Act so that we can continue to enjoy some benefit from it. I should mention that we have had 27 applications since it was passed in 2012. So I think that is a good sign. We hope that will continue. Many of the applicants have been home porters. And we all know, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been trying to attract more home port vessels. So this in itself is another magnet for home porters. Having said that, now that the legislation is two years old and more itineraries would have been planned since it has been enacted, and of course with these amendments now cleaning up some of the concerns that the partners had, we should start to see more itineraries planned where vessels that are not home porting will opt to take advantage of what is offered under this legislation and stay longer.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is the matter before the House. We had a chance to discuss cruise tourism only two weeks ago. And I would just only say that we continue to enjoy good results at the moment - increases. And I think that this particular amendment will only do good in enhancing our offerings and our attraction as a cruise stop and as a home port option for cruise lines. I therefore ask that this Bill be read a second time.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for St. Philip South. Thank you.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise in support of this amendment. Indeed, one may recall that in 2012 when this Bill was enacted, there was much talk then about the Democratic Labour Party trying to introduce casino gambling into Barbados through the back door, et cetera. And I saw today another reference to casino gambling as a result of this amendment. And that is where I want to start, Madam Deputy Speaker, because for quite some time now I have been saying that the level of hypocrisy in Barbados with respect to the issue of gambling needs to be exposed. That in fact there is gambling in Barbados almost every minute of the day.

Just yesterday, Madam Deputy Speaker, I was at an establishment buying some yam and turkey stew, and there was a dollar coming back. A lady says to me, well, why do you not take a quick pick or something that is drawn at 12.30. And it was just about 12.25. So I said, but I thought the lottery only drew on afternoons. Much to my surprise, I found that I was behind the times, that in fact there are so many different games and all kinds of organisations. I did buy it. The Domino Association has bingo games. I know that the Lions Club used to, et cetera. There are all kinds of tickets you see people selling. But yet you hear this cry about casino gambling, like if it means the worst form of anything.

So therefore, I thought I would do a bit of research in terms of casino gambling or otherwise, in terms of the effect it has on countries or on cities. And my research seems to suggest that, contrary to what you will hear, casino gambling does not automatically mean the mafia, does not mean an increase in crime, does not mean an increase in prostitution,

et cetera. The research does not seem to indicate that. Admittedly, sir, I was unable to unearth anything in terms of what is happening in the Caribbean. But here is what I am seeing - the issue of casino gambling. And yes, like any new industry, there is a bit of concern, but there is nothing to suggest, based on what I know, that happens in certain parts of the region, for example, in Antigua, in St. Kitts, even in Trinidad next door. There is nothing to suggest that, in fact, that has led to an increase in crime or

an increase in prostitution. And the Bahamas is a good example. We have all, at some point in time, visited Atlantis, which has a multiplicity of different gadgets that you pull, et cetera. And there is nothing that I have read that suggests that has led to an upsurge in crime in the Bahamas, et cetera. But yet the mere mention of casino gambling - you are trying to bring crime into this country, you are trying to bring additional prostitution, et cetera. It is just not so, based on what I am reading.

But I go back to where I started, which is the fundamental point. The fundamental point is that there is probably too much gambling in this country. But you do not hear anything about it. You do not hear anything about it. You are told that in fact the greater good is that certain organisations like the Barbers, Olipod Associates, et cetera, that they benefit. So that is all right. So that is all right. But we should be concerned because again, just last night - because I am being accused of being a nobody by the member for St. Philip North - again, just last night in my constituency I was at a shop in Rock Hall and there are these, what are they called? They are not one-armed bandits. No, the ones that are owned by that other company where they play like video lottery machines. There are about half a dozen of them there and there is a sign up: no individuals under 18 allowed to use the machines, et cetera. I do not know how to play those games. I do not know how to play those games. But what struck me though, sir, is that in almost every shop around Barbados you can see these video lottery machines. In almost every shop around Barbados, no one knows, as far as I am aware, how much money is being made by them. No one knows, as far as I am aware, how much money is being spent on them. No one knows, as far as I am aware, the impact that is having on households - whether in fact persons are going every Friday evening and spending all of their money and then going home and making noise because they have no money to give their wives or partners. No one knows how many elderly pensioners are there during the afternoons or during the day, et cetera.

And on a note of elderly pensioners, all you need do is go into gas stations and see them lined up buying the tickets, or in the case of the lottery, see them walking down the road at that time - in the hot sun - going to buy tickets, et cetera. Now this concerns me, this really concerns me, because we need - and someone needs to do the research - to see whether or not the amount of gambling that we have in this country is having any social dislocation within our households. A couple of years ago we used to hear about the one-armed bandits. We used to hear about women in particular having to assemble on Marhill Street on Friday afternoons before the men go into the arcades, to make sure that they can get some money to buy groceries. Because if they do not come into town, when the man reaches St. Lucy he has no money because he spent it all on one-armed bandits, et cetera. So we should be concerned. Yes, we

should be concerned. But we should be concerned after having done some research. We should not just decide that X is bad and Y is all right without looking to see what the true facts are. Without looking to see what the true facts are.

So I raised that because when we took this initiative we were more concerned - and the honourable Minister is correct - we wanted to have a win situation. We were not concerned about casino gambling. We were not concerned about whether or not the bars would have been open. We wanted additional bodies to remain in Barbados so that they can come up to Oistins in St. Philip and buy some food and buy some drinks before going back onto the cruise ships. So they can go down to Moontown and buy some food - albeit food that will be weighed - but they can go down to Moontown and spend some time before hurrying back onto the cruise liners. That is what we were focused on. But you heard all kinds of things. I am happy to hear from the Minister that there has been some take-up of these opportunities, and although we do not know the additional spend in Barbados as a result, the reality is that if it means that additional bodies are happy to sit on Bay Street for a couple more minutes at the establishment there - basically where you see all those chairs, et cetera - then we are happy that we brought this amendment. We are very happy.

The other point I want to make - and although the Minister did not go wide, because I detected that the Minister does not want to have another tourism debate - is another area that concerns me. Yes, I am saying I am detecting. You did say that I can speak for the opposition. The other area that concerns me is as follows. The Caribbean is the most heavily dependent tourism region in the world. And you will notice that recently I have been spending lots of time focusing on the issue of crime and security. And at this point in time I am very concerned that we are not, as a region, paying enough attention to the whole issue of crime and security. And given how tenuous the tourism industry is, I would like to see more focus - not only by us here in Barbados, but as a region - on the whole issue of having almost a seamless crime and security strategy. Because whether we like it or not, there are many individuals who cannot separate Jamaica from Barbados and who cannot separate Trinidad from Barbados, et cetera. When something happens in the region, they automatically think, well, I cannot go to Barbados because I heard about crime in Jamaica, et cetera. Indeed. So we need to address these issues. We really need to address these issues and spend more time on these issues.

The third point I want to make is as follows. I happen to have been in Grenada last weekend at a Legal Education Council meeting, and I met a gentleman there who said to me, A.J., it is good to meet you. And we began talking tourism, et cetera. And I am sorry, I do not

remember his name, and I am sure that the Minister knows who I speak about. And he said to me, the region is grateful to Barbados. He said, as a hotelier, let me tell you this - I am grateful that Barbados was able to take the lead and finally recognise the tourism sector as a service sector. And many of us in the region for years have been canvassing this, and we were unable to persuade our governments, but you managed to have done it. Whatever led you down this road, I want to commend Barbados for doing it. Because finally we are able, as a region, and many hoteliers are now able to persuade our governments that this is the way to go. This is the only way to go. If you want to transform your offerings, if you want to transform your tourism sector, if you want to generate additional employment in your countries, this is the only way to go.

And therefore, I want to be able to publicly say - to say in this Parliament to the Minister - that even if the other side have not appreciated your efforts, even if the other side want to talk about deals that they have done with Sandals and all kinds of negative things, there are others in the region who are saying that Barbados is leading and that we should see significant benefits. And we are already seeing them. We are already seeing the signs, although I am told - and I know the Minister often says - I am not interested in bodies. Let us not talk about the increase in bodies that visit. Let us talk about the increase in spend. That is what we want. But we are seeing an increase in bodies nevertheless. And I am very sure that within the next couple of weeks we should also be hearing about an increase in spend.

So to my colleague, the honourable Minister of Tourism, I want the records of this Parliament to reflect the fact that notwithstanding anything heard from the other side, we on this side are confident that we made the right decision in terms of the incentive that we have given to the tourism industry. We are confident that we made a decision by transforming our thinking of seeing the tourism sector as a service sector and that Barbados will benefit significantly as a result of our initiatives. And this may be a simple amendment, but again, if you cannot give everything - and let us be clear about that, you cannot give any cruise liner, any hotelier, everything - but certainly the things that we can provide, where we can have a win situation, we ought to do them. And this is another example of where we can have a win situation where vessels that are home-ported in Barbados are able to open their casinos, they are able to open their bars, et cetera, longer.

And before I close, let me just make this one additional point. With respect to the issue of gambling, I am advised that Barbadians love to cruise. So if you want to be hypocritical and say that in fact you cannot have a casino in St. Philip or you cannot have a casino anywhere about Barbados because you want to protect Barbadians - that is what you are saying. You want to protect Barbadians

from themselves. But every couple of weeks the same Barbadians who you are talking about get on cruise liners and sail up and down the Caribbean for a week or two. For a week or two. And what do they do? Eat, drink, read, swim, go into the casino and shop. That is a reality. That is a reality. So in closing, this Bill meets my approval and gets my support. And as I have been saying to the Minister of Tourism recently - because sometimes he accuses me of speaking like an opposition member on tourism-related matters - I say to him again: I am confident, I am confident that history will prove that you were one of the better, if not the best, tourism ministers in this country, given where we are going. I thank you, sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, the honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. J. D. PAUL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also want to contribute to the debate and also say that I really want to compliment the Minister of Tourism in terms of being able to accomplish at least what I consider feats that the last administration before seemed unable to do. And the question of home porting is something I really think that again, because of the changes that we see in this particular here, where first of all, you are actually encouraging ships to be able to spend quite a longer period of time in Barbados. But I want also to emphasise too that we also have an opportunity to take much greater advantage of the presence of these ships while they are home porting here. Because certainly, while I understand that in terms of the changes, we focus a lot on the issue of gambling, but more so, the fact of the matter is that it exposes a larger market, a much larger market to our local production sectors to take advantage of. And I think, I want to emphasise that because we should not. I think that we should not just see it as an opportunity to have ships here without fully recognising that we need at the same time to maximise the foreign exchange earnings that are available to Barbados through the sale of goods and services. And, you know, we mentioned services, but we also have to mention goods.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was in the gym this morning at 4:00 when I usually go there at that particular point in time to exercise. And there was one, the chaplain said, he made a comment and he said, you know, he's a cook for an expatriate at a villa. And he said, you know, he prepared meals for his boss. And he said he had a habit of when he prepared meals, he go and go in the supermarket and get some grapes and some of these nice things that you sell in the tins and put it there. And the fellow said one morning, look, listen, I am in Barbados and I would like to get - do you have any fruits around here at all? And he said, well, look, I would like - he had to go and find some golden apples. And he had to go and serve him golden apples. Okay, that is a fact. And, you know, he had to find some kind of fruit, sugar apple, something that we have

here, a little mango. Now, this is an actual experience from a chef who prepares dinner and lunch and breakfast for an expatriate who lives here.

Now, the point I'm making is this, that basically when we discuss the whole issue of cruise tourism, I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that there's an excellent opportunity for us. And we always talk about exporting Barbados, selling Barbados for what it is to take advantage of the fact that here we have now, or we are going to develop a kindred relationship with ships that are here. And I think that what we need to see is perhaps an aggressive private sector that actually makes contact with the principals of these cruise ships to see in a very active way how do we get more products that are locally made and produced in Barbados onto those particular ships. And I think that we must not lose sight of this.

Because I want to make this clear. I mean, I understand when we talked about the subject of gambling and things like that, that we are giving up something. But the point I am making essentially is that we are also losing the opportunity to be able to market what we produce in Barbados to those ships. And I don't think that we should assume that we cannot sell these commodities to the local cruise ships. As a matter of fact, I know that we have evidence available that as a result of the presence of a very healthy cruise ship season, that there is an apparently insatiable demand for the products that we produce in Barbados to the point where it is causing difficulties in respect of some commodities. And I think that the fact that this is happening represents the grand fact that we have somehow not taken the presence of these ships here and we have not really understood the impact that being treated as basically home base for these ships can have on the sale of local products in this country.

And I really think that we need to emphasise that and to indicate to Barbadians that there are opportunities that we are not taking advantage of. Not only that, we also need to indicate to our private sector that maybe the way in which we have been doing our marketing in the past is not keeping pace with the kind of changes and the kind of opportunities that the government is providing to the members of the private sector. And we need to take greater advantage of this so that we do not, at the end of the day, get caught not being able to meet the commitments when they are to be met. And I think that is something, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be very aware of and that we need to take advantage of. Because we cannot, especially in an environment in which we are trying to look for employment opportunities for people and to look at new areas of activity - the cruise ship represents an area which we need to exploit to the fullest.

So I really, in supporting these particular amendments, I would want to say that I really want to at

least applaud the efforts of the Minister of Tourism in this regard. I mean, for instance, even now, the issue with Sandals - we can say, even within the agricultural sector, that there is verifiable evidence that already Sandals is beginning to make an impact within the sector. And there is verifiable evidence that this is beginning to happen. So we should not basically think that a lot of the changes that we are seeing are not having an impact. I would also though say this, that at the same time we need to maintain the protections, but we also need to emphasise to the individual sectors that they need to look and see how they need to change processes to take advantage of them. And therefore we might even have to ask government to look and see what other incentives need to be given to the sectors themselves to be able to take greater advantage of these opportunities. And that, sir, is my brief contribution to this debate. Thank you very much, sir.

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

Hon. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to continue on the path the Honourable Member for St. Philip South ended on and to say from the outset that I support the amendments being brought before this House. But it boggles my mind, Mr. Speaker, that every day in Barbados there is some place outside of the beauty part of St. Lucy that you can find all sorts of gambling going on with these meetings, et cetera. And yet still there are persons who give the impression that casino gambling - that as far as I know, wherever you find it in the world, most places they do not allow locals to partake thereof or to play the machines. But yet still in Barbados we are saying that casino gambling cannot come for the rich and famous. But yet we encourage our locals on a daily basis to do likewise, sir, and that is to get involved in gambling. And I'm saying I cannot understand the logic and I find it rather surprising that the persons who say that they do not want casino gambling encourage the persons who cannot afford to lose the money to continue to lose money on a daily basis.

As you walk around Barbados, you will see that the majority of the persons who frequent these gambling establishments are pensioners and persons who just cannot afford to lose the money. And sometimes they might rent \$1 000, but before the week is over, they spend \$2 000 that they cannot afford. So I want to ask us whether we are protecting Barbados from gambling or whether we are encouraging Barbados in gambling, or whether it is right for poor people to gamble and we want to stop rich people from gambling. I am saying that if we have a policy, it must be consistent. And if we say that poor people can gamble in Barbados, I do not see why I as a politician should come to this House and stop rich people from gambling when they can afford to lose the money. So if we want to have a policy, it will have to be a policy of no gambling at all.

And if we are going to allow my constituents, as the Honourable Member from St. Philip South said, to come to Bridgetown to gamble, I do not see why people who go on cruise ships or who fly here on planes with pockets full of money or credit cards and who can afford it, cannot gamble. I am not going to say, sir, whether it's right or wrong. I'm just going to look at what is happening and I do not think it is fair for my constituents to be exposed when they cannot afford to be exposed. And those rich people who can afford to be exposed and who can afford to even lose a million dollars because they have billions of dollars - we want to protect them, and the ones who cannot afford to lose a hundred dollars and who are going to lose \$1 000, sir. So I am saying, sir, we have to be consistent. And if we are going to allow my constituents to gamble, then allow everybody else to gamble. Because if you are not protecting my constituents, then I am not here to protect others that can afford to lose the money or who see the money as if they are just spending money on a vacation trip.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to say that I want to support what has been said in here and I want to support the provision of allowing the ships to remain longer in port. And if this is what it takes for the ships to remain longer in Barbados instead of going on the high seas, sir, then I have no choice but to support it, sir. I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you. Yes.

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY: I rise to support this Bill before the House. I believe that at the onset, I would like to congratulate the Minister of Tourism and International Transport for being very forthright in ensuring that, particularly as it relates to cruises, that the facilities to ensure that we can grow our cruise business continues to be appropriately modernised and particularly in a very fast growing tourism market, that Barbados retains its competitive advantage. And I believe that this particular amendment of the Cruise Ships Opening of Facilities Act is particularly important and creates the kind of opportunities that I think Barbados has got to continue to grapple with, particularly in a very competitive environment. This particular amendment, Mr. Speaker, must be seen in that particular light.

Of course, the amendment in relation to the opening of facilities, particularly the very topical issue of casino gambling, has been one that not only this government but prior governments have been asked to address within the context of to what extent should Barbados become involved within the context of casino gambling? And I'm happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that what we have done certainly in the initial Bill, and we continue to recognise in terms of the whole question of how our ports should be used and our cruise liners - we have created a regime or an

environment in which I believe we have been able to adopt very responsible measures to ensure that the issue of allowing cruise liners to operate, whether it is casinos or bars, operate in an environment that does not create any societal problems for Barbados.

Notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, that of course, it may be said, and I have heard so far in this debate, that Barbados is by and large a society that engages in various aspects of gambling. I know, for example, that the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth benefits directly from the National Lottery. And I would like to encourage the persons who participate in that lottery to continue to do so because their contribution to a large extent helped to finance quite a bit of the programmes and projects within the context of youth, culture and sports. And while of course we do that through the avenue of a lottery, I think the overarching goal has got to be the bigger picture where we want to ensure that sufficient financing is available for very critical parts of our economy.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, I hail for a number of reasons because it has certainly been pointed out that having passed the original piece of legislation, that we were sufficiently emboldened to be responsive to the market, to be responsive to those persons within the cruise line business. And of course, having engaged in very wide scale consultation, it was brought to the attention of the government that several aspects of that legislation which was first enacted needed to be amended to ensure that Barbados remains competitive and that as it relates to the movement of cruise liners, that we do not lose the competitive edge when we compare

ourselves to other jurisdictions. And to that extent, Mr. Speaker, I understand the various amendments, one of them of course, relate to the whole question of ensuring that the bars which the cruise liners operate can be done in a manner that does not create undue restriction on the uses of those bars. At the same time, the amendment does ensure that the uses of those bars are restricted to those persons who would have been passengers on the cruise liners. So I believe Section 11 creates that facility where we are only saying that persons who are registered passengers should be allowed access to the licensed facilities and bars. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that is an element of utmost responsibility which has been included in the legislation and which shows that while we are very keen on ensuring that cruise liners who literally move from port to port - we are a tourist destination - and the reality, Mr. Speaker, is that we have to compete like anybody else for cruise line business.

And it is going to be more important, even after the passage of this amendment, it is going to be more important that Barbados remains alert in relation to developments in the cruise line business. This is a business,

Mr. Speaker, that has the potential and certainly has shown over the past few years of generating significant revenue earnings for Barbados. And I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that Barbados remains one of the ports of call of choice. And we have still to ensure that, wherever possible, our legislative framework is sufficiently updated from time to time so that we retain existing cruise line business and that we are able to attract new business to Barbados.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one of the amendments which I think certainly is also important - because we exist within an environment where, of course, based on the Public Holidays Act, there are certain close-off periods in relation to the general business in Barbados - and I think it is important to recognise that while onshore there are certain arrangements to ensure that some days are protected in terms of work, we have to be aware that where cruise liners are concerned, that really and truly, once they come to Barbados or to any jurisdiction, they are not necessarily concerned about whether it is a public holiday, whether it is a Sunday or a Monday or a Tuesday. And therefore, we have to be sufficiently flexible within the context of our laws to ensure that where cruise liners come to Barbados, whether it is a public holiday or not, that we have facilities in place to be able to provide the utmost excellent service that they require.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it has been a concern of mine, particularly within the context of the very historic achievement of World Heritage status for historic Bridgetown, that there are some days where cruise liners are berthed at the deep water harbour, that there are tourists who would disembark those cruise liners and immediately descend upon the city, particularly on a Sunday or a public holiday, and Bridgetown looks like a literal ghost city. And I feel, Mr. Speaker, that is something that we have to look at very seriously. We are yet to make that connection between creating the kind of impact at the port by means of amending legislation - yes, to ensure that our port of entry complies with international standards, that our cruise liners when they are berthed here are readily suitable and able to do business as they would do in any other jurisdiction. But what we have to do, Mr. Speaker, is we have to go the next stage and we have to be able to get Bridgetown to awaken and to look as though it is a city and a town when our cruise liners visit.

And I think it is an excellent opportunity for our stores. And it should not only, Mr. Speaker, be stores such as Cave Shepherd and maybe Harrisons. Because I know that sometimes we have cruise liners that come and of course there are one or two stores that are open for business. And particularly when we have more than one cruise liner, I believe that our city and our store owners should respond in a big way so that the business that can be had from those cruise liners can be secured.

The other component of the amendment before the House, Mr. Speaker, again relates to the whole question of ensuring compliance with the Act. And I must say that we have done so by ensuring that we have tightened up on how we can police the legislation. In other words, once we are given permission for these activities to be held on cruise liners that are licensed, that we are going to ensure that the requirements and regulations are adhered to. And therefore there is an amendment which provides for an authorised public officer to be able to enter the various facilities, cruise liners and so on, to ensure that the provisions of the legislation are adhered to.

I would like to end, Mr. Speaker, by also recognising that this is clearly a growth subsector within the question of tourism. I think the evidence is there to show that we can even do more business, that we can do more business in the area of cruise, and that we have got to go after those cruise liners that are visiting other jurisdictions and ensure that they actually see Barbados as a port destination for their passengers. The whole question of ensuring that we can become much more attractive, Mr. Speaker, I believe, is something that is engaging the attention of the Government. I believe that there is still room for much more proactive marketing of Barbados in relation to cruise. I think we are doing well, but we can do more. And I am sure that the facilities will be afforded through the Ministry of Tourism and International Transport to be able to propel further growth in this sector.

But I think that we have seen so far enough evidence to justify the initial decision that was made by the Government to bring the initial legislation. And so far, based on the information that I have, we have seen from 2013 to date - I believe that is when the original legislation was brought - from 2013 to today we have had 26 or 27 licences issued to cruise ships pursuant to the legislation. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that shows that this particular decision of the Government to move in this direction, notwithstanding the controversy surrounding casino gambling, we have not opened up casino gambling to the entire Barbados, although I know that in some quarters there is a view that we have to look again at the whole question of onshore casinos. And I believe some hotels in Barbados would want to argue that it is time to look at whether we should not have onshore casinos within hotels.

I think that is something that still has got to be properly ventilated and discussed. I know that in other jurisdictions there are casinos that are attached to hotels and there is specific legislation that governs how those casinos operate, governs the entry requirements, the age of persons who enter those facilities and so on. And I am not, Mr. Speaker, here to make a particular submission or to advance a particular view on it. The most I would say is that it is an issue that ought to engage debate. I believe that, as we have seen in the cruise line business where Barbados

has got to be on the cutting edge of being modern and being up to date in terms of a market that we are seeking to retain, I believe that we will have to at some point in time - particularly within the context of being competitive with other onshore hotels - that it may very well be that the discussion in Barbados has got now to move to whether or not we should consider having casinos on hotel properties under stipulations and appropriate regulations that satisfy us. And I think one of the things that we should be very concerned about is not to expose minors and persons who are vulnerable to the temptations and the vagaries of casino gambling, but within the context of the wider issue of gambling in Barbados, Mr. Speaker, I believe that this issue will have to be discussed and we will have to fine-tune a policy based on a wide consultation on this matter.

And I feel, Mr. Speaker, that just as we are looking at the issue of the opening of bars and cruise facilities, that perhaps at some point in time we will have to look at the wider discussion. The other point I would like to make, Mr. Speaker, is that in the context of how our ports are utilised, I think that one of the things that we have to look at in the wider area of cultural activities - I would like to see at our ports of entry, both at the airport and our seaports, I would like to see more cultural activity, particularly when we are having major inflows of visitors, whether by aircraft or by sea craft. And I think as we approach the Cropover festivities this year, I would have said it in another place, but I believe that the time is right for our ports of entry to be more identifiable with our prime festival, which is Cropover, and that even outside of the Cropover season, there is no reason why we should not engage the cultural practitioners and the cultural groups.

We have certainly a very rich array of culture in Barbados. We have been fortunate enough to have on our statute books the Cultural Industries Development Act, which I predict will ensure for all time a diversified economy based on the cultural industries sector. But we have to go beyond that, Mr. Speaker, and we have to empower our cultural practitioners, and I think within the context of our ports, that we have to have more engagement where we have our cultural practitioners engaged to display to our visitors the richness of our culture and what we have to offer. It happens in other places where their culture is certainly displayed for the benefit of visitors. And therefore, in my view, there is no reason why we should not have that in Barbados.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, again, I would like to congratulate the Minister and his team for continuing to be on the cutting edge of ensuring that tourism - not only in relation to cruise, but the wider aspects of tourism in Barbados - remains refreshed, remains relevant, remains updated, so that we can continue to get the numbers that we need in Barbados to create the kind of growth in the tourism sector and to redound to the

benefit of the economy of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I of course rise to wrap up this particular matter as far as the second reading is concerned. I have to thank my colleagues for the support they have given on this particular matter, but of course the whole wider issue of getting tourism on a sound and sustainable footing. I want of course to particularly thank my colleagues that participated in the debate. The Member for Christ Church West Central, who just took his seat, who of course raised a number of good points, but beyond that he has been a stout advocate for some important niches - of course, sports tourism, fusion, and of course the whole cultural touristic experience, having responsibility for those particular portfolios as well in Cabinet. So I thank him not only for his contribution in here today, but his constant support as we try to strengthen our offerings by looking at the niches and so on.

The Member for St. Lucy, of course always a big supporter - I thank him for his comments. The Attorney General, the Member for St. Philip South, of course had a cathartic presentation in some respects. He got out his whole views on gambling and his experience from the time he was a child. But he made good points. He is also very passionate in his views on tourism, and certainly as the parliamentary representative for a part of Barbados that is playing a significant role in our tourism and has potential when we talk about certain developments that are planned. So we know that he pays an interest in these matters.

My friend from St. Michael West Central - I am happy to hear him speak so positively about tourism. One knows that there was always a concern about the leakages in the sector, particularly with respect to importing produce that can be sourced locally. But I would like to think that the farm-to-table programmes that we have been looking at, the MOU that we have for example with Sandals Resorts International, and also the one that we have done for the sector, the concessions that the Member for St. Philip South spoke about - they all speak to seeing our farmers as partners in the process. And as the leader of the largest farmers' organisation in Barbados, it is quite heartening to hear the optimism that he is expressing with respect to the possibility of his members being more activist suppliers to the sector. And that does not only mean hotels. We have always made the point that the cruise industry, particularly the home porters, presents a grand opportunity for the agriculturalists. So there is no need to see tourism really as a problem for our farmers. Tourism probably is the best friend of the farming community in Barbados potentially. And we know our chefs and our culinary specialists want fresh produce and so there is a

grand opportunity. So it is heartening to hear what he has said.

He spoke of opportunity. So it is a case where I interpret from that a very clear understanding of exactly where we are going in terms of the potential. November this year, for example, when the cruise season for 2015 opens, we will have a record period in terms of the numbers of passengers that will be home ported - the people that will commence cruises in Barbados. The Britannia, that is going to be launched next month - I think the correct term is commissioned. I understand the Queen goes to Southampton and throws a bottle of champagne on the brand new vessel. She will be the godmother for the Britannia - 4 000 passengers - and that will be home ported from Barbados in November. And that is a grand opportunity not only for our farmers and our manufacturers, but importers as well, because they have to provision the ship in order to get it going. So this is opportunity for everyone, opportunity for our cultural practitioners and so on. So we sincerely look forward, as we develop the cruise industry, to opportunities opening up for our young people to pursue careers on the water once again. I am told that the second largest employer of Vincentians after the Government is the cruise industry - Royal Caribbean Cruises or something like that. Maybe it might be an exaggeration, but they do have a lot of Vincentians working on cruise ships and there is no reason why we cannot have more Barbadians. The Minister responsible for Labour sits in the other place, and I know her feelings on tailoring the programmes offered through the Ministry of Labour to take more advantage of the cruise industry. And we look forward to that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also know obviously the whole issue of casino gambling, or looking at it within the context of gaming generally in the tourism sector. Let us first accept something. When we did our research, speaking with the cruise lines, very, very few people really and truly will take a cruise because of the casino. So if you have the Azura, for example - it has 3 000 passengers - you know that casino will be lucky if during the course of the cruise 300 people pass through it; less than 10 per cent. So it is really not a huge issue for cruisers necessarily. Of course it makes money, and to the extent that some people want to do it and they like to cater to everyone, it is not a huge compromise that we are making. Even if they cater to the few that want to have the casino experience, you have another 2 700 who will want to do something else, possibly onshore. So I think that when we talk about the measure we have allowing - not any casino to be established, but casinos that are already in Barbados, it is just that they were roped off, which is what used to happen - we are simply facilitating that the people who normally would have access to the casinos anyway will have access to them when the ships are berthed.

But one naturally will want to look at the wider question. I take the point of the Member for Christ Church West Central - maybe we need to have another look at it. We have had several commissions going back, I think, to the 1970s. I think the most recent one would have been under Justice Eric Bishop, that would have been in the 1990s, I think. So we have had at least two or three, maybe more, and maybe there is a time to have another look at it. But let me just say, Mr. Speaker, I have already said publicly that with respect to this issue of gaming within the context of tourism, and specifically full-fledged casinos - because some of what we have even here are near-casinos, to tell you the truth - we need to have, in my view, some empirical evidence on precisely what are the incremental benefits that we see coming. It is a very emotional thing. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I hear people say, oh, I went to Las Vegas and I saw a lot of tall hotels and a lot of people, so let us do gambling here and we will get the same thing. Or let us do what Atlantic City is doing and we will get the same thing. It does not always follow. And if you understand how the distribution channels work, who is to say that if we bring a casino here it will automatically follow that we will get all these additional benefits?

Now I am just looking at it from a dispassionate, analytical basis, because the truth is, Mr. Speaker, there are also people who come to Barbados precisely because we do not have casinos. And what are you gaining against what you are losing? And I think that is the kind of exercise that I would like to see us look at if we are going to take another look at the question of casinos. The question of having a commission of inquiry, opening up to the public for everyone to come and talk about the economic benefits - a whole set of people can come in there and wax lyrical about the economic benefits, and then another set of people come in and moralise about all the declines, and then you compile a report: these are the pros, these are the cons. I think we now need to have something a little deeper, better reasoned. If we are making the case for casinos in tourism, I think we need to be a little more empirical. And that is basically the way that I see it. It is very interesting having discussions with people associated with the Bahamas, for example - a jurisdiction that does have casinos - and they are not actually certain to what extent the casinos cause them to get increased arrivals. They have done some work and it is interesting that people planning a vacation to the Bahamas are not thinking of the casinos at the top of mind. And in fact, if you see the advertising and promotional work, they do not push the casinos necessarily. So we need to look at this thing in a fairly honest, analytical, and empirical manner and, if necessary, make some recommendations that can be discussed. That is basically where I see that question. And if it is that we feel the time is here to look at it, then I would hope that the look would go down those lines.

So, Mr. Speaker, I once again look forward to these amendments further increasing our appeal to have these cruise vessels come to Barbados and of course to encourage those lines that we have relations with for home porting, and ones that we are trying to draw. There are still some others that do not home port here. We would love to see home porting here - Disney and MSC come to mind right away - and what we are doing here will help enhance that process. So once again I am obliged to you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask that this bill do now be read a second time.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and the Bill was read a second time.

Hon. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that you do now leave the Chair and this House do now resolve itself into Committee for further consideration of this Bill.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee, Mr. J. D. PAUL, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 5, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 6 - 10, inclusive, were called and passed.

Clauses 11 - 13, inclusive, were called and passed.

The Schedule became the Schedule to the Bill.

On the motion of Hon. R. L. SEALY, Mr. Chairman reported to His Honour, the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R. L. SEALY, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Act, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, with that we have come to the end of Government Business for the day and I beg to move that the sitting of the House of Assembly be adjourned until Tuesday, 17th February, at 10.00 in the morning.

The question that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, February 17, 2015 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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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 ‘[1.00 a.m.]’ during the morning and ‘[12.30 p.m.]’ after the luncheon suspension) and have been omitted.

Q3. Throughout. The source places the words ‘I beg to second that, Sir’ at the start of Mr. SPEAKER’s putting of the question. They are printed here as a separate seconding under AN HON. MEMBER; the seconders are not identified. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 15, after Hon. J. D. E. Boyce. ‘I beg to second and to support the resolution’ is headed Hon. J. D. E. Boyce in the source, immediately after his own speech. Printed under AN HON. MEMBER. Please identify the Member.

Q5. Order No. 15, Hon. C. P. Sinckler. Headed ‘HON. CHRISTOPHER D. L. GIBBS, M.P.’ in the source; that person was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for St. Michael North West and the speaker refers to himself as Minister of Finance, so the speech is printed under Hon. C. P. SINCKLER. Please confirm.

Q6. Order No. 15, after Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe. Headed in the source ‘HON. G. P. IAN GOODING-EDGHILL (St. Michael West Central)’ and then ‘HON. DAVIDSON I. ISHMAEL (St. Michael North)’. Neither was a Member of the 2013–2018 House. The speaker names Grazettes as being in his constituency and says ‘St. Michael North’, whose Member in 2015 was in Opposition, while Mr. SPEAKER later records that the Opposition was not present. Printed under AN HON. MEMBER. Please identify the Member.

Q7. Suspension. The motion to suspend is headed ‘HON. RALPH A. THORNE (Christ Church South)’ in the source; he was not a Member of the 2013–2018 House. Mr. SPEAKER called the Member for Christ Church South, the Leader of the House, so the motion is printed under Hon. J.

D. E. BOYCE. The source records the suspension at 1.00 p.m. Please confirm.

Q8. Order No. 15, Hon. M. A. Lashley. Mr. SPEAKER directed that a remark be withdrawn and stricken. The source shows only ‘One Member said it is akin to -’, followed by a speaker-uncertain marker; the remark is not otherwise recorded here.

Q9. Order No. 15, between Hon. R. D. Jones and the Prime Minister. Part 2 of the source ends during the speech of Hon. R. D. Jones and Part 3 begins during the speech of the Prime Minister, with no call from the Chair. Part of the debate may be missing at this point. Please check against the recording.

Q10. Order No. 20, Madam Deputy Speaker. The call reads ‘Member for St. Philip North’ in the source. The Member who spoke was the Attorney-General, Member for St. Philip South, as Hon. D. St.E. Kellman and Hon. R. L. Sealy confirm; corrected.

Q11. Order No. 20, Clerk. The Clerk’s reading gave ‘Cruise Ships Open Air Facilities Amendment Bill’; printed with the title used at first reading and on passing, the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2015.

Q12. Committee. Mr. CHAIRMAN is not named in the source; the Chairman of Committees, Mr. J. D. Paul, is presumed. The Committee stage is condensed to the Official Report formulae; clauses were called in three groups and passed without amendment.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday, February 10, 2015, with Mr. SPEAKER presiding. The Minutes of January 13, 2015 were confirmed. The Leader of the House, Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, laid three Duties, Taxes and Other Payments Exemption Orders on behalf of the Minister of Finance, and Hon. D. O’N. Inniss laid the Fair Trading Commission Annual Report of 2014. The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. F. J. Stuart, moved the first readings of the National Registration Bill, the Statistics Amendment Bill, the Constitution Amendment Bill and the Representation of the People Amendment Bill, 2015, and Hon. R. L. Sealy the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2015. Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 were suspended.

Under Order No. 15 the Minister of Housing, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman, moved a Resolution under the Crown Lands (Vesting and Disposal) Act, Cap. 225, to vest 1.87 hectares at Rosemont, Deacons, Blackrock, St. Michael, in the National Housing Corporation, so that the 69 units there could be transferred to tenants under the 20-year programme. He traced the land to its purchase by Government on October 7, 1892, proposed treating the transfer programme as capital rather than revenue expenditure, and described a scheme under which qualified purchasers could rent a unit at \$500 a month while awaiting a mortgage. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce spoke of some 3 885 potential new homeowners, contrasted the Government's policy with the Barbados Labour Party's earlier sale of units, and cited projects at Bushy Park, Coverley, Marchfield, Tweedside Road and Valerie.

Hon. C. P. Sinckler, Member for St. Michael North West, in which Rosemont lies, recalled the programme's origins, acknowledged delays in conveyancing and the cost to Government as Minister of Finance, and urged National Housing Corporation staff to serve tenants promptly. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe set housing within the Government's social democratic approach and spoke of Sayers Court. A Member whose constituency includes Grazettes thanked the Corporation for its help after a house fire and raised the condition of the area. After the luncheon suspension Hon. M. A. Lashley reviewed the transfer legislation and joint-venture housing; Mr. SPEAKER required him to withdraw a remark and ruled on references to persons outside the House under the Standing Orders. Hon. A. D. Brathwaite

raised the social mix of housing projects and the link between poor housing and social ills, citing Parish Land and Constant, and Hon. R. D. Jones described the policy as socially progressive and criticised what he called a 'vulture culture'.

The Prime Minister traced housing policy from the Housing Committee of the late 1930s through the Democratic Labour Party's 1961 commitment on plantation tenancies and the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act of 1980, and spoke of landlords who neglect rented property. Replying, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman said the 1963 Cabinet decision lay behind later policy and stressed land ownership as the basis of empowerment. The Resolution was passed.

Under Order No. 20 Hon. R. L. Sealy moved the second reading of the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2015, which shortens the application period from two months to one month, repeals section 6 on cruise ship bars and gives public officers powers of inspection on board; he said there had been 27 applications since the Act was passed in 2012. Hon. A. D. Brathwaite spoke on gambling in Barbados and its effect on pensioners, Mr. J. D. Paul on the opportunities of cruise tourism, Hon. D. St.E. Kellman in support, and Hon. S. A. Lashley on shopping in Bridgetown and casino gambling. The Bill passed through Committee without amendment, was read a third time and passed as the Cruise Ships (Opening of Facilities) Amendment Act, 2015. The House adjourned until Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at 10.00 a.m.