
THE SENATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

THE SENATE

Wednesday, June 19, 2002

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, June 19, 2002, at 11.20 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator Sir Fred GOLLOP, K.A. (President)
His Honour Senator C. L. BOLDEN, C.B.E., Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.) (Deputy President)
Senator the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT, F.R.C.S., (Edin.), J.P. (Minister of Health) (Leader of the Senate)
Senator the Hon. G. S. H. MURRAY, B.A. (Hons.), J.P. (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office)
Senator T. E. BARKER, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Econ.), J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Economic Development)
Senator P. C. GODDARD
Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS, D.B.E., G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.), P.G.C.E., J.P.
Senator Miss J. C. ODLE, J.P.
Senator J. E. D. WILLIAMS, B.Sc., M.B.A., J.P.
Senator D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C.
Senator K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B.
Senator C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance)
Senator LeR. H. McCLEAN, B.Sc. (Hons.)
Senator Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.H. (Harvard), S.R.N.
Senator C. K. LAURIE, D.I.C.T.A. (S.T.), FBSTA
Senator Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., G.C.M., B.Com., F.C.A., Hon. LL.D. (U.W.I.)
Senator B. R. COLLYMORE, C.M.G.
Senator the Rev. L. W. B. ROCK, M. Div.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senate is in session.

PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following documents:

1. Report prepared with regard to the Queries raised on the operations of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs in the Auditor General's Report for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2001;
2. Report on the Accounts of the Social Investment Fund for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2001;
3. Report on the Accounts of the Social Investment Fund for the Quarter ended March 31, 2002;
4. Report on the Accounts of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2001;
5. Report on the Accounts of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the Quarter ended March 31, 2002;
6. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 2) Order, 2002;
7. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 2002;
8. ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed at Cotonou on June 23, 2000;

9. Annual Reports of the Barbados Water Authority for the year 1998-1999;
10. The Annual Report of the National Assistance Board for the Financial Year April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2001.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

Mr. PRESIDENT: Public Business is the Order of the day.

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ACQUISITION OF PARCELS OF LAND IN ST. ANDREW, ST. JAMES, ST. GEORGE AND ST. MICHAEL FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AT ST. ANDREW'S PRIMARY, ST. ALBAN'S JUNIOR, ST. JUDE'S PRIMARY, ST. MATTHEW'S PRIMARY AND ST. PAUL'S PRIMARY

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, in rising to support this Resolution, I think the importance of education to this society is understood by all Members. Certainly, I believe that there is no divide politically on the importance of education in this country.

Over the years, the major improvements in this society and certainly the social mobility of the vast majority of our citizens, has been primarily due to the investment in education by governments formed by both parties. There has been a lot of contention over the years regarding free education, but suffice it to say, that free education started in the 1950s and was universalised in the island in the 1960s.

Having said that, I must also say that we were renowned for the quality of education which was provided in the society and over the years; I well remember and I do not know whether many Barbadians realise, people came from throughout the region and even from South and North America to be educated in Barbados. A number of them attended boarding schools such as St. Ursula's, Lodge, Mapps, Presentation College and Codrington High School. Certainly, I was at school with people from Venezuela, from Jamaica and even from the USA, people who had lived here and when they went back to the United States they thought it best, because of the quality of education available here, that their kids should still continue to be educated here.

As I said, it had to do with the quality of education. We cannot just say that we have a good quality of education and leave it without doing anything to it. I think we discussed recently the whole idea of teacher appraisal and assisting and maintaining quality in education. Obviously, at this stage of globalisation, I think it is only necessary that we understand that if we are to progress and continue as a nation we must understand that what makes the world turn now is

mobility and flows of labour, information technology and capital. I do not know that Barbados has a lot of capital, but certainly we have the labour and we can certainly educate our people to give them the technological skills and skills in information technology. Hence the whole concept of having this EduTech programme introduced. I am certain that the Government will be supported in this venture, even by the Opposition, as it can only be a worthwhile one that we seek to give the youth the tools with which they can face the future.

Having said that, I am reminded of a quotation from Aristotle, the famous philosopher, who said that the fate of an empire depends on the education of the youth of that empire. In this case, we are saying that the fate of Barbados' future certainly hangs on the education provided the youth of this country.

We have this education sector enhancement programme, affectionately known as EduTech. This provides essentially for computerisation in schools, access to computer training and computers for children in primary and secondary schools. Hand-in-hand with this, goes the whole refurbishment of our schools. You would understand that classrooms not only need to be in a situation conducive to learning but also for teaching to be comfortable in imparting knowledge to these children.

This project not only looks at providing computers and computer labs but it also looks at the whole physical refurbishment of the school structures, the wiring of electricals and also expanding school structures where necessary. So far, 18 primary and secondary schools across the island have benefited from the works aspect of this programme where schools have seen expansion, creation of more blocks, refurbishment of buildings, classrooms repainted and refurbished and new equipment provided, all aimed at providing a total improvement in the schools in our country. I must say so far that all reports indicate that in spite of the problems with salaries, by and large, the teachers are very pleased with the improvements that have occurred in the schools which have been dealt with so far.

This Resolution deals primarily with five schools and the land that is being acquired will be used to enhance the development of these individual schools. Certainly, in the case of St. Jude's Primary there will be provision for playing field and recreational facilities and it is expected that a new classroom block will be constructed at St. Jude's Primary. In addition, provision is being made for the development of hard court facilities on that school's premises which will be of use to the community after school hours.

In the case of the St. Andrew's Primary School, there is a proposed amalgamation of St. Andrew's School with

St. Simon's and St. Saviour's and this will increase the total roll to 389. To facilitate this, a new block of classrooms is being built on the space that was formerly used for games and the new land that will be acquired will be used for new recreational facilities.

In the case of St. Matthew's Primary, a new block of classrooms will be constructed and there will be additional space for recreational facilities. In the case of St. Alban's, the roll will now be up to 420 as there is a planned amalgamation of the St. Alban's Infants School with the Junior School. In addition, there will be an additional block and recreational facilities. In the case of St. Paul's, an eight-classroom block will be constructed where you have a situation at present in which 12 classes are carried out in one large hall.

The total land acquisition for improvements to these schools are expected to cost about \$450 000. Sir, it is obvious that the schools are benefiting from this whole enhancement project, this EduTech programme, as it continues across the island. Already, we have seen the benefits of it.

Initially, it had its detractors and I believe that this has subsided somewhat now but there are still a few misguided voices in the country. Obviously, if we are to move forward as a nation we need to equip our youth with the tools with which they can assist in this process. Government is certainly mindful of that and is forward thinking and forward looking in this regard.

I think, Sir, that sometimes in these debates we have differences of opinion, but in a situation like this I see no reason why we should have differences. We should all focus on the future of the youth of this country. I am mindful of Lyndon Johnson stating that we must open the doors of opportunity but we must also equip our people to enter through these doors. I think that the Government of Barbados, through this EduTech programme, is certainly equipping our people so that they can enter these doors of opportunity and move on to develop themselves and this country.

With these few remarks, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I want to compliment the Minister on two points. The first one being when he made the point, and I hope this puts to rest the history of free education, when he said that it was introduced in the fifties but made universal – he used a word which I am not too quick to repeat lest I twist my tongue – under the Democratic Labour Party. I hope that puts to rest the notion that the Barbados Labour Party...

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: On a point of order. Mr. President, I could understand the desire of the Honourable Member to publicise the failing Party but I am sure the last speaker never used the words "universalised by the Democratic Labour Party". If they want to call the Democratic Labour Party into question, let them do it themselves without attributing that pleasure to another. He said it was universalised in the sixties, not what was said by the Honourable Member.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I thank the most noble Senator for his correction. I agree that the Honourable Member did say it was universalised in the sixties. I am sure that a man of such wisdom would also recall that the Democratic Labour Party held the reins of Government from 1961 so one can only assume that it was the Democratic Labour Party. It is a fair assumption to make that it was the Democratic Labour Party that universalised free education.

It seems, Sir, that even to compliment the Government poses some difficulty. It appears, Sir, that the Government does not know how to be gracious in accepting a compliment. I want to compliment the Minister on making that point as understood by all Members.
11.25 p.m.

Secondly, on another point which is sort of close to me, I want to compliment the Minister in his capacity as Minister of Health, but touching on an area which relates to Education, nonetheless. One will recall that some five years ago, there was a group of medical students who were faced with the prospect of being unable to pursue their studies because the Government had made mention of some quota which would have been put in place and would have deprived many of these young persons of attaining their goals. I must say to the credit of the Minister that those same students who have now completed their studies are not faced with the usual difficulties which young graduating doctors are faced with, that is, wondering whether or not they will be able to get into the internship at the QEH.

Sir, whereas I will always criticise the Minister when it is necessary, I must compliment him because we say that if something happens to the Ministry, the Minister is supposed to take responsibility. Therefore, I am prepared to give him credit, if something good happens. I think it is to his credit that those young people, even before they had completed their exams, were sure that all of them who were successful would have places available to them for the internship at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH). This just shows the difference in the other person who understands a particular issue and is dealing with it rather than one who does not. I think, Sir, that is where my charity ends.

Sir, on this matter of acquisition of land for the purposes mentioned by the Minister, I would like to begin

with a call which I have made on more than one occasion, and that is that persons for whom land is acquired should always be given it with that option, whether they want to have a piece of land in return or whether they want to have payment for it.

We have been told before that it has been done, precedence has been set and, therefore, I think that it is time that it becomes a standard of procedure that once land is acquired, the persons from whom that land is acquired, should have the option of having an alternative piece of land or if they would want to take the money instead. Sir, we know the difficulties that are encountered with respect to the purchase of land. We know the prices of land, particularly when we have a place like St. Albans which is on the West Coast. One could very well appreciate that land would have a good market value. If a person there wanted to acquire a piece of land in a similar location, it is very unlikely that they would be able to do so at the price which the Government would pay for that land which has been acquired.

Sir, I would like to reiterate that call for Government to make that option available to persons from whom land is acquired, that is, they should either get a piece of land in return or accept cash, if they so choose.

Mr. President, I have made the point before that the Barbados Labour Party has not been consistent in its programme where education is concerned. It seems that too often today we are hearing of one policy, tomorrow we are hearing of something else. I recall that the matter of EduTech was a very hot issue at the time of the 1999 general election. In fact, persons were given the impression, that that was the means by which education would be revolutionised in Barbados and certainly, it would have been even greater than universal free secondary and tertiary education.

Sir, I go back to the White Paper on Education preparing for the 21st Century. This document, published in July 1995 was touted to be the Government's revolutionary plan for education in this country. Nowhere in this document, is there any mention of this thing called EduTech. The reason why I am saying this is that between 1995 and 1999, the then Minister of Education, having been exposed to this concept of computers in schools in another part of the world, and also I believe, influenced by the policy enunciated by the then President of the United States, President Clinton, thought that this would indeed be a great selling point for the Barbados Labour Party in the 1999 general elections.

Sir, every time you refer to the matter of EduTech, you are told in no uncertain terms that it is not EduTech, it is the Education Sector Enhancement Programme. I do not recall seeing this in that either, maybe it is there but I cannot see everything, but I have not seen it in my perusal of the document. We are told, particularly by technocrats in the Ministry of Education that we do not want to use this term,

EduTech, it was never intended to be about computers in schools. In fact, Sir, I think the former Minister of Education described EduTech at a meeting with some teachers, in the words of that person, as just a sexy word for repairing schools. Whereas we are told that the emphasis was not on computers, when we look at the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party for 1999, under the heading, "New Education for the Knowledge Age", it says, EduTech 2000 and, I recall, Sir, on a previous occasion being taken to task in this Chamber by an Honourable Member from the Other Side who said that it was never meant to be anything about the year 2000. It was not EduTech 2000. It was just EduTech.

It says here, Sir, that we must ensure that no child is left behind as Barbados surges forward into the new millennium, page 12 of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto. To this end, we have formulated an innovative and comprehensive programme of education reform to be driven by creative strategies, which will make Barbados a global leader in the development of human capital. These strategies form the basis of EduTech 2000.

EduTech 2000 is a radical new approach to the delivery of education structured so as to enhance an in-depth range of learning experiences and to ensure that every child benefits from a sound and relevant education.

I made that point, Sir, to deal with this issue which we have been hearing all the time, that EduTech is not EduTech, it is Education Sector Enhancement Project and therefore we should not emphasize the technology part of it, when in fact, the Government's programme is based on EduTech from 1999.

Sir, as I said, this was not thought of, certainly if we are thinking of preparing for the 21st Century and we are going to produce a document in 1995, I believe that one should have had the foresight to know that technology would form an important part of any strategy for going into the 21st Century. In 1995, all of us were aware to a greater or lesser extent, of the strides which were being made in the area of technology, with the introduction of the Internet and all of these things.

11.35 a.m.

Mr. President, while this seemed to have missed those persons who were responsible for what would be seen as a revolutionary document, suddenly someone got a whim and decided they will now move to EduTech because this is the best way to sell the idea and to win an election in 1999. I am not saying that was the only plan but, to some extent, there is an element of deception in the whole matter.

Sir, we seem to be pinning all of our hopes on this new technology believing it is the medication for all our ills. This

is something that is not new. From the time radio was invented it was said it would revolutionise education. In fact, it was believed that as one form or other of technology came on stream, they would almost make the teacher in the classroom obsolete. Persons felt the new technology was the answer to all of the teaching ills in the classrooms.

In fact, President Bill Clinton referred to it as a bridge to the 21st Century and said that computers are as much a part of the classroom as blackboards.

Mr. President, many people are excited about this new technology but the question is, is it the answer necessary to the problems we face in education? I would not deny that technology is important if we are going to advance in this world. I would certainly hope that every child would be given the opportunity to be exposed to the technology so that on leaving school they can fit into the workplace as there would be a greater demand for technological skills in the workplace.

Sir, one cannot fault any move to improve the exposure or technological base with respect to education in this country or anywhere else. What we must be careful of is not to give persons a measure of expectation which cannot be realised.

Sir, with the EduTech programme, there is a clear lack of proper planning and coordination. Every stage has been met with inordinate delays. We have seen situations where, for example, the St. Paul's Primary School took almost two years before they could have gotten out of the temporary location at Bishop's Court Hill. There were all kinds of reasons why this was happening. One of the reasons given at the time was that there was a difficulty in acquiring land adjoining the school property.

The children have moved back into the school but now there is a Resolution for land in order to extend the same school. Therefore, the question has to be asked, what was the problem at that time? Was it a situation of the land or was it merely bad planning on the part of the Minister of Education?

Mr. President, we have heard cases where persons go into schools and are finding them in worse condition than had been expected. Anyone who at least appreciates that many of the schools were very old... We have had a situation where a multi-million dollar hotel was totally demolished after approximately 30 years of being in existence. What then, would one expect of a school which is probably more than 50 or 60 years old if it is expected to undertake repair? One must know that the electrical system must be redone. One must expect termite infestation. One must expect the roof must be repaired. Therefore, it cannot be said to the

people of Barbados that a person is going to embark on a project to refurbish an old building without at least having done the proper survey to have an idea as to what one would be up against.

Mr. President, one of the problems – I think the Accountant General made reference to this – is that in many cases the contracts for these jobs would have gone over the \$100 000 limit which was required for tender. What was done was that Government advertised for only part of the work which would come to less than \$100 000 or, in some cases, awarded a contract, since the Minister has the authority to approve a contract for less than \$100 000. The contract was awarded and after starting the work, one then hears about additional work that is required to the same project. Therefore, the same contractor goes on to do a job that will cost \$200 000 or \$300 000 when, in fact, it had originally started out at \$100 000.

In other cases, what was done was that the contracts were split so that the project which would require \$160 000...

SENATOR P. C. GODDARD: On a point of order. The Honourable Senator is implying that the Minister operated under the premise that the contract being awarded would be expanded. That implies improper motive. I do not believe the Honourable Member means to imply improper motive in the methodology being utilised in awarding contracts.

As we could all understand, as work is done on an old building, there are unforeseen things that do come up. Therefore, it is not necessarily accurate to say that because a building is 50 years old, the electrical supply is inadequate. That electrical supply could well have been renovated some years previously to comply with the current regulations. Therefore, some of the logic here is leading to improper motive, as far as I see it, Mr. President.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, there were some contracts for which the work would come to approximately \$160 000 but it would be split into two, meaning there would be two contracts costing \$80 000 each being awarded.

I do not intend to suggest there is any improper motive on the part of the Minister but the Accountant-General drew attention to this matter. It is in the Report from the Accountant-General that he questioned a number of the projects that were undertaken under the EduTech programme.

For example, there is a school in St. Peter where the contract was awarded. Windows were included in that contract but after the contract was completed, the contractor

was subsequently paid more money for the installation of windows

Sir, there are many things that have happened in this EduTech programme which the people of this country need seriously to question. Another problem is that many of the contractors who had been given jobs under the EduTech programme were working at that level for the first time. Some were not even contractors but merely persons who were able to put together a few workmen and who had the ear of someone and were able to gain jobs which they were incapable of completing. That was a point which a former Minister of Education complained about; the fact that many of the contractors were incapable of completing the jobs. 11.45 a.m.

We also had the case of what has been referred to by the wider public as the EduTech programme house where a person involved in EduTech was involved in the construction of a house using employees of the Ministry of Education who were supposed to be working on the EduTech programme. Sir, that person was returned to his substantive position and no serious action was taken against him in that matter.

EduTech will turn out to be the biggest drain on the Treasury of this country and the project that got the least value for money of any project that was ever executed in this country. Sir, it is a sad situation in that a project of this type, if properly executed and approached with the kind of vision required, could be extremely beneficial to the entire country because Barbados is spending over \$500 million on this project.

In the United States of America there are school districts with populations equivalent to the total population of Barbados and they are spending \$30 million on projects of this sort yet we are spending \$500 million on a similar project.

Sir, the interesting point is that this project is going to be funded by Caribbean Development Bank and IADB and it is the first project of this type that has been funded by either of these institutions so that Barbados is apparently being used as the guinea pig in this project. I have been told by a reliable source that these two institutions were prepared to give concessionary rates on the financing, given the fact that it is a pilot project but the Barbados Government never asked for these concessionary rates so we will undertake this project with a high debt to repay and very little to show for it.

Sir, about eighteen months ago we were told that there were computers already on the island for the EduTech programme. You do not need to be a rocket scientist to know that technology is changing so rapidly that in six months'

time a computer could be obsolete. Sir, Government bought computers and put them in storage as if they were storing cans of food so that before they started the project, they had to deal with the fact that the computers were obsolete.

Also, the company supplying the computers had a contract for the maintenance of those computers which was not free to Barbados. One of the major problems encountered by the places in the United States of America which embarked on putting computers in schools was the maintenance of the system. They have determined that it can cost 70 per cent of the original cost to maintain the systems over a two-year period.

Sir, I agree that most of the \$500 million will go towards refurbishing the schools, but we must appreciate that there will be a high recurrent cost for the maintenance of the system and I am wondering to what extent Government has taken this fact into consideration.

Sir, we also have the matter of training teachers who will be involved in the project because some teachers started the programme of training and then the programme was stopped to the extent that persons do not know what Erdiston Teachers Training College is being used for now since there is constant confusion in the Ministry of Education with respect to projects.

Sir, I must admit that presently we have a less flamboyant and vocal Minister so we do not hear his pronouncement as often as we heard those of the previous Ministers. Under the previous Ministry of Education you could be assured every three months to hear about a new initiative coming out of the Ministry of Education and if one of these initiatives had worked and was revolutionary to the extent that the Minister suggested it would be, Barbados would have been leaps and bounds ahead of most other developing countries.

11.55 a.m.

Sir, whenever there is talk about any initiative, we are told about how great it would be. The White Paper on Education was supposed to be revolutionary in education in Barbados. What has happened since 1995 that we can say was revolutionary? In fact, what we saw was steady decline in the performance of students in schools. We still have, as the former Minister said, 30 per cent of the children who are going through secondary schools leaving without any kind of certification. Sir, what has happened with this revolutionary document since 1995? What has happened with EduTech 2000 which was introduced in 1999, a project which the people of this country were led to believe that by the year 2000, Barbados would have been on the cutting edge of technology, computers would be in schools and we would have been...?

SENATOR P. C. GODDARD: On a point of order. The Honourable Senator is misleading the Senate again. The EduTech programme was clearly defined as a programme that would take until the year 2005 and there was the possibility that there could be a year or two of slippage in that. Sir, to say that we would have definitively arrived at a technologically advanced stage in the year 2000 is incorrect.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, one would only attach a year onto a project if something significant was supposed to happen with that project in that particular year. It was not called EduTech 2005 or 2007. It was called EduTech 2000 because the people of this country were led to believe that EduTech 2000, on Page 13 of the Barbados Labour Party's 1999 Manifesto says that "EduTech 2000 has four key components:

Physical facilities:

Use of information of multimedia technologies to enhance learning experience in the classroom;

Enhance teacher training to ensure teachers have the tools to deliver and improve education;

Institutional strengthening, namely Administration Reform in the Ministry, Curriculum Reform, a system of continuous testing and assessment of students, teachers and administrators."

Sir, under "Modernising our School", it goes on to say "the use of information and multimedia technology". As far as I know, the modern facilities relate to that and not to repairing any school.

In 1999, when the Barbados Labour Party put out this document, the idea of having to repair schools was not on the cards. It was put forward that we were to have computers in schools by the year 2000 and no consideration was given to any refurbishment of any schools. It was only when...

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Mr. President, on a point of order. I believe that the Honourable Member is seeking to mislead this Chamber. On the same document from which he is quoting, Page 13 of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto 1999, it is clearly indicated that extensive refurbishment and upgrading of both primary and secondary school plants and the implementation and structural programmes would take place. Further, the Administration would spend \$100 million over the next seven years.

Sir, to suggest that we were trying to confuse the public is inaccurate.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I would repeat what I said. It says "the modern physical facilities, use of information and multi-media technology to

enhance the learning of students in the classroom", *et cetera*.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: On a point of order. Mr. President, I sat and watched the Honourable Member pick up a piece of paper and read it from the beginning of his speech. He is allegedly quoting from the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto of 1999. Another Senator has just read to this Chamber a section from what is alleged to be their document. I would, therefore, ask that the Honourable Member produce a copy of the document that he is reading to the Chamber so that we can be assured that he is reading from the correct document. Otherwise, somebody is taking a quotation or part of a quotation from a document.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Bolden, you have made your point. Senator McClean, it would help if you would tell the Honourable Senate what you are quoting from. You are under no obligation to lay the document in any formal way but at least tell us its source.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, this is a copy of the 1999 Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party. Somebody has an original copy and I am sure that...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please, refer to the page.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Sir, Page 13.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Thank you.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Sir, I must say that, with all respect to you, Sir, I am bound only by your instructions. Therefore, no Honourable Senator will try to dictate to me how I would present my presentation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That goes without saying. Please proceed.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Sir, the point which was raised refers to modernising our schools which is a totally different heading from EduTech. It was not listed under EduTech and it cannot be a sub-heading of EduTech when the heading is a bigger type than EduTech. If it is a subheading of something, it would be in smaller type than the original.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is obviously stuck in a mode in which he cannot get out and is misleading the Chamber. On the same Page 13, under "Modernising Our Schools", and I would lead into the part and the headline is "Modernising Our Schools".

"We will change the environment in which our children are taught.

Much of our school plant is old, inadequate and generally suffering from the lack of systematic maintenance.

The infrastructural reforms that will take us into the new millennium, and which involve the widespread provision of computer laboratories, require extensive refurbishment and upgrading of our primary and secondary school plant, and the implementation of structural maintenance programme.”

Sir, those are the facts. Stop misleading the Chamber! If you cannot understand, say so and we would explain it to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You cannot issue an instruction to the Honourable Member.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean is only the second speaker on this Resolution and it seems that we are being bogged down on points of order. Senator McClean, objections have been made to your quotation from the point of view of completeness. Let us proceed.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, it seems to me that persons would want to tell me how I should make my presentation. The point that has been made from the Other Side strengthens the point that I am making. When the EduTech programme first started, we were told that it was to the tune of \$300 million. It says here on Page 13 under “Modernising our Schools” that we would spend \$100 million on refurbishing schools. Sir, \$100 million from \$380 million leaves \$280 million. Therefore, the emphasis was not on refurbishing schools for the computers. The emphasis was not providing the computers and the refurbishing of the schools, it was on providing computers; and the refurbishing of the schools was under a totally different consideration. Sir, it is clear that if you are telling me that EduTech was going to cost \$380 million and you had planned to spend \$100 million on refurbishing schools, then you are going to spend \$280 million on computers.

Sir, the next point is, we are hearing today that the emphasis is not on computers in schools, the emphasis is on refurbishing the schools and this Education Sector Enhancement Plan. This bears out the point that the Barbados Labour Party is not clear on its education policy.

As I said, the 1995 Education Sector Enhancement Plan was not on the cards nor was EduTech. In 1999, when EduTech 2000 came onboard, the Education Sector Enhancement Plan was not yet onboard because there is no such terminology used in the Manifesto of 1999.

12.05 p.m.

We are hearing now that the majority of money that is going to be spent is going to be spent on the refurbishing of schools and only a small amount of computers, so where exactly are we? What really is EduTech? Is it only in the words of the former Minister a “sexy” word for refurbishing schools? Is it really intended to bring technology to the people of Barbados? Or is it merely another gimmick, a public relations exercise from the Barbados Labour Party? That seems to be the case, Sir.

Nowhere are we seeing that this programme called EduTech is going in the direction in which it is intended. Sir, another problem that arises is the means by which the project is being implemented. We have the phasing in of the project and we have one set of children who obviously will benefit from the technology at the primary level but the phasing has been so sporadic and has been so inconsistent that those very children who are introduced to the technology in primary school will go into a secondary school where the technology is not available. So what is the sense? What are we telling the children? This is what I say about raising people’s expectations and then you cannot deliver. You will have a child going to a primary school doing exceptionally well, going into Harrison College, and the computer is not there.

I think that if Government is talking about refurbishing schools one of the first schools that it should refurbish is Harrison College. Whereas people are talking about Harrison College being an elitist school and all that, it is one of the schools with some of the most deplorable conditions in this country. In fact, if you go there you would see windows falling off the building and the furniture is in a poor state. So you have a situation where in the primary schools you are being introduced to the technology and then you go onto secondary school and the technology is not available. Then we have a further situation where in one household you will have one child being exposed to the technology and then a sibling who has no idea about it.

We are told that people raised the point about the length of time that children might be exposed to the computer and the possible ill that they might face. These were all things that were raised and people have a right if they have concerns to raise them. In fact, it always seems as though you should not criticise anything the Government does. In fact, only this morning I was reading a document where a gentleman writing on the black diaspora said that he reminded persons of a speech that was made by George Lamming some time ago when he made the point that somebody like Erskine Sandiford, now Sir Lloyd, had to make the point that you must not feel you are unpatriotic because you criticise a prime minister. But the Barbados Labour Party members always like to believe that if you criticise anything that they do that you do not like Barbados, you are unpatriotic.

I am going to remind the Government members that I am the most patriotic Barbadian you will find. I would therefore criticise anybody that I have to criticise without feeling a sense of being unpatriotic. I would therefore mention again that there were persons in this country who raised concerns about the length of time students would be exposed to the computer and the response from the Ministry of Education was that they would be only exposed for 40 or 45 minutes per week. I do not know how many people recall that. You are going to spend \$380 million, to expose a child to a computer for 45 minutes a week. I think that we would have been better served if Government had agreed to give a subvention to every householder in Barbados of \$1 000 towards the purchase of a first computer.

If every Barbadian who was purchasing his or her first computer got a rebate of \$1 000 from Government there are about 75 000 electronic households in Barbados I believe. That includes the little old lady with just one light and it also includes persons like some of the Honourable Senators on the Other Side who would not need to take advantage of such a subvention. If we say that 40 000 of those electronic households accepted it, Government would spend about \$40 million and you would have computers in 40 000 houses in Barbados and you would still have enough money left back to refurbish the schools. The entire family would have access to the technology and not the one child. What Government could have done was to have properly equipped computer labs in the schools which they could have as part of the curriculum in the computer training and the children would have computers at home.

There are ways in which this could have been done at less cost but Government likes to come with these grandiose plans and tell the people of Barbados that the Barbados Labour Party does everything with great flair and pomp. In fact, the latest gimmick to promote EduTech is EduFest where you had a great party, "tuk" bands, stiltmen, puppeteers, the works, at the Ministry of Education to promote EduTech. Apparently, even some of the Government members do not know of it. It seems as though some of our colleagues are not up-to-date with what is happening around them and I would suggest that they go back and look at the papers or call somebody at the Ministry of Education and ask them if they know of a programme called EduFest when there was great Kadooment at the Ministry of Education in trying to promote EduTech.

I am amazed, Sir, that persons seem to be unaware of this when it was all over the television, in the newspapers. I am sure that these persons, the Honourable Senators, are not dishonest persons, so all I can say is that they are so uninformed that this would explain why so many of the Government's policies go awry because they are not informed and do not even know what is happening in the very government of which they are a part.

Sir, I would hope that the people of this country do in

fact have the benefit of improved exposure to technology because it would be nonsense for anybody to suggest that we must not go the route of exposing as many people as possible to technology.

12.15 p.m.

Sir, let us not believe that it is the "be all" and "end all" when it comes to education in this country. We still have some serious problems for the basics in education in this country. To what extent will this improve that rate of certification from the 30 per cent? Will we see a reversal where we have 70 per cent rather than 30 per cent? I doubt very much, because if the implementation of this project is bogged down with so much confusion, certainly, we cannot hope to see any great benefits from it in the short term.

In fact, the sad thing is that there will be students who will be exposed to the programme in the primary school and will probably leave school without having any further exposure to this technology.

Sir, we have to rethink the whole programme and I think the Government should at least swallow its pride and say that it thinks it has gone in the wrong direction with this and needs really to sit down and re-examine what has been happening. In fact, the inconsistencies go as far as the point where a person who is a key person in the EduTech programme in the Ministry of Education was removed from the Ministry of Education and put to work in the Prime Minister's office with the HIV/AIDS awareness programme. If there are Government Members who are not aware of EduTech, I must confess that I am not aware as to whether to date anybody has replaced that person who was the key person in the EduTech Programme. Sir, if you are going to remove the personnel who are responsible for the implementation of the project, how can you expect that this project will be a success?

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. President, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. The officer to whom he is referring was not removed. There was a position available as Director of the National HIV/AIDS Commission and that officer, along with others applied, was interviewed and found to be most suitable. Therefore, to say the person was removed, is to put a spin and connotation on it, which is inaccurate, wrong and undeserving.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, in two minutes, your time would have expired.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

Sir, I will pay the Honourable Senator the courtesy to rephrase what I said. The person who was the key person in the EduTech Programme moved to a different position in the Public Service and has not yet been replaced.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. President, again, I rise on a point of order. The Honourable Member must know that when a position becomes available somebody always fills that position. The position that the previous holder held before going to the National HIV/AIDS Commission has been filled. It is not vacant. Somebody is in the job working because it has been filled.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It seems to me, as I said earlier that we are being bogged down with smaller points. If they are substantive points, then I will permit points of order. On the question of whether or not somebody has been replaced, I think you have made the correction, Senator Murray. Senator McClean has rephrased his original statement. I do not think we need take it too much further.

Senator, you are almost out of time.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

The technique is evident. I would like to close by saying, Sir, that a gentleman called Mr. Todd Oppenheimer - and those persons who have any knowledge of science would know that if you see the word Oppenheimer, you had better pay attention - says that there is no good evidence that most uses of computers significantly improve teaching and learning. Yet, school districts are cutting programmes, music, art and physical education that enrich children's lives to make room for this dubious nostrum, and the Clinton administration has embraced the goal of computers in every classroom as credulous and costly enthusiasm. I think that statement could almost be applied to the situation in Barbados.

Sir, of course, technology is important for the development of this country. I will obviously support any attempt to bring technology to the students but I would caution the Government and ask them to be more careful with the way in which they implement these programmes, and that they reduce the wastage which is taking place and has become evident from the time that the EduTech Programme started.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I have spoken before in this Honourable Chamber about the benefits of the EduTech Programme and of computer studies to the children of this island and, as a result, to the economic and social progress of Barbados. Although I still enjoy teaching, I am sorry that yet, again, I

have to get up and inform Senator McClean that he obviously is not seeing clearly when it comes to some of the statements he has made.

Aside.

SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: The Member is not seeing clearly. It is not the Democratic Labour Party; but I am afraid that in this instance I have to try and educate him and make him see clearly about certain statements.

I do not like to blow my own trumpet but I do think that I have the credibility where education is concerned, to make him and the public who may be listening know what is really happening in the EduTech Programme. Mr. President, when the previous Minister of Education visited schools in 1994 and 1995, because that was one of her first steps as the new Minister, the teachers expressed their concerns to her about failing schools. The majority of the children were not performing to a satisfactory standard. When the statistics were examined at the secondary schools, it was found that only 30 per cent had left with adequate certification.

The Minister also consulted employers and they too said that children were lacking in basic literacy and numeracy skills and also that they had bad work ethics. There was even an occasion when someone on the first day of the job wanted to know when she would get vacation.

Aside.

SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: You know, it was said in a rather discourteous way. Therefore, the Ministry of Education officials sat down and came up with the idea of a programme which was later named the Education Enhancement Programme. They realised that it must have four components: Civil Works - focussing on repair of roofs, bathrooms, electricity and plumbing and even wheelchair access.

12.25 p.m.

Then there was a second component of teacher training to prepare our children to be functional in the 21st Century. There was a third component of curriculum reform and I wish to stress here that would include EduTech as part of educational reform. It is not necessary to mention it in the document that each child matters. Any educator would appreciate that it was part of the curriculum reform. The fourth component which was very important was the installation of all technologies, not only the computer. The computer would be part of the strategy to be in the classroom like other strategies such as tape recorders, videos and overhead projectors as we used to call them, and tapes for foreign languages.

Again, I say there was no need for specificity and there was no need to refer to EduTech specifically. The officials of the Ministry also met and talked with children and they said that teachers were still using talk and chalk. That did not mean, of course, that one must not use a certain amount of talk and chalk but the teachers were confining most of their teaching to that.

Mr. President, these four components are what they used to ensure that we are making certain that each child develops to his or her potential. The idea of repairs is necessary. You must have a pleasing environment in which to learn. This programme is also seeking to ensure that school leavers are able to make more contributions to the social and economic life of Barbados. Yes, it is a multi-based programme and it will take seven years precisely because we have not got the money to do it in a shorter space of time. It is child centred.

Any educator would have heard of P.R.J. Brunner and Dewey and these have all emphasized the importance of child-centred education which I did in my education course so that this is no gimmick as implied. The Barbados Labour Party gave us adult suffrage and the beginning of free education and the Status of Children Reform Act. I could go on and on and this would not descend to the level of gimmickry. This is one of the tools. I am sure all Honourable Senators would have heard of Professor Drucker because he is famous. He has emphasized long ago the importance of information technology. Originally, we spoke about literacy and have always prided ourselves in Barbados on our high percentage of literacy and the fact that almost every Barbadian could read and write. But nowadays, if we are not computer literate as well, we will be left behind. We cannot afford only to be literate in the sense of being able to read and write, although that is important. It is also important that we are computer literate and that is one of the reasons too that it is being taken to the community centres, so that not only the children in the schools but adults will be able to avail themselves of the opportunity.

This EduTech programme is not instant. It will take years and the White Paper in many ways is revolutionary and in time we will see a reversal. As educators, we are not bogged down by confusion. I heard Senator McClean say "probably" and "rethink", but the educators are very much aware of the necessity for the EduTech programme. They are giving it their full support and with time we shall see our children further on the road to the level of education which has made Barbados what it is, on the road to being a developed country and where we are noted for our sophistication and skills. Without EduTech, our education will be incomplete. Even if you start it in the first and second forms and do not go on until you leave school, it would still have stimulated and exposed children and for the most part there will be many who will benefit from this programme.

Therefore, with those words, Mr. President, I wish to say that I wholeheartedly support this Resolution.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Symmonds.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: If it pleases you, Mr. President, I would not want very much time in reflecting on Senator McClean's contribution. I think, Sir, there was a lot of mischief involved in that contribution and I treat it as such.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would be careful with the word "mischief".

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I retract the word "mischief". However, I want to make reference to a few observations. I am of the view that land acquisition is a sufficiently serious matter in Barbados. We need to recognize that obviously it is a very costly and often times a lengthy process. Ministries seeking to acquire land, in my view, need always to be mindful. I listened to the Honourable Minister's presentation as I came into the Senate Chamber this morning when he said that the Ministry was, in fact, mindful that it should be as efficient as possible in the whole exercise of land acquisition.

In specific reference, Sir, to the Resolution before us, I want to speak to the question of efficiency in the context of education. Sir, it occurs to me that the special requirements of primary and secondary schools in Barbados need to be borne in mind as we embark on this process of land acquisition. I will say why I am of that view and how perhaps we should go about bearing those requirements in mind.

12.35 p.m.

Mr. President, the spacial requirements of the schools reflect the long-term standing which has not always been immediately evidenced when we look at the way in which those exercises have been conducted in Barbados. I think past records of school populations are often not taken into consideration so that they are able to recognise the rate at which the enrollment of the students has grown over a number of years and, therefore, be able to better project what requirements they might have, what necessities might have to be met over a 10-year period.

Obviously, it would be impossible to try to predict these things as a matter of science but it will be necessary, in my view, to try to calculate the rate of growth per student population so that we may have a better understanding of the type of student body in terms of its numerical strength with which we may have to deal.

Sir, there are consequences which come out of this numerical strength in the student body – the need for more classrooms, more bathrooms and other facilities.

Another consideration would be what existing plans, if any, principals of the school, which we are taking into consideration may have for either the expansion or variation of the curricula or the introduction of other specific types of activities be they recreational or otherwise.

I am also concerned that we need to bear in mind other issues such as the specific catchment area or constituency population the school in question is serving. There are some areas in Barbados that are growing very rapidly. If, for example, a primary school which is set up to serve the catchment area of Ruby, St. Philip and the surrounding districts, were to be falling under our contemplation, then the reality is that there would be a greater need to recognise the importance of the likely variation of that student enrollment and demand for places in that school than there would be, say for example, in Mount Tabor, St. John, or St. Catherine, St. Philip, which do not have the same rapid rate of growth per student population.

Sir, the fact of the matter is that we need to be always mindful that schools in Barbados have not all developed at the same physical pace. Rural Barbados has repeatedly seen instances where primary schools have not benefited necessarily from the same kind of physical amenities that schools in urban Barbados have benefited. That situation has been compounded by our experience in the structural adjustment period when maintenance of the amenities that did exist would have been cut back, when improvement in facilities would have slowed down and, in all likelihood, those schools which were running behind would have fallen even further behind.

Asides.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, I am going to beg. I do not want to become sidetracked by the petty politics I am hearing. If you could please rescue me from the asides of Senator McClean.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have not, in fact, been hearing the asides but to the extent that you are hearing them, I would therefore ask any Honourable Senator who is making the asides to permit Senator Symmonds to be heard in silence.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: I am obliged to you, Sir.

In looking at those broader considerations, in my view, we are then better able to understand and appreciate the fact that the infrastructure of our schools has to be taken into consideration when we are dealing with land acquisition.

Sir, in future planning for the schools, even if those plans are located in a principal's mind, or are plans which have to take into consideration the immediate demands of the catchment area which the school serves, those plans must also be taken into consideration.

Sir, infrastructurally, if we look at a school like the St. Paul's Primary School, it becomes very clear there is quite a demand for the school. St. Paul's is seen as a school which is centrally located. Again, things such as matters of convenience, *et cetera*, would be seen as being attractive to persons wanting to send their children to school. Sir, the reality is that the physical plant had not been significantly improved upon for several decades. That applies to several other primary and secondary schools across Barbados.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: On a point of order. I am not sure if the Honourable Senator is misleading us or if he is simply confused.

On one hand he said the schools in rural Barbados were the ones that did not benefit from the physical improvement. Now he is using a school in urban Barbados as an example of a school that has so benefited.

Mr. PRESIDENT: No point of order. Please proceed.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the truth of the matter is that I would want to assist Senator McClean. He does not take a serious demeanor in anything these days.

Sir, the reality is that the pace of development of certain schools in Barbados, especially in rural Barbados, was much slower than has been the pace of development in the many schools in urban Barbados.

If I am being provoked to be more specific, I could speak to schools in the country that would have had to endure situations where recreational facilities were either non-existent or, alternatively, would have had to endure situations where students had to travel a significant distance in order to enjoy those recreational facilities.

Sir, I could speak to a situation where, previously in the St. Thomas by-election, we had to explain to Senator McClean the fact that some students who did not enjoy the benefit of suitable amenities were being forced to leave one part of a school's compound to go a significant distance, through pouring rains sometimes, in order to make use of the bathroom facilities. We have to take these things into consideration as being deficiencies in the physical plant of primary and some secondary schools in Barbados. The point I am making is that...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean, I am hearing you. Please allow Senator Symmonds to be heard.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, when we are speaking to the question of land acquisition for the EduTech programme, we first have to recognise the physical plant of our schools was a consideration. Not necessarily a consideration born only out of significant mismanagement in the past but a consideration born out of a lack and scarcity of resources.

I make that point to try to demonstrate to the Opposition that it is possible to view this matter above and beyond the political divide. Sir, if one is provoked to go into the political divide, then one would have to make the point that one cannot simply take computers and put them into a school, if that school is bereft of security. For example, taking the school of South District which, prior to the exercise we now have here would not even have had the benefit of a fence around it.

To go further, one would have to take into consideration the fact that in some of those primary schools in Barbados, when the schools were toured, it was realised there were problems with the roofs. For example, by the time the roofs were taken off, it was realised the rafters were rotten. In looking at spending money wisely, the rafters were then fixed. By the time that was done, it was realised the electrical wiring was bad. By the time that was repaired, it was realised the plumbing had not been changed or improved upon for 40 years. Therefore, the school is rebuilt from the top down in the process of making it ready. On top of that, there is the need to build suitable buildings for laboratories.

Sir, the plague we are dealing with is one of bad management and bad planning. If it is that they can only see it in the context of party politics and not in the context of national development, then I want for them to recognise that when talking about party politics... and I heard Senator McClean when on his feet, introduced the issue of free education.

Sir, I had the painful experience of being associated with them. When at political meetings and they ran out of things to say, they would invoke Errol Barrow and free education and the Undine Whittaker cheer section would clap and applaud. Sir, the reality is that the DLP held office from 1961 to 1976. Between 1961 and 1994, the DLP held office in this country for 24 years, while the BLP held it for 10 years.

Therefore, when one is talking about free education, at the same time we need to speak to the issue of the management of the physical resources that give life, meaning and sustenance to the existence of the continuity of that whole education process.

12.45 p.m.

Sir, you never heard about the mismanagement that took place with the physical plant but they now come to the Senate and make sport of the education process. Sir, EduTech cannot be implemented by putting computers into buildings which are ready to collapse. So, we should not reduce this debate to blaming any political party. Government in Barbados has a duty to recognise that the time has come to place greater emphasis on the management of the physical resources because the public purse will be abused if this is not done. Sir, we do not do this in our private life because if we had a house we would make sure that the investment is looked after and because it is a public sector investment it should not be mistreated.

Sir, they should not make it a political issue because they held office for so long and now want to cast political blame and throw aspersions wildly but then the first aspersion of accountability should be for the party that held office for such a prolonged period of time.

Sir, I want to say that when I was an adversary, the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto 1999 came out early enough for the nation to read, analyse and form an opinion on. It was not like the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto that was written by the political leader of that party and not even the candidates had a chance to see it.

Sir, I am always reminding them about the Republican white woman who came here and helped the Leader of the Opposition write that Manifesto....

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, that is irrelevant.

SENATOR K. D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the document in 1999 made it abundantly clear that the EduTech programme was going into the new millennium. It is disturbing the cynical spin that could be put on it now to say that it should be up and running by 2001. In no way could any realistic Barbadian believe that to be the case largely because so much basic work had to be done on the physical plant of the many schools in question which would explain why \$100 million had to be committed in the Manifesto to the exercise. Sir, I just want to demystify all of those things which were thrown out by Senator McClean in his speech.

I want to speak to the question of the infrastructure of the schools because that is part of what this exercise is about and a simplistic choice has been offered up by the good Senator. He would have us believe that it is simply a matter of spending money on computers or that Government is fooling the people of Barbados when they really want to repair the schools. I will use the school in South District that the Honourable Senator is familiar with, where the infrastructural underdevelopment was so acute that there was no staff room for teachers and this reality is also experienced

at other primary schools in Barbados. If most schools do not have this development, you cannot simply put in a computer and turn your back on the institutions because we must think of improving the amenities for the staff and students. Therefore, a broad all-encompassing approach had to be made to this exercise.

Sir, the time has come across the divide for persons to be committed to the development and well-being of people. If we are serious about this, we will accept that there is an education plant in this country which is in significant need of refurbishment and repair. Once this is done, we can talk about investing further in terms of laboratories and so on because one cannot be seen as being exclusive of the other.

Mr. President, you would not buy a house which is rat-infested and move your new furniture in it. Neither would I or Senator Mascoll and I suspect that Senator McClean would not do it either.

It reeks of something improper for Senator McClean to suggest that the public purse be so abused that when a school is in fundamental need of improvement that we would take public funds and invest heavily in computers when there is no security for the computers or the schools, where the roof is leaking and there is no adequate electricity with power surges that can cause damage to the infrastructure and equipment.

Sir, we have to create an ambience that is comfortable for the students and teachers and is compatible with what we are seeking to achieve and that is sustainable in the long run.

Sir, this is about one set of people's view of physical development and recognition that the whole question of physical development and planning cannot be short-sighted but it has to be a broad, all-encompassing one that looks at all the ramifications involved therein.

Sir, I am aghast at the content of Senator McClean's speech and I urge that he dissociate himself of that approach because if we were to adopt that approach to the development of Barbados, this country would be ruined in the twinkling of an eye.

Sir, I want to lend my full support to the Resolution before the Senate and I want to commend the Ministry of Education for the approach to the question of the implementation of the EduTech programme.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.05 p.m. today.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to and

Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.
12.55 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Mr. President, much has been said this morning about various aspects of education in Barbados. Some very informative information came from Senator Dame Patricia, who served in the capacity of headmistress for many years. Recently, I heard that she was lauded as one of the greatest headmistresses of her time. I think that it is important to recognise that a person such as herself, who would have taught long and hard in the education environment would be well able to speak in a neutral way about benefits as they have accrued. Sir, she did so in reference to some comments that seemed to be less than accurate coming from the Other Side, particularly with respect to the vision of this Administration of the Barbados Labour Party and its vision for education today.

Sir, Senator McClean spoke about the Barbados Labour Party not having any vision or any clear plan for future education in Barbados. This Resolution before us speaks to the acquisition of land to improve the environment of primary schools.

Sir, the plan for school institutions in Barbados is clearly outlined in a number of ways. It spoke broadly under the Educational Enhancement Sector, not only at the level of technology but also at the development of the school plant. This Resolution today speaks specifically to that.

Sir, Senator McClean wants to knock the Barbados Labour Party but I would wish to remind him that if the Democratic Labour Party had a greater vision for education, primary schools in particular, in 1999 when they sought to amalgamate two schools, St. Matthias Boys and St. Matthias Girls, the capacity then accommodated 359 children to a new location. Sir, to build a facility to accommodate 320, that is as visionless as it could ever get. Sir, you amalgamate two schools and you can create a little more than seventy spaces. I would leave that for the Senator if he wants to continue to criticise this Side.

Sir, since I specifically mentioned St. Matthias School, I must speak to the Arthur Smith Primary School in St. Matthias. Whilst this Resolution speaks about the acquisition of land, unfortunately, the area where this school is housed has no provision for acquiring land to expand the current facilities. That is somewhat unfortunate but I believe there is opportunity for relationships that could help to alleviate some of the problems in that institution.

Mr. President, I must point out where the Arthur Smith Primary School is for the benefit of those who do not know. It is physically located in close proximity of Hotel Pommarine, The Barbados Community College Training Institute for Hospitality. It shares a boundary with the now celebrated United Nations Building, which houses all of the United Nations office in Barbados. As a matter of fact, they share a common fence and it resides in Christ Church. Hopefully, the Senator would now recognise exactly where that school is.

Sir, this school was built to accommodate 250 students and today they are almost bursting at the seams. The current capacity is 359 students and children will be entering school in the September school term. We also recognise that this school is in the heartland of an area that has a housing estate.

Asides.

SENATOR MISS J. C. ODLE: The Resolution speaks to acquisition of lands for schools and improvements and in speaking to the need for schools to be so positioned and to receive accouchement satisfactory to the delivery of information in a comfortable environment, obviously for better academic results and the emotional stability of students, I thought that it would be important to make reference to one of the schools in our primary system.

Mr. PRESIDENT: St. Andrew's Primary, St. Jude's Primary, St. Matthew's Primary and St. Paul's Primary are mentioned specifically.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: I would speak specifically to the land acquisition with respect to the schools that you have mentioned.

Sir, it is important that in seeking to acquire lands for the primary schools as identified, I want to pay specific attention to the amenities. There are primary schools in Barbados, St. Paul's School is one such school, which is very tight on space. If you know where St. Paul's School is located, it abuts and abounds with a road which makes it very challenging for activity to take place at the school. The acquisition of land for this school is very positive in that regard.

I am sure that school like several other schools in the primary system would benefit from this because the students would be able to burn off some of the energy by participating in various sports including cricket. I do not know if the land that is being acquired for this facility would benefit all of these things but it would certainly make a difference.

In terms of the physical plan, we have to ensure that when we add land to the physical plant, there is always the possibility to have around-the-clock schooling. I am aware

there are instances in certain primary schools when it rains that certain areas can be rendered unusable. Therefore, this would make it difficult for the delivery of education.

I believe that it is also important that in acquiring these additional spaces, attention should be paid to areas where the schools could be used for common public activities, auditoria and the like. We recognise that students in Barbados now have opportunities, culturally, to show their artistry. I hope that with the areas that we have identified for additional space, we would be able to consider this and in an area that would not be weather threatened.

I compliment the Administration for moving in a direction that is indicated through the Education Enhancement Sector Programme, in phasing in various levels of construction to make sure that students benefit in a particular way. This phase that is about to be completed under that sector should redound to making better provision for the extra-curricular activities.

I am well aware that communities surrounding primary schools would be the first choice, catchment area for individuals living in the area. I believe that of all communities across Barbados, primary schools should be upgraded in such a manner in time to ensure that no child is left behind and no community is disenfranchised and children can go to school in a home environment.

We recognise that it takes an entire community to raise a child and if we have schools in areas that cannot accommodate the children from the catchment area, then we are challenged in delivering the best possible care and environment for these children.

With those few remarks, I support the Resolution.

SENATOR P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I rise to support this Resolution for the acquisition of land in St. Andrew, St. James, St. George and St. Michael for the primary schools mentioned.

Mr. President, I had not intended to speak on this Resolution. However, the direction in which the debate has gone makes it necessary for me to do so.

I was not prepared to discuss this Resolution as a full-blown debate as an EduTech programme but Senator McClean clearly was.

Asides.

SENATOR P. C. GODDARD: Sir, he has demonstrated a remarkable level of unfamiliarity on the subject and a complete lack of understanding of the strategy

being used in the use and introduction of new technology into our school system.
2.15 p.m.

Unfortunately, the criticisms that were made of the EduTech programme were of a nature that sowed seeds of doubt about the value of the use of new technology and the necessity for exposing our next generation to the new technology being used in today's world. We should not be playing games with our children. Their future is important. We should be promoting the value of the use of new technology in the enhancement of the learning process. To imply that technology would replace teachers is to attempt to raise the spectre of unemployment and to create apprehension and fear in the teaching profession. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The use of new technology and the introduction of the use of new technology systems in the delivery of knowledge and in the enhancement of the learning process will mean that there will be a greater reliance on the teaching profession than ever before. It will bring new skills to bear and develop teachers to a new level and it will make the learning process an absolutely new one both for teachers and for students alike.

No one can doubt the value of multi-media systems in delivering knowledge. Just last night, I watched a programme on the design of the Spanish galleons and the metamorphosis of ship design into the British navy that evolved out of the Spanish galleon and it showed the technological advances that led to the British dominance in the seas after the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

Now I had learnt about this in third form at Lodge School and it was a dry subject, one that happily was brought to life for me by a very excellent history teacher, Sir Alexander Hoyos. Seeing the audio-visual presentation, it brought new light, new meaning and a new understanding into the techniques of ship building and what it meant for national power, for commerce and warfare in the times of Elizabeth I. Mr. President, we need to understand that we should be using new technology to enhance the learning process to bring new skills to bear and those skills are being used in commerce today in the development of new business and new methods of communication around the globe.

Mr. President, the EduTech programme is one that is a long lasting project. It is a massive project and, yes, criticisms can be made about its implementation and certainly there may be some criticism to be levelled about its design but I would certainly like to see those criticisms be of a positive nature which would allow us to enhance the programme and develop it further. To my mind, that is the way we should go about the process of building our nation and certainly building our educational system.

Mr. President, there is no doubt in my mind that the

EduTech programme and the general enhancement of our schools in many areas of activity through expanded recreational facilities, through better classrooms, better equipment and through the teacher training development that is continuing will improve our educational system and deliver knowledge to the student of today in a way that is vastly improved from when we ourselves were at school.

I have no doubt, Mr. President, that every successive government of Barbados has been very interested in improving our educational system and has committed substantial sums of money to the training and development of our children. It is very clear that our economic development and our current prosperity are largely founded on this base. Therefore, Mr. President, I really think that when we come to debate measures relating to education we should be thoughtful, we should make comments on the system that will inspire people, that will develop confidence and will move the process forward rather than sow the seeds of doubt and be negative in the extreme.

Therefore, Mr. President, I have no hesitation whatsoever in supporting this Resolution for the acquisition of the lands aforementioned. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I rise to support this Resolution simply because I feel very deeply that we are where we are today because of the foundation that has been laid by our educational system. If not, we would not be doing so well. Technology has changed. There have been rapid changes and, therefore, we have to change the educational system radically in order to realise the benefits in the next 10 to 15 years.

Mr. President, this acquisition of land in the first seven schedules, it seems as though there are some people who work very hard. It was done by Cyril A. Foderingham who seems to have worked very hard, contrary sometimes to what we hear about some of the persons working in different areas of the Government. It shows that not everybody is lazy. There are some key people out there who are doing a mammoth task, especially nurses, because you cannot do without nurses. When you get sick, you realise the benefit of the nurses. When you are well, you do not, unless you are married to one.

Mr. President, I am glad that land is being acquired for recreation as mentioned in this Resolution. The time has long passed when people are expected to go to school, sit down and learn and not have areas of recreation. If you look at all the older schools you will see there is just a little yard in which the children have to play, several children running over each other, falling down and stumping their toes. We know that if you are going to have a healthy population, recreation must be an integral part of the educational system.

To carry that further, if we are going to compete on the world scene and not just have one Obadele Thompson or one Andrea Blackett, if we are going to have several of them, we have to start early and this is where you start. Not only in the area of recreation I am thinking about but in the area of primary school education as a whole.

I am one of those people who feel that your best resources should be allocated to primary education instead of secondary education. I deeply feel that if you take your best teachers and put them into the primary school, by the time they leave primary school they would be so well grounded that they would be able to help themselves much more in the secondary education, as indeed, some of those bright persons do at Harrison and Queen's College. It would spill over into the other schools.

I sincerely hope that we in Barbados would wake up as far as education is concerned and realise that in the world today when people reach 18 and 19 they have their doctorates and they are managing large corporations. They are not just sitting there marking time trying to get one or two GCEs *et cetera*. From the time they reach their thirties, they are ready to sit down and go into virtual retirement. The world has changed as far as education is concerned and we have to change rapidly to deal with the various new technologies.

2.25 p.m.

Sir, by what I am saying, you can deduce that I am an advocate of computers in the primary school and languages as well in the formative years of our young people. When the first personal computer came to Barbados, I bought one and I had to rewire a part of my house and have a special plug for the use of that computer. They would not sell me a computer until they came and inspected my house and I had to rewire my house to ensure that the computer was on a plug by itself. Why? I am not so sure but that is what happened.

Sir, I do not see why anybody should get alarmed about the major renovations that have to be done in the schools to introduce computers. You cannot put a computer on an old system. I am not so sure what it will do to the computer but that is what happened to me and I am sure this is what is happening with the Ministry of Education.

In the same breath, Mr. President, I would like to say that successive Governments have grossly neglected the maintenance, not only of schools but of Government buildings, including the Tercentenary School of Nursing which is out there all closed up and not being used, and the Nursing Home which needs refurbishing. They do not seem to feel that when they have a building that it is to be maintained, and the schools have suffered the same thing. I am not accepting any argument that when someone goes to refurbish a school and take off the roof, they see the rafters

being changed. That does not make sense to me because if I am changing my roof, I am going to send somebody up there or I am going to go myself and look at the rafters first to see if the rafters need changing as well as the roof. In other words, they do not seem to plan properly.

We need to improve our planning. Mr. President, if you are going to fix your roof, the first aspect of planning is inspection. It is an integral part of planning. You do a feasibility study on what you are doing to find out. I am not saying that there would not be some surprises, but you go and you have it thoroughly inspected. We have enough qualified architects and qualified technical people here in Barbados, who could go and inspect these schools and make a list of what needs to be done. I am not saying that other things would not crop up but there is no excuse when you are going to refurbish a school, and you are going to do it in so many months, that when the school term is about to start, you cannot open the school because it is not ready. There is not a shortage of board, cement or workers in the country. There is no excuse for that and it happens time and time again. If the contractors do not have enough workers, let them get some sub-contractors to work and try to get the schools ready for occupation.

Mr. President, I would like to say that when these schools are completed, I sincerely hope that the people living within these catchment areas will be given the first opportunity to send their children to the school. Sir, that has not been happening throughout Barbados. I have had several complaints of children living beside schools who cannot get into those schools because children from other areas are given places in those schools and the children living close to the schools cannot get in. We have to do better than that. Sir, I do not know how it can be done but we have to do much better. If you are going to tell me you are going to amalgamate two and three schools and build a new school, give the places to the children living in the catchment areas. It makes better sense.

Sir, what happens in Barbados is that when people hear that a school is better than the other, they try to get their children into that school because of this 11-Plus examination.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, would you please speak to the Resolution.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I am going to speak to the improvement of educational facilities, and I hope that when these educational facilities are improved, the people living in the area of such improved educational facilities will be given first choice to use these improved educational facilities in St. Andrew Primary, St. Albans Junior, St. Jude's Primary, St. Matthew's Primary

and St. Paul's Primary. Mr. President, that is the point I am trying to get across.

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Yes, I would like to see the nurses in these schools so that they can examine the students as well. I have been calling for that time and time again.

Mr. President, it is not difficult to find out what your roll call of the school may or may not be. I am saying that because the population is at more or less replacement level; we have not been having increases in the population, so it is easy to plan so many children will be expected from certain areas throughout Barbados.

We are not getting more children, unfortunately, because since in the 1970s I was asked to tell Family Planning to stop telling people to limit their children because we were below replacement level. The pill and everything have worked so well that we are not having enough children and we are going to feel the effect of that with our aging population.

Mr. President, I would just like to say a word or two about teachers' training which I am very glad that they are doing, although I do not know why people are waiting until now to learn to use computers. I feel that a computer is such an important part of your work and your being that most people in Barbados should try to learn to use a computer. I cannot do without a computer. I use it every day and I am self-taught. I did not go anywhere for anybody to teach me to use a computer. It is not that difficult to do. It helps in your daily activities and your daily work.

Sir, I never knew of a staff room in any of the primary schools in my time. This is something new. They might have had staff rooms but I have not really seen any. This is something new and I feel that all primary schools need to have staff rooms and if one needs to acquire more land for schools to provide staff rooms I think that should be done.

With this, I support the Resolution.
2.35 p.m.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: Mr. President, I had no intention of becoming involved in this debate but after hearing Senator McClean with his fallacious view as to what has happened in education, it becomes necessary that I must speak on this Resolution.

Mr. President, I must compliment the Government. It is a Resolution that not only combines land acquisition but also education. Mr. President, the introduction of computers into schools is a major step for any nation, particularly third world countries. I think rather than being critical of the

method and base of introduction, we should all, on Both Sides, be complimenting the Government for such a visionary step, particularly in these days.

Sir, on the one hand, we cannot be speaking about making Barbados the centre of financial activities in the region while, at the same time, being critical about the introduction of computers into schools because everything now is being done by computers. If Senator McClean was up to date with what is happening, I would say that we are even behind hand in passing legislation dealing with computer technology, contracts being made by computers, how contracts are signed by computers, *et cetera*.

Mr. President, we cannot expect our young children to come on behind us without giving them this grounding in what the modern world requires. Senator McClean spoke about the cost of computers in schools and about the redundancy of computers. This is a fallacy. In the first place, he is worried about the total cost. He talks about school districts in the United States that are only spending \$20 million but he is so limited in his knowledge of education in the United States that he comes to the Chamber and speaks what is false and utter rubbish.

Sir, I have had two children educated in the United States. One went to Georgia University and the other to the University of Boston and South Western University. What I was told by them was that the computer companies in the United States donate computers to almost every school on the basis that if your computer is put in the school, when the children come out they will, in turn, buy that brand of computer. Therefore, it would not be seen in the school budget but they are in the school.

Mr. President, rather than finding out what is happening, he comes to fool Barbadians...

Mr. PRESIDENT: No, Senator.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: He makes statements which Barbadians might tend to accept, when those statements are wrong. Therefore, we must not send the message that the Government of Barbados is spending an excessive amount on computerising the schools.

Mr. President, I would now like to call on corporate Barbados to adopt schools and to help provide computers to those schools. In doing so, this would take the burden off the Government. It is these young people coming out of school, who have to go into the industry and who are to provide the forward movement required in this country.

Mr. President, this brings me to a point that has for a long time been grieving me. None of the work to be done

will be done on Holy Innocents School, St. Thomas, an area where I live.

Mr. President, I want to bring to the attention of Government an institution that is corrupting the knowledge of the young people in that area of St. Thomas. It is called a Project Office that followed on from a consultant that was dealing with the Harrison Caves. In the newspapers, they are being advertised as "In D' Heart of Barbados". This has brought a policy of carrying us back to the slave days and out of this springs the concept of "In D' Heart of Barbados".

Sir, we have the Holy Innocents School in that area where there are young children with impressionable minds. When they walk that street and see that sign, I want to know what language are we speaking. We have to raise our children to a certain level.

Sir, Senators here and I, who have to employ people, can say that come July or August, we will be inundated with applications from children who are leaving school and are seeking employment. The language used is not English any longer and is, therefore, difficult to understand.

Sir, it goes further, let us look at the gas stations advertisement – "DEFENDA". I do not know whether it is German or Greek but our Government is fighting to bring our children to a certain level, not in the community only but also on the world scene and we have people coming to Barbados to keep our poor children down.

Mr. President, those are the things at which Senator McClean should be looking. When he talks about the White Paper on Education in 1995 and sees nothing in it about computers or EduTech, it shows how backward he is. Time has rolled on and what was good in 1995 is no longer good in 2002. If his Government would write a Paper for 1995 and in 2002 foist it on the people of Barbados, that is good enough for him and for them but not for other people.

Mr. President, I would beg to suggest that we look upon our education in particular as something which is moving from day to day. We have to change to meet the world and the demands of the world. We cannot be stuck in any one position.

Senator Rickinson spoke of making positions available for people who live in the area. When the BLP spoke of zoning and had plans for zoning, there were persons who did not understand what we were speaking. Even today, there are at least 60 Transport Board buses moving children crisscrossing Barbados when they could have been attending schools within easy proximity of their homes, which would not only benefit the children but save the children more time to be involved in recreational activities or to get home on time to study their work. We have those persons in our community who cannot see ahead of the time to plan for

what is coming.

Mr. President, I would beg to suggest that we continue to look at education as one of the primary planks of progress in our society. We know for some time that part of the position in the Third World countries is the export of trained personnel. With that, comes inflows of foreign exchange for the benefit of those remaining in the country. Sir, if, at this stage, we cannot produce well qualified children, what is going to happen to us in another 20 years' time.

Mr. President, I do support the Government in its effort to bring modern-day technology and modern-day education to our schools.
2.45 p.m.

Sir, I heard a man on the call-in programme criticising the Government for giving children laptop computers to carry home. He said that in the United States of America, a Government with more money than Barbados, this does not obtain.

Asides.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: I wanted to call in on the programme but everybody knows my voice.

Sir, he is trying to say to the Barbados Labour Party Government that we should not provide laptop computers for children nine years old. Sir, I see nothing wrong with it, because if we do not invest in our children now, when will we have a chance to invest in them?

Asides.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: Yes, Sir, if we do not invest in them now we will have to go to Glendairy and see them there.

Sir, the same consultant...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please move on from the consultant to the Resolution.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: Sir, the Resolution deals with the acquisition of land for the expansion of our school plants for the education of our children to prevent them slipping back into slavery like days gone by. Sir, I will follow your guidance and support the Government in this Resolution.

Sir, Senator McClean spoke about computers being obsolete but he does not have the knowledge about training young people to use the computer. Sir, computers become obsolete when you have a computer with a small memory and slow speed. You do not need a gigabyte of memory and speed for school children. A friend of mine from England

tells me that he goes around England and collects old computers, put the various pieces together and donates them to schools because once you learn the basics of a computer and how to input and extract data, speed does not matter. It is only when you crunch numbers that speed and a modern computer are required.

When Senator McClean speaks he must not give the impression that he knows what he is talking about because he does not understand computers, the technology nor does he understand the scope of learning required to get into the Computer Age.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Deputy President will take the Chair at this time.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Sir, in making my contribution to the debate I would like to deal with a number of issues raised by Senator Rickinson. Senator Rickinson talked about poor planning, poor maintenance programmes and the approach to Government's business. I admit that there has been a tradition of not maintaining Government buildings systematically over a long period of time but that has changed because buildings now have their own maintenance coordinator, maintenance programme and a firm that maintains them.

I want to focus on the question of this alleged poor planning as it relates to refurbishment of these schools which are involved in the EduTech programme. Senator Rickinson as a trained, respected nurse must know that refurbishment of a building is akin to digging a foundation because when you dig down you are not sure what you will find.

Sir, if you take a roof off a house, you will not be sure of the conditions of the rafters, beams, *et cetera*. Often people will carry out soil test scientifically in seeking to establish a foundation for a structure but when they actually excavate the land it is totally different. This will cause an increase in the expenditure and refurbishment is the same thing, Sir, because there will be many things that you cannot plan or anticipate. Sir, this is what has contributed to the cost and delays on this project.

Senator Rickinson also talked about the lack of staff rooms. I saw a picture recently of the new administration block of St. Matthew's Primary School...

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. Deputy President, on a point of elucidation. I did not say generally. I said I have not seen any staff room. I did not say that there were no staff rooms in primary schools.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. Deputy President I am glad to be Senator Rickinson's eye on this occasion because I have seen pictures of St. Matthew's Primary School and there are offices for the Principal,

Secretary, a sick bay, a staff room and bathrooms and it is the same thing with Sharon Primary School.

Sir, I want to focus on the contribution of Senator McClean. I could not understand the objection and attempt to play down and diminish the EduTech programme but this is par for the course of the Democratic Labour Party. He reminded me of the people who were in bitter opposition to printing and saw it as the work of the devil to destroy mankind. Sir, the technology has changed and advanced but the attitude is the same and it has always been that way with the Democratic Labour Party. All the dire consequences that he is predicting and speculating about regarding EduTech reminds me of the same story that came from the Democratic Labour Party since 1956 when the Deep Water Harbour was being built. They said we were defying nature and that the sea would wash away half of Bridgetown and many people would drown.

They had the same attitude towards the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and they said that Government Headquarters was extravagant and they called it "Adams Castle". They also said that the ABC Highway would be used to carry drug dealers and gamblers to the West Coast. Sir, they cannot deal with the change and they cannot admit that the Barbados Labour Party is ahead of them on this matter.

Sir, Senator McClean tried to make jokes of the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto of 1999 on the whole question of education. Sir, in the Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto for 1999: "An Agenda for the 21st Century", EduTech is part of the agenda for the 21st Century. Sir, We devoted five and a half pages of our Manifesto to education as compared to the Democratic Labour Party who devoted only three quarters of one page to education and makes no mention at all of anything like EduTech.
2.55 p.m.

Sir, on Page 21, it says:

- "1. Bring more technology and skills to citizens. We will establish library and Media Resource Centres across Barbados and ensure that libraries are equipped with books, computers and other reading materials. We will establish computer labs in communities island-wide.
2. Make education relevant to the good jobs of the future.
3. Embark on a vigorous thrust in Early Childhood Education.
4. Keep drugs, guns and violence out of the schools.
5. Give a quality education to all students.

6. Bring back discipline and respect to the classroom.
7. Remove “floating classes” from the system.
8. Upgrade and refurbish the School Meals Department. Improve the system of storage and delivery.”

Sir, it makes no mention of computers in schools. Its only mention of computers is, not in the text or body or cloak in any philosophy or programme, but there is a picture on Page 20 under which there is a caption which says “Computers in a school is a promise we will keep.” That is the extent of their contribution to what can be properly called EduTech. Sir, not a sentence in its own philosophical context, not a paragraph, not a page about computers in schools. Mr. President, that is why they are so limited and so handicapped and frustrated about dealing with it.

Sir, we are producing citizens in Barbados through Edutech, not only for the 21st Century, as citizens of the world. Our citizens through EduTech would be able to ply their craft and skills anywhere in the world. The eleven-year or fourteen-year old child of today who is exposed to computers is exposed to a world which I did not know when I was in Forms One to Four at Combermere School. The information to which they have access on the computer is of another world. The most that I could have done to access information was by going to the school library, the Barbados Public Library or an encyclopaedia. Today, children only have to click on the information that they want on the computer.

Sir, if one was to gauge the attention that the two Parties devote to education, you would see that it is like chalk and cheese. We want to produce citizens of the world for the 21st Century. We do not intend, like the Democratic Labour Party, to fight the future like King Canute who stood on the shore and tried to defy the waves and tides. We are not doing that. We are riding the crest of the waves to the future, because we do not want to provide students whose only vision for employment is categorising our workers as bus fare and lunch money people. We are not a bus fare and lunch money Party. Through EduTech we will be producing people who never have to consider themselves as relegated to being either of bus fare and lunch money mentality or value our nation as a nation of toilet scrubbers. That is what EduTech is all about.

I am proud of a Party that is very well ahead of its time in some areas and is devoted to making sure that we produce the citizens who can take advantage and capitalise on all the developments of the world, to contribute in a meaningful way to the ongoing development of Barbados so that we can all, as humanly possible, and with the grace and blessing of God and good leadership, especially leadership of the kind coming from the Barbados Labour Party, produce a country

of which we can all be proud, a country where no one will be left behind and where all our citizens will have equality and access to equal prosperity.

Thank you.

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 5 – TO MOVE THE SECOND READING OF THE MORTGAGE INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2002

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, moving the Second Reading of this Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Bill, I want to start by saying that there are three important wishes of citizens over the world, access to health care, education and affordable housing, and certainly Barbados is no different in this respect. I do know that throughout this island, the ambition of all working Barbadians is to have their own home.

Sir, this Government is committed to improve housing for all. I am going to refer to the Manifesto for 1994 where this Government pledged to alleviate the chronic shortage of housing and house spots in Barbados. This is obviously a reflection of what had transpired prior to 1994. In the Barbados Labour Party’s 1999 manifesto, on page 25, this Government again reaffirmed a commitment to providing access to affordable and good quality housing to every Barbadian.

Sir, as I said earlier, it is the wish of every Barbadian to have his own home. Over the past twenty-five or thirty years, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company (BMFC) has been a very important vehicle in this regard. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is a subsidiary of the Barbados National Bank and the Insurance Corporation of Barbados. It disburses loans to prospective homeowners. This is limited by the Mortgage Insurance Act, that is the maximum loan that can be disbursed. The purpose of this Bill is to give effect to allow the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company to lend \$350 000 instead of \$250 000.

Historically, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company has been providing loans for lower income and lower middle income house owners. In 1975, the limit to low income housing was set at \$9 000 – \$12 000 and middle income loan limit was \$20 000 – \$23 000. In 1981, the limit was raised from \$75 000 to \$100 000. The limit was 1994 to \$175 000 and further increased in March, 1999, to \$250 000. At that time, in keeping with a Manifesto pledge, 100 per

mortgages were introduced for the first time up to the limit of \$250 000. In addition, it allowed for the purchase of land and the construction of houses.

Sir, the concept of a 6 per cent interest rate for loans at the lower end, that is up to \$75 000. I should say that over the years the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company has been quite profitable averaging about \$1.72 million over the past ten years with a profit recorded in the year 2000 of \$1.9 million.

3.05 p.m.

Sir, why the reason for the increase? Why do we want to move the limit from \$250 000 to \$300 000? Certainly, I think that all Members would agree that in the last three or four years building costs and the cost of land throughout Barbados has increased. If I may give some examples. Compared to the years 1998 and 2001 the cost of construction per square foot in 1998 was recorded at \$90. In 2001, it was up to \$125, an increase of 39 per cent.

Sir, the average cost of land per square foot in 1998 was about \$7.50 and there is an increase by the year 2001 to about \$10, an increase of 30 per cent. So in all, you have an increase of over 30 per cent in building costs in Barbados and we are asking now to increase the limit to \$300 000 which is, in fact, a 20 per cent increase.

This increase would also allow the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company to maintain a share of the middle-income market, which, of course, would be supplemented. The lower income mortgage facilities, as I said, are at a low interest rate.

We may talk about how you qualify for a \$300 000 loan and some people have criticised it and said it is catered to high and middle income and not related to low middle income people, but if you take a loan of \$300 000 at a nine per cent interest rate for 25 years, a household income of \$7 600 is sufficient as this is below the \$9 000 per household which qualifies householders to benefit under the present scheme. By way of information, the lower income portfolio has disbursed about \$33.5 million at an interest rate of six per cent.

Having spoken about the Mortgage Finance Loan Company being a vehicle for people to own their own homes, this does not exist in a vacuum and there has been a lot of banter about this Government not doing anything for housing and having land in a land bank and not really looking after the needs of the country. Sir, I am happy to say that the National Housing Corporation has recently invited these developers to join them in this joint venture to develop NHC land. This will facilitate both middle and lower income development. Small contractors will, of course, participate, those who have done good work over the years, and these

will be invited to take part in the low cost housing development. Sir, other Honourable Members who have interest in construction are invited to become involved in this joint venture process.

There are a number of areas allocated and in the area of low income houses: Blackmans – 70 houses will be built; in Hoyte's Village – 42; in Arch Hall – 29; Coverley – 50 and in Grazettes – 16; 207 houses not house spots. It is to be done in two phases. Phase 1 is expected to start in August this year and Phase 2 perhaps in November this year. The Phase 1 area will be Blackmans with 70 houses and Arch Hall with 29, Coverley – 50, Grazettes – 16.

In the area of middle income housing, it is planned to construct a number of houses throughout Barbados in Kent – 198; Coverley – 80; Ellerton – 110; Deane Town – 245 and Husbands, St. James – 21 houses; Rices, St. Philip – 100; Lancaster, Phase 3 – 300 houses; Lancaster, Phase 1 – 55 houses and old Deane Town – 50 houses. Sir, a grand total of 1159 houses in the lower middle income area giving a total of 1400 houses which will be built in this joint venture programme.

Sir, I go further. We keep hearing this talk about the National Housing Corporation and what it has and has not been doing so I thought it necessary to look at what has happened between 1994 and the present time, realising that nothing substantial or recordable has taken place prior to 1994. I am pleased to say that the NHC has constructed a number of new houses over this period for sale, 293 in all. Eleven were constructed at the Crane; 25 at Hoyte's Village, St. James; 52 at Apes Hill, St. James; 15 at Flat Rock, St. George; 61 at Cottage in Groves, St. George; 8 at Rock Hall, St. Thomas; 13 at Bakers in St. Peter; 20 at Gall Hill, St. John; 20 at Briar Hall, Christ Church; 15 at Mount Brevitor in St. Peter; 6 in Simmons Road, Rendezvous, Christ Church and 47 at Orange Hill, St. James.

A number of terrace units have been completed. We have the London Bourne Towers which had 44 units, at Flat Rock, in St. George, 20 terrace units were completed. In Deanes Town Terrace, St. James – 28 terrace units, in Bonnetts, St. Michael – 6, in Bush Hall, St. Michael – 12. That is another 110 units. Yet we hear that nothing is being done.

Sir, there have been a number of quadruplex units. One at Flat Rock, in St. George; one at Brighton, Black Rock; one in Phillips Road, St. Michael. Duplex units have been constructed at Grazettes, sextuplex units at St. Barnabas Heights. In all, an additional 23 units have been constructed. In addition to the houses I mentioned for purchase, a number of houses were constructed by NHC for relocation purposes – 136 in all. Farmers in St. Thomas – 22, Passage Road in St. Michael – 11, Westmoreland, St. James – 3,

Lammings, in St. Joseph – 2, Bakers in St. Peter – 11, Leadvale/Fairy Valley – 22, Corbins Village, St. Andrew – 4, and to accommodate the Bridgetown By-pass 24 town houses were constructed.

Sir, there is often talk about the land bank and the lot of land lying idle and not being utilised and all the Government seems to be doing is acquiring more and more land. They speak to hundreds of acres. Yes, 700 acres, 1550 house lots available. Eighteen lots at Pipers Avenue, St. Michael; 12 at Eden Lodge, 40 at Haggatt Hall. Phase 2: 20 at Bartletts Tenantry, Christ Church; 30 at Church Village, St. Philip; 10 at Airlie Heights, St. Michael; 30 at Corbins Village, St. Andrew; 9 at St. Helens in St. George; 41 at Mount Brevitor in St. Peter; 90 at Parish Land. Phase A: 50 at Haggatt Hall. Phase 3: 40 at Bournes Land, Christ Church; 72 at Parish Land. Phase 3: 223 lots at Lower Burneys; 120 at Blackmans in St. Joseph; 80 at Jackman, St. Michael; 21 at Husbands Heights. These are the ones that would have already been done not the new ones and the ones in which there are amalgamations and members working together to develop land.

3.15 p.m.

Forty-seven lots at West Terrace; 51 lots at Farmers; 38 lots at Constant; 44 lots at Clifton Hall, St. John; 133 lots at Husbands Terrace, St. James; 59 at Cottage Grove, St. George; and a further 90 lots at Parish Land, Christ Church. Sir, work is currently in progress. In Grazettes, an additional 41 lots and at Walkers Development 32 lots. That is 1 515 lots on approximately 700 acres of land and 82 lots on an additional 15 acres of land.

Sir, I believe you can see from what I have shared with you this evening that there is indeed a commitment on the part of this Government to provide housing and house spots for the citizens of this country. Indeed, we are trying to make it more affordable for them by increasing the maximum loans which they can obtain under the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation, and in so doing, we are certain that some of them will be able to afford some of these houses which will be built in the joint venture cooperation.

Sir, with these few words, I hope that I have been able to shed some light for the benefit of the Opposition, on what has in fact been happening at the National Housing Corporation (NHC).

With those few words, I beg to move that this Resolution be now read a second time.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy President, notwithstanding the amount of lots that we have just heard about across the length and breadth of Barbados, it is fair to say that the average "Lottie" cannot access a lot in Barbados. I have spoken to several "Lotties" around Barbados and they have been unable to get access to any lots of land across the

length and breadth of Barbados. There are many nurses involved named "Lottie" who told me that they were unable to get access to a lot.

This Bill really is about increasing the limit at the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation (BMFC) to \$300 000. This confuses me because I am starting to wonder which market is the BMFC really targeting. I was told a couple of years ago that the BMFC will concentrate on providing mortgages for low and low to middle income individuals at the time. In fact, it was established that a household with an income – this is less than four years ago, about two years ago – of about \$2 700 roughly would be able to access or qualify for such mortgages.

It makes me wonder because there is supposed to be a lot of so-called liquidity in the banking system in Barbados. We are to ask the question, why is it that the private sector and private individuals are not demanding loans in the way that they should be demanding? It has now become a good thing for the commercial banks to lend mortgages to individuals and to look further down the road, in terms of diversifying, what I refer to as the investment portfolio. As a consequence of that, commercial banks have been somewhat encouraged in recent times to go the route of lending mortgages. It is very surprising that the mortgage market among commercial banks is not in a much healthier state in the face of all of this so-called liquidity in the banking system.

Now, there are several reasons why this Government has failed miserably in trying to deliver housing to the people of Barbados. According to the Manifesto, they were supposed to promote several ideas. For example, a 30-year mortgage and that has not happened. You can ignore the talk about the 100 per cent mortgages because a 100 per cent mortgage is a misdemeanour. It is highly impossible and highly unlikely for a financial institution to be able to provide 100 per cent mortgages. You only have to understand how a mortgage works to understand that this talk about a 100 per cent mortgage is only talk.

In any case, I have said it before that it makes sense to encourage people who are going to engage in getting access to a mortgage, to be in a position to repay it, not only now but down the road and in some sense, there is some merit in encouraging individuals to so manage their financial affairs, as to be able to go to the commercial banks with something already in the kitty and some degree of capacity to borrow. Sir, let us not play pure politics when we talk about this so-called 100 per cent mortgage. I have not heard any commercial banks advertising for it. It is a purely political objective that has not been supported within the commercial banking system, in spite of the so-called excess liquidity. I understand that there are other institutions that specialise in

the provision of mortgages but I am speaking about commercial banks in the broader context. So, that mortgage thing never worked.

This Administration in 1994 promised to establish a secondary mortgage market or tried to facilitate such. That has not happened in Barbados. There has been no creation, even an attempt to create a secondary mortgage market in Barbados. This Administration in 1994 said that it would look to introduce a Building Society's Act, I am yet to see it, and this is eight years later. Then it went on to say that it would in fact use housing bonds and other instruments to increase the availability of mortgage funds. Now this Administration raised \$50 million in bonds in 1998 and when it came to Parliament, it was said that the intention was to provide for low income housing. Sir, that was said at the time when George Payne was Minister of Housing that the \$50 million was supposed to be used in providing low income houses for Barbadians. Instead, the Government having, raised \$30 million in the first tranche, took \$22 million or so and allocated it to the building of the offices at Warrens. The intention at that time was that the money would be invested in Warrens to build Government offices and then the rental income would accumulate sometime down the road for the true investment to occur in low income housing.

3.25 p.m.

Of course, if it is that the initial intention was to raise \$50 million in bonds which were raised and the intentions stated in the Resolution were that they would go towards the building of low income houses, the monies were diverted to the building of the offices at Warrens and we all know the story at Warrens. At Warrens, we have seen absolute wastage of taxpayers' money in a building that was started four years ago and has not, in fact, reached the stage where you can indeed pull even a chain to activate a toilet, or you cannot even pull a clip to open a window, or you cannot enter the building and hope to see in front of you a door opening automatically. This is four years that the Government has been involved in building offices at Warrens with the money which was raised to build low income houses in 1998.

The Prime Minister in a classic retort said that you cannot evaluate the wastage at Warrens in terms of time spent. You have to recognize that to date 49 percent of the income has been spent and 49 percent of the houses has been completed. That was a most ridiculous response that you could ever wish to hear, ignoring the fact that there would have been substantial cost overruns. If it is the case that you start putting a building up in 1994 that was to be completed in two years time and four years later you are now justifying that there could have been no wastage because you only spent 49 percent of the budget and 49 percent of the building has been completed, that is finance gone mad.

How is it that two years later you have not completed the building, two years further on you still are not half way and you could justify that there has been no wastage at Warrens? Well, that is like "Mount Stinkeroo" or Greenland. You went and put \$35 million in a hole at Greenland...

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: Senator, I allowed you to deal with Warrens because you could justify that under National Housing which pinches on the Resolution. But when you are going down to Greenland now, I would like to see how you will connect the two. You have really gone below the sidelines.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Sir, you should give me a chance.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I have given you a chance before.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: I am being interrupted unnecessarily.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: I am not interrupting unnecessarily. When you move to Greenland in St. Andrew, you have moved out of housing into another Ministry.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy President, I am saying that there has been wastage at Warrens and I am identifying Greenland as another example of wastage to justify...

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: How can you connect a Resolution on mortgage finance to Greenland in St. Andrew which, as I know, falls under the Ministry of Health? How can you?

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: I am saying that I have just identified that the Government raised \$50 million four years ago to build low income housing at Warrens and the Government four years later has itself said that less than 50 percent of the building has been completed and justified it by saying that only 49 percent of the budget has been spent. That suggested to me that there is substantial wastage. I introduced Greenland to justify that wastage...

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: You cannot introduce something that is not before the Chamber. If there is a Resolution before the Chamber, we have to debate the Resolution that is before the Chamber.

Asides.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: The question is that there was substantial wastage in terms of the housing bonds

that were raised in 1998. Since that was so, I will now get political in this debate. I will become even more political in this debate and cause chaos.

Asides.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Barbados Mortgage Finance is being used because the commercial banking system has failed to deliver on the provision of mortgages in Barbados. Rather than the institutions that were designed and are able, in fact, to handle such provisions, I am seeing a situation in which the commercial banking system having not delivered, the pressure is now being put on a Government institution to so-call deliver mortgages to the people of Barbados. That institution is not sufficient in terms of its size to effectively deliver mortgages to a wide cross-section of the public. It is the case that the major provider of housing on the part of Government has now reached the stage where it is operating on a deficit of well over \$20 million as I speak to this Chamber.

Sir, if we had to fully analyse the financial status of the NHC, we would see that this Government is in even more dire straits than it appears on the surface. But we have not had the privilege in this Chamber to access the true financial status of the National Housing Corporation because they refuse to bring reports to the Lower House and Upper House of Parliament. It is time that we get access to the national status of the National Housing Corporation. We have not seen their reports since 1998 and it is now year 2002. I think that I understand why. If you look at the management of the NHC and see how poor it has been in several areas around Barbados, including the same area of which I spoke and then the National Housing headquarters in Country Road compounded by several other areas in which they have not delivered adequately, you would understand why the national programme in housing has failed miserably in the last seven or eight years.

Now, Sir, no talk of establishing a land bank is going to impress me because land is available in Barbados once you need it. The question is, has the National Housing Corporation and the Government of Barbados been able to deliver to the people of Barbados? The answer is "No".
3.35 p.m.

Mr. President, the National Housing Corporation (NHC) is supposed to be in the business of providing housing and land to the people of Barbados at a reasonable rate. When one checks the cost of land, particularly in the area of Husbands, St. James, above Queen's College, the NHC was able to fetch \$9.50 per square foot when the Government was supposed to be providing land at an affordable rate to the people of Barbados. Instead, they have exploited the market to make excess profits off the backs of the Barbadian taxpayers instead of doing what they were

supposed to do, that is to provide adequate land and housing at affordable rates to Barbadians.

It goes on. This Administration was supposed to stimulate interest in home ownership, particularly for young persons, by tax concessions in respect to savings for this purpose. It has not happened. There has not been any measures in this Parliament since 1994 that addressed the state of young people acquiring ownership of housing and lands and no special provisions were being put in place to encourage others to get access to land.

In addition, Mr. Deputy President, it was supposed to be the case that this Government was to restore the Income Tax concessions on mortgage interest. What happened was that prior to the early 1990s a home owner was able to have interest deduction of mortgages in an unlimited way and several Barbadians benefited from that measure.

In 1995, the BLP Government included mortgage interest along with home maintenance, insurance, *et cetera*, and limited the amount that an individual could claim in a given year to a mere \$3,500. This meant that persons taking out a mortgage would hardly have benefited from the provision that was there long before. Mr. Deputy President, when one adds the mortgage interest on the new loan, plus home maintenance, insurance, *et cetera*, one was surpassing the \$3,500 quite easily. Therefore, that was no major concession because Barbadians were in no position to benefit.

Mr. Deputy President, then they were supposed to help in the development of indigenous building materials. That was supposed to constitute part of the housing programme and policy of the Barbados Labour Party's Administration. That has not happened either. There has been no particular measure to encourage the use of indigenous materials in Barbados since 1994. They are supposed to create a special fund to assist with the installation of water-borne toilets in every home. That was supposed to be a measure for low income Barbadians. Instead, what has happened is that either the Urban or Rural Development Commission has taken up this issue because the Government has treated it as largesse. This is no major housing development of any Government. This is largesse they were hoping to deliver and, therefore, the water-borne toilet system that was supposed to be in every home has not been delivered. Yet this Administration continues to fail the people of Barbados in relation to affordable access to housing and land across Barbados.

Sir, it is worse now than it was...

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: On a point of order. The Honourable Senator is misleading this Chamber.

We are the Party that made it possible for rural Barbados to have land at 10 cent per square foot. They are the ones who have dispossessed and have down trodden generations for centuries and we are now coming out and assisting the people.

Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT: No point of order.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy President, in 1980 when the BLP enacted the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act to give security of tenure to the tenants of plantation tenancies by allowing them to purchase their house spots at 10 cents per square foot, that was then. I am speaking of this Administration since 1994.

Therefore, in this debate, one cannot introduce any talk about a 10 cents per square foot measure. That action was taken as far back as 1980 when, in fact, the indebted plantations of Barbados, knowing fully well the sort of debt they owed to Government, would see this as such, an indebtedness that at least gave the people in the tenantry land at an affordable price.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Member again, is misleading the Chamber. The initiative was to give persons in rural territories land at 10 cents per square foot but not out of any indebtedness. It was part of the philosophy of the BLP which went to the extent of being prepared to amend the Constitution of Barbados.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. Deputy President, it is quite evident that the housing policy of the BLP since 1994 has been miserable and has failed to deliver. Mr. President, one does not have to accept what Senator Mascoll is saying, one can go into the community and sees the average Barbadian there, crying for a house spot or to have access to affordable housing. They are crying because of the excess rental they are paying for housing that is in poor condition.

The nursing community of Barbados has been looking to promote the interest, looking to have access to lands on the limited income they have. When one looks at the reality of life in Barbados in the 1980s, a nurse could have afforded, on a very small salary, to take a year's salary and access land. In the year 2002, on the nurse's present income, that nurse is incapable of getting access to affordable land on the present salary.

Mr. Deputy President, when one looks at the present development of the nurses in Barbados and at the position of the nurses, one can see the nurse's position has deteriorated in terms of access to affordable land. Therefore, the poor nurses are struggling and suffering to have access to land and housing. When one looks at the relative salary and the

relative increase of housing in Barbados, one can see the nursing population in Barbados continues to cry under the circumstances, a situation that will be addressed in this debate by an Honourable Senator to my right.

Mr. Deputy President, therefore, one can understand the present state. It is ridiculous when this Administration tries to project itself as having provided so much to the people of Barbados when, in the same areas, this Administration has failed to deliver. They have failed to deliver in the area of housing and now the cosmetic amendments to the loan limit at the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited is supposed to constitute a major initiative on the part of this Government, when Government has failed to provide the housing market with any impetus.

Sir, with regard to the repetition concerning housing spots that we are hearing across the length and breadth of Barbados, when one looks at the reality, one would recognise that the Government continues to fail. They have just built a number of houses above Rogers Circle, Grazettes. If one checks the situation, the houses are next to the road. One wonders whether or not the Government itself has received planning permission to build those houses. Those houses are so close to the main road that one has to wonder whether or not any permission was given by the Town and Country Planning Department to allow houses to be built there.

They are struggling so much that there is now a situation in which any little area where it has to be uneconomical to put two houses is being utilised in Barbados because there is need to maximise a vote.

3.45 p.m.

The classic example happens to be below Howards Supermarket in Bush Hall where it must have caused Government a substantial amount to put those ten terrace units in that location. It is an area poor in drainage and one understands that it is in St. Michael Central and that initiative was born out of a direct desire to ensure that the incumbent is safer next time around.

Sir, it must be expensive to take small parcels of land and construct terrace units on them at a high cost because you have to move machinery and personnel around to do this. This explains why the National Housing Corporation has a deficit in excess of \$20 million as I speak to this Chamber that is not being corrected. Sir, there is no evidence that the National Housing Corporation has done a good job, the Minister is looking to take care of St. George North and now we are having a wide expanse of land in the other part of St. George, above Bulkeley, that will be utilised for housing purpose and one wonders if this is not directly correlated with the closure of Bulkeley Factory.

Mr. Deputy President, when I look at this Resolution I wonder what is the purpose of it and what it is designed for. Is it designed to assist the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company in the provision of loans or is it designed to allow politicians to send individual constituents to that institution to access funding as has been the case before and you push up the ante so as to widen and broaden your scope of constituencies.

There can be no good reason with the abundance of liquidity in the system why you need to encourage the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company to increase its loan limit while it could be allowed to concentrate on the lower end of the market.

Sir, we are approaching the silly season and it will soon be elections in Barbados and as a consequence we are seeing the Government positioning itself only too well to try to exploit constituencies across Barbados. I interpret this increase in limit not as a meaningful way of dealing with the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company but as an attempt to allow politicians to influence the outcome by sending their friends to this institution to get access to loans. Sir, soon from now you will have to be a member of the Other Side to gain access to a loan from the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company.

Sir, I see this amendment as purely an attempt to gain ground by a Government that has failed to deliver in the area of housing and land access to Barbadians. The Government took the taxpayers' money and spent it necessarily on acquiring offices at Warrens when that \$50 million was expressly designed to provide low income housing which the average Barbadian would have access to.

It worries me that there is so much hue and cry in Barbados for affordable housing and land and to assist the builders in reducing the cost of building as stated in two Manifestos of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, the Government was supposed to reintroduce the mortgage reduction that was beneficial to Barbados, a building code, a building society and establish a secondary mortgage but when you evaluate the performance of the Barbados Labour Party it has failed to deliver and once again it is making another attempt to impress the people of Barbados that it is doing something meaningful in their interest.

Sir, I have a completely opposing view on this Bill because I cannot see how we can pressure an institution that is of minimal size to deliver such largesse to the middle income Barbadian so short before elections.

Mr. Deputy President, I thank you.

(Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair).

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Mr. President, I rise to support this important amendment to the Mortgage Insurance Act which the Government is commending to this Honourable Chamber for their assent. Sir, after hearing the ramblings of the last speaker, I would like to bring some clarity to the proceedings.

There are two clauses in the Bill which we are seeking to amend. One clause seeks to increase the maximum amount of any loan from \$200 000 to \$300 000 and the second clause seeks to increase the total insurable loan limit from \$150 million to \$250 million.

Sir, these are important because they fit in neatly with Government's housing policy. We do not only believe that we must cater to the lower income but we believe there are middle income people whom the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company must also cater to.

I do not see a problem because if this Government was only catering to the middle income person we would have cause to complain but this Government, which the last speaker seeks to denigrate, has introduced some rather comprehensive measures which are at present assisting the lower income workers to achieve what all of us want to achieve, for example, to buy their own homes.
3.55 p.m.

Sir, this Government introduced 6 per cent mortgages. We know that in terms of repayment what a half of a per cent decrease in the mortgage interest rate would mean. A 3 per cent decline in the mortgage interest rate means for people who could not previously afford to own a home, that a mortgage is now within their reach.

Sir, this is an important piece of social engineering this Government must be commended for. The Government is seeking to ensure that those who were previously left out of the housing market can now acquire a mortgage from this institution at a lower rate of interest. With the introduction of the 100 per cent mortgage facility, they can now own their home with little difficulty.

Sir, Government is now seeking in this Bill to empower The National Housing Corporation (NHC) to cater to another segment of society without sacrificing its ability to carry out its function. Sir, outstanding loans at the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company increased from \$96 million to \$127 million, that is approximately a 30 per cent increase. The Barbados Labour Party is going to take credit for that increase because they have ensured that the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is doing what it was set up to do, that is, to help the lower income groups in the society.

In the early 1990s, growth at the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company was very slow. In 1994, we ensured that

institution which was being stagnated under Senator Mascoll and his Party, the Democratic Labour Party, was given a new lease on life. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is now providing mortgages for those people it was designed to help in the first place. Mr. President, this Government has not lost sight of its mandate to provide adequate housing for the people of this country. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company is one of the institutions which the Government has used in that exercise.

Sir, given the fact that the cost of building has increased over the years, a house that the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company was able to finance at that time it is no longer able to because of the increased cost of building today. That is why we have periodically to increase the limit of lending to ensure that institution can cater to the same customers. If the limit remains where it is, it would be a useless exercise.

Sir, the low income group has been specially treated by this Administration. On the one hand, the Democratic Labour Party is saying that the poor man cannot afford a house and on the other hand whenever the NHC puts lots of land on the market, they are purchased very quickly. Mr. President, this is an indication that there is a high demand for house spots.

Sir, when I look at the GDP figures, I realise that the private building activity has almost doubled since 1994. It moved from \$253 million in 1994 to \$456 million in the year 2000. That is the result of the impressive steps that we have taken to ensure that ordinary Barbadians own their homes. The Annual Statistical Digest, published by the Central Bank of Barbados, shows that long-term residential mortgages for the period 1994 have moved from \$586 million to \$884 million.

Mr. President, when it is said that people are not building houses at this time, they are flying in the face of facts. There is still a hive of activity in the private building market which is almost unprecedented. In the 1990s, Senator Mascoll was the advisor of the Democratic Labour Party and because of their policies there was a backlog of mortgages. When the Barbados Labour Party assumed office, they were able to implement their policies to the extent that today the housing stock in Barbados has reached this very high level. Also, with the implementation of the Government's policies, the Urban Development Commission is able to assist tenants to purchase the tenantry land at \$2.50 per square foot and the Government would be subsidising the market price. Government subsidising the difference between \$2.50 and the market price – of course, it will take time to get this fully implemented – will mean that people can go to the same bank and use the land as collateral and we will see what we did in rural Barbados, a marked improvement in housing activity within the urban corridor. Just as happened in the rural sector we will see in the urban sector, when more

people are able to use their land as collateral to borrow funds to improve their housing. We have set the wicket, as it were, for a massive assault on housing conditions in this island of ours.

4.05 p.m.

I am told that there are people in bigger countries who are following our lead. We are making sure that housing is within the reach of ordinary Barbadians and this measure that we are here debating will ensure that the Mortgage Finance Company maintains its role as a major provider of housing finance for the people of this country. BMFC is a properly run institution and I am not aware that politicians influence those who get loans at BMFC. If Senator Mascoll has information on that, he ought to share it with this Honourable Chamber, but if he is just digging at the organisation he should desist on that because it is not worthy of a man who has ambitions to lead this country. Note, Sir, that I said ambitions and I did not mention ability. I did not mention capacity, but I mention delusions of grandeur.

This Party can take comfort from the fact that the people of Barbados recognise that we have done a lot for housing. We talk about the NHC and the level of activity within the NHC and all of us wish that it could move faster, but we understand that there are many constraints, legal and institutional. They are moving ahead and are doing some impressive work in providing housing for people of this country. Sir, I know that when the Other Side was in government the only housing are a that they built was in St. Philip. We had plans for Pondsides and they significantly reduced the number of units that were supposed to go there. The ones in St. Philip, the rate was set at \$96 a week which made it out of the reach of a lot of ordinary people in this country. Imagine the maid working for \$100 a week and you pass a Bill for \$96 a week for a house, you are immediately telling her that she cannot have a unit.

Sir, I will not talk ill of the dead but the representative of the dead is here. The same NHC that is now being pilloried from pillar to post in the short time that we have had the reins of Government has built 293 houses for sale. We wish it were 1293 but it is an impressive number in comparison. Do not forget that inertia had stepped in and the NHC had now to be awakened from slumber, so to speak, and they are now moving ahead. There are 293 houses for sale, 110 housing units, including the impressive London Bourne Towers and there are duplexes, quadruplexes and sextuplexes, all types of housing for the people of this country and in addition, the amount of land that they have put on the market.

We criticise them and at times we wish that they could move faster, but we must never lose sight of the fact that in a short time they have put a lot of people into housing

solutions. A lot of people have managed to own their own lots. Remember when the NHC produces lots, especially for the low income people, they do not sell them at the full market price. When they offer lots for sale for working-class people, they offer them at a subsidised rate which is a step towards making sure that the price of land is within the reach of the ordinary citizen. That is a concern which all of us share and the NHC is offering land to ordinary Barbadians at a subsidised rate.

I think that instead of criticising them we ought to look at the work that they have done. They have done some impressive work in this country in order to bring housing within the reach of the citizens of this country so that I will not join in an unnecessary pillorying of that institution. Every time the Opposition gets up they can find no other whipping boy than the NHC which is working twice as fast as it was when they were in control of it.

The NHC has done a lot of good in this country of Barbados since 1994 and it will continue on its path. In the last six years, it developed over 1500 lots for the people of this country. It completed 1500 housing solutions for the people of Barbados and now it has another 80 which it is working on and which will soon come on the market. This is impressive, but the staff at NHC every time they listen to radio 100.7, can be assured that once Senate is debating that Senator Mascoll or Senator McClean will be on their case because they feel that they have an audience. I want to commend them because they are trying their best to respond to the wishes of this country.

Sir, the NHC has given out \$41 million in loans, over 3700 loans to the people of this country. So when persons say there is nothing being done for housing they ought to become conversant with the figures. As you know, Sir, figures do not lie. Liars might figure but we know that figures do not lie. Sir, this small amendment has the main purpose of ensuring that the BMFC maintains their share in the housing market. If they do not increase the loan limit, then it means that a lot of people they previously catered to in the past they can cater to no more. It is a very simple amendment and one which I would commend to this Honourable Chamber to keep the BMFC an active player because it has helped a lot of people who may have been a little queasy about going to other institutions. A lot of them have seen the BMFC as a refuge, so to speak, and they have done well through the BMFC and we just want to make sure that they keep their place in the market.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

4.15 p.m.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: Mr.

President, it is with great regret I have to try and bring this Chamber back to the Resolution which should have been debated in here.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, you are reflecting on the Chair which you were occupying for a considerable part of the debate.

Asides.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: I thank you, Mr. President.

The Act before the Chamber is an Act to amend the Mortgage Insurance Act and it has nothing to do with the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation increasing the amount of money they are lending to borrowers. The Act deals with the amount or the value of any mortgage which can be insured. We are not talking about how many houses the National Housing Corporation has built, who sent whom to the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation to get mortgages or not. What the Act before the Chamber deals with, is to increase the value of loans which can be insured under the Act.

Mr. President, what I would like to look at is how the Mortgage Insurance Act evolved over the years and the reason for such an Act. If you went to a mortgagee or to an institution lending money and you borrowed money on a mortgage for a house or land, that mortgagee can insure that money so that if anything happens to you and they have to sell out the land and they did not recover the amount that is owed on the mortgage, they could recover the difference from the insurance company and this is what this is about.

The Act in its original form said that an Act can implore the Urban Development Corporation to issue insurance policies in respect of loans secured by mortgages of dwelling houses. It was amended later to say, and/or land and for matters connected therewith or incidental data.

Section 4 which is being amended today was amended in 1999 because at that time, Section 4 (b) said that a loan is insurable under the Act where it is for an amount not exceeding 90 per cent of the appraised value and for the amount of the insurance fee payable in respect of the loan.

It was amended in 1999 to move it to a figure of \$250 000 which meant, if you had borrowed \$250 000 on mortgage, the insurance company could issue insurance up to that amount. They have now moved that amount from \$250 000 to \$300 000, so that if you borrowed \$300 000, and in keeping with what the Leader of the Senate had said, building costs have gone up, land prices have gone up so that

the value of the property and the money involved have gone up, so you can insure up to \$300 000.

Mr. President, what I would like to say is that we should move from here to a situation where we can sort of guarantee mortgages, what would have been the secondary mortgage market, in which if a person is unable to pay his mortgage over a given time, and the mortgagee seeks to foreclose, there should be an institution which would take in that mortgage and tap the unpaid mortgage at the end of the mortgage, so that when times get better, the mortgagor can redeem that amount.

Sir, in the Mortgage Insurance Act, the property with insurance can run for a period of more than 30 years and we could do that. I have had discussions with the insurance companies on this matter and they have said that they have had difficulties with lending institutions in Barbados that give mortgages, sold houses for less than the amount of outstanding mortgage and then claim against the insurance company.

I think this is what we should be looking at, because it is time that we ask the lending companies to be better corporate citizens and understand that in a developing society everybody wants a house, and it is not that everybody will travel on an even path from the time of obtaining the house until the mortgage is paid off, that there are incidences which can happen in the space of any man's life, when difficulties would arise.

I think, Mr. President, that we should ask the Government to look at the Mortgage Insurance Act and incidentally, as I understand it, there are only two institutions which are providing money for the BMFC, because I believe at the minute it is only those loans that are being insured. It is not a question of how many mortgages the BMFC give out or to whom they give them, it is a question that in every BMFC loan, that loan carries an insurance and the insurance premium is taxed into the repayment, so that that loan is guaranteed to preserve the capital investment of BMFC.

Asides.

HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN: Mr. President, rather than we attack the BMFC about to whom loans are given, rather than we attack the National Housing Corporation about the number of houses that are being built, we should deal with the question of preserving the house which the purchaser has purchased and has mortgaged in such a way that he is not embarrassed along the road by his house being put up for sale because of some difficulty.

Sir, what you would find is, that the house will go up for sale and advertised in the newspaper and the week before the sale, you will see that the sale is no longer on, but then you have to ask what happens in between there. I am saying that the amendment to this Act is relevant in that the cost of

building has gone up tremendously in Barbados since one institution brought into existence some outlandish rates of masons being paid \$180 a day, carpenters being paid \$150 a day, *et cetera*. When I heard quite recently that we must control our cost today we can understand why and this Act is only responding to the circumstances of the day, as it relates to building houses.

I thank you, Mr. President.
4.25 p.m.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I rise to support the amendment to the Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2002, simply because the majority of Barbadians depend on mortgage and mortgage insurance in order to own property. As a nurse, I could never have owned property if the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation did not exist. Even though one has land, it is still very difficult to get money to build a house but this makes it easier. Sir, even though I had land at Prior Park, St. James, I could not have gotten the funds but the BMFC made it possible by giving me a loan so that I can own my property. I think the majority of Barbadians are in that boat.

Mr. President, I support the increase from \$250 000 to \$300 000. Actually, \$300 000 is a very small figure going with today's prices. I do not know if the housing market is going to be reduced but one would have to look for another mortgage if one wants the average middle income type of home.

Mr. President, I am glad, as the Leader of the Senate said, that there are 1,550 available lots over approximately 700 acres of land. What I keep asking for in this Senate is some form of transparency in the allocation of these lots or of these houses to persons. Persons have complained because they feel that others were being given preference over them. If it is transparent, there might not be that many complaints. Therefore, a formula has to be found in order for the public to know how these lots are being allocated.

Mr. President, if a person is a temporary worker and cannot get a job letter to receive a mortgage to buy a house – this happens to persons like some nurses and health aides who are not appointed – I would urge that these persons be given permanent appointments so that they can access mortgages in order to own their homes.

Mr. President, a lot has been said about the National Housing Corporation and about both the Urban and Rural Development Commissions that are involved in the building of housing and roads.

Mr. President, before starting to build, they have to be very careful to make sure they know the owners of the lands.

I am speaking specifically about land at Fair View, St. Patricks, where a house has been built on people's land without the permission of Town and Country Planning and where the person has not paid any money. This cannot be done. There is the need to have lawyers and other persons working in these areas so that people do not access other people's land.

Mr. Speaker, the situation is also in Maxwell, Christ Church, where a road has just been built on someone else's land. One has to check first the owners of these lands and should not be done by word of mouth. People should present documentation showing they are the rightful owners of these lands.

Mr. President, I am urging that they either employ enough persons and lawyers in these areas in order to give them the necessary advice before possessing persons land and building on them. With this, I support this Resolution.

SENATOR D. D. MARSHALL: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

I am pleased to speak in support of this legislation.

The essential element of this amendment is to increase the limit of mortgages which the BMFC can offer to citizens of Barbados. This is nothing new. In fact, any progressive institution, from time to time, has to examine the various limits that have been set, to ensure they remain current and relevant.

From my own experience, the National Housing Corporation has entered into a similar exercise in 1995 after the BLP Government took over the reins of this country in 1994. In the short life of the Urban Development Commission, they have also had to reset the limit themselves. This is nothing of which we need to be ashamed.

In fact, it is a clear indication that the BLP Government continues to be proactive, continues to strive for relevance and seeks, at all times, to ensure our policies are flexible and do not forever see themselves mired in what Chaucer would have called the slough of despond.

Aside.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. President, I have heard many of the Honourable Senators speaking to housing as if the situation is dire and desperate.

I certainly do not share that view. My own research and available statistics tell me that Barbados now has more home owners than it has ever had before. This is notwithstanding the high wages that have to be paid to construction workers

and the other pressures that exist in the economy.

We have done extraordinarily well as a people in terms of housing but our needs continue to expand. There are persons who would have purchased a house in 1995 who, for whatever reason, now find themselves with more disposable income – I am told by some of my colleagues that it might have been the return of the 8 per cent – and feel the need to approach a lending institution for further advances.

Sir, it is a most depressing thing when one finds the limits with mortgage finance do not accommodate the aspirations of some persons. Mr. President, when Barbadians need financing, the first port of call is not the credit unions or the financial institutions but the organisation set up by the Government to cater to that specific need. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited continues to do an exceptional job. It has been very successful in providing good service to the citizens of Barbados. It is well known that they offer extremely attractive mortgage rates. They are also offering 100 per cent mortgages which means that the amount of money being disbursed will not only be the construction cost. As a first-time homeowner, one receives a mortgage at a rate of 6 per cent. More importantly, included in the mortgage will be the incidental costs and legal fees.

Sir, as an attorney-at-law, I am well aware that many persons go to borrow money to build. The lawyers then have to call and inform them about a shortfall; that is when the amount of money borrowed does not take into account the legal fees, stamp duties, *et cetera*, on the mortgage.

The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company Limited is an innovative organisation. It recognises that one cannot complete one's mortgage process unless there is money to cover the incidental costs. This is an initiative which we should shout loudly and clearly about. It shows an understanding and a sensitivity of the needs of the people far beyond just wanting to borrow money but to have money to do the other aspects of the transaction.
4.35 p.m.

Sir, the comment was made by the Honourable Senator who leads the Opposition in this Senate, that National Housing Corporation units are being built on small parcels of lands.

Mr. President, 1994 represented a paradigm shift in the housing policy in this country. In 1994, before the National Housing Corporation did anything, it sat down, formulated what its policies were and looked at the history of housing development in Barbados. This Government was determined that it would not make the same mistakes again and that we would do things differently to bring back to the Barbadian

society a feeling of homeliness and neighbourliness because we discovered that this feeling was not prevalent in the large National Housing Corporation projects. This Government decided to go into the existing communities where there were strong links and locate housing projects in those areas.

It was considered disruptive to move 200 people into a community because we are talking about displacing a community of people overnight and this would have negative social ramifications. It would be far better to put four, five or six houses within a community to provide continuity because it is an easier task to absorb these few families into the community and once that absorption takes places, the feeling of neighbourliness is not disrupted.

Mr. President, that is the kind of approach that is needed as we try to settle the housing concerns of Barbadians today and I would like to see the day when we do not need to set up large housing estates of ten or twenty blocks of houses. Certainly, the economies of scales might lead you in that direction but we know only too well of the kinds of social turmoils that present themselves in these large communities. Mr. President, there is a Chinese concept of harmony in everything. The basic idea is that whatever you do you must strive for harmony and the approach of locating small units in Rogers Circle and Bush Hall will ensure that we continue to keep harmony in our communities.

Mr. President, the timing of this amendment is quite appropriate because we cannot allow ourselves to be caught trying to catch up in the area of housing. The momentum and need is there, more and more Barbadians are better educated, they are earning more, the family needs are greater and we need to ensure that we deal with them in such a way that they can spread their wings and reach the extent of their aspirations.

Mr. President, this amendment will go a long way towards satisfying the needs, desires and aspirations of all Barbadians.

I thank you.

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

The question was put and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT the Senate resolved itself into Committee on the Bill HIS HONOUR SENATOR C. L. BOLDEN in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Clauses 1 – 3 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Mortgage Insurance (Amendment) Act, 2002.

ORDER 6 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF LAND AT BULKELEY PLANTATION, ST. GEORGE FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, this Resolution before the Honourable Senate seeks permission to vest 6.897 hectares of land at Ellerton, St. George which is abutting Bulkeley Plantation in the National Housing Corporation. The land was acquired for the purpose of housing development. As I said earlier, this is part of Government's ongoing programme to alleviate the shortage of house spots and housing in the island in particular in St. George. The land is to be subdivided into 120 lots and the National Housing Corporation intends to have 110 houses constructed on this land.

With these remarks, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.
4.45 p.m.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Mr. President, I think that this is an extraordinary step for the Administration of the day to satisfy a housing stock that is forever growing, as was stated recently in this Chamber. There are more Barbadians today owning houses and house spots than at any other time in its history.

Sir, one of the acquisitions which we are discussing is located in the heart of the St. George Valley and the agricultural belt. This area is a wonderful area and it is near the Bulkeley factory which is going out of operation.

Mr. PRESIDENT: That is irrelevant, Senator.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Sir, I recognise this but in relation to the co-relationship to Bulkeley, we recognise that this is part and parcel of what was the Bulkeley Plantation. Sir, the two would have been synonymously spoken of for a long time.

Sir, many of us who are from the parish of St. George know that there is a certain degree of nostalgia for the area. I think that whole Bulkeley area would be enhanced by the proposed 110 houses and it would bring a tremendous amount of new life into the general environs of Bulkeley Factory.

Sir, while it might not be relevant, mentioning the word "Bulkeley" would bring a certain degree of nostalgia to many Barbadians and to the people of St. George in particular. Nostalgia, because Bulkeley forms part of Barbados where for many years people would have got syrup from that factory. However, we know that with the proposed development of the area the question of economies of scale becomes relevant to the success of the community.

Sir, I would have hoped to make some comments about the heritage of Bulkeley factory and the use of what would become an old plantation and factory yard. However, I hope that it would become a heritage site. Sir, the Bill before us speaks to Bulkeley Plantation, St. George and I would be guided by you in this regard.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Sir, I understand that you will not permit me.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Sir, regarding the proposed housing and development as part and parcel of a package for St. George, Bulkeley and the environ of Ellerton will take place in one of the most beautiful areas in Barbados and I would support this Resolution. I hope that on another occasion I would be able to make further linkages between this project and tourism.

I thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 5.10 p.m.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. DEPUTY PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.
4.45 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I am sure that when the representative for St. George South heard of the proposal to construct houses in this part of the constituency, he must have been extremely pleased, because it is the first time in several years that anything has been done in that part of St. George. Sir, we have heard people from that part of St. George lament the fact that everything is being done in the north of the island and nothing is happening in the south of the island.

Mr. President, someone once said that the last time

anything happened in St. George was when the late Colonel Downey put a stand pipe in Greens.

Asides.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Sir, that is no reflection on the representative who may have represented that constituency before.

I believe that when a person has the responsibility to approve or undertake a government project, there must be a more even-handed approach in the allocation of houses. This is a case where you have a Minister representing one side and another person representing the other side. Therefore, the constituency suffers as a result.

Sir, this development falls in the most beautiful part of this country. I am sure that those persons who would eventually occupy these houses would have a lovely view of the St. George Valley and, indeed, they would have the benefit of not having to endure the operation of the Bulkeley factory. Maybe, it is to their disadvantage that they would not be able to enjoy the sweet smell of the sugar being manufactured as they leave their homes early in the morning on their way to work. Sir, this is very unfortunate, because those persons who lived in that area for many years would be seeing a part of their heritage slip away and they would not be able to tell their children about the good old days when the sugar factory was in existence and their children would not be able to enjoy the sweet aroma of the sugar coming from the factory.

Asides.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I hope that this development would benefit the people of St. George South. We always want to make sure that people from all across the island have access to these houses when they are built. I think that the people of St. George South have waited for a very long time for a project of this type. This is one time when I would hope that preference would be given to the people who reside in that part of St. George when these houses are being allocated.

Sir, I am not making a case on behalf of the representative of the constituency. Having had close contact with that constituency in the past, I know that there is a great demand for housing in St. George South. We would like to know that they would be the first people who would benefit when these houses are constructed.
5.15 p.m.

I should hope that the Minister of Housing would indeed ensure that this project is not one of those things that would remain a promise for a considerable time but that the

project will be expedited as soon as possible and in another two or three years from now we will not be hearing that the project is still in planning and will just come on stream at the right time when it would be fresh in the electorates's mind.

Mr. President, I have great pleasure in supporting this Resolution and hope that we will soon be able to see the long wait endured by the people of St. George South come to an end. Thank you, Sir.

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 4 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE
THE EDUCATION (AMENDMENT)
REGULATIONS, 2002

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, this Resolution should be a fairly simple amendment to deal with the provision for the award of scholarships under the CAPE, Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination. As you know, Sir, about 25-30 years ago we introduced CXC in the region and it was only a matter of time before we reached the equivalent of the advanced level examination. Certainly, the Caribbean Community Ministers responsible for Education had requested that a regional examination equivalent to the Advanced level be put in place. As a result, we now have the CAPE examination.

Sir, it brings a new approach to the whole concept of advanced level exams and it seeks to bring together academic, technical and vocational courses within a single system of certification. In this particular case, the former Cambridge Examining body offered examinations in Mathematics and Further Mathematics at "A" level and at that time the Mathematics course was in effect part of the Further Mathematics course and students placing emphasis on Mathematics usually studied both courses and took both exams. However, in order to do this under the new CAPE system they must study Statistical Analysis and Applied Mathematics in addition to Mathematics.

Under this system, there are a number of one-unit and two-unit courses and Statistical Analysis and Applied Mathematics are each one-unit courses. These in themselves and by themselves cannot be used in considering the award of a scholarship and exhibition under the regulations as they presently exist. So to give full effect to the award of scholarships and not to disadvantage students who might be doing Statistical Analysis and Additional Mathematics it has been proposed that there be an amendment to the Regulations.

Statistical Analysis will be a one-unit course and Applied Mathematics will be a one-unit course which together will be regarded as a one two-unit course so that students who have done both of these can offer them as a two-unit course to be eligible for a Barbados Scholarship if they reach the necessary grades in the other exams.

With these few remarks, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, there has been a great deal of emotionalism about CAPE as it is known. I support the idea of CAPE in principle. Admittedly, it is more demanding than Cambridge but it tests a wider range of skills. For instance, in Caribbean Studies, students are exposed to Caribbean economics and Caribbean society. The examination aims at developing a well rounded student, aware of and sensitive to Caribbean issues and behaviours.

Caribbean Studies is an inter-disciplinary subject drawing from a broad field of knowledge dealing with Caribbean issues in a global context. The syllabus is a very interesting one. Communication Studies is like Use of English and there is an oral component to which the student listens and responds to in writing. I want to emphasise that CAPE is not a one-shop examination. There is a test in the Lower Sixth in which the first unit is done and at the end of the second year the student does the second unit. There are some single unit courses like the ones I mentioned, Caribbean Studies and Communication Studies. The students need to think quickly, not regurgitate facts. They have to be engaged in more activities, discussions and thinking. The aim is to make them aware of the society and region in which they live so that they can make a contribution to their society.

I want to say a little more about Caribbean Studies and elaborate on it. It is an inter-disciplinary subject and it draws from a broad field of knowledge dealing with Caribbean Studies. The Caribbean is a highly diverse society and its issues, behaviours, and interactions are different across the region. Student activities are designed to encourage active engagement with the ideas, concepts, issues and knowledge within each topic. It looks at Caribbean society and what constitutes Caribbean society and it is interesting to note the emphasis such that students will be exposed to cultural erasure which stems from tension between traditional ways of doing things and the apparent efficiency and cost effectiveness that seem to characterise modern production.

Processes spring from a continual contradiction in Caribbean society and culture. Culture, as we know, is dynamic and dialectic and impetus is derived from values outside. Students are also exposed to cultural retention which may occur from a deliberate desire to keep traditions alive and help some groups to preserve their sense of identity.

Then there is the question of cultural renewal which refers to efforts to salvage parts of our past by fashioning new practices based on the old.

There are key concepts like society, socialization, folk culture, geography, society and culture and there is attention to the fragility of the environment, geologic hazards, volcanic activity and other areas such as research and discussion, sport, including cricket, of course, the gentleman ethos of the game, promoting social mobility.

Students are also asked to look at, discuss and think about social justice and development. Social justice includes human rights, ageism, poverty, equality, justice, equity, equality, civil society, referenda, freedom, sexism, racism, history, society and culture so that again, they look at immigration, for instance, and all that that entails and all the effects it has had on our society. There is plantation society, gender issues – I know Senator Odle will be pleased to hear that – minorities in development, music, reggae, Rastafarianism, and investment in people.

In an age of information technology, the production of wealth requires individuals with problem solving skills and management capabilities and then there are strategic alliances to do with international agencies. Interestingly, too, they suggest in the syllabus, contribution of individuals and they mention not only politicians. They refer to some regional figures: some are from the literary world, some are politicians, some are cricketers and I am not going to call all the names, Nobel Prize winners, writers and so on. Those are also mentioned.

5.25 p.m.

It is important, as I said before, that students learn something about the world in which they live so that they can make a contribution to their society.

Mr. President, if one is truly a scholar, one must also have good language skills, as well as scientific and analytical skills. There must be a balance. The CXC Examiners, however ambitious, need to listen more to the teachers.

I had some experience with CXC at “O” Level when it first started, having sat on Committees and CXC was willing to listen to teachers and attempt to iron out any problems that were insurmountable.

I think it is important to stress that teachers have been trying to teach subjects in some areas, because with such an expansion, teachers have had to be trained to teach Caribbean subjects. Sir, CXC has provided trainers and responded to a genuine request for material for Caribbean Studies. In some cases there have been requests made to the Ministry for additional staff and more resources.

Teachers have been obtaining help through CXC from

teachers who are already trained and the syllabuses have been done by panels of teachers across the region who work in sixth form schools, in teacher training colleges and universities. It is important to note also, that people in the private sector, in commerce and in industry have also been consulted to ensure relevance. So that in Barbados, we can look at this exam with confidence and hope. It does require more consistent application but it is educationally sound, and worth supporting.

I think also, I should point out that Britain has already accepted this examination and it has the recognition of regional universities. Already the University of the West Indies (UWI) has approved six CAPE units, including two single unit courses, Communication Studies, and Caribbean Studies for normal matriculation. Discussions are underway with other institutions on requirements for matriculation.

Mr. President, I also wish to add that it is not only students in the sixth form schools who can take the exam but also students at Teachers’ colleges, students at universities who need to complete foundation courses and other requirements for their academic programmes, and persons who are out of school and wish to continue their education are also eligible to take the exam. In addition, persons in the workplace who seek further professional development can also take the exam.

Sir, CAPE differs from “A” Levels in that there is more flexibility and choice in the range of courses. It recognises achievement after one academic year. It is similar to “A” Level in the sense that it takes students beyond basic secondary level and two-unit syllabuses in CAPE is made up of 60 per cent of the content of the “A” Level syllabus, used by the U.K. Examination Boards. The organisation which recognises universities in Britain has also recognised CAPE. I think it is important to note that as well.

Sir, CAPE is more work, there is no doubt about that, but it is better work. In the beginning, it would seem more arduous but as time goes on, one can see that it will redound to the benefit of Caribbean society on the whole. I think that just as in the beginning people had misgivings about CXC, some will perhaps feel the same way about CAPE, but ultimately, its intrinsic worth will be recognised.

Apart from human and social biology which students still take at Cambridge, no one nowadays hankers after the Cambridge examination at “O” Level and CAPE has the potential to be an excellent exam. I am sure that with students applying themselves, as I have said, consistently and with the excellent teaching which we have seen displayed in our sixth form schools, that students will perform as well in this examination as they did in the Cambridge one.

Mr. President, therefore, with those remarks, I fully support the Bill.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. President, this brings us to the end of today's business. However, it is proposed that there will be a special Sitting of

the Senate on Wednesday, June 26, 2002 at 11.00 a.m. On that occasion, a Resolution will be moved to congratulate our Head of State, Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on the celebration of her Jubilee of Accession to the Throne, some 50 years ago. The Senate will meet at 11.00 a.m. and that is likely to be the only business that day.

I now move that this Sitting be adjourned until Wednesday, June 26, 2002 at 11.00 a.m.

The question that the Senate be adjourned until Wednesday, June 26, 2002 was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly. 5.35 p.m.

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2. Report on the Accounts of the Social Investment Fund for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2001;
3. Report on the Accounts of the Social Investment Fund for the Quarter ended March 31, 2002;
4. Report on the Accounts of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the Financial Year ended March 31, 2001;
5. Report on the Accounts of the Public Enterprise Investment Fund for the Quarter ended March 31, 2002;
6. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 2) Order, 2002;
7. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 2002;
8. ACP-EU Partnership Agreement signed at Cotonou on June 23, 2000;
9. Annual Reports of the Barbados Water Authority for the year 1998-1999;
10. The Annual Report of the National Assistance Board for the Financial Year April 1, 2000 to March 31, 2001.

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ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN OF THE PARCELS OF LAND SITUATE IN THE PARISHES OF ST. ANDREW, ST. JAMES, ST. GEORGE AND ST. MICHAEL MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN THE SCHEDULES HERETO FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES AT THE FOLLOWING PRIMARY SCHOOLS NAMELY ST. ANDREW'S PRIMARY, ST. ALBAN'S

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