

THE
SENATE DEBATES
(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 2003 – 2008

THE SENATE

Wednesday, July 26, 2006

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, July 26, 2006, at 11.00 a.m.

PRESENT

- His Honour Senator Sir Fred GOLLOP, K.A. (President)
Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS, D.B.E., G.C.M. (Deputy President)
Senator the Hon. E. R. GRIFFITH, G.C.M., B.A. (Econ. & Hist.), Dip. Pub. Admin., M.Sc. (Financial Studies), J.P. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Leader of the Senate)
Senator the Hon. Miss L. V. EASTMOND, LL.B. (Hons.), LL.M. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)
Senator T. E. BARKER, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. (Econ.), J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Senator R. W. GRANT, B.A. (Econ.), G.Dip. M.A., J.P. (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Tourism and International Transport)
Senator I. St. C. LINTON
Senator G. P. B. NICHOLLS, B.Sc. (Hons.), LL.B. (Hons.)
Senator Miss P. E. PARRIS, J.P.
Senator G. P. I. GOODING-EDGHILL
Senator Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS, B.A. (Hons.)
Senator F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M.
Senator Dr. D. S. LOWE, Ph.D., Dip. Theology, B.A., MED., ED.D.
Senator Sir Roy TROTMAN, K.A., M.A.
Senator Sir Allan FIELDS, K.C.M.G.
Senator Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., B.Com., F.C.A., LL.D. (Hon.) (U.W.I)
Senator A. A. BYNOE

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senate is in session.

ABSENT

Senators Dr. F. L. CHANDLER, R. O. MARVILLE, the Very Rev. H. E. CRICLOW and the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON.

EXCUSES

Senators Dr. F. L. CHANDLER, R. O. MARVILLE, the Very Rev. H. E. CRICLOW and the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following documents:

1. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Hotels and Resorts Limited) Order, 2006.
2. Annual Report of the Operations of the Barbados Drug Service for the Fiscal Year April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
3. Annual Report of the National Cultural Foundation for the year 2002.
4. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Barbados National Oil Company Limited) Order, 2006.
5. Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 2) Order, 2006.

6. Draft E-Government Strategy.
7. Shipping Incentives (Dreams Investments Limited) Order, 2006.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS
OR SITTING OF THE SENATE AND
MOVED BY A MINISTER

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 22(1) and 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of this Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move the first reading of the following:

1. Consular Services Fees (Amendment) Bill, 2006.
2. The Resolution to take note of the Draft E-Government Strategy.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to without division.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 7 – SECOND READING OF THE
CONSULAR SERVICES (AMEND-
MENT) BILL, 2006

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Bill before us is seeking to amend the Consular Services Fees Act, Chapter 13(B), to clarify the law in relation to the payment of fees, to provide for officers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to provide notarial services for the prescribed fee and to increase the fees payable under the Act.

Sir, as you are aware, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, both at home and abroad, through its Embassies, Missions and the Honourary Counsuls for Barbados, provide a number of services to Barbadian nationals abroad, as well as at home and to businesses. In the particular instances before us, fees are not being charged for those services provided and in other cases, it is that the fees which have been in existence for the last eight years are in need of an increase, to take account of the fact of all the changes that have ensued over those years.

Sir, in the existing Act, there is a section which speaks about fees, to be collected for particular services provided in various jurisdictions. All the evidence suggests that there has been some misunderstanding on the part of some of the persons providing those services, as to the correct currency in which those fees should be paid. The amendment to this Bill before us seeks to make it clear that the fees are to be paid in the currencies of the particular jurisdiction or in US currency, so that in the future there should be no misunderstanding. Previously, it just said X number of dollars and there was some doubt as to the type of dollars the legislation spoke about. Sir, it is now made clear that it is the currency of the particular jurisdiction or US dollars, so there should be no misunderstanding in the future.

Mr. President, there is an amendment which seeks to provide for the charging of a fee, in cases where officers within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs provide services. There are a number of services, which they provide for individuals, in relation to documentation which has to be sent to universities and various business houses, and currently there are no fees charged for those services, because the Act identifies the officers who can charge a fee for specific services. The amendment now makes provision for the prescribed fee to be charged for those services as well.

11.30 a.m.

Sir, there is the one which speaks about the need for the increase. These fees, as I said, were put in place eight years ago and since then, various costs have changed, other fees have been increased and it is felt that it is now necessary for an appropriate increase to be made to those fees.

When you look at the Schedules to the Bill, you will notice that in the case of the increases, it is about 50 per cent but, when you look at the actual fees that are being charged, you will realise that there are still fairly insignificant. Remembering, of course, that in most cases, these are fees which are paid by business persons and that there is still the provision in the Act, which allows the Consular to exempt Barbadians who are considered to be destitute. Therefore, there is really no intention of imposing any undue hardship on particular individuals. As I said, the fees set out in the Schedule are still fairly small fees. Therefore, even the increase in percentage terms may appear large, that is what happens when we allow fees to remain unchanged for a long period. In order to put them back, in most cases where they were, it requires a fairly sizeable percentage increase, even though in money terms, it is not a huge amount. This is what is being done in this legislation.

Mr. President, as you know, the Foreign Service provides representation for Barbados and Barbadians, through a number of avenues. You have the Missions, you have the Embassies and you have the Consulates and all three of those entities provide services to Barbadians

and to business persons who are interested in doing business with Barbados. Therefore, this legislation is seeking to make sure that in instances where the Consulates, as opposed to the Honourary Consuls who are in the Missions provide services, that the fees which are charged are comparable with fees which have been charged by the services provided by the Missions and the Embassies.

These fees for services provided by the consulate staff are separate and distinct from any fees which are charged, in relation to travel documents and passports. They are collected under a different Act and have nothing to do with these services. These services are in essence services where the officers certify documents, provide translation to documents and things of that nature. Therefore, it is felt that even though these fees will not cover the cost of providing these services in many instances, that some small amount of revenue should still be collected to go toward defraying part of the cost.

It therefore seems to me, Mr. President, that this matter is straightforward and, I wish to commend it to the Senators on Both Sides.

Thank you.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH, the Senate resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Her Honour Senator Dame Patricia SYMMONDS in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH, Madam 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. E. R. GRIFFITH, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Consular Services Fees (Amendment) Act, 2006.

ORDER NO. 2 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 THE SALE TO CATHERINE BROWNE OF A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT SPRING GARDEN IN THE PARISH OF ST. LUCY

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, the Resolution before us is seeking approval for the sale of 963.2 square metres of land, which is owned by the Crown to Mrs. Catherine Browne for the sum of \$10 000. This is one of a number of Resolutions before us which in some way deals with housing. This just shows the number of different approaches this Government is using as it seeks to provide solutions for those persons who are in need of housing.

11.40 a.m.

In this particular case, Mrs. Browne was given notice in 1993 to vacate the small piece of land which she and her four daughters occupied in Arch Hall, St. Thomas. Mr. President, in her time of emergency and need, she quite naturally turned to the Ministry of Housing for assistance. The Ministry of Housing, through the National Housing Corporation, assisted her and provided this plot of land at Spring Garden, St. Lucy to her for a rental fee. In September 2000 as her circumstances improved, she sought and obtained permission from the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment to do what most Barbadians do as soon as they begin to see an improvement in their income, that is, to move from wood to wall. She therefore sought and obtained permission from the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment to put up a wall structure on the land.

Mr. President, the proposal before us today is seeking permission for the Government to sell that portion of land to Mrs. Browne, who has expressed a willingness to purchase it. Mr. President, even though it was not possible to sell it under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, because it does not fall within that particular category, Mrs. Browne has expressed her willingness to buy it and the Government has agreed that it would sell the plot to Mrs. Browne subject to parliamentary approval, that is why the matter is here before us.

Mr. President, this is a case that deserves the full support of Both Sides. Mrs. Browne is to be complimented for her determination to rise above her initial circumstances. Mr. President, even though the Government accepts that it is its duty to provide solutions for these particular cases, I think that we must however take note of what is being done. Therefore, Mr. President, I expect that all Honourable Senators would support this Resolution.

With those remarks, Mr. President, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF THE PARCEL OF LAND, THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT MAYNARDS IN THE PARISH OF ST. PETER IN THIS ISLAND TO FACILITATE THE SALE OF THE CORPORATION'S TERRACE UNITS

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, this is yet another example of Government's effort to provide housing solutions and to respond to the challenges in that particular area.

As you know, Mr. President, the Government has made its position absolutely clear when it comes to the question of divestment of houses within the housing areas, and this is one of those situations. In this particular case, the land at Maynards in St. Peter is owned by the Crown but in order to facilitate the transfer of the houses from the Government to the individuals who are desirous of purchasing them, it is necessary for the land to be first vested in the National Housing Corporation so that they would then be able to make the appropriate transfer to the persons who are desirous of buying these houses.

Mr. President, the Resolution before us is seeking permission for the land to be vested in the National Housing Corporation which in turn would then be able to transfer the properties to those individuals who are interested in purchasing them.

Mr. President, as you know, there are a number of persons who somehow still believe that the individuals who live in these houses should not purchase them. Certainly, we on This Side are convinced that the individuals would be getting a good deal if they make the purchases. We would give them an opportunity to have their own property and to do so at a very reasonable price. Mr. President, I really encourage all persons who have the opportunity to own their property to do so as the Government continues to unfold its plan in this area.

Mr. President, I therefore fully support this Resolution and would encourage all Honourable Senators to do so.

With those remarks, President, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the matter in this Resolution for a number of reasons. One of those reasons

would be that in the constituency where I have a vested interest, there are a number of terrace units in the area of Sayes Court that should become of importance to this debate from my perspective, as well as the fact that the Democratic Labour Party has certainly played its part in demonstrating its understanding of the importance of shelter to the whole process of social justice in a society. Of course, we understand that the pursuit of shelter is indeed one of the critical human needs as it relates to the advancement of humanity in any society.

Mr. President, a society that can boast of having achieved a certain level of human development must also be able to boast of having taken every possible measure to ensure that persons of all walks of life in the society have the opportunity to be able to achieve the common human pursuit of shelter as one of humanity's greatest needs.

Mr. President, the Democratic Labour Party has no difficulty in supporting the Resolution before us for the simple reason that it gives persons who would have occupied Government units for many years the opportunity to own those units.
11.50 a.m.

Mr. President, we believe that is consistent with the policy of the Democratic Labour Party. We believe that once individuals have spent most of their lives renting these units, they should have the opportunity to own them and that there should be no impediments to the transaction or transition from that of renting to that of owning.

I believe the Honourable Member would agree that one of the challenges, in this whole transactionary process, is that many persons, who have intention of owning the units they have rented at times, upward to 15 and 20 years, have been experiencing a number of difficulties in achieving that objective.

Mr. President, if I would cast the minds of the Honourable Senators back, perhaps to 1973, April 1, when the National Housing Corporation came into full being, I believe. The National Housing Corporation has replaced two other statutory organisations, one being the Housing Authority and the other being the Urban Development Corporation. These organisations were both charged with the responsibility of providing housing opportunities for ordinary Barbadians.

I believe sometime around that time, there would have been a Ministry under the Democratic Labour Party, entitled the Human Services Ministry or the Social Services Ministry and that there would have been a Parliamentarian at the time, "Joy" DaCosta Edwards, who would have been instrumental in helping to move the country forward, in terms of providing those individuals at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, the opportunity to rise, not only in terms of their quality in life but their station in life.

Mr. President, it is true that any Government should consume itself with the commitment, to ensure that if the society must be seen as a progressive society, that progress must be demonstrated across the lifelines of all people in the society, and that the same vigour with which Government seeks to entice, to encourage, and to incubate foreign investment, must be extended to those persons who, perhaps, have lived an entire generation in poverty and are seeking desperately to break that cycle of impoverished circumstances in their lives.

Mr. President, it cannot be a good feeling for one to have entered the world, in circumstances of a struggle and then, at the point of exiting the world, as we know it, the circumstances have only gotten worse, and in many cases the trophies that they would have wanted to show as having resided on this earth, would have eluded them, even up to the point of death.

Mr. President, therefore, the effort of the State to create for those persons in the society, who are seen as ordinary persons, and perhaps who reflect the beginnings of many of us, who have been fortunate enough to have escaped the clutches of poverty, who now live a life in the society that can be seen as one of maximum social progress.

Mr. President, we must not forget that, in many cases, our beginnings started in the corridors of struggle. Our beginnings started at social locations, where today there are many who are still in those locations and who are pleading with us as, the policymakers of this country, day in and day out, to pause for a moment to give an ear to their concerns in this society.

Mr. President, I do not intend to suggest in any way, shape or form, that this Government is not intending to put those opportunities within the reaches of those persons. What I would want to suggest, is that in so doing, we have to give careful understanding of what it would take to extricate that segment of this society, which continues to be trapped in conditions of poverty.

Mr. President, I do not know if a society would ever be able to eradicate poverty. As a student of the Bible, I know that it is discouraged in the Scriptures from thinking that such could happen. Sir, instead, what I believe could happen, is that a Government could put systems in place, where it not necessarily eradicates poverty – if a Government could eradicate poverty, we must praise God for it – but where any Government could ease the impact of poverty on the lives of those people, who have demonstrated the kind of human courage that they are prepared to do whatever is necessary, to create for themselves, their children and grandchildren, a place in the society, where they could be at some measure of comfort.

Mr. President, very often I find that we try to create comfort, to work within the corridors of poverty and not necessarily create the kind of enablement structures that allow people, through their own mechanisms of courage and effort, to climb beyond the veil of where they are trapped.

Mr. President, when I think of the whole process of investing land into the National Housing Corporation by the Ministry of Housing and Lands, to create for those persons that opportunity, I ask myself: Can a Government truly understand what obtains in seeking to create housing that is affordable, accessible and available, for all its citizens, particularly those at the bottom of the ladder? Can a Government truly put a system in place, unless it unveils what is its philosophy of housing in a society? What drives that process? What allows the society to connect between the policies of the State and the principles that need to be endorsed for that society to be able to move forward?

Mr. President, I go back to the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party, which is, of course, my reference point. Sir, the founding Leader of the Party once enunciated that the philosophy that drives the housing policy of the Democratic Labour Party, starts with the position that all members of the society have a right to housing.

Mr. President, the truth is that we believe that once we engage the society at that kind of level, it would allow us to be able to put the measures in train, that would allow for the provision of housing for all. Sir, if social justice in a society has any real meaning, it would have to be undergirded by a philosophical premise that says that the society's obligation to its members is to ensure that every person who wants access to housing, could find that access in the corridors of Government's policy.

Mr. President, our philosophy also talks about providing housing in a congenial environment. Sir, by a congenial environment, it talks about a commitment to provide housing that is surrounded by the necessary human services, that allow that society to be able to enjoy not only housing, but to enjoy the kinds of environments compatible with a progressive society. Therefore, for example, there is now a trend where families are uprooted for resettlement purposes, and when one contemplates what drives the whole format of that resettlement, one wonders sometimes if it is understood that where families have been socialised in communities, that it is not an easy undertaking, when people are uprooted from everything they would have known for so many years, and not taken into full consideration the need to ensure that the new environment reflects, as closely as possible, the same kind of human dynamics that would have defined the lives of these people in the past.

12.00 noon

Mr. President, I could refer, for example, to people who are being relocated from Thyme Bottom and Fairy Valley into that area and the horrors which these people are experiencing, in some cases where a family would have secured two or three lots to be able to give the offspring an opportunity to be able to stay within the community, and the Government by its own rights, moved the people but then scattered the family because they only replaced a single lot and others have to scramble around to find space in the society and, in some cases, some people become displaced. Sir, when displacement occurs, we have to search closely to see if there is also disinheritance.

Mr. President, I want to make the point that once we understand the philosophy that drive us, it is then important for us to put systems in place to make sure that the National Housing Corporation, with its mandate to provide housing solutions for Barbadians, takes into full cognisance that housing which it provides for poor Barbadians must be affordable, accessible and available. Sir, I think you have heard the arguments made by some that the National Housing Corporation has lost its way. I am sure you would have heard the argument by some that the National Housing Corporation has been somewhat subverted and that the National Housing Corporation now expends much of its time and resources in the pursuit of commercial projects. Sir, people have been registering their needs for house and land for over 15 years but to date, they have not been able to find a solution.

Mr. President, the Government came on-board just before the last elections to make it clear that it was prepared to offer housing units to persons who were prepared to purchase them. Sir, a number of persons rushed forward to seize the opportunity but, as I understand it to date, 2003 to now, many of those units have not been disposed of and many persons who have made deposits have not been able to achieve the ultimate maximum social effort in terms of housing.

Mr. President, I do not have to state how many in here because that is the obligation of the Government. If the Government knows the numbers, they should tell the public how many Barbadians who have applied to own National Housing Corporation units, since the promise was made in 2003, have been able to achieve that objective. Sir, we are not here to make 'mock sport' at poor people. We are not here to pretend that this is not an issue that is at the heart of the society. I am amused that some Members on the Other Side can laugh almost with scorn at the concerns raised by the Opposition. Mr. President, at the end of the day, the society must be able to feel that there is a guaranteed commitment by the State to give them what they require, the basis social good in the society.

Mr. President, if you tell us that the economy has prospered but at the same time, those who stood at the

bottom at the beginning of the tenure of this Government are still at the bottom, then, Mr. President, you are telling me that the prosperity of the society has perhaps only met certain people at certain social bands but those who need the help the most have not been able to be reached.

Mr. President, I believe that it is the position of the Democratic Labour Party...

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, on a point of order. I would ask that the speaker withdraws that remark "laugh almost with scorn" because it is out of place. There is no derision from This Side as to the points made by the speaker. Therefore, I asked that the remark "laugh almost with scorn" because it is unparliamentary ... Sir, it has no reference to the debate with respect to the attitude and the feeling from This Side of Government. Sir, I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I did not necessarily take it as a personal reference but if you so understand it, for the sake of good order, I would ask the Senator on his feet to withdraw any inference which reflects on the conduct of Honourable Senators.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: I am obliged to you, Sir, and I withdraw the comment. Mr. President, if people by their objection to the decision of the Democratic Labour Party become giddy in their own expressions of disapproval to the policies of the Democratic Labour Party, that is a matter for them. I would maintain the point that we must continue to bear in mind that there is a segment of the society that we call our own, who rely on the Government to assist them in paddling their canoe from one side of the difficulties of life to a side of a better opportunity in life.

Sir, the policy of the Democratic Labour Party remains that as long as we have the opportunity to be Government of this country, that housing must remain not just a priority but that we must do whatever is necessary to ensure that the National Housing Corporation does what it is mandated to do and that every single member of Government has an obligation and a commitment to those persons who now sit at the bottom who are in search of housing.

Mr. President, do you know that there are persons who have grown up in the housing estates, that there are sometimes two or three generations of residents living in those estates, that some persons have taken it upon themselves to create extensions to accommodate the growth of their families. Sir, some, who I know personally, lament over the fact that the National Housing Corporation has allowed many of those units to run to ruin. Sir, windows have fallen off, doors have fallen off, staircases have fallen down but even though the tenants have called time and time again, the National Housing Corporation is very negligent in its response to their concerns. Sir, the National

Housing Corporation is not fixing up the units for people to buy, the poor people will get the units as they are.

Mr. President, in many cases they will have to not only pay the legal costs to get the titles transferred...

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, I rise on a point of order. The Honourable Senator is grossly misleading the Senate. One of the reasons why the Government is allegedly taking so long, according to him, to transfer the titles is because a number of remedial work is being done on many of the housing units before they can be transferred. It is a slur on the Government to say that the Government is going to transfer the properties to tenants without remedial work going on. Sir, the Senator knows that work is going on in many of the estates; Resolutions have come here to Parliament in relation to financing the operations of repairing some of those rental units.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, I prefaced that statement by suggesting that windows have been falling off, doors have been falling off, staircases have been falling down and the National Housing Corporation has not been dutiful in providing the kinds of repairs necessary to give these people a home to reside in. Sir, what the National Housing Corporation is doing and what the Honourable Senator should have said is that the Government is now putting in firewalls and that in some cases the asbestos roofs which remain are being removed. Sir, that does not negate the point that what creates an environment that is congenial is not only the extremities of the housing environment but what obtains within. I am saying that it is my hope the persons in Maynards Estate, who at some point in time in their life before they expire, would have an opportunity to own those units and that the Government would do whatever is necessary to hand over a unit that is presentable, a unit that creates the kind of standard of living that is necessary in terms of housing.

12.10 p.m.

Mr. President, I might be comfortable in my dwelling and so might you, other Honourable Members of this Honourable Chamber are comfortable in their dwellings, some of them have maids and gardeners, but some of the same maids and gardeners who are working for nominal wages are residents in these same areas. The point that I am making here today is that as a responsible politician in this country, it is important for us to join our vigour and passion together in an argument to ensure that these ordinary, hardworking, committed Barbadians have every opportunity to enjoy the same quality of life, though it might be in a terrace unit environment, as persons in the heights and terraces enjoy. That is the point.

Sir, regardless of the distractions, I maintain the view that as long as the Government insists upon creating

the best possible opportunities, removing the red tape – a lot of people are complaining of having to go back and forth. Then, again, this is a feature of the public sector, in some cases.

Mr. President, the cost should be reasonable. The transfer of title issues should be sorted out and for the people in Maynards, hopefully, the passage of this Resolution would put an end to that, and the approach of Government, in the final analysis, has to be one where it does not see itself as doing these Barbadians a favour, but it sees itself as fulfilling a very important national cause, as it relates to housing for the poor and indigent in the society.

Mr. President, I am also touched by individuals who would like to have good housing. I meet them every day and I talk to them. I hear their cries and concerns, and people who have been waiting for lots for many years, I am asking today that the Government speeds up the process to ensure that those persons who have paid rents for 20, 30 or 40 years, as the case might be, that finally they can see themselves as owning a piece of Barbados.

Mr. President, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Nicholls.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Mr. President, I am grateful for the opportunity to lend my voice in contribution to this debate. A lot of the discussion in the country in relation to housing, stems from misinformation that resides in the hearts and minds of people, who are the prominent speakers on the issue. Sir, no difference to that debate was made by the contribution of the last Honourable Senator.

Sir, I say that because housing will continue to be a challenge to any Government in Barbados, principally because the rate at which land is released into housing, out of what was the dominant role of economic production in Barbados, does not exceed the demand. In other words, we have a situation where the majority of land in Barbados has been zoned for agricultural purposes, because of our historical use of our land, as a major economic engine in the country king sugar. We also have a situation pace of the development in the country, making increasing demands on our land as an asset to house Barbadians, in situations where house owners are not applying in the same great numbers to have the lands released out of agriculture, for housing.

In addition, people who are interested in housing developments are interested in a development where they themselves as private landowners, can maximise returns on their investment.

Mr. President, a private developer is not interested particularly in low income development. He is interested in releasing agricultural land, marginal agricultural lands or lands which the Chief Town Planner has determined are not now required for agriculture, in a manner in which he can recoup largely on his investment. The debate on housing in this country, to my mind, has to understand some of the parameters from which we operate.

I believe that the Government's policy, in relation to the national land bank, of acquiring lands in certain areas in Barbados, is a policy that has to be placed fully at the foot of this discussion. This Barbados Labour Party has acquired lands, since it has come into office in 1994, and has been releasing such lands to the National Housing Corporation, to fulfill its mandate, to continue to alleviate some of the housing concerns in the country.

Sir, the private developers in Barbados, and it is a fact, are not required to release land into housing development, where they believe that they cannot recoup on their investment. Therefore, we see housing development by private developers, at the high end and the middle income end. The Government is under pressure, to provide housing solutions for all Barbadians, particularly to those persons, at the lower level of the socioeconomic scale, in Barbados.

Mr. President, the Government's policy in relation to housing, is not only being carried out at the level of the National Housing Corporation, but throughout urban Barbados, the tenancies programme, practised by the Urban Development Commission, has seen a number of titles being transferred from the landlords, to a number of urban tenants across the urban tenancies in Barbados.

It is very interesting to hear, all of a sudden to my mind, the Democratic Labour Party has at the core of its philosophy, that everybody in Barbados should have a right to a house. Sir, I might be a little naive in saying that in 1966 the Democratic Labour Party led this country to Independence, the rights that were contained in the Constitution of Barbados, as a contractual relationship between the State and the individual, were set out in the Constitution of Barbados. The Democratic Labour Party, to my mind, was in charge of the affairs and management of the country at that time, and they did not seek to enshrine in the Constitution of Barbados then, nor in the 1974 amendments, which they brought – to give more power to the Prime Minister of Barbados – to create the provision where as an economic right, citizens of Barbados have a right to housing. However, we can hear today that it is part of the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party, that every Barbadian should have the right to housing.

We have not seen that philosophy enunciated, in a way that policy has evolved from that enunciation and people in

Barbados *en masse* have benefitted from this so-called policy of the Democratic Labour Party.

Sir, when I heard Senator Dr. Lowe speaking glowingly about this philosophy, urging the Government to look at the Democratic Labour Party's philosophy about housing as something we can mirror, I requested from the Library of Parliament the Annual Reports of the National Housing Corporation at the time when the Democratic Labour Party was last in Government, to see if there is a manifestation of this philosophy, in terms of the right of every Barbadian to a house.

Mr. President, I really do not want to carry the Honourable Senate through the voluminous pages of the report from 1991 to 1993 to prove the point. All Barbadians know that the Democratic Labour Party, between 1986 and 1994, did not build a single house under the auspices of the National Housing Corporation. Yet, they have a philosophy, and this Government is being pilloried by the Democratic Labour Party commentators, like Senator Dr. Lowe, on the issue of housing.

12.20 p.m.

Sir, prior to the last election, the Barbados Labour Party's philosophy was clear. We said that we are going to sell the housing terrace units to the tenants of the National Housing Corporation. The Barbados Labour Party has articulated a clear strategy of where we are going in that regard.

The Democratic Labour Party did not oppose the strategy. They only said that the Government should not sell the units. They should give them to the tenants free of cost. This is in their Manifesto, Sir, on page 30, of the last Manifesto, which is already a document of this Honourable Senate, that all persons living in the NHC housing and paying rent for a period of 20 years or more, to own these homes and units with the payment of a small fee for his title deed. Therefore, there is no payment of a fee for the conveyance but only a legal fee for the title deed. This was the Democratic Labour Party's answer to the housing issue that still, to my mind, sticks like a bone in the throat of all Barbadians.

Sir, I believe that as our economy grows, and as the economic activity in the country becomes more and more robust, as the effects of the diversification of the Barbadian economy touch all levels of activity in the country, more and more Barbadians are having access to capital.

The credit unions, and the banks will tell you that their mortgage portfolios have trebled over the last couple of years. Sir, housing development in Barbados on the financial sector has grown over the last number of years, because of the robustness of the Barbadian economy, under the good management of the Barbados Labour Party.

We have to accept that as the demand for housing grows in a country in which land is already a scarce economic resource, we are going to have some problems. We are going to have challenges and for Senator Lowe to suggest that if the Democratic Labour Party were in power, everybody in Barbados could be assured that their right to housing would be manifested in the policy in which all poor people in Barbados would get houses. Sir, I have a fundamental problem with that assertion because it is not realistic.

The National Housing Corporation cannot realistically give everybody in Barbados that house, who wants a house. It is a fact. We would have to put millions of dollars into the hands of the National Housing Corporation to fulfill such a mandate. We must be reasonable in our discussion, as well as we must be mature.

When the Democratic Labour Party built the housing units at Cane Garden in the 1990s and left them exposed to the elements for years, that was not in fulfillment of the philosophy of the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, that every Barbadian should have a right to a home. They abandoned that project.

The Barbados Labour Party came to office in 1994 and had to finish those houses and Cane Garden is now a burgeoning middle class district, no thanks of the work of the persons who understand the philosophy of the Democratic Labour Party, the impersonators, who held office under the auspices of that Party. The point I am making, Sir, is that we hear all of these things.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not sure that the word impersonator is the kind of word we should use in the Parliamentary forum. I would ask you to withdraw that, please.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: I withdraw the word, impersonator, Sir, but I am talking as persons who carry, as a philosophy, something that they really do not actually do anything to show that they are related to the philosophy. In that regard, I use the term but I did not intend to disparage any of the Honourable Senators here.

Sir, it is a fact, Sir, that none of us has sat in Government so really and truly, I could not be referring to any Senators on That Side, in that regard. I withdraw the word if it was taken in that way.

Mr. PRESIDENT: They may not have sat in Cabinet, but they may, I am sure, be Members of Government. Anyhow, proceed.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Sir, the sad reality of the matter is that all of this discussion, to my mind is a little

immature. We are not going to find great solutions for the housing challenges that we have in our country, if we continue to engage in a Tweedledee and Tweedledum debate about what Party did what, and what Party can do better. We have to confront the challenges, head on. We have to confront the challenges by creating more opportunities for people to save and invest in land in this country.

We have to provide the opportunities, Sir, for people to be able to go to the banks and financial institutions, and borrow money on the strength of their title in the ownership of land, so that they can improve and modernise their social and economic circumstances. This has been the working philosophy of the Barbados Labour Party.

It has been resisted from the time we have brought the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act, as a substantive piece of policy, into the politics and the political life of Barbados. It has been fundamentally resisted by the Other Side.

Sir, as a practising Attorney-at-Law, I see on a daily basis, people across urban and suburban Barbados being able to buy the land upon which their families have had a significant interest in, as a tenancy for 30 or 40 years. Now for the first time, they are being able to substantially repair their dwelling-houses, because they have a title to the land, so that can satisfy the security arrangements of the financial institutions.

These are the policies that touch and concern the urban and suburban poor in Barbados, which this Government does not get credit for. Sir, we are not here to sit on our laurels. We are here to find the solutions for people's problems. We are not here to make grandiose statements that windows are dropping off Government units, without being able to say exactly where these windows are dropping off.

We are not here to make grandiose statements about staircases falling down. I cannot tell you that every Monday, when the cause list comes out, I know exactly what is every matter on the cause list in the courts. Sir, I cannot tell you that you can find a single Barbadian where anybody has suffered injury, or has sued for loss of damage as a result of a staircase falling down in Barbados, but I may be wrong. Senator Lowe has a peculiar knowledge about these circumstances.

SENATOR Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. President, on a point of order. There is great virtue in listening carefully. I believe it is important that I remind this Honourable Chamber that I listed the housing estate in Sayes Court, and if the Honourable Member wants to verify the information, then he is free to do so.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please be seated. I am not sure that is a point of order. It might have been a point of elucidation but, please proceed.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Sir, I am guided by your ruling but I might be even more mystified than you, because nothing was elucidated as a result of what was said.

Sir, all I am asking for is some evidence. It is all right to speak for the cameras and the newspapers, and tell them the windows are dropping off and staircases are falling down in the housing units. They like sound bites but I am saying that we must have a mature response to the challenges of our people in relation to housing, rather than making statements on the eve of a political season, that staircases are falling down and windows are dropping off the housing units, bring the facts.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party has a fundamental responsibility, as law makers in this country, to bring a mature response to the challenges that face the people. We must not fall prey to playing the gallery to make fanciful statements about serious issues. I have a fundamental problem with that, and if I am going to be held as a person who likes a lot of philosophy and theory and I really do not like politics because, I think differently, I would think differently.

Sir, I would not engage in a discussion because I have come from a community in suburban Barbados and moved to one in rural Barbados, where housing continues to pose significant challenges for ordinary people in Barbados. We are not advancing the debate by these kinds of discussions.

I would like to see, Sir, greater support given to the National Housing Corporation in relation to the release of these tenantry units, which we are speaking about here. I believe the one under consideration is at Maynards in St. Peter.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am delighted to hear mention of Maynards. Thank you.

Asides.

SENATOR G. P. B. NICHOLLS: Sir, in the remainder of my contribution, I will speak to the Resolution before this Senate for the first time since it was introduced by the Leader of the Senate.
12.30 p.m.

Sir, Maynards is an area that sits just outside of the development going on in Speightstown, St. Peter. The people at Maynards, St. Peter have benefitted from a lot of the infrastructural development going on as a result of the

activity and the robustness of the new Barbadian economy. Mr. President, it is to their benefit that this Resolution receives the fullest support in spirit by the Honourable Members of this Senate because when the land is transferred to them the benefit of any increases in the value of that real estate accrues to them. Mr. President, previously as tenants they had no right to benefit from any increase in the value of that land.

Mr. President, it is precisely because of the vesting of this land in the National Housing Corporation that these properties can be sold to the tenants that these people can now say they have a real stake in the development of their community which has seen real improvement in terms of the physical infrastructure.

Sir, this exercise has to be repeated across a number of other housing estates in Barbados in which the National Housing Corporation in its thrust to provide housing solutions have built on lands owned by the Crown but do not have the ability to transfer the titles to the tenants because the land is still owned by the Crown.

Mr. President, this Resolution vests the land in the National Housing Corporation so that they can enact the policy of the Barbados Labour Party to make sure that these persons who have been living in tenancy units can benefit from all of the developments going on around them and can have a stake in the land of this country and can have a secure future. They can go to a financial institution and borrow money to send their children to university or they can do anything because they now have security of title.

Mr. President, I have said in this Chamber before – and I want to reiterate it because I believe that what was carried in the Press in relation to the point I made was not accurate – that we have a duty to create imaginative solutions so that we can deal with the housing solution. Sir, I believe that civic Barbados and the financial institutions should find ways to get Barbadians to invest money in the acquisition of property on a community basis so that a greater number of persons can benefit from it when the property is released. Sir, that is important.

I would like to see, Sir, more discussion on this kind of issue because in other societies there are private companies, communal organisations and civic organisations, like the trade unions and the credit unions, that have been encouraged to take their land or to allow their membership facilities to acquire land as a collective group so that the land could then be transferred to members of those institutions.

Mr. President, these are ways in which we as Barbadians can use our creative intellect to find ways in which we can save towards the acquisition of property. However, we might not be able to accumulate the capital

as individuals to deal with the situation in which the land values have shot up as a result of the small land area that we have *vis-à-vis* the infrastructural development that is required of the land that we have to put into economic activity, that is a reality.

Mr. President, the point I am making is that I would like to see the credit unions, the banks, the financial institutions of Barbados, the civic organisations of Barbados, the labour unions, the churches, people who owned land already as well as institutions which have the capacity to invest in parcels of land, investing in land so that more Barbadians can get them. Mr. President, if we could spend more of our time trying to facilitate this development, I think that we would do justice to our already complicated situation.

Sir, the historians tell us that we had the unkindest cut. We had an emancipation that did not allow Barbadians to flee the estates to acquire land and to be able to hold it as their own through prescriptive rights and so forth.

Sir, the challenges that we face today are going to become more and more of a global nature. Decisions are going to be increasingly taken at a distance that would affect the way in which we operate as a small society. We cannot escape the impact of people seeing Barbados as an investment vehicle. Mr. President, people speak about parking their money. We live in an international economy. We have never been a closed economy and we have never been a closed society. Forty years of nationalism cannot automatically close the Barbadian economy and society from what is happening in the international environment. We might feel that we can do that. Politicians might feel that they can tell Barbadians that they can shield them from the brunt of everything going on in the international environment, but the truth is we operate in an international economy, and Barbadian land, like all the rest of the land in the Caribbean, is going to be seen as an attractive investment vehicle for some people. Sir, we have to be able to creatively attract investment that can benefit the people of our country as well as provide for housing solutions for the people of this country.

Mr. President, a Government and a people that are willing to confront these challenges head on and stay focussed as to what are the fundamental goals that drive the society forward would do well.

Sir, I am saying that this Resolution falls well within the ambit of the Government's policy enunciated before 2003. Sir, we are going to put it in place and we are going to make sure that people get a housing unit that is worth what they have invested in it, not only the cost of the transaction but taking into consideration the rent that they have paid over an extended period of time.

Sir, with those few words, I support this Resolution before the Senate.

SENATOR Sir Roy TROTMAN: Mr. President, I am pleased to be able to say that I am able to support the measure before the Chamber. However, at the same time I believe that it is important to say that a subject such as this presents us with a marvellous opportunity to be able to revisit many very interesting matters which are before us.

Quite naturally, Sir, we have to locate that discussion within the parish of St. Peter and more specifically within the village of Maynards. Mr. President, a discussion of this sort surely would not permit us to stray too far away from St. Peter. It would not, for example, permit us to speak from so high a principle that we were not able to underscore the need to ensure that our land use policy would not permit the attractiveness of private wealth to rob our citizens of their ancestral rights, because that is equally so for Maynards as it is for Graeme Hall and St. Lawrence.

Mr. President, we would therefore have very well to recognise that private property, though it is entrenched in our society, still has to be subject to the will of the people. Therefore, as attractive as the St. Lawrence or the Graeme Hall special attractive new water skiing or water provision might be, I think we have to be more concerned with the public well-being in that particular area and make sure that Graeme Hall remains the public property of all the people and not the private wealth of a few people.

Of course, one does not stray from Maynards in St. Peter when one makes a position of such high principles in the wider context of a subject that deals with a scarce resource such as land is. Mr. President, when we have such a scarce resource, quite naturally, one of the important things that we have to address is the matter of how we are going to treat that scarce resource.

12.40 p.m.

Mr. President, we are presently trying to support Government's effort, to make sure that the National Housing Corporation is able to have title to the property and that we can facilitate private development by those people, who will be the owners of Maynards. This will allow them to do what they have to do, to make their livelihoods better.

Sir, I think that apart from what is happening at Maynards, including the surrounding villages – and Barbados is but a village – we have to realise that with a limited amount of land, there may need to be a review of the nature and structure of future developments.

Mr. President, at our own Barbados Workers' Union Conference last year, we reviewed the same problem

of housing, with limited land space. One of the things that the workers put forward to the leadership of the Trade Union Movement, was that in our own development of the limited land that we have, we must start thinking of terrace units, as opposed merely to units.

Mr. President, what I am saying is that we have got to start thinking in terms of making housing provisions become structured, in such a way that the same acreage of land, perhaps five acres, may be able to hold more family units than we now put on that same acreage. That is what we mean by terracing, as opposed merely to tenancy.

We have land resources and we have a major problem with how we are going to be able to satisfy the need of all our people to that housing, or how we are going to satisfy the need of all the people for those lands. No doubt the Honourable Senator, who has just spoken, has, in fact, touched the real nerve centre of the people of Barbados, when he spoke to the question of the level of demand, versus the capacity of the society to supply.

Mr. President, we have a very real problem of increasing demands for land and increasing demands for housing, while, at the same time, the limitation of supply being brought on by two things. That limitation of supply is being brought on by the fact that much of the land, which is available to the country, is privately-owned. Therefore, since we are an open community, one steeped in our democracy, that poses a significant problem for choices.

Mr. President, the rest of the land, which we have, has to be developed in such a way that we can maintain the protection of our parks and access to our beaches, in such a way that we do not develop 'ghettos' societies, where we have the rich living behind their gates, in one kind of community, and where the poor are put into ghettos, where they do not have access to our parks and beaches. We have to develop in such a way that will ensure there is a level of living, which will build a community spiritedness that we all want.

Sir, given that kind of difficulty which there is, it would seem to me that we have to use this occasion and occasions such as these, to revisit a number of the assumptions, which we have held before. Mr. President, one such assumption is the question of how seriously do we take the issue of landownership. It is my considered view, and I suspect the view of many others, that land is going to be a major reason for the next social confrontation in this country. It needs not be so.

Mr. President, I have not said that as a means of attacking any particular Government, or trying to cast aspersions of any one or on anything. I merely wish to make the point that there are two things, which are very strong in

the forefront of every man and woman, and I would say every teenager about to enter the world of work. The first thing is the need to have a job, and that job has to be a decent job. The person who goes to find the job, wants to have a job because of the fact that job will give that individual the hope to make progress. That progress, which the individual makes through his work, is overwhelmingly represented by that person's capacity to own property.

Mr. President, one of the important things we want to do, when we work, is not just to have a large bank account, especially now the interest rates are not as healthy as they used to be, but we want to take that money and make it produce something. We want to own a piece of the rock.

Mr. President, though we want a piece of the rock, we have limited amounts of land. Therefore, if that amount of land is so limited, that there are going to be queues, with people trying to get some of that scarce resource, then we have to be particularly careful in how we are dispensing with that very scarce resource.

Can we allow market forces, blindly and unbridled, to control how that land is going to become the property of the people of this country? Would Government have to be a major player influencing that market, in such a way as to establish that the land of the country remains within the hands of the people of the country? Would it be done in such a way as to reduce that confrontation, to which I have spoken?

Mr. President, the question must be asked: to what extent are we able, as a people, to do that, without bringing Barbados to a position where it could lose the image it currently has, the image of having an open society where freedom to act in the market is secured? We, in the Barbados Workers' Union and those of us who are representatives of the Labour Movement have, for many years, been trying to put forward an approach, which we thought would help the people of the country.

Mr. President, when I was in Another Place, and that is quite some years ago – and I might have been accused, as the Honourable Senator before me was accusing some other people of representing another Party – I was of the view that there was so much money owed to the Government for land in this country, that Government could not be accused of acting improperly, if, in return for the money owed, it sought to acquire much of that land, for which it was owed taxes and other forms of loans. I was also of the view that Government would have sought to acquire that land entrusted for the people of the country.

Mr. President, I know I would be told there is a land bank but my vision went beyond that. My vision has gone so much beyond that, that I have expected and still expect,

Government to adhere to the request which the Labour Movement has put to it. Government then has to be a facilitator to institutions like that of the Trade Union Movement, where at least one trade union, for which I can speak, is asking Government to set aside or to facilitate the procurement of some of that plantation land, so that above board, the Trade Union Movement is able to take on some of the responsibility of developing housing for the low income groups within this country.

12.50 p.m.

It is a position articulated by one union quite some time ago. It is a position coming out of what I have been able to put forward when I was in Another Place. I agree with Senator Nicholls that nobody should believe that a private developer has any legal responsibility beyond his legal responsibility to the shareholders. Sir, he may have a moral responsibility but moral responsibility does not have the force of law.

Government has to give the facility to make sure that we do not develop this country purely for the benefit of private wealth and at the expense of public welfare and well being. This is why we say that there is a major problem before the country. The problem is one which some of our neighbours have. We have told ourselves that it cannot be part of what we do now because we have committed ourselves to a different approach.

I believe that we could recognise where in many dispensations and jurisdictions the question of land became so fiercely political, whether that land was in Maynards or St. Lawrence that we move as a people in many jurisdictions towards the question of ownership of land versus leasing of land. This may now be just a moot subject, good enough for debate and not for application, but it is something which we ought not to allow ourselves to forget because once you take something you have and apply it in a pronounced way to another use, it may not be as easy as you wish to bring it back to another form of use much more in the interest of the masses of people. Sir, Barbados will have that eternally as a problem. It will, therefore, have consistently to be dealing with the advice which some of our international advisors would be constantly giving to our Government and our Ministers, that is the advice of surrendering the lands of Barbados over to total and complete exploitative development allowing the market so to take over that our lands are given up to private speculation. This is part of the advice we have got way back in the early 1990s, that we should take our lands completely out of Government influence and allow the capital market and private entrepreneurship to take over and thereby re-establish a Barbados position and, perhaps, it might have worked.

Mr. President, had it worked it would have worked for a few and not for the masses. Mr. President, the Government

has that major problem of how to balance that exploitation of the wealth and land that there is. Government needs continually to reassure the masses of people that the Government, whichever Party forms the Government, remains the guardian of the wealth of the people, the protector of the wealth of the people, that it would be safeguarded in such a way that whatever the circumstances of external influences and pressures, that land would not be allowed to slip out of the hands of the young men and women of this country who hope one day to get a job and having got a job, to demonstrate that they have arrived by using the benefits of their jobs to own a piece of the rock, to own land.

Mr. President, I think that as a move as a people to develop the industrial estates that we should not see this as an end in itself. We have to see the broader picture of what we are going to do to secure as much of our land, as much of our rock as we still for as many of our people as we can.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.50 p.m. today.

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Sitting is resumed. Senator Linton.

SENATOR I. St. C. LINTON: Mr. President, I had no intention of speaking on this particular Resolution, but it would be remiss of me not to speak, in light of what has transpired during the debate. The Resolution before this was a signal to me, that there was a bipartisan approach to our discussion today in relation to Barbadians and ownership of land. Indeed, the aforesaid Resolution was an example of what the Barbados Labour Party Government and its policy on housing and ownership of land for persons of the lower echelon of society.

Sir, Maynards became, today, a tip of the iceberg in two ways. A tip of the iceberg in relation to what Maynards as an example of, is that over the years, several areas of housing development in Barbados, by the National Housing Authority, now National Housing Corporation, has opened a way for persons living in National Housing Corporation units across Barbados, particularly in the urban area, to have an opportunity to purchase their units at reasonable cost.

In addition, the upgrading of those units. Sir, Maynards has also become a tip of the iceberg, in relation to the policy of the Barbados Labour Party with regard to providing housing for the lower echelon of society in Barbados.

Mr. President, in 1980, the Barbados Labour Party, under the Tom Adams regime, brought the Plantation Tenancies Act, in which the children and descendants of Barbadians who worked on the plantations, in the sugar industry in Barbados, have been able to purchase lots at ten cents per square foot, even today this is happening.

Mr. President, today I heard Senator Lowe going into the 'huskings' because somebody believes that the silly season has started. I recall that the Democratic Labour Party, which he claims has housing for all Barbadians as a policy, voted solidly against persons who worked and lived on sugar plantations in Barbados, acquiring land and owning property, on land that was ten cents a square foot. Sir, Hansard would reveal who voted against it, some became Prime Ministers, Ministers of Finance, Attorneys-General and Justices of the law. If you were to call names, which I do not intend to do, even the persons Senator Lowe spoke of, espousing the virtue of the National Hero, the Right Excellent Errol Barrow, he was the main one who spoke and voted against providing housing for the poor people in Barbados.

Sir, in speaking to this Resolution, one has to remember a lot of things. I am happy that I am still around. I can remind Senator Lowe about things which he does not know of. For example, the Senator spoke about National Housing Corporation. He also spoke in glowing terms about its establishment and purpose, but he would never know why the National Housing Authority became the National Housing Corporation. The individual, Edwards, when he spoke about who provided housing, but as Minister, he superimposed a private business in which the National Housing Authority equipment was used and National Housing Corporation was a cover up...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, I would urge you not to go too far along those lines. I think that you can make your point without imputing the characters of persons.

SENATOR I. St. C. LINTON: Sir, from my experience, in order to get a house to rent or to have assistance in owning land in Barbados – the National Housing Corporation – you had to go to Roebuck Street at a businessman's premises.
2.10 p.m.

Sir, in politics in Barbados we have to understand that there are members in the same family and in the same household, who support the Democratic Labour Party and

the Barbados Labour Party. I am speaking to what I know occurred because I have always been a supporter of the Barbados Labour Party, but I was able to go down Roebuck Street, not at the National Housing, to get assistance, as a member of the Democratic Labour Party, which I was not. Sir, when Dr. Lowe talks about housing in Barbados and for everyone, this Party has been the stalwart in providing opportunities for the ordinary Barbadian to have housing in Barbados.

Right now in Barbados, this Government purchased land and has made it available to Barbadians for less than the market price. Persons living on tenancies all over Barbados have an opportunity to purchase their lots on tenancies at \$2.50 per square foot, and whatever is the market price that the owners of tenancies want, the Government pays the rest. Barbadians of all walks of life and whichever Party they support, are beneficiaries of the housing policy and the land policy in this regard, of the present Government.

I will never come to this Chamber or anywhere to say that over the years with Democratic Labour Party in office as the Government in this country, has not made opportunities for such. They have too. Sir, when we come to debate matters like these, we must be honest.

It is time for us who are in politics and in this Parliament in the Other Place and here today, to approach this measure of housing and lands on a bipartisan basis. It is no sense at all, for us to seek to put down the Opposition or the Opposition seeks to put down the present Government on the question of land in Barbados, Sir, because there is not sufficient for everybody and the future generations.

I heard Dr. Lowe talk about land at Fairy Valley. If you occupy a piece of land in Fairy Valley or anywhere as a family, it is not always possible that if you are removing for purposes of development that you can offer every member of that family a lot of land. You cannot do that, because land is not available for you to do that, but I agree that where it is necessary that families who live together on a piece of land, which we are using for development, that we as Barbadians, as politicians, as members of Parliament, as members of the Senate should seek to be human to do the best.

When we look at our country, in today's world, we cannot survive on agriculture. There may be niches. Years ago, we could have depended on the sugar industry, but no longer can we do that. Sir, no longer can manufacture be the kind of foreign exchange earner in Barbados, as it was before. When the bigger countries have the wherewithal and the raw material, and even in agriculture – subsidising agriculture – we have to use different approaches to the development and the lifting up of people in Barbados and I

agree totally with Senator Sir Roy. We have to come together to see how we can put in place systems for development that are balanced, because we have to keep people employed. We have to educate Barbadian children. We have to develop a health system that can cater to us as Barbadians, when the whole world seems to be against us, as a small country.

Yes, political parties exist for reasons of either becoming Government but this must not be our main purpose as politicians and political Parties. Barbadians must be the beneficiaries of our approach to politics, not any particular individual wanting to be Prime Minister or wanting to be Minister, or wanting to be in Government. It is natural for politicians to want to be a part of Government. There are certain matters in our development such as providing housing, education and health, where we must sit together and work out a system in which, in spite of whatever Party I belong to, my children and grandchildren can be beneficiaries of the Barbadian experience.

Sir, there is cut and thrust in debate but sometimes we bring ourselves so low in order to become representatives of constituencies or become part of Government that we do not see the broader picture of approaching the governmental management of this country, with a balanced philosophy of what is possible.
2.20 p.m.

Mr. President, in supporting this Resolution and in support of a housing policy and a land policy that must be beneficial to all of us as Barbadians, I want us to sit down and put together a policy that any political party can be proud of. Mr. President, as I appeal to us as politicians, Members of this Senate and Members of the Other Place, I want to also appeal to Barbadians to have an understanding that while every Barbadian should benefit in some way, there are some things that all Barbadians may not be able to have when there is an insufficiency of resources in relation to land.

Mr. President, there must be a policy approach that provides us with the best we can do. The best practices of events and development in this country must be seen by 21st Century aspirants to political life and governmental participation for us to really sit down in some ways together and mark out a policy so that every Barbadian would have the best that we can afford.

Mr. President, today I am here. It was possible that I might not have been here a month ago, but God has blessed me with the opportunity to be back here. Therefore, I am making this kind of call and appeal to all of us in the Parliament, in business and in every aspect of Barbadian life to see what we can put together for the best of our children,

our grandchildren and future generations. Mr. President, that responsibility falls to us in this Chamber and in the Other Place. Unless we are willing to find some means of sitting together and working out this kind of policy for our development, nobody else will be able to help us, not even God.

Mr. President, I want us to reflect soberly and sensibly on what we want for ourselves and for our people and the kind of Government we would have, whether it be B, D, PEP or anybody else. It behoves us to set the right policies and programmes that balance the life of Barbadians.

Mr. President, I support this Resolution that is before us with all of what is part of me and what remains. I therefore appeal to us as legislators to be willing to bring about a balanced approach to the further development of this country.

I thank you.

SENATOR A. A. BYNOE: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution before this Chamber relative to the acquisition of land, first for the use of Mrs. Catherine Browne and from the history to this. We all support the effort to make sure that the family of Mrs. Catherine Browne is well housed and then also in relation to Maynards.

Mr. President, in so doing, I think that we have to recognise a couple of points. One of those points is that land is a most expensive commodity worldwide, so that what we see in Barbados is nothing that is just relative to Barbados alone, it is certainly throughout the region but even more so throughout other parts of the world where today in some parts of Asia land is even more expensive than in New York. Mr. President, who would have thought that this would have been the case.

Therefore, recognising this, we should say to ourselves that what is happening in Barbados is nothing unique. The fact that we have a rush for land in Barbados really tells us that we are a part of this worldwide exercise. What is required though, as far as we in this country are concerned, is that our Government, on recognising this, has to rush to purchase land. If we are to make an impact on the cost of real estate in this country then it has to come through the action of Government.

Mr. President, I would like us not to forget a statement by Senator Sir Roy who said that land will be the next major topic of social transformation in this country, or words to that effect, that is my interpretation. He may have used the word revolution, but that is my interpretation. Therefore, Government must see itself as the catalyst towards moving more to enfranchise the ordinary person in this country.

Mr. President, I put it to you and to this Honourable House that the way to do that is for Government to rush to buy land, the same way that we have a rush all outside of Barbados to buy land. Mr. President, I am saying that Government should be cognisant of this. Mr. President, because we know that this is a Government that cares for people, I am putting this on the table as a matter of urgency.

Mr. President, as we look further at real estate in this country, we ought too to be concerned that a lot of the multi-million properties are not being sold by local real estate agents. We also see a rush of the foreign real estate agents to come into this market, and again we have to be concerned about this. Our local real estate agents should come up to the plate, they too should be selling some of these multi-million properties on the west coast and elsewhere. Alas, not much of that is happening. Therefore, this in itself is a matter of concern.
2.30 p.m.

Mr. President, another area that perhaps should excite our imagination is the fact that when we look at the West Coast, we see that much of the West Coast was owned by local Barbadians. That is not now the case. We still have though, valuable tracts of real estate in this country that are owned by locals. They do not have the capital to take advantage of the kind of investment opportunities that are existing within the market.

Sir, here again, I see a part for Government to play; that is by encouraging, through whatever instrument, so that the asset itself, rather than being sold, could be capitalised as an element within the overall cost of the project, thereby persons who now own valuable real estate, would, rather than selling out, become shareholders in the larger and more profitable enterprises.

Mr. President, we would have heard from the Other Side, that there has now been encouragement for tenants to own the units, which they now occupy from the National Housing Corporation. Sir, I recall, perhaps about ten years ago, the then Minister of Housing and Lands, Miss Elizabeth Thompson, bringing that as a policy of the Barbados Labour Party. Therefore, that concept is nothing new but it is this same thought of ownership that I would like us to engage our minds on, so that enfranchisement does not only happen at the higher level but that we give opportunity for such also at the smaller level.

Mr. President, it is with these few comments that I would now conclude my response to this Resolution before this Honourable Senate.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss S. C. V. HUSBANDS: Mr. President, I rise with my colleague, to give support to the Resolution

before this Honourable Senate and to speak in particular to the matter of Barbadians owning land. I think it is commendable that Government is seeking to help individuals, such as the situation at Maynards and the other locations, to help ordinary Barbadians to be able to get title to land.

Mr. President, one of the things I am very concerned about, however, is the fact that there is some misunderstanding about what a Government can do, given the circumstances that we face in Barbados, when it comes to assisting every person in owning land or in getting a house, *et cetera*. Sometimes it is because I feel that the ordinary citizen often does not understand the dynamics that have to be dealt with, when trying to govern a country the size of Barbados and trying to meet the needs of the population.

Mr. President, that particular struggle of trying to balance the needs, in terms of land use policy, is often muddled by remarks of persons who try to put out into the public domain that either Government does not have a land policy position; that Government is not trying to help people who do not have land; that Government is not trying to help the ordinary small Barbadian in Barbados or that Government is not making any effort to help them to acquire land in Barbados, *et cetera*.

Mr. President, this is unfortunate because it creates a dissatisfaction or a feeling that we are not busy doing the people's business, in a way that would redound to their benefit and in a way that would seek to meet their needs, to help them to meet their expectations. I think it is important, when we are discussing the whole thing about making land available to Barbadians, that Barbadians understand there are certain dynamics, with which we are dealing.

Mr. President, therefore, one of the first things we need to understand in Barbados, is that there is not a lot of land. Sir, 166 square miles of Barbados is not a lot of land. There is also a situation where you are balancing competing interests that need land, in order to carry out the various activities, which need to be carried out, in order to keep the nation sound, healthy and viable.

We have, for example, tourism that is going to require land, if we are going to develop and keep that product fresh, vital and relevant to the marketplace, in which it is operating. Tourism is one of the key sectors that create employment for Barbadians. Therefore, if we do not service the need of tourism for land, then we are going to create a situation where we cannot continue to have a viable industry, which is going to impact on the ability of Barbadians to have jobs. Therefore, tourism will have its demands and will constantly pressure Government for land to be able to carry out tourism activities.

Mr. President, along with tourism activities, there is agriculture. Agriculture is crying out for land. Small farmers are crying out for land. We need to be able to have food security. We need to be able to develop our foreign exchange earning crops, but all that calls for land. Sir, similarly the agriculturalists are unhappy about how land use is being done, because each person is looking for what will benefit their interests only and not look at the fact that it is a balancing act for the whole. Sir, surrounding all of that, is the need of the ordinary Barbadian to be able to have housing and access to land.

Mr. President, if we are going to meet all of the needs of Barbadians, if we were to put all the land available to every Barbadian who wanted it, if Government were to buy all the land and give everybody a piece, we would not have sufficient to carry out our other activities. Therefore, it is important for us to understand that it is a balancing act.

Mr. President, in such circumstances, the question, therefore, would be: How does Government balance a land use policy? Sir, that is not an easy answer. I do not think that Government could sit and say that it is going to use "x" percentage of land for tourism, "x" percentage of land for housing or "x" percentage of land for agriculture, because of the fact that the dynamics of the economy keep changing constantly. Therefore, as a result, it is important that Government examines every project that comes to it. Government has to think through its long-term objectives and make the very best decision that it could make, at that time, on whether or not to give approval for a piece of land to be used for a particular purpose.

Mr. President, I believe this is why the Prime Minister has moved the Town Planning Department into his portfolio, so that he could give more hands-on judgement as to what we are going to do with each project, especially when it comes to the use of agricultural land. It is not an easy thing.

Barbados has put itself out into the international domain as a place where we want people to be able to do business. We are trying to attract foreign direct investment. It is very difficult to attract foreign direct investment, if we have a land policy that does not allow people to be able to set up the operations they need to set up, in order to transact business. Therefore, if we want to create jobs, and one of the main mechanisms for creating jobs is attracting investment, then there must be a policy that allows people to be able to own land, at the same time, balancing it against the other interests of the average Barbadian, such as the interest of tourism or that of agriculture. Mr. President, it is not an easy job. It is not a job for which a lot of people would want to be responsible.

Mr. President, the other issue is the fact that because we are a democratic society, we cannot tell private persons how to dispose of their land. Sir, very often, when we think of private persons disposing of land, we think of the huge land owners, who have between 20 to 100 acres of land, who are selling them off, doing big housing developments or who are raking in millions of dollars.

Mr. President, that is not the only way that land is shifting, in terms of its ownership. There are ordinary Barbadians; families who have been able to acquire a few lots of land or who have an acre or two, these persons are being presented with the challenge of people from overseas coming and offering them enormous sums for that piece of land. In this regard, what does one say to that Barbadian, who sees an opportunity to be able to get money, which ordinarily would not have come his way. What do you say to those Barbadians, who want to sell their family land to that developer, who wants to put up a housing development?
2.40 p.m.

Mr. President, I remember in the last General Elections, the Prime Minister pleading with the people of St. Peter about the sale of their lands to foreigners. He said that people who had small plots, some no more than 2 000 square feet or 3 000 square feet were being offered \$1 million for the plot. He pleaded with the people of St. Peter not to sell their land and told them that he would try to find ways in which they could maximise the investment without selling their land. Sir, this has been difficult because, when next would a poor person who does not work for much money get an opportunity to get \$2 million for a piece of land. Sir, these are the challenges.

Mr. President, it is important that we recognise that there is no simple straightforward answer as to how we are going to deal with the issue of land use, how we are going to take care of it, spread it out and create maximum benefit. Sir, the truth is that our society has emerged out of a plantation model that had a slave-holding society. Therefore, slaves came off the land without having the opportunity to own land. We have seen since the days of slavery, more and more Barbadians being able to get access to land but all have not and many still live in tenancies renting the spot which they have rented for many years. What does a caring Government do in relation to that to make more land available?

Mr. President, we have the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act and the Land Tenancies Act put forward by the Barbados Labour Party to enable and empower dwellers in the urban and rural areas to be able to buy their properties at well below the market price. This is a commendable initiative on the part of Government to be able to ensure that ordinary Barbadians can own where they live.

Mr. President, the question was asked earlier as to how many Barbadians have taken advantage of the provisions especially under the Land Tenancies Programme. It is important for Barbadians to know that while you have a number of people who still do not have land that some are gaining titles to lands every year. For example, in the Urban Tenancies Programme being managed by the Urban Development Commission, for the financial year 2003 to 2004, the Commission had accumulated figures of 1 028 lots covering 107 urban tenancies for which they had processed the payments of their subsidies. We had a number of Barbadians who have been able to purchase their lots under the Freehold Tenancy Programme.

Mr. President, in 2004/2005, another 148 tenants were able to enjoy title to the land on which they had been living for many years, in 2005/2006, 91 tenants were able to do the same thing and, Sir, that is commendable. There are ordinary working class Barbadians who were able to benefit by being able to pay \$2.50 per square foot for land which probably had a value of \$7, \$8 and \$10 per square foot and the Government paid the difference so that they did not unfair the landowners because in many cases, those landowners were not rich people but ordinary Barbadians who happened to own five or six lots of land and who had been renting them to other Barbadians like themselves.

Mr. President, Government did not want to unfair those persons so they put a programme in place to allow people to pay what they could manage to put land within their reach and, at the same time, did not disadvantage the other Barbadian who had the good fortune to be able to have a few lots of land and I think that Government should be commended for this.

Mr. President, it is not only in the programme of the Government that Barbadians are acquiring land. We have seen a tremendous construction boom in this country over the past few years where the demand for construction services cannot be met because it is so great. Sir, Barbadians are buying land and getting mortgages. In the period 2004/2005, commercial banks lent \$666 million in mortgages to ordinary Barbadians to own a piece of the rock. Sir, people are coming into ownership more than any other time in the history of this country.

Mr. President, while there are still some Barbadians in need of land, I believe that eventually we will find ways in which we can satisfy not all the demand but as much of that demand as we can. What is it going to mean for us? Mr. President, Barbadians have a particular mindset when it comes to land. We like our own little paling, we do not like to share our land space with another person and we have already heard Honourable Senator Trotman share today the need for terrace units but I feel that we need to go further than that.

Mr. President, as Barbadians, in the past we have not been accustomed to living in apartments. We have not been accustomed to owning apartments. We feel that we can rent an apartment but that you should own a house which sits on land. Sir, if we are going to make sense of the need for ownership in this country when it comes to real estate then, one of the mind-shifts that would have to occur for Barbadians is that we would have to understand that we would have to move to high-rise living. Mr. President, I know that a lot of people do not like it and that they resist the idea of building apartment blocks which house several families and that those families can own that real estate. Sir, other countries have had to do this because they were faced with the mounting pressure of having more people who want real estate than having the land space.

Mr. President, if young families, young professionals, young people coming out school are going to have an opportunity to own property, this is the method that we would have to use. Sir, it is important that Barbadians understand that we have to get in touch with that reality and begin to embrace the concept of high-rise living and owning an apartment. Sir, for some of us it would be the only way in which we would be able to own a piece of the rock.

Mr. President, I am obliged to you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Stuart.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, I rise to make a short intervention on this Resolution which seeks to vest in the National Housing Corporation a particular piece of land, the property of the Crown, situate at Maynards in the parish of St. Peter in this Island to facilitate the sale of terrace units of the Corporation.

Mr. President, the decision of the Corporation to make its units available for sale was declared as a policy about two years ago and there developed a partisan divide, not so much on the decision to sell units to tenants but rather on the price at which those units should be sold. Sir, at no stage was the Democratic Labour Party against the National Housing Corporation parting with possession or ownership of its units to the tenants who would have occupied them over a number of years and who would have paid rents consistently over the period of their occupation. Therefore, the Resolution before the Senate is pursuant to that policy and to the extent that it is pursuant to that policy, the Opposition has no problems with it as long as the Corporation and the tenants involved can reach some kind of amicable arrangement on the issue of the cost of the units.

Mr. President, the Corporation, as Senator Lowe quite ably pointed out in a well-delivered and well-thought-out speech, has a mandate under the Housing Act to not only sell property but to rent it as well. Over time the

Corporation has attracted the attention, sometimes the hostile attention of commentators, on the extent to which it has been meeting that mandate.

2.50 p.m.

Sir, I wish, of course, that today I could stand up and defend the Corporation against these strictures. I have to rely, of course, on its Twenty-eighth Annual Report for the financial year 2000/2001. We are five years in arrears in terms of what is going on with the National Housing Corporation. In spite of the Housing Act that, I believe that section 17 of the Act, the Corporation is required to lay in Parliament within a reasonable time of the end of every financial year its reports, so we have to rely on what is contained in the report for 2000/2001, the Twenty-eighth Annual Report.

Mr. President, when one looks at the demands of the Corporation and the extent to which those demands are met, the picture, I contend, is not a very happy one. I heard mention made of this Government's passage of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act in 1980. Sir, mention was made of the fact that the Democratic Labour Party opposed it. That is not really strictly true.

The Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act raised issues of a constitutional nature, related to the rights to property of persons in Barbados who owned property. It was thought by the Party then, as it is thought now, in terms of persons who are committed to textual amendment of the Constitution, as against non-textual amendment of the Constitution, that the property rights of ordinary Barbadians were under threat. There was a divide in the parliamentary debate between the Democratic Labour Party, which said that the Constitution was being amended non-textually, and the Government was saying that the Constitution was not being amendment, it was being altered. The report of debate will show that divide.

Sir, I remember very well because I sat in Parliament and listened to the debate. Mr. President, when the late Right Excellent Errol Barrow got up to speak in that debate on this distinction between altering a Constitution and amending it, he said to the Government of the day, that if there is this great difference between altering a Constitution and amending it, if you have a male dog whose reproductive capacities you are trying to curtail and you take him to a Vet, what consolation is it to him to tell him that you are not amending him, you are only altering him, the effect is the same. That appears in the debate.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Sir, the other issue, which the Democratic Labour Party raised, was that the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, in its plantation dimension, was a highly agreeable piece of legislation because it could be accused, if I may use that word, of trying to effect some kind of land reform in Barbados. In its non plantation dimension, that is, taking land from poor people in non-plantation situations and forcing them to sell to other poor people, that was highly undesirable, and the Democratic Labour Party took the position, because the people who owned these small lots of land and who out of the goodness of their hearts rented spots to two persons in the hope that some time in the future...

SENATOR I. St. C. LINTON: On a point of order. Senator Stuart is misleading the House. The plantation tenantry provision was against plantation owners, where the workers for centuries worked for nothing. It had nothing to do with the question of small lots.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, somebody should read the legislation to Senator Linton for his education. The legislation creates plantation tenancies and other tenancies. What the Democratic Labour Party had to do when it came to office in 1986, is by 1989, ameliorate the asperities of the legislation by increasing the number of tenants that can make up a tenantry from two to more than five. That is a part of the public record.

SENATOR I. St. C. LINTON: On a point of order. The legislation that permitted two lots to be a tenantry had nothing to do with plantations. It was a Tenancies Act, and the Democratic Labour Party then moved it from two to five. That had nothing to do with the Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act provision, absolutely nothing.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, you have made your point of order. It seems to me that Senator Stuart has not accepted it. It is really a matter of law in the context of legislation, and I am not going to promote a legal argument today, but your objection is on record. Please proceed, Senator Stuart.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Mr. President, the point being made is that once the owners of non-plantation tenancies, persons who had rented their lots at least two persons, as long as they became convinced that it was now dangerous to rent your land out because you did not know whether you were going to get it back, a lot of private landowners stopped renting their lands out, and that led to a rush on the National Housing Corporation, inflicting a burden on the Corporation for which it was not really prepared. Sir, to this very day, the demand for the rental of house spots and so on from the Corporation, grossly outstrips the supply of house spots available for rental.

Sir, this, of course, is historically true as well. Senator Lowe pointed out the Urban Development Commission had similar problems. Mr. President, a useful guide to this would be to look at the Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the National Housing Corporation, at Page 19 – Rental of Houses. The point is very well made that the Corporation and its predecessors were renting houses from the 1950s, but from April 1, 1956 to March 31, 2001, 51 170 applications were received by the Corporation, and of these, only 10 790 were met, up to March 31, 2001. So far as the house spots are concerned, from April 1, 1956 to March 31, 2001, 15 653 applications were made, but just 1 749 were met. The Corporation has always been trying to play catchup, in terms of the applications, which it had to deal with, Sir.
3.00 p.m.

Therefore, the Corporation has been under a lot of pressure from the public and has been the target of very hostile attention as a result. It has been seen as a source of frustration for persons who look to it for relief, at the level of getting house spots or housing and are unable to do so, Sir. All of this, of course, is after the present Government of Barbados brought a Green Paper and a White Paper at different times to Parliament, articulating a housing policy.

I am not going to get into any debate, as to whether the Democratic Labour Party's policy as articulated by Senator Lowe, quoting the late Rt. Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, is of a nature, quality and kind that requires to be enshrined in Chapter 3 of the Barbados Constitution, as Senator Nicholls contends. As far as I know, the philosophy of a Party represents a core of ideals. Ideals are always aimed at. When you are dealing with ideals, your reach always exceeds your grasp, in the same way that the Barbados Labour Party says that its philosophy is to eradicate poverty. This is an ideal, and your reach always exceeds your grasp.

Sir, so far as the National Housing Corporation is concerned, in spite of its difficulties, it still has to stay on course. We, in the Democratic Labour Party are worried that the Corporation has gone off course, in recent times. I do not know what is going on at the National Housing Corporation. What I do know is that over the last few years, the voice of the National Housing Corporation has been the voice of its Deputy General Manager. Like the church by the side of the road, when the Deputy General Manager speaks, the Corporation speaks and when the Deputy General Manager remains silent, the Corporation remains silent. The voices of no other persons at that Corporation are heard in respect of its direction or in respect of its future.

Sir, sooner or later, a Minister of Housing has to stand up in Barbados and tell this country, after subduing the voice

of the Deputy General Manager of the Corporation, what is planned for the Corporation and where the Corporation intends to go, in terms of satisfying public demands for the rental of housing units, and the rental of house spots.

The Corporation cannot begin to so conduct itself that it becomes the enemy of those it is designed to serve. Now, just under two weeks ago, the Corporation, as I understand it, went into Field Place, the Bay Land, and caused a lock to be placed on the door of a tenant, who was in arrears of rent to the Corporation, a middle-aged female, and a lock was placed on her unit.

Asides.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: It does not matter how many thousands.

Sir, the law is there to deal with the procedures for the removal of tenants from units, if they are in arrears of rent. But to separate a middle-aged female from her clothing and her personal possessions, is in my view, a barbarous act, in the year 2006, in Barbados. I do not care how much rent she owed the Corporation.

Sir, when private landlords are owed rent, they have to follow the law by issuing notices to quit, notices of intention to recover possessions, then, complaints before the magistrate, giving the magistrate the right to determine when the tenant should leave, and the terms on which those arrears of rent should be paid.

The NHC has no right at all to just lock people out of their units, separating them from their personal possessions, separating a middle-aged female from all her clothes, while she walks around like a dejected suppliant, unable to find any place to rest her head. I think that the Government has to set a proper example in this regard.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order please. I am hearing voices other than the Honourable Member on his feet.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: Sir, I under Senator Nicholls. He runs to me. He runs from cupid and cupid is the classical God of erratic love. He runs from Cupid and runs to Senator Stuart, and I do not know why.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not sure what you mean, Senator, and I would ask you to withdraw those remarks.

SENATOR F. J. STUART: I unreservedly withdraw, Sir. Mr. President, there is no divide between the Government and the Opposition on the Resolution at present before this Chamber. As I said, as long as the tenants at Maynards and the National Housing Corporation can agree on an appropriate purchase price, the Resolution is consistent with the policy articulated by the Government.

I should just like to say that in the pursuit of its mandate, under the Housing Act, that the National Housing Corporation should show a little more humanity, in its dealing with tenants, even in circumstances where those tenants are in breach of their contracts.

There are other people in other spheres of life, who owe Government agencies money and are not exposed to this kind of humiliation. I do not see why the National Housing Corporation should stand out, as any separate example, in this regard.

Mr. President, all of us, on both sides of the political divide, have a vested interest in ensuring that Barbadians are comfortably, properly and affordably housed. There is no divide on this issue. We are both embarked on a labour of love and conviction to ensure that those who need houses and those who need house spots can get them.

The Government has to understand that people are not going to accept promises indefinitely. The time has to come when the Government has to start delivering, in a meaningful way, to those persons who are awaiting house spots and who are awaiting houses. After a Green Paper and a White Paper, I think it is time that we should begin to see some light at the end of the tunnel, so far as this issue is concerned.
3.10 p.m.

I look forward to listening to the speech of Senator Griffith as he winds up because he may be able to shed some light on the way forward for Government housing in Barbados and the way forward for the National Housing Corporation and how it plans to get back on track to begin to meet the demands of persons who want house spots and persons who want units to rent. Mr. President, so far as the sale of the terrace units are concerned, this Resolution has the Opposition's support.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: It is good to know that Senator Stuart and his colleague support the proposal by the Government to make available to the tenants of these terrace units and other terrace units the particular properties.

The Barbados Labour Party's position, as Senator Stuart quite rightly said, has been made available to the public over time through various Papers brought to Parliament, but particularly through its Manifestoes of 1994, 1999 and more recently of 2003. Mr. President, since the Barbados Labour Party has always maintained that its Manifestoes are contracts with the people, Senator Stuart and Senator Dr. Lowe can read what is there and can accept it as being the position of the Barbados Labour Party.

This Resolution before us is one more effort by the Administration to put into effect those promises which it made. Therefore, Senator Stuart does not have to wait too long to see more projects being implemented. In fact, only last week, I heard the Minister responsible for housing indicating that very shortly, he would be speaking about a number of projects which are going to be started, so gradually Senator Stuart would see more and more of the projects aimed at providing adequate housing for the members of the community.

In fact, Mr. President, the first Resolution we dealt with today is a demonstration by the Government of its commitment to enable persons in straitened circumstances to rise above those circumstances. If Senator Dr. Lowe had any doubt about the intention and the commitment of the Government to deal with the issue of poverty and its eradication, he should no longer have those doubts. The first Resolution before us dealt with a situation where a lady with a small chattel house was asked to vacate the spot on which the house was sited and today the Government is facilitating her by making available to her a spot of at least 10 367 square feet, which is way in excess of anything she was renting when she was asked to leave that spot in Arch Hall. That is a case where the Government is putting in place facilities to accommodate persons in those circumstances.

Mr. President, I am not sure that Senator Dr. Lowe has it correct when he says that the Bible advises against any feeling that poverty would be eradicated. I know there is reference in the Bible which says that the poor will always be with us, but I never interpreted that to mean that an effort should not be made to eradicate poverty. We on This Side do not share that interpretation and that is why the Government continues to promote its various policies which are aimed at the eradication of poverty. Mr. President, if perchance, we do not succeed in eliminating it but we reduce it to 99.99 per cent, that would be a job well-done and in a sense would almost be eradication. We are aiming for the best.

Mr. President, the respective policies that go in that direction can be seen in the sectors of the economy. In every sector Government is pursuing policies which are aimed at enabling those at the bottom to rise above their circumstances, be it housing, small business development or whatever sector. In the agricultural sector there is the Land for the Landless Scheme. There are numerous loan facilities to enable small, medium size and large enterprises which sometimes have difficulty getting loans from the bank to acquire loans. In every possible sector the Government is pursuing policies which are directed at the persons at the bottom to enable them to rise above their circumstances because we believe that no one should be left behind, which is one of our Manifesto pledges. We are intent on pursuing policies to achieve that objective.

Mr. President, this Resolution is another example of that commitment because it now provides these persons who are renting these units with the opportunity to own them. As Senator Nicholls glibly pointed out in his presentation, these persons now, when they become the owners of the property, would be able to do a number of things that they cannot do now, in addition to benefitting from any increase in the value of those properties and so on.

Mr. President, we certainly would wish to encourage all of those persons who have the opportunity to own the properties which they have been renting over time to do so.

Mr. President, I accept that there are some difficulties with the programme, but this particular case is an effort by the Government to overcome a difficulty. The land on which these units now exist is owned by the Crown, which therefore prevents the National Housing Corporation from transferring title to the owners. Mr. President, that is why the Government is seeking to have the approval of the Senate to have the land vested in the National Housing Corporation that they can transfer the title.

Mr. President, Senator Dr. Lowe, while at first was saying that he did not know why the programme had not taken off as quickly as it should have, was then able to find out some of the particular problems, such as the need for the change of the asbestos roofs and things of that sort. Sir, at least he knows that the Government is making an effort to deal with those other issues to make sure that the various properties are available to the persons who are renting them.

Mr. President, with those remarks, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 4 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 THE VESTING IN BARBADOS TOURISM INVESTMENT INC., OF THE PARCELS OF LAND, THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT FONTABELLE AND PICKWICK GAP IN THE PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND TO FACILITATE THE REDEVELOPMENT OF KENSINGTON OVAL TO PROVIDE A MULTI-PURPOSE FACILITY FOR SPORTING, CULTURAL, ENTERTAINMENT, BUSINESS, SOCIAL AND OTHER PUBLIC USES

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, this Resolution is slightly different from the previous one. This is a matter that came before us not very long ago. You would recall, Mr. President, that not

long ago this Chamber dealt with a Resolution dealing with the acquisition of a number of properties near Kensington. There were four properties which were bought by the Government through private treaty and there were 13 properties which were compulsorily acquired and the appropriate Resolution was approved by this Chamber at that point in time. At the time the purpose for the acquisition was to facilitate the redevelopment at Kensington for sporting, cultural, entertainment and other public purposes.

What is before us today is a Resolution seeking to vest those properties, which have been acquired by the Ministry of Housing, Lands and the Environment in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated. Mr. President, that is what we are being asked to do, so that the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., would now be the agency responsible for seeing that these properties would be used for the particular public purposes, as identified.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I do not believe that we need to engage in any long discussion on it, in view of the fact that not so long ago we dealt with the acquisition of the same properties. All we are dealing with now is the question of vesting them into the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc., to facilitate their development.

Mr. President, I thank you.

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

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT, CAP. 228, THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN, OF THE PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT GREENWICH VILLAGE, IN THE PARISH OF ST. JAMES IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, some years ago, the Ministry of Transport and Works was engaged in road construction at Greenwich Main Road, St. James, with the intention of alleviating the unsatisfactory road conditions being experienced there and improving the flow of traffic.

Mr. President, those works were completed but it was subsequently discovered that there was no point at which vehicles could have turned, when they needed to do so. It so happened that vehicle owners, over time, found their own solution to it and engaged in making manoeuvres on a piece of property, at the end of the road.

Mr. President, the Resolution before us is seeking permission to acquire that particular piece of property, so as to facilitate the construction of a proper area, on which vehicles could turn.

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

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 6 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE LAND ACQUISITION ACT, CAP. 228, THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE CROWN OF THE PARCEL OF LAND SITUATE AT WESTBURY ROAD, IN THE PARISH OF ST. MICHAEL IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, this final Resolution is one which deals with housing, and I have reason to believe that Honourable Senators have all exhausted their comments on housing. Sir, this is another example of Government providing housing solutions.

This particular piece of land is one, which is going to be used as a site for one of the Primary Home Programmes. It is a matter which I think deserves the support of all of us. Mr. President, you would recall that not so long ago, the Ministry of Housing and Lands announced its plans for the development of Primary Homes, in an effort to keep the cost of housing down to the point, where those whose incomes are small, would be able to afford such housing. Therefore, everything that could be done to facilitate the development of this programme, should be done, in my view.

Mr. President, this parcel of land is being used for that purpose and, therefore, I beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. E. R. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, that has brought us to the end of today's Business. Mr. President, based on discussions taking place earlier today, it does seem to me that we might have to meet on a day other than a Wednesday, in order to conclude our Business before the Senate goes on recess, before we go too far into August.

My understanding is that the Other Place is likely to meet next week Wednesday and that precludes us from so doing. Therefore, it might be that we would have to meet on Friday next, in addition to having a second meeting the week following.

Mr. President, those matters would become clearer over the next few days, but I am advising Honourable Senators to remain on the alert, just in case it turns out as I foresee it.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Honourable Senate be adjourned *sine die*.

The question that the Honourable Senate be now adjourned sine die, was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.
3.28 p.m.

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2. Annual Report of the Operations of the Barbados Drug Service for the Fiscal Year April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.
3. Annual Report of the National Cultural Foundation for the year 2002.
4. Duties, Taxes and Other Payments (Exemption) (Barbados National Oil Company Limited) Order, 2006.
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