
THE SENATE DEBATES

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2008 – 2013

THE SENATE

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, December 17, 2008, at 11.10 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour SENATOR Dr. Branford M. Taitt, D.H.L.(Hon.), M.P.A. LL.B(Hons.) B.A.,(President)

Her Honour SENATOR Kerryann F. Ifill, M.B.A., B.Sc.(Hons.), (Deputy President)

SENATOR the Hon. H.L. BENN, E.M.B.A. (Marketing), Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

SENATOR the Hon .A.B. WALTERS, M.A., DPSA(Oxford), (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office)

SENATOR the Hon. D.W. BOYCE,(Minister of State, Ministry of Finance)

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V. MILLINGTON, M. (Theol.)

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES

SENATOR P.I. INNISS, B.Sc.(Hons.)

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH

SENATOR Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., B.Com., F.C.A., LL.D,(Hon.)(U.W.I)

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V.E. NEWTON, S.C.M., LL.M.(Hons.)(U.W.I), M.A., B.A.(Spec.Hons.), F.L.A. (Gt.Brit.), L.E.C.

SENATOR Dr. F.L. CHANDLER, Ph.D, Bsc. (Hons.)

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE, M.B.A., M.A. African Studies,

B.A.(Hons.).

SENATOR J.A.C. HUTSON, B.C.H., MRAC.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON, LL.B.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is in session.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE PRESIDENT

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have received communication from various Senators asking to be excused from today's Sitting primarily, because they are on other business mostly outside of Barbados. I have received communication with regard to Senator McClean, Senator Derek Alleyne, Senator Sandiford-Garner, Senator Sir Roy Trotman, Senator Kerry Symmonds and Senator the Very Reverend H.E. Crichlow.

11.20 a.m.

SENATE

11.20 a.m.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV Benn: Mr. President, I beg to move that Standing Orders 22(1) and 45 be suspended for the remainder of the day's Sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV BENN: Mr. President, I beg to give notice of the following:

1. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV BENN: Mr. President, I beg to move the first reading of the following:

The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV BENN: Mr. President, I beg to give notice of the following:

1. A Resolution to authorize the Minister of Finance to raise \$1 billion by the issue of Treasury Bills, Tax Reserve Certificates and Tax Refund Certificates to pay off, at maturity, bills already issued and outstanding.
2. A Resolution to approve the borrowing under the Special Loans Act, Cap. 105 by the Government of US\$35 million from the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development for the purpose of financing and implementing the Second HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project.
3. A Resolution to approve the Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Conditions of Service and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 3 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE JUDGES REMUNERATION AND PENSIONS (CONDITIONS OF SERVICE AND ALLOWANCES) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS, 2008.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV BENN: Mr. President, at the last Sitting of the Senate on December 10, 2008, the Senate would have dealt with the salaries for public servants, Members of Parliament, personal assistants to Ministers and there was a full debate on the matter. The Resolution to approve the Judges' Remuneration and Pension, (Conditions of Service and Allowances) Regulations, 2008 was not moved and passed.

I now formally move that the Resolution be now passed.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 1 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT CHAPTER 225, THE VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION OF A PARCEL OF LAND, THE PROPERTY OF THE CROWN, SITUATE AT SIX ROADS IN THE PARISH OF SAINT PHILIP IN THIS ISLAND FOR THE PURPOSE OF HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV BENN: President, the Resolution before the Senate today seeks approval to vest 4

827 square metres of Crown land at Six Roads in St. Philip in the National Housing Corporation for housing development.

Mr. President, if I may give a little background, this matter dates back to a long time. I would say 1980. The Cabinet a number of years ago, considered and concluded that an area of 2.023 hectares of land at Six Roads in the parish of St. Philip should be acquired for the purpose of housing development.

The Ministry of Housing and Lands has agreed to allocate 4 827 square metres of that parcel of land, acquired by the Ministry for the purpose of erecting a fire station, which was considered necessary at the time to provide fire protection in the South East area of this country, but that offer was never taken up.

However, the National Housing Corporation has since utilised the 4 827 square metres of land in St. Philip, to construct 10 masonry low income houses under the Primary Homes Programme. As a result, the Ministry of Housing and Lands recommended that the above-mentioned parcel of land should be vested in the National Housing Corporation to give the Corporation clear title to the land, in order to effectively facilitate the clear transfer of title of the properties to the homeowners.

Sir, construction of these houses, I am told, was done as far back as 2006, and residents occupied their homes, paying occupancy rent. Of course, the then Minister of Housing and Lands was aware that the homeowners were there and they were paying rent but did nothing about what we are seeking to rectify now, Sir, which is to give the Corporation clear title to the land, in order to effectively facilitate the clear transfer of title of the properties to the homeowners.

This Government is now seeking to rectify this situation to allow the owners to have their titles. Sir, having titles give home owners that sense of ownership, and that measure of independence and security.

Mr. President, I want to go back to the Manifesto of the Democratic Labour Party 2008, in which they indicated that access to decent, affordable housing and land, remains one of the major concerns of all Barbadians. The Democratic Labour Party believes that decent housing is the key to good family life. The time has come therefore for Government to intervene to ensure that every Barbadian gets an opportunity to own a piece of the rock.

This Democratic Labour Party Government is philosophically committed to ensuring that every Barbadian resident has access to comfortable shelter.
11:30:14

We commit to housing every last person under this HELP Programme. Under this HELP Programme, this Democratic Labour Party Government has committed itself to providing 500 lots of land at \$5 per square foot for first-time homeowners, 2 500 house spots for low and middle income owners and to building 2 000 housing solutions per year in the first term of our office. The programme is well on he way.

The Minister of Housing and Lands has embraced the concept, and with the support of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development in providing lands for housing, et cetera, has gone about his task with a vigour that was very much absent during the years of the former Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. President, I am not seeking to knock the former Government or to criticise any former Ministers of Housing and Lands. The public ought to know what this Democratic Labour Party Government is all about and what it is doing. Mr. President, from time to time perhaps therefore you may hear me refer to things that ought to have been done and were not done. The goodly priest would have reminded us occasionally that in the Bible we pray that those things that were to be done and were not done, that we ask for forgiveness, et cetera.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It usually says and there is no health in us.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: The President ought to know that it is HELP. The Democratic Labour Party is doing now what could have been done by the Barbados Labour Party when they held the reins of Government if indeed they were interested in the development of people particularly the people at the lower end of the socio-economic bracket.

The Throne Speech that was delivered in this very Chamber addressed the issue of affordable housing and land. The Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals presented by the Prime Minister on July 7, 2008, confirmed, cemented and sealed what was promised in the Manifesto and proposed in the Throne Speech.

One would recall that upon being elected in 1994, the Honourable Member for St. Peter said that his vision was to see a motorcar in front of every house. You would recall that, Sir, you have a very good memory. Sir, if Barbadians do not own their own houses, they would merely be parking cars in front of houses owned by other persons.

Mr. President, I strongly believe that progressive thinking young Barbadians would rather own their own home than to own a car. We all agree that an investment in

a house is far better than an investment in a motorcar. Therefore, it is no wonder the previous Government did not see it as a priority to build adequate number of houses for our people.

If you look across St. Peter, St. Lucy and the uttermost parts of rural Barbados, you would see that only one housing programme was erected between 1994 and 2007. That development took place in Boscobelle St. Peter and it was done by a privately owned contractor, not Government-led. I can point you in many directions where construction was done by private contractors, no Government initiative, but Government had lands.

Mr. President, you would remember from as far back as when a former Minister of Housing, who now represents the Constituency of St. Andrew, that Government was building what they called land banks. The previous Government established and built a land bank and other Ministers of Housing and Lands in the previous Administration would have added to that land bank.

Mr. President, our vision in the Democratic Labour Party is to provide housing solutions, not necessarily to store up land in a bank and not utilise it for the benefit of our people. During that time, the number of Barbadians waiting on the National Housing Corporation for either land or houses or both, is said to be over 25 000.

Let me remind you at this point that within 100 days of this Government coming into office, over 1 700 families were given letters offering to transfer their rental units to them. They would become owners of the houses they have been occupying for years.

In the 14 years of the previous Government, only a mere 10 houses were built and erected in St. Philip. I know that we cannot say that nothing was done. The former Barbados Labour Party Government introduced a primary homes programme on September 4, 2004 to satisfy low income earners like the nurses, the policemen and the gas station attendants who earn small monies. I do not think that more than 80 houses were built in that programme. I believe that when the Honourable Senator from the Other Side makes her contribution she would probably give us the right figure.

This Government has started construction at Constant and Greens in St. George, Workhall, Marchfield and Six Roads in St. Philip and Four Hill in St. Peter.

The hurtful thing, Mr. President, is that these have been done on lands that were put there by the Crown under the former Administration. These lands were there for the taking by the Crown, but little or no construction of houses was done for the people, while they continued to put a lot of land in the bank sitting down there while Ministers were

concerned mainly with fast-tracking properties for wealthy non-nationals on the West Coast.

Mr. President, if the former Administration had put that same energy of fast-tracking properties into advancing the cause of low income owners in this country, we would have seen a different situation today. They were busy securing themselves, securing their seats, perhaps getting...

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. President, I take issue with the language of Senator Benn when he says, "busy securing themselves", because it is open to interpretations of all kinds of impropriety. I really hope that the Senator is not intending to go down that road unless he can produce evidence of people securing themselves as an impropriety.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I was under the impression he said "securing their seats".

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: No, he said "securing themselves and their seats".

Mr. PRESIDENT: Oh, I see.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Thank you, Mr. President. If you want me to withdraw that remark I could. I went on to say securing their seats but because the goodly Senator did not secure her seat, I suspect that is why she decided she would interrupt on a point of order.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Not at all. I did not have one to secure. I have to win it first before I secure it. You did not secure yours.

Asides.

11.40 a.m.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is going to try to interrupt but I am okay, I will go on.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, really, I am going to ask that you have that struck from the record.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I take it the Honourable Senator is on a point of order?

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I am on a point of order.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please say so, so I would know. Senator Benn, do you wish to rephrase the statement?

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: I wish to withdraw it, Sir.

Certain remarks made by SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. Benn, were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I am going to ask that statement be struck from the record because if that is allowed, it constitutes a....

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, what is it that you would want struck from the record?

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, the comment made by the Honourable Senator.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I do not intend to get under the skin of the former Minister of Housing and Lands. I do not intend to ruffle her mind. Sir, our Minister of Housing and Lands found land at Constant on a file, doing nothing, just waiting for the acquisition process to be done. Sir, this would have gone through all the Barbados Labour Party Ministers of Housing. I do not want to call their names, but within four months of the Democratic Labour Party taking office, action was taken.

Sir, there were 2 500 persons on a waiting list for housing and lots, while the former Barbados Labour Party built land banks, with thousands of people waiting for the past 14 years for housing solutions. Sir, I would want to say that within four months the Democratic Labour Party found a way to embark on a progressive housing programme. Sir, to date I can report that construction is well on the way in many areas of that waiting list of 2 500 persons.

Mr. President, in the 10 months of this Democratic Labour Party Government, we have identified other land at Parish Land, Christ Church; Pool Land, St. John; Vineyard, St. Philip; Woodbourne, St. Philip; Colleton, St. John, and Bushy Park, St. Philip. This is in addition to those lands that were identified under the Barbados Labour Party Government but which were left lying idle over the years.

Mr. President, this Democratic Labour Party Government will soon be starting construction on high-rise units at Mason Hall Street, in the heart of the City, I believe similar to the London Bourne Towers on Bay Street.

Mr. President, Government has also resurrected the project at Country Park Towers, and I say resurrected because it was lying dead. Sir, I passed there this morning on my way in, because I wanted to remind myself that over the number of years I have been passing there, I would see a lot of rusted steel and cement blocks becoming discoloured by the elements. This morning when I passed

there, I saw steel frames, I saw progress. I saw a situation where persons would, sometime in the new calendar year, be moving into their homes. This project was left abandoned by the former Administration in 2000, at a time when poor Barbadians were looking for rental units.

Sir, imagine people who were 14 years of age in 1994 and would have become 20 years in 2000, who would have left school, started courting, looking forward to marriage, looking forward to building a family, all going to the National Housing Corporation on a daily basis without any success. Sir, the past Administration had lands lying idle, yet they were telling Barbadians to come back. Sir, within weeks, more blocks will be awarded for the construction of other houses. At Marchfield, St. Philip, that housing project is advancing beautifully despite the weather.

Mr. President, as I said, I do not want to knock the former Ministers of Housing for their dismal record in providing housing solutions for our people. They have attempted something at Lower Burney, St. Michael and at Buckeley Terrace, but I am sure other Honourable Senators will deal with those projects. Sir, those projects were fraught with problems, particularly the Lower Burney Project. Those former Ministers of Housing knew that Lower Burney was a dump site, they were told, and the National Housing Corporation was advised to tell perspective homeowners that they were buying those houses at their own risk. Instead, they did not tell the people anything.

Mr. President, my information is that the project at Buckeley Terrace was given to a contractor, who has never built a livestock pen for sheep, goats or pigs. The owners at Buckeley are now having severe problems, but some other Honourable Senators will discuss that. Sir, the Minister of Housing and Lands will now have to rectify those problems.

Mr. President, I want to laud the efforts of this Democratic Labour Party Government, particularly for the interest shown by the Minister of Housing and Lands, the Honourable Michael Lashley. Sir, the Honourable Member is on a mission to remove any stumbling blocks that would inhibit persons from owning a piece of this rock. I want to congratulate him on his efforts.

Mr. President, I want to join with other Members of Parliament on the Other Side and in this Honourable Senate, who are throwing their support behind the Minister of Housing and Lands, in ensuring that adequate housing solutions are met, in accordance with what the Democratic Labour Party represented in its Manifesto; with what the Acting Governor-General delivered in his Throne Speech; and with what the Honourable Prime Minister would have indicated in his Budget debate.

Mr. President, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development will continue to work closely with the Minister of Housing and Lands, in identifying those parcels of land in rural and urban Barbados which we consider to be marginal. I also want to encourage land owners, if they have parcels of land, some of which are fertile - and I know that many estates and plantations have some lands that are fertile and others not fertile - and they want to make an application for a change of use, they should take some time to go through the process. I would want to advise them not to make an application for the entire piece, including that fertile land because it will not be granted.

11.50 a.m.

Take some time to identify those marginal areas; those that you know do not produce anything and make the application for change of use on those parcels. Do not let your arable lands run into rubble or run into being possessed with river tamarind and shrubs to come back later to seek a subdivision. Once it used to be fertile it will always be fertile. Those that were marginal will remain marginal. You can seek permission from the Ministry of Agriculture through the office of Town & Country Planning to have those lands subdivided. We will look very favourably on persons who want to use their marginal lands, their infertile land for housing. The fertile ones, the ones that could be producing food in this country, we will not grant.

Mr. President, I also want to join with the representative for Christ Church West Central, Mr. Stephen Lashley in calling for the database system at the National Housing Corporation to be updated.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I hate to interrupt the Honourable Member but there is no Mr. Stephen Lashley in this Chair.

Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. Stephen Lashley, an Honourable Member in the Other Place. Sir, thank you for your guidance.

Sir, before I close, I also want to say, and I believe I will have a role to play in that as well, as I support the initiatives by this Government, to support a call for a review of the Zone One policy.

Sir, every year people make applications because we have a lot of poor people who build chattel houses in the country side, I know that Ashton Hall, in particular, is considered Zone One and lots of low-income people own properties in Zone One areas where they are not allowed to build or refurbish. Sir, there must be some engineering technology that could help to resolve the issues in Zone One.

Mr. President, with those few remarks, I wish to say to this Honourable Senate that I am very pleased and happy with the efforts made by this new Democratic Labour Party Administration, where we, in a short period of time, after coming to office in January; most of us took up responsibility on January 22, the day after the bank holiday on January 21; we were able to put our hands to the plough and can boast, although we do not like to boast, that with a great degree of certainty that we have made tremendous efforts in providing adequate solutions.

Mr. President, I want to say to Honourable Members on This Side that as much as we want to laud the efforts of the Government. I have desisted from knocking the former Administration. Let us concentrate on the things we have to do and to pray God that he would continue to bless the efforts of the Minister of Housing as we continue to provide adequate housing for our people.

Mr. President, I beg to move that this Resolution be now passed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Inniss.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Mr. President, I would like to make what I hope to be a short contribution here in support of this Resolution to support the vesting in the National Housing Corporation, a parcel of land in Six Roads, St. Philip for the purpose of housing development. Sir, you would have heard my comrade and Honourable Senator, Haynesley Benn, speak of his history and how land some 23 years ago, when I was still in school, was surveyed and how since 1980, which is almost another 20 years, under a former Government, it was considered for vesting and that was that.

Mr. President, the speaker before me said he did not want to knock, and I am not in the process of knocking either, but I am in the process of speaking about the wrong, the hurt and the damage that has been done and to let it be known clearly that it was not acceptable. Sir, in 2006, the National Housing Corporation utilised this parcel of land, 4 826 square metres, now coming for vesting here before us, in 2006 and constructed 10 homes without clear title.

Mr. President, I think it is important to speak to these matters. I have, like many other Barbadians, listened for years to what has been going on for many years in the Chambers, sometimes not quite familiar or understanding of the context and seeming to think that what is occurring in the Other Place and in this Senate is merely a passing of Resolutions; merely changing Bills to Laws or is maybe scoring points on what is supposed to be an Opposition.

Sir, I want to be clear in letting you, Sir, know that today this is not what it is about. Yes, before us, we have a Resolution before us and we have Bills, but ordinary

Barbadians need to understand that what is happening here is a matter of human interest and is a matter of human pain.

Mr. President, our Honourable Houses have more become a place of legislation and paper. I am hoping that Honourable Members on This Side, today are here to explain clearly what this present Government is doing. Sir, in this small Resolution, we are looking at a bigger issue of alleviating human pain and Mr. President, make no mistake about that, this is what I am here speaking about in the vesting of this land.

Mr. President, when I first read this Resolution, I can say clearly that I hurt and I will probably always bring in the human aspect to these discourses because it is the lack of a Government to do right by a people to help. Sir, for 15 years, it amounted to that in this simple Resolution.

Mr. President, therefore, those 10 home owners, who secured and had homes in this parcel of land, which the National Housing Corporation did not have title to, the reason being the former Administration refused and did not because of indifference, negligence or just did not care. Sir, it has to be that.

Mr. President, where persons may think I am speaking politically or where persons may think I am about knocking an Opposition, I have no time for that. I am not here in Her Majesty's Chamber to deal with the Opposition's duties. I am here speaking about a problem and speaking to my fellow Barbadians about a wrong that has been corrected and I am giving due where due is deserved. It is deserved by those Ministers in the Democratic Labour Party for this short tenure of time, who have brought this matter finally to the House and who have brought the matter to the Senate.

Mr. President, the National Housing Corporation, under a former Administration, wisdom that I, in my simple self, cannot understand, did not have clear title. What did it mean, Mr. President? I am deliberating it because many people out there do not understand and if there is no other duty, it is mine to be clear on this matter.

12:00

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: It meant that those 10 persons could not access title to their properties in Six Roads. Today, December 17, 2008, that has changed. I am very proud to be part of any Administration that gives property and rights to the 10 persons in St. Philip. Sir, this small Resolution means that a wrong can be corrected.

Sir, if you would allow me, I also want to clear up one or two other matters relating to housing and issues which are mentioned continuously by the Opposition relating to housing matters. I have to say that I am grieved.

I want those who would decide to speak on matters relating to housing in Barbados, or to criticise a Government or a Minister of Housing, who for the first time in 15 years has the ability to make changes, and is doing so, to give him kudos. It does not have to be a political slant.

Sir, in 10 months I have even lost track of the places. I can say that the Honourable Minister is always looking at a house. Whenever you speak to him he is thinking about a house. He is also trying to vest land. I am sure that not even the Honourable Minister of Finance can keep up with his wishes, but we all know the areas. I am not going to reiterate Marchfield, Workmans, Four Hill, St. Peter, Constant, St. George, and the number of houses. That has to be commended.

Sir, it commends to this point and I am bringing back the human touch. It is my duty in this Honourable Chamber because I have inherited the grief, as a person of St. Michael North East. I call them my constituents. I have heard others tell me that they are not my constituents. At 5.00 a.m. this morning when someone called me to say Senator Inniss, you heard any word yet about a house, who has been waiting for 20 years for a housing unit. I have to bring that in and Members would get tired because I can say, homes are being built, hold on.

Sir, those who are going to speak against this Government and the attempt to find land and house do not have to deal with such cases like a young lady with two children, one child with cerebral palsy, who is looking for a rental unit and cannot find one. I have the records here but I will not go through them because my list is long. I am citing homes and citing people because it is the pain that I have inherited.

Sir, Honourable Members of the Opposition would say not to bring up the past, the past has not left me because every single day I deal with the cries of Barbadians who need homes. They simply say, if you do not have a home, you cannot start a life. Probably all the Honourable Members in this great Chamber do not understand that concept. Even as I look around at my Honourable comrades, most of them have a home. Most of them may have been working towards a home for many years. I want Honourable Members in this Chamber to understand what it means. You cannot start your life because you do not have a home.

Sir, in 15 years under a former Administration not even 100 homes have been built. I would really like the Honourable Senator to be able to speak today...

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. President, I do not want to say it is grossly untrue because that would be to call the Honourable Senator a blatant liar. It clearly could not be allowed. What

I would say is, it is grossly inaccurate and it has to be within the Senator's knowledge, that it is not true that the Administration built less than 100 houses in 15 years. It is blatantly untrue. I beg your pardon, Sir. It is blatantly inaccurate and I would wish that the Honourable Senator would correct it.

I understand the passion with which she is speaking and I hope she does not believe a lot of what she is saying.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The point of order made.

SENATOR Miss P.I. INNIS: Sir, I would wish the Honourable Member to correct me with the names or identification to clear my error. I have searched long and hard to find more than 100 houses built under the former Administration in the last 15 years.

If the Honourable Member is going to say that I am grossly misled, I would in all honesty beg the Honourable Senator's indulgence to get for me, or for all the others on This Side, who obviously are misinformed, the information on the number of houses that have been built in the last 15 years under the last administration.

I have not counted 100, and I am good at Maths. I am hoping that the Honourable Senator is able to correct me. I do not know if I need to sit down before I continue, but that is my understanding. If it is over 100, if it is 150, it is still ridiculous. If it is 200 it is still ridiculous. Even if it is 500, it is still ridiculous. I have to speak with passion in these matters.

I will not let this issue of housing in Barbados go down as a paper issue. They are people who are suffering. They are people who I have to deal with every day who do not know how to make it, because they cannot get a home. That is the point that has to be laboured and that is the pounding that has to be done. Not as a matter of scoring points for a Party.

I am saying to the Opposition now, you have done wrong to Barbadians in the last 15 years, and in a few months, the Minister of Housing is showing that he is doing more than just talking, but he is prepared to go all out to help Barbadians and to secure homes. Mr. President, this is what this vesting is about today.

Sir, as Senator Benn spoke, some 25 000 applicants, some 11 000 of them - 200 of them applied for land and housing. We have heard these figures before. Sir, 18 000 persons are attempting to get rental units. Sir, I hope that if for no one else but your sake, I can dab into your mind to help those Barbadians understand these are not just numbers. Every single one of these is a brother or a sister who cannot make it.

This is what the Barbados Labour Party has to account for. They do not have to get hot in here and feud, but they have to show by some semblance of commonsense to all of us, their stewardship in the last 15 years, rather than objecting for no point.

Sir, that the National Housing Corporation has not built a house since 2002 is old history. I do not know if that needs to be objected to. Sir, I am not going into the Lower Burney issue. Maybe some other Honourable Members will. I often say that I am here with a human touch. I have been to Lower Burney. I go into those houses. The residents that I speak of did not know of any fault. They have been living in squalor. Even in the hot season if you look under the cellars of these homes there are rivers. Their homes have cracks, two and three-years -old, I have been told, unless the Honourable Senator wants to object, even going as far as legal recourse, because a former administration failed to warn them of shoddy - I do not know where to carry it.

Sir, is it total negligence on the part of a former Government? They did not care. We must bring it to this point, we must. I am not even speaking about illegalities. I am not even going there. That is the situation we are at now.

Sir, before I take my seat I need to speak and applaud the efforts of the Ministry of Housing, as it relates even to the transfer of titles to tenants. Even that has been treated with disdain. Sir, you will remember, under a former a

Administration, clearly a year ago now, tenants were allowed under the Barbados Labour Party to purchase their homes and they took out mortgages. The Democratic Labour Party took up office in January 2008, and in our spirit of kindness, empathy and of doing right, title was transferred to those tenants who did not have arrears and, of course, who have been living in the units for over 20 years.

12.10 p.m.

I have sat and listened in the Other Place to persons speaking from the Opposition benches, in essence saying that the Democratic Labour Party's caring policy should also seek to remove the mortgages or to correct the actions done under a former Administration, and then chiding us for not doing it.

Mr. President, to my mind, it seems like insanity because under the present Administration, we are saying, you own your homes. We will transfer titles, and the response from an Opposition is. Why are you not rectifying the actions that were carried out under our policy, and returning the mortgages of persons who had those

mortgages under a former Administration, Sir, we are being chided for doing it.

The whole housing issue in Barbados is one big spin around story, it seems to me. Then, the latest issues I have heard in the last few months, were that the conveyances have not been transferred. The Democratic Labour Party is under a propaganda programme. When everyone who bothers to listen and look, knows that it is only a matter. A legal recourse by some of the same lawyers in the Other Place, sitting on the Opposition benches, who are now holding up the process. I do not know if the Honourable Member wants to speak to that, but that is the position now.

Sir, we have done everything to make it work and not to respond to an Opposition. I would encourage any Member of the Democratic Labour Party here in the Senate and in the Other Place that our actions are not to respond to the whims and fashions of the Opposition, or when they say: "Move." You say: "Where?" Our actions are to respond to those Barbadians who are caring, who want to understand and who are in need of help. Mr. President, it is our duty to respond to such.

Mr. President, this is the position. Finally, this parcel of land for some reason sitting there since 2006, seemingly for no reason again, but probably for one of the three issues that I earlier spoke of, Sir, gross incompetence, total indifference, or grave negligence. Now in one fell swoop, we are able to bring this to this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. President, if I leave this land tomorrow and I go to my great maker, I could be happy and say, Thank you, Lord. At least I was a part in one single thing that took away the pain of 10 homes. Sir, that is how important it is, and this is why, when they speak of these flippant, little nonsensical issues as to who did what, and how it was done, and who is not transferring what, refusing to accept that what is happening here today, is a note of empathy and compassion. This is the way the Democratic Labour Party must function and I will speak it across the board.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that more Resolutions would come this way of such magnitude that I can give my support to, and that I can say to those Members in the Opposition: "Object. You have a noble cause but for heaven's sake, make sense because there are Barbadians out there who know the difference between not having a home and not having a place to lay their heads."

Mr. President, I thank you for your indulgence.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Newton.

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V.E. NEWTON: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise to speak on this debate. While I agree with the Resolution, I heard a previous speaker say that the Minister of Housing and Lands has nothing but houses on his mind, which is a good thing.

Mr. President, there is something that has bothered me for many years. I take this opportunity to speak in relation to it, and it has to do with lands that were purchased by owners of the Panama Estates. Sir, to my certain knowledge, these lands have been worked by certain persons, the last of the remaining estates, I believe, is Four Hill in St. Peter. I gather that those lands have been, or are to be subdivided and for sale.

Mr. President, those lands do not belong to any of the persons who are currently the proprietors. The land belongs to the beneficiaries of persons who bought those lands with the money of the persons who went to Panama and decided to invest in Barbados. I believe many of them cannot be found, but there is a procedure when these things happen for those lands to be estated to the Crown.

I would hope, Mr. President, that this is what is done, so that the State can make sure that if the lands are made available for sale that they are properly vested in the Crown, and that persons who had nothing to do with the purchase of the estates are not the ones who benefit from the sales.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Millington.

SENATOR Rev. P.A.V MILLINGTON: Thank you, Mr. President.

I want to take a different approach in discussing the housing situation in Barbados and I want to look forward. I do not really want to look back too much. I want to state that in observing the Minister of Housing in the Other Place, that his progress has been spectacular in a very short period of time. The housing units at Marchfield are really well-advanced and almost every day, we are seeing or hearing of additional housing units.

I particularly would like to compliment this Administration for the interest in high-rise units, where we are maximising the quantity of occupants per square foot, without making it too uncomfortable, because in previous discourses, it was found out that this is the way to go, because of our limited land availability.

The fact that 2 500 persons are on the waiting list at the National Housing Corporation, is really a very serious

situation. Every day, we find that market forces are driving up the price of land. A prominent landowner in St. Lucy showed me that land he bought at five cents per square foot is now selling at \$20 and \$25 per square foot.

Sir, every time you save your money and you think that next year, you would be able to afford a small lot, 5 000 square feet, you are finding that what you thought you could buy for \$20, is now costing \$30 or \$35. So it really is a major struggle. Therefore, the fact that Government is intervening in providing lots at preferential or low rates, \$5 per square foot, is going to be of great assistance to many people who will not ordinarily be able to afford housing lots.

Sir, 500 lots have been identified and that was very early in the year. I believe that they have surpassed the 500 and there are some names I want to mention that have been already mentioned. They are: Pool Land, Colleton, Parish Land, Woodbourne, Vineyard, Deacons, Rices, Mason Hall Street, even Tweedside Road.

I understand that two further blocks are soon going to be started in Country Road. I pass there almost every day. It is heartening to see the pace at which this development is taking place; especially in light of the fact that I used to see rusted steel and discoloured blocks.

Sir, I would say that the future looks very bright for housing in Barbados and if we continue at this rate, and the Minister of State or the Minister of Finance could come up with the funds, I am sure that the Minister of Housing and Lands is quite equal to the task of utilising that money for building new houses. I believe that at the end of the five years, we would have a really enviable record, as it relates to housing.

Sir, the future looks very bright for housing. I understand not only is the Government making a great attempt to house our citizens but, I know that there are private individuals as well, who want to join the bandwagon. Sir, I know a multimillionaire, who shall remain nameless, who is very keen. He told me that he just wants to do something.

12:20:17

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It is okay to build villas and condominiums, but I really want to see something being done for the lower and middle income people. I believe coming on stream sometime in the New Year, we would hear not only of Government incentives or Government moves to acquire other parcels of land but to actually start projects. We have heard of many plans... There are many different types of houses that were supposed to be built that were never built,

but this Administration is really doing something practical about it.

Projects have been started I understand. I have dates and times. French Village is to be launched on December 22. The project in Greens, St. George is being launched on Thursday this week. On Sunday coming, Constant Housing Development is to be launched as well. There are several simultaneous projects and products being launched. It is not a little spot here. It is becoming an avalanche of housing solutions.

I am very excited and very impressed with the Minister. We are not close, so I am not looking for any favours, but from my observation, he is really doing a great job.

Mr. President, I support this Resolution for this land to be vested. It augurs very well. This Government has shown already in the first year that it is a very caring Government. We do not have to go back to the bus fares.

I know that whatever this Administration can do to make life more comfortable and housing certainly is critical. I know of people who are really trying hard to get houses because some unscrupulous landlords are taking advantage of the situation and are offering them rooms that you would not put an animal to live in and are asking for maybe \$150 or \$200 a week.

Mr. President, we have to pull all of our resources to provide homes for Barbadians even if we have to cut out some other things, because housing is critical in Barbados.

Mr. President, I am happy to say that I have seen a dent being made. We cannot eliminate poverty. The Bible says we would always have the poor with us, but at least we can do our best to help. I therefore support this Resolution.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I want to begin by apologising first for my absence last week without notifying the President as I really should have. I had been off the island from before and did not know that there was a meeting of the Chamber and hence did not write which would have been the normal protocol. So, please let me indicate that there was no disrespect intended to the Chair or to the Chamber.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Chair is so happy to see you back, that the Chair could not take any concern about disrespect. Thank you very much for coming back.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Chair always provokes mischief in me but it is a pleasant

mischief in this case. Sir, I am rising late because I have been waiting on some statistics. Unfortunately, many of my papers, since my dismissal in January of this year, are still boxed and I do not have access.

I am hoping that during the course of next year, we would have a housing debate of some length because I have collected housing statistics that went back to the 1960s. I went further looking at the Moynes Commission and to the 1930s and came forward, so I have a breadth of statistics and a lot of information about housing policy over both Administrations for some considerable time and I want that we could have a debate.

I know it would be charged with some high degree of emotion but I would wish that it would also be charged with a high degree of accuracy. Mr. President, I will try today to share with the Chamber the information that I do have, which I must concede, is not my full arsenal.

Mr. President, I will speak from two perspectives. First of all, I want to respond to some of the issues raised by the Honourable Senator who led the debate for the Government as well as to look at some of the whys of Senator Inniss who I know now really cannot help herself. I had hoped that we could have a debate on broad policy because this is a new Administration and at some point I think there has to be a philosophical approach to how does one really house a nation which really is the challenge that we are discussing. How do you as a political party or how do you as a Government, develop housing policies which are sufficiently effective that they address the fundamental issue of giving shelter to a large number of the populace?

Sir, it is my observation that both Administrations over many years have tried. One could quarrel about the extent to which there has and has not been success and why. There is no country in the world, not even communist countries in which every single individual lives in a house which they own, so that the attempt to house every last person is laudable.

In fact, I note that the Administration relaunched the HEART Project. The acronym for Housing Everyone, An Affordable Realistic Target, so that you move from the notion of having a car parked at every house, which I think was a sort of red herring, a kind of argument, to looking at the fundamental underpinning philosophical approach that both Administrations have attempted.

The acronym being used by this Democratic Labour Party is HELP, Housing Every Last Person. The former acronym was HEART, Housing Everyone, An Affordable Realistic Target. There is HEART and HELP and at the core of them is housing every last person, housing everyone.

Mr. President, there has been underpinning the approach to housing by both Administrations this notion that every single Barbadian whom we can house we will house. We will look for all kinds of mechanisms to house those individuals in a way that is sustainable in the context of a developing country.

I apologise, Sir. I returned from the United Kingdom with a problem. Whenever I travel during winter, I become unwell. I will therefore sip from the water that has been brought to me by some very kind hands.

Mr. PRESIDENT: We are here to help.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, let me start then to answer the question: What was done between 1994 and 2007. In 1994, when the Barbados Labour Party came to office, we had to confront the problem that we were taking over from a cash-strapped Administration. You had housing projects like Cane Garden, which were really shells. Several other developments like that where there have been a concept that there would be a development but the housing had never been put up and so we started first of all to complete some of the work.

12.30 p.m.

Mr. President, the Honourable Senator Inniss spoke about despair and pain. Sir, people who had to watch that steel remaining there in the ground for years, with nothing happening at developments like Cane Garden, were people who were encountering genuine and acute despair. The first thing we had to do was to address that. There were a number of developments, at Husbands Garden, Cane Garden, among others, where that problem was immediately addressed.

Mr. President, beyond that, what did we do over the course of the last few years? There were a number of deliberate initiatives which were developed. The Housing Credit Fund was significantly capitalised - and this is where as I indicated I am missing my data, so I cannot give specific figures - so that a lot of conversion could have been done from wood to wall. Repairs of low-income houses could have been carried out, and so. That was a major initiative.

Sir, in fact, the Housing Credit Fund then came to be administered. It grew so substantially that it then was subsequently administered by the Central Bank of Barbados and sold under their umbrella. When one looked at the statistics, that showed a major index of growth from the people who were able to access that Fund.

Sir, the whole notion of the Housing Credit Fund was that it was specifically targeted at the core and at those

persons who were in the low-income earning percentile in the country. That Fund was used, not only to build but to effect repairs, to refurbish and to transform the conditions under which people were living.

Mr. President, a significant safety net was also established through the development of the Rural Development Commission, the Urban Development Commission, and the Poverty Alleviation Bureau. These became significant instruments through which poor people were helped. Sir, it was not an accident, therefore, that in the last Human Development Index, the United Nations specifically identified Barbados as the country in which the most had been done to alleviate poverty conditions, particularly in relation to housing.

Sir, both the Rural Development Commission and the Urban Development Commission were the mechanisms through which large numbers of persons who were living without waterborne facilities in their homes, people whose houses were in a state of disrepair, were allowed to access funding, resources and programmes within these institutions, to be able to upgrade their living and housing circumstances.

Those programmes reached thousands of persons. In fact, it is a matter of great concern, however, that the vote of the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission, under this present Administration, has been significantly cut, given the fact that they are tools for poverty alleviation and tools for the construction and facilitation of low-income housing in Barbados.

Mr. President, another mechanism through which housing was facilitated in Barbados was through the Barbados Mortgage Finance.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss. P.I. INNISS: On a point of order. Mr. President, this is the second time in this Honourable Chamber that the Honourable Senator has spoken to me in such terms. The Honourable Senator has just said she is going to build a sty for me. Sir, that is imputing improper motive and I would ask you to ask her to withdraw it. I would further ask you to ask the Honourable Senator to refrain from saying such things in my presence.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, on a point of order. I believe that the Honourable Senator should be made to withdraw those remarks.

SENATOR Miss. P. INNISS: Mr. President, on a point of order. What is your ruling? The Honourable

Senator has just said she is soon going to build a sty for me. I do not know about human beings living in a sty, a habitat for pigs.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I did not hear the “sty” part.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, am I being invited either to withdraw or to rephrase? Mr. President, I will withdraw, only in the spirit of Christmas and charity. I will withdraw.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Senator is better schooled in the behaviour patterns of this Honourable Chamber for me to accept that comment. The Honourable Senator knows absolutely that is not going to bypass me. Please.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I withdraw the statement but the fact remains, as we saw happening earlier today.

SENATOR Miss. P. INNISS: Mr. President, on a point of order. I would like to know what fact remains.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I said we saw it in here but that I would not do it.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would like to appeal to all Honourable Senators. We have a tradition in this Honourable Senate of a very high level of debate. There is no reason we should ever descend from that standard which has been established in this Honourable Senate. I wish to appeal to Honourable Senators to help me in this matter. I am not going to treat Honourable Senators as though they were children but I do have the capacity to do so. Therefore, when called upon to do so, I shall do so. I ask Honourable Senators to help me, it is Christmas time.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I am always happy to help you but Sir, Senator Inniss is particularly provocative because the Honourable Senator is the only Member on that side who constantly heckles and makes offensive remarks sotta voce. Therefore, the Honourable Senator challenges one to respond to her and if the Honourable Senator does not want people to interfere with her, then the Honourable Senator must not interfere with others.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Member, I hate to interrupt you but you are putting me in a very difficult position because the President does not hear the sotta voce remarks to which you have just referred. If the Honourable Senator would help me by being a little more explicit, it would be useful for the Chamber.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I understand therefore that you are saying if I deal with her sotta voce that you have no difficulty with that. Sir, that is no problem, but the comments will not be liked when I have to make them. Let me say that.

Mr. President, I have spoken about the Housing Credit Fund. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Company which was, at the time a Government agency, a very important institution in housing development in Barbados between 1994 and 2007.

In fact, the first thing that we did was to reduce the income rate for persons borrowing from the Barbados Mortgage Finance, particularly in relation to first-time homeowners, since that is the cohort for whom the Barbados Mortgage Finance targets. That facility extended by the Barbados Mortgage Finance of a low interest rate, allowed larger loans and more flexibility within their loan system.

It also permitted larger numbers of people to access low-income housing or to access funding for low income housing. In fact, what happened was that their numbers swelled significantly. I think the figures I have here, and I am reading from a note that was given to me, in 1993, I think the figure of the loan stood at \$2,925 and by 2007, it had risen to \$4 318.

12.40 p.m.

I think that is under the Barbados Mortgage Finance but I am speaking from a note that was passed to me. It is not my own data and I would not want to say that it is absolutely accurate. The data I have is unassailable and, Sir, as I indicated during the course of next year.

Mr. President, with the extension of the Barbados Mortgage Finance what happened was that their rules were relaxed and this allowed a large number of first-time homeowners to access financing for first-time home. I regret that I do not have the statistics but, hopefully, before I get off my feet, I would be able to pass them.

Mr. President, at the beginning, I apologised for being absent from the country but had I been here, I would have known and would have been able to dig my stuff out so, Sir, I apologise. I have spoken about the Housing Credit Fund, Barbados Mortgage Finance, the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission. Sir, the other facility put in place that acted as a major catalyst to home ownership in Barbados between 1994 and 2007 was the institution of the 100 per cent mortgage facility, which was done through the Barbados Mortgage Finance, which as I indicated, was owned by the Government.

Mr. President, prior to this, in order to own a home in Barbados, you either had to have a 10 per cent, 15 per cent or a 20 per cent deposit as well as all of the other financing costs for the loan because the financing costs on a loan are significant. What the 100 per cent facility did was to put in place a mechanism where anybody, who was working was able to get a 100 per cent loan to build a house.

Mr. President, this meant that persons whose disposable income was small; people who were low-income earners; poor people in Barbados, who had the dream of owning a home but because they did not have a lot of disposable income left over at the end of the week or at the end of the month, would have found it very difficult to accumulate savings of 15 per cent or 20 per cent of the purchase price of a property even if it was \$75 000 or \$100 000 and then accumulate all the financing charges were immediately able to access home ownership through the 100 per cent mortgage facility.

This subsequently, because of the degree of competition in the market was further embraced by the private sector lending agencies thereby facilitating a tremendous growth of mortgage loans to all income levels but particularly in that sector of the market. That cohort of the market who would have found it most difficult to access housing.

Mr. President, there was also put in place a mechanism where persons living in urban tenancies and, Sir, there are a large number of those. I know, Mr. President, in a former life, you have been the Member of Parliament for a St. Michael constituency and you well know that St. Michael is a patchwork of urban tenancies.

The policy was that persons who lived in urban tenancies, through the work of the Minister of Housing Planning Unit and Urban Development Commission were able to access lots in those areas, or the lots on which they had been living for some considerable time but which the land owners were not intending to sell over to them because of the legislative and policy instruments that were in place. These persons were able to access those lots at \$2.50 a square foot. I think that some 5 000 people benefitted from that tool alone and, Sir, that is only one of the instruments of which I have spoken today.

Mr. President, during the course of his comments, the Honourable Minister, Senator Benn, mentioned the Primary Homes Low Income Programme and I would like to suggest something to the Chamber, and again, Sir, I am attempting to give some history. I would like us to consider as a country, not as a political Party, and not necessarily as this Chamber alone, why the Primary Homes Programme was set up and to say that it is, therefore, wrong, given the concept to speak of Primary Homes low-income houses.

Mr. President, at the time, I felt very strongly that we should not classify a home as a low-income home because it almost stigmatises an individual. I felt strongly that a person who aspires to home ownership builds the house they can afford. It may not be a \$350 000 or \$500 000 or a \$1 million house but it is the house that they can afford within their means. Sir, a man's home is his castle and we should not call it a low-income house. Sir, the whole concept of the Primary Homes was for us to change the language of how we approach people and seek to find housing solutions for them.

Mr. President, since we understood the concept of primary health care, secondary health care and tertiary health care; since we understood the concept of primary, secondary and tertiary education by putting in place a housing programme and calling it a Primary Home Programme, it was to get away from the very notion of stigmatising people, or using a classification that we had built for you a low-income house.

Your Primary home was supposed to be the home for the person at the wrung of the ladder, making their first foray into the housing market, when they were earning a base income. Mr. President, we can determine, if we want to adopt and embrace that language, as a country, or whether we want to continue talking about low-income houses.

Therefore, Mr. President, it would please me, certainly from a sociological perspective, if one could identify that first initial step in housing as primary homes rather than low-income homes. Sir, nobody builds a low-income house. A person builds a house that they can afford, which in time, may not externally or internally be appointed like other homes, where people have different kinds of resources. I am just indicating what the history was and what was the concept.

Mr. President, the idea behind the Primary Homes Programme was that you classify houses by the size of the house and they were to be first homes, some were to be of wood and some were to be of wall. There were homes of three types, one bedroom, two bedrooms and three bedrooms and you could get them either in wood or wall.

The price of the lots, under the Primary Homes Programme was capped so that it did not go beyond a certain amount which meant that when the purchaser was approaching the marketplace or approaching the National Housing Corporation, there was a high degree of predictability in what they would have to spend. The price of a lot was capped at a maximum of \$21 000 and the price used at the time was \$5 per square foot.

Mr. President, then the price of the house was also fixed, whether it was a one-bedroom; a two-bedroom or

three-bedroom. There were various builders in the programme and, therefore, some offered a little bigger one-bedroom or a little bigger two-bedroom and somebody built one that had bay windows, which had a higher cost but the point was that it was like going to the supermarket and picking out an item that had a price tag on it.

12:50

You know that if you chose the model with no bay windows it would cost you X dollars and if you chose the model with bay windows would cost Y dollars.

Sir, the other thing which we did in the Primary Home Programme, at the time of the making of the application to Town and Country Planning Department, the builder through the National Housing Corporation would put in an application for a three-bedroom house, even if you were building a one or a two-bedroom house.

The benefit of doing that was that later on the house owners sought to expand their homes, and invariably they do. If you go to places like Oxnard Crescent, St. James, in the constituency of St. James South, you would see that was a development where some very basic houses were built. Now these houses have been expanded and developed, people do that. Once you give them that first hand up, that first leg up, that first opportunity, then they take it and run with it and go on to expand for themselves. When the applications were submitted, they were submitted for three-bedroom houses so that the householder, when they sought to do their construction later on, could at any time continue the development or the expansion of the house, without having to go back to Town and Country Planning Department to make a further application.

Mr. President, where are the primary homes? There are primary homes at Mount Poyer, St. Lucy, Westbury Road and Culloden Road. There are about five locations in which primary homes were built in less than two years when I was Minister. I do not have, and I began by saying that I did not know we were doing this today and I do not have my housing statistics, but some time in the future I will have all my housing statistics and will be able to give chapter and verse on the numbers.

Sir, I turn to the whole concept of a land bank. When we came to Government in 1994, the housing programme was significantly constrained by the fact that there were ...Sir, I believe that you really are not allowed cell phones in here. Sir, I am just saying that Honourable Senators cannot know when one person is breaching the Rules. The Rules do not allow for cell phones to be used during a debate, or to be brought into this Chamber to be used. Sir, it is not allowed.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: I really feel that Honourable Members on the Other Side need to restrain the Honourable Senator, sometimes, and do not always allow her to carry on with foolishness.

Sir, the whole issue of a land bank, when we came to office in 1994, we were significantly constrained by the fact that there really were no large tracts of land either with services, or infrastructure available to Government within the ownership and vested that you could run with a housing programme immediately. Therefore, the concept was, that a land bank would be developed out of which you could build continuously.

From 1994 to 2007, there was a continuous construction programme of houses all over Barbados through the National Housing Corporation, that numbered into the thousands. The land bank was used by Government, when I say by the National Housing Corporation directly. It was used by private contractors contracted to build for the National Housing Corporation. They did not themselves have access to the land. It remained under the ownership of the National Housing Corporation and of the Government and people of Barbados, but they built houses there for Barbadians as agents of the National Housing Corporation.

The land bank in Barbados, I believe, added a good 3 500 to the housing stock in Barbados, out of the National Housing Corporation. I am going to get some of that later on. Then there was a massive transfer of tenantry land in urban and rural Barbados.

Sir, when we came to Government- I do not have, but I can source the statistics from the Central Bank Reports and I did so. The statistics represent people. When we came to Government in 1994, the mortgage market, the number of people who had borrowed money accumulatively for lower, middle and upper-middle income housing, over all the years stood at \$24 million. In 2007, that figure stood at \$1 192.7 billion. That figure represents Barbadians who had access to the Barbados Mortgage Finance, the commercial banks in Bridgetown, the 100 per cent mortgage facility and other mechanisms put in place by this Administration to ensure that Barbadians got housing. Apart from building single units, a number of terraced units for rental as well as for sale, were also constructed at various locations in Barbados.

Sir, if one wishes to ignore the statistics, one can say whatever one wishes, but the reality is when one goes to the Central Bank Report, the Central Bank Report shows that growth in the mortgage market. The mortgage market can only grow when people are accessing money to buy homes and to build homes.

When one looks at the statistics, one sees that the majority of houses were built in the primary homes market, the middle income market and the upper middle income market as opposed to the upper income market. The mortgage burden is not carried by that cohort of the marketplace, who are building the million dollar houses. It was a number of ordinary Barbadians, like the persons in this Chamber, some of whom acquired houses during that period and whose loans are among those that grew from \$21 million to \$1 192 billion. That is a phenomenal growth anywhere in the world by any consideration. One cannot ignore that figure, no matter if one wants to say that 100 houses were built. A hundred houses do not equal \$1.192 billion. You can make up any sort of bogus statistics and sell it to the feeble-minded, but when one comes up against serious Central Bank's statistics, then one has to bring serious responses.

Sir, I turn then, since it was also raised, to the matter of the rental units from the National Housing Corporation. Before I go on, let me say, I sent for some information. I want to indicate to this Chamber some of the locations, I do not have all, because it is a total myth that our housing programme was slow, indifferent, insensitive, et cetera. These are some of the locations at which tens of thousands of houses were built in Barbados, Lower Burney, Church Village, Constant, Blackmans, Mount Brevitor and Six Roads.

13.00 p.m.

1.00 p.m.

Ellerton, Rices - in the back of St. George by the radio station, I cannot remember - Lancaster 1 and 2, Drax Hall, Arch Hall, Hoytes, Mount Poyer, Early Heights, Marchfield, Culloden Road, French Village, Bagatelle, Bakers, Bennetts, Bartletts, Battaleys, Six Roads, St. Ann's, Forde's Road, Work Hall, Fairy Valley, Leadvale, Deans Town 1 and 2, Husbands, Coverley, Grazettes, Old Deans Town, Ellerton, Cane Garden, Hoytes, West Terrace, Pine, Wildey and London Bourne Towers.

Among these, I have listed some rentals and some purchases but that is a whole slew, and those are ones that I just sat down and pulled, Sir, using my recollection of some of the locations at which houses had gone up.

I also had a list that we had just done the acquisitions and started work on a further, 2 111 lots at the following locations: Apes Hill, Bagatelle, Bakers, Bennetts, Bartlett's, Battaleys, Bayville, Bellaire, St. George and Richmond; I do not know the difference, Belfield Land, Bissex, Bonnetts, Bournes Land, Bready's Land, Checker Hall, Church Street, Church Village, Clapham, Clevedale, Clifton Hall, Clinketts, Colleton, Constant, Crane, Deacons Court and Dr. Hamlet's.

I believe in his opening remarks that Senator Benn spoke about Tweedside Road, I believe that is Dr. Hamlet's. He spoke about Deacon's Court.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, you did say that you are not familiar with St. Michael but Dr. Hamlet is not in Tweedside Road.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I beg your pardon. I apologise.

The land at Tweedside was formerly owned by a doctor, who had a substantial property and that is what is being used for the units.

Eden Lodge, Emmerton, Farmers, Fields, Free Hill, Gall Hill, Gemswick, Gibbons, Golden Mile, Grazettes, et cetera. Sir, it is a list of 2 100 lots, where the acquisitions were ongoing. In fact, these are some of the lots that the Democratic Labour Party is now using. You could only have access to lands, if there are still deposits in the land bank to draw from, and that is how the system of the land bank is used.

The Government acquired, put into the land bank, finished the process, started the earth works and the infrastructural development, and built and went on. Therefore, all of the developments that I called this morning, where work was completed, all of those came out of the land bank.

Then, other parcels were deposited into the land bank for further growth. In fact, that is why the Democratic Labour Party was able to come and start building houses because there was land in the land bank that could be used.

In addition, there were also houses that were underway at places like Rices and Ellerton, where I had broken ground. Sir, when they talk of 500 houses that they are now completing, the majority of these houses were started by the Barbados Labour Party, some of which I broke the ground.

Asides.

Senator Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I will continue, sir.

I hope that has helped to dispel the myth and for those who are amenable to reason, and not hard headed, to see that we have moved well beyond 100 houses and that there was, in fact, some vigour to the housing programme. I know they are those, who are like stony ground, the seed falls and there is no fertilisation. That, I fully expect.

Mr. President, there was also a programme to transfer title to a number of persons of the situation we saw

this morning. I just want to spend a few minutes speaking to that, Sir. Sometimes, I hear Members of the Other Side speak, some in innocence and some otherwise. Sir, with the best will in the world, there is no perfection in a bureaucracy and every Minister serves in a bureaucracy.

There are thousands of files and situations within Ministries, some of which you will only hear about, when they come to crisis. When the file is brought to you by the bureaucracy, the civil servants or when, in fact, you go somewhere and somebody on the street pulls you aside and says: "Minister, you know that so and so." The reality is, that you may very well not have known.

Mr. President, it may be something happening within your Government or within your very Ministry. It is not possible, in Ministries, as large as Housing and Health, where you have 5 000 employees working for you to control, know or understand what everybody has done, what every file is saying at every time, so it is entirely possible that, like two years ago, houses would have gone up without the process being perfected for the vesting.

Mr. President, let me say to you that was not new. That is something that has happened across both Administrations in Barbados. Would you like to see it not happen? Of course, because in a perfect world, you would not want to do it that way, but it sometimes happens, when in fact you are rushing to deliver.

In fact, let me make the point that right now, this Administration is rushing to deliver houses within housing areas, and have written to people to say that you will be able to own your lot or your unit. Sir, let me say that you are not aware that some of the letters have gone to people in areas where the land is not vested in the National Housing Corporation. Therefore, you have already committed the same offence of which you are complaining today and talking about malice, indifference and people not caring. It happens in the best regulated of Government systems.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, there are a number of other things. The Government also inherited a Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme for urban Barbados. The negotiation process on that went through, I think, three different housing Ministers because the conditionalities that the IDC was trying to impose initially were so onerous that it took a tremendous amount of time negotiating it, in order to ensure that we got the kind of programme, which would have fulfilled the dreams and demands of a number of people.

Therefore, in the City, all at Cat's Castle and Mason Hall Street, and all the areas in St. Michael East were

identified under the Neighbourhood Upgrade Programme to facilitate a full upgrading of areas in the City and in urban St. Michael. Sir, I think that was a programme of US\$70 million that we negotiated and that would add because under part of the programme, is a significant construction of houses, as well as an upgrade of existing programmes in urban Barbados.

Sir, another programme was under development. In fact, I had started it and we were working on it. Part of the difficulty that we were having, was to look at the number of vacant lots and derelict houses across St. Michael to establish a programme, where you would work with the owners.

13:10:12

There are a lot of people in St. Michael. It is a programme which I would urge the Government to consider. If you walk across St. Michael, as I know Senator Reverend Millington does, you would know that there are large parcels of land that are vacant even though St. Michael is really very populated.

Mr. President, you would also know that there are a lot of derelict houses all over St. Michael. In many instances it is part of the social history. There were people who lived in Bank Hall, Bush Hall and surrounding areas who many years ago were relatively well off but who over time some families have gone into genteel poverty. Others have migrated and have never returned to Barbados and so on. A lot of persons either do not have the interest or the resources to redevelop those houses. Some are caught up in estates that have been disputed over many years with members of families fighting over properties and so on.

Mr. President, we started negotiations with a lot of these property owners to bring those properties back into useful use so that the property owners themselves could either benefit from it from their own occupation, paying back Government at a concessionary rate over time, or they could put them into a rental and sales pool and benefit from the income from either the sale or the rental with us having worked out between Government and the individual, a mechanism for repayment.

Mr. President, I have given some of the statistics available to me today. Sir, the last thing I want to speak on is the issue of the purchase of the National Housing Corporation terraced units. I must join with other colleagues from the Other Place in making two points.

The first is that unless there is expediting of the process of transfer of title to these individuals, then, in fact, all we are seeing is a cosmetic and public relations exercise by the current Administration.

Several persons who live in terraced units have come to me and asked me to represent them in the matter of the transfer of titles. Since this programme has been announced, I have not received a single conveyance for a single one of my tenants and that is true of a majority of people. There has been a lot of window dressing with the Minister personally rushing up to be photographed for handing over one or two conveyances, but the reality is that the thousands of people who received letters have not received their conveyances.

Mr. President, some of those units are not in a position to be transferred because all of the surveying processes are not completed because the Town and Country Planning Department is quarreling about the illegal construction in a lot of the housing areas and the additions to many of the units.

As people sought to expand and make room for growing families, they added on. Some people have built over wells and drains and critical electrical and other installations. That is an issue that needs to be resolved. In some instances the housing areas themselves are not vested properly in the National Housing Corporation, so that there cannot be a transfer of these things. Although they have given people letters you do not own land or houses in Barbados...

SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: On a point of order. I think the Honourable Member is misleading the House when she carries on in this manner because we can see that vesting of lands has already been done at Bonnetts and Lammings. Therefore, it is clear that the process is underway, therefore it cannot be said then that it is not being done if it is already underway, rather that it is being done over a period of time.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: One cannot own property in Barbados with a letter the law does not allow that. Ownership does not pass until the conveyancing is completed and title deeds are in people's hands. That cannot be done until all of the technical processes are completed. I am saying that in a majority of cases people have received no conveyances.

SENATOR D. K. A. GRIFFITH: On a point of order. I specifically said that the conveyances had been conferred at Bonnetts and Lammings, and it is the beginning of the process.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Bonnetts and Lammings are less than 10 per cent of all the units to be conveyed, so to say that it was done at Bonnetts and Lammings does not say... Perhaps, the Government started before it was really ready because it was so busy embarking on this public relations exercise.

Finally, I think it is very important that those persons who may have paid a deposit or who paid the full purchase price but to whom title has not yet passed - but even under the previous Administration, I would have to be talking about that because they would not be paying now. They would be getting them without charge - be refunded that money, because in essence, if the Government is as caring as it likes to suggest it is, then it has changed policy. It is not the fault of the individual who has paid their money that the conveyancing process was not completed and they do not have title. They therefore should not be penalised or punished for having paid.

If the Government is as caring as it says it is, those persons who have not yet received their conveyances or full transfer of title should be fully refunded any monies they have paid. It is not millions of dollars we are talking about, it is not \$1 million.

Sir, by and large the people who would be living in the housing units are not rich persons and therefore they deserve to have their monies back. Some of them would have sought loans. Some of them may have had savings. Therefore, I would urge the Government to review its policy and return the monies to those individuals because it is not their fault that the process was not completed.

Mr. President, it is open to me to continue and there are in fact other points that I would wish to make because I have responded to the issues raised, but I do want to speak to housing in a broader context and a broader philosophical context. I think also another Senator is indicating they might want to speak so perhaps you may wish to break at this time so that we can resume or would you wish me to continue.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Senator has another eight minutes.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: You want to say five, I said eight, it is eight. The Honourable Senator has eight minutes to conclude.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, if I were not in This Place I would use the language, you too sweet, occasionally.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I beg your pardon.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: You are not supposed to hear. I thank Your Honour for the eight minutes.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am not going to get involved with any tête-à-tête with you inside or outside of the Chamber.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Or any matter of sweetness.

Mr. PRESIDENT: ... on any matter of sweetness. I will deal with matters in which I am versed.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I trust that I have responded to some of the issues raised to the satisfaction of those who want to and are able to reason. Sir, the broader issue is not really what the Barbados Labour Party did or whether the present Minister of Housing and Lands is more enthusiastic than anybody who preceded him in the last 100 years. What is important here is to look at a broad... Eight minutes is not a lot of time, but I will just try to sketch what my thinking is.

1.20 p.m.

Mr. President, I share Senator Benn's view that there has to be a re-look at the Zone One policy. In fact, about 18 months ago, the then Prime Minister had mandated the Town Planning Department, the Ministry of Public Works, because the Drainage Unit and the Barbados Water Authority are located there, to look at the matter of Zone One system. There had been a review that was started some time between 1992 and 1993, and completed around 1995. That review took large parcels of Zone One lands out of Zone One listing at St. Peter, St. James, St. Lucy, et cetera.

Sir, the Zone One policy does effect a hardship. Mr. President, the question, therefore is, how do you bring land into housing while, at the same time, protecting your water reserves, to ensure that you do not compromise the quality of potable water in Barbados? We might have to look at what are the most expensive and best technologies available but, at the same time, it is something with which we have to tread cautiously.

Mr. President, there had also been a consultancy which involved persons from overseas. Sir, sometimes when Members come in, the civil servants in charge do not tell us the full slew of resource information that is there, but a study was done which tracked the movement of waters in the Zone One area into the Belle and other areas. That study was done to determine the migration patterns. To determine the time it took for water to move, what would be the level of filtration and purification it went through and so on. These are things that do warrant consideration.

Mr. President, how do we deal with housing in a developed country? It may be that we would have to build up, which will move away from the traditional

single/detached dwelling which Barbadians have preferred. What percentage of the population can you house? Let me say this. We took large numbers of people off the waiting list, but with the measures we have put in place, which catalysed a demand for housing, an unprecedented demand for housing developed in Barbados. Further, with the unemployment rate moving from almost 30 per cent to 7 per cent, there were large numbers of persons who had money and wanted housing. Therefore, the list grew.

Mr. President, I can assure Senator Benn that under this Democratic Labour Party Administration that list is going to diminish because of the fact that there are so many people who would be out of work that they cannot afford to buy houses now.

People are scrambling for basic survival. Therefore, the issue of housing is not going to be a major challenge to this Government but insofar as there is a waiting list, then I think it is commendable that they have to address it, but the better the economy does, the higher the demand for housing is going to be.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Honourable Senator, you have two minutes more.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, what would it take to house the country at various levels? The National Housing Corporation cannot build for everybody. What has to be found is a way of getting the private sector to build for the Primary Homes cohort. Sir, that is part of the challenge. The profits to be engendered from building houses are more substantial in the middle and upper middle income market and therefore very few builders want to build in the Primary Homes market. Even when we developed the Primary Homes Programme, we found that the profits were not significant enough for those builders. Therefore, the question remains, what kind of policies are evolved that will cause housing to go forward? How do you develop a policy that is sufficiently aggressive and effective to house a country at every tier of the cohort who wantS or who have an interest in housing?

Sir, you will find that it is not a simple matter. You will also find that in terms of the promise that you gave, that promise of 2 000 lots, 2 500 houses a year, you are already far behind on your first year of your own programme.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended until 2.30 p.m.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.30 p.m. was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.30 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Honourable Senate is now resumed. Senator Griffith.

SENATOR D.K.A. GRIFFITH: Mr. President, I take this opportunity to rise and speak on the Resolution before us for this vesting of land. I feel that it is necessary for some context to be added to this debate at this juncture because the previous speaker would have addressed a number of issues which are of grave concern to me, specifically beginning with the Primary Homes Programme.

Sir, when we look at these 10 houses that we are trying to vest this land to ensure that these home owners can now rightfully hold title to their homes, it is an important concept in how this Government will treat people going forward. It is necessary for us to lay the foundation for the humane and caring treatment of people.

Mr. President, I have heard of HEART, HELP and several different things. Sir, the point is not in the name but in the treatment of people. Sir, to date I can say that my concern with the housing programme over almost 15 years of the Barbados Labour Party Administration is that it has not connected with the people of Barbados. This is why, whenever we step out into the public, you will hear the concerns. You will hear people asking when we are going to resolve the situation with housing.

Sir, we are in a position where we can say to them that we have done much work already and I am sure it has been acknowledged many times. We have matched and surpassed our Manifesto's promise of having 500 house spots for new home owners. Sir, that must be greatly acknowledged because, to date, we are just shy of 11 months into the term of this Government and we have already started to materialise tangibles for the people of Barbados so that they say what is the difference. Sir, that is what has not been acknowledged to date.

Mr. President, when we speak of the housing programme over the last 15 years, prior to this Administration, it must be said that lots of promises were made but the tangibles were never materialised. We have heard that Primary Homes were this place and that place but the people of Barbados have not had access to them on any scale and Sir, we have been told to speak about the scale.

Mr. President, when you see the drastic difference that the current Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Philip North, in the Other Place, has done, I must say that he is one Minister that I admire and that I must look towards because he goes after his job with a passion and a zeal that is to be commended. He is in the business of helping people. Sir, that is what we need to see more of.

Mr. President, had the previous housing policy done more of that, then we would be in a better place. It is not a matter of how much land is in the land bank.

14:40

It is not a matter of theorising. I sat here today and heard pronounced a lecture on the theory of housing and developing and a developed nation. Yet I cannot see the substance coming from that theory. It is my concern that we do not have the substance to back it up.

The Primary Homes Programme is vital. Whether we call it primary or whether we call it low income, we shall not get into the semantics. The point is, we need to be in the business of connecting people, who do not have the greatest incomes with adequate quality housing. It is crucial for us to be moving from developing to developed, because if your people cannot find and access the appropriate quality housing, there is no consideration for development. You must connect your people with adequate quality housing.

Sir, if you look at the same 10 houses in St. Philip, I am sure that the Leader of Government Business indicated, that in the last 15 years this is the only major development in St. Philip. Yet we can see that it was done haphazardly. There was no care and attention to ensure that the land was vested in the National Housing Corporation, and for them to complete the conveyances for the owners of that land, or for the people who aspired to owning the land.

Sir, we see a number of failed projects as a whole over that 15-year period, in terms of the project at Country Road. Several projects, including the one at Kensington Lodge, where much remedial work had to be done and is being done to get these properties up to scratch. We ask, again, where is the sentiment that says, housing must be about people first.

I continue to be amazed that there is any discussion on the fact that housing has not been up to scratch over the last 15 years. If there is one thing that has caused consistent outcry, was the quality and access to housing, whether it was houses being built too small, or whether there were no houses available at all. We were told that a number of these housing lots provided this year were already being worked on by the last Administration. Yet, it took them 14 years to

get to the point where they could work on these housing lots, or is it a fact that the work was not being expedited?

We all know that there are certain steps in the process of conveying land. Surveys must be done, information communicated and the legal processes gone through, to ensure that you are in the right to convey land. Yet we can look at certain situations and see that it has been expedited with a clear focus and by implementing a management drive.

I think this is the distinction that should have been made. The quality of management has shifted under the current focus to a management that understands the needs of people, understands that you must keep within legal bounds, while making alterations and considerations to ensure that these housing solutions continue to reach the market in a timely manner.

Again, I praise the Minister of Housing, because over the last 11 months we have seen a slow but steady stream of housing options entering the market. It has not been one vast dumping to affect the market negatively, but we have seen every month - I am pleased to see some new solutions being offered, some recommendation of where people can look to developing themselves.

I believe the figure of 11 000 people waiting for house spots was used earlier in the debate. I see the Minister surpassed the 500 housing spots he said would be made available, or that were promised in the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto, earlier this year. This is important because even with that promise, it would take us approximately 10 years to clear that backlog, if we continue to go at the 500 a year rate. There needs to be real solutions coming into the market. Therefore, it is important that the Minister is surpassing expectations, to ensure that we decrease the number of persons on the waiting list.

We have to ensure that people are not waiting now for 20 years. It is of much amusement that the initial Cabinet Paper regarding this parcel of land was done in 1980, three years before I was born. For the development to take this long to come to fruition is an indictment of a very bad nature on the process that we have gone through. Again, I harp on the expediency of trying to make sure that these properties come to market.

I also need to speak to the quality of properties. One of my fellow Senators took great lengths to explain and speak towards the developments that were done under the last Administration. Sir, Buckeley Meadows was one example that comes to mind. It is probably the best example we have of poor organisation, poor workmanship and a failure to look after the interest of the persons who are supposed to be serving.

Sir, Buckeley Meadows was a public sector/private sector venture that has not yet been able to benefit the working people of this country, in the manner it was intended. It was supposed to be one of the new methods that we undertook to ensure that quality housing was being developed for middle and working-class persons in this country.

We can see today that they are not reaping the benefit. Far from, they now have to go back to do remedial work to try and make these plots usable. It is a very concerning thing that far from lightening the burden of people gaining access to housing in this country, something entered into by a previous Administration was actually adding to their struggles? Adding to their grief and preventing them from developing. To my mind, this is what we most have to consider.

Sir, moving from this issue, there is one particularly, that has burned and inflamed my passions, that is in relation to the transfer of title of the National Housing Corporation units. In this Chamber we have heard how it is a pipe dream, nothing is tangible with a letter and what is the Government really going to do.

I think it is necessary to remind the Honourable Senators in this Chamber, that the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party in 2003, indicated by the next Election that they would have put in considerable time in making those transfers at a premium, but they would have done the work. They took money from people and now every time we recap on housing in this Chamber, we are hearing that we should be giving the money back, and this person did not do it under this.

Sir, the point that is necessary to be made in this context is, we have begun to get those people the houses. I do not think that any one of those persons would say, "I want to get back my money and not get the house." They wanted to get their house in this ten-month period

14.50 p.m.

Further, the fact is that the letters have been distributed. Mr. President, I would have to take your guidance here. I am not a lawyer but we can speak to legitimate expectation.

Mr. President, that legal term speaks to the fact that by giving these people letters, this Administration has made a commitment to convey those properties to them. I can say that I believe in the good work of this Administration. It has started its work.

Mr. President, we are not talking about the theory of housing Barbadians. We are doing it in practice. The Members on the Other Side need to get to that point

because some people in this country have been entitled and have been given and some people are without. Therefore, it is our duty to represent those who are without first and foremost. To make sure that there are no hard feelings, and to make sure that we feel as if we are incorporating the general population into the work of Government. This is what we are here about, to make sure that they are secure and stable so that this country has a platform on which to develop.

Mr. President, I will end my submission simply by saying that we should not lose focus. We have kept it with regard to housing quite steadfastly over the last 10 months and we have a great way to go. At the end of the first tenure of this Administration, the housing situation in this country must and will be significantly improved from what we found. There are no bones to be made about that, because the situation we inherited was in great disarray and we have set about putting order to it.

Mr. President, it is not the fanciful fairy tale that we have been told and people keep trying to pass off on us. Fairy tales are for children and we have seen the reality. There is a reason that every time we step on the precincts of this compound people stop us and ask: "How can I get a house? I am living in the most deplorable conditions. And how am I going to make a better situation for my children. How are they going to study and do their 11-Plus and their CXC's and study for university to make themselves better, when they are living in a house where they fall through the floor boards if they step too hard?"

I heard earlier it was spoken of how so much development was done in this country, as far as installing waterborne facilities, yet the City of Bridgetown, the capital of this country, has high numbers of homes with pit toilet facilities, no waterborne facilities. It is worrisome in this day and age that this still exists. If all of this work has been done, why is it not corrected now?

I say to you, Mr. President, it is time that we move on and look to the future. We keep hearing that so much was done in the past; that is no longer our concern. What we must be concerned with is the good work that is being done and this is why I add my voice to this debate to support the people who are working to house the Barbadian population. It is necessary for us to add our voices and not to be drowned out by those who could have, should have, and might have, but did not.

Therefore, Mr. President, I am thanking you for your time today and acknowledging that this Resolution is necessary, even if only as a token gesture to symbolise the will of this Administration.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Thank you, Senator Griffith.

Senator Gilkes.

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES: Mr. President, after listening to Senator Thompson's rambling presentation today, I now better understand why so little was done in the Ministry of Housing. So much talk, so little action, and so little substance.

Asides.

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES: Mr. President, it is not my intention to ramble aimlessly on this matter before us today, but I stand in support of this Resolution. I would like to express my thanks to the new Minister of Housing and Lands for his caring approach to this pressing matter of attending to the dire needs of those with needs of housing.

It is with pride that I speak of his swift movement towards the Resolution in seeing after the needs of those residents of this project at Six Roads who, from my records, have been long-suffering through a series of various Ministers in the past Barbados Labour Party Administration, until having had the good fortune of seeing this Minister being appointed. After years of neglect to malaise, these good people of Six Roads, will be given the right of ownership.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of order. It is a breach of the Rules of this Chamber to read one's speech.

Mr. PRESIDENT: It is also a breach to do what you are doing now. You made a point of order and then you walked away. I know that you know better than that, Senator.

Senator Gilkes, you will take note of the point of order.

Senator P.w.B. GILKES: Thank you. I was just following my notes, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: There is nothing wrong with following your notes, closely.

SENATOR P.W.B. GILKES: Thank you, Sir.

The vesting of the lands in the National Housing so that the Corporation can now, after many years of neglect by the Barbados Labour Party, to finally effect the clear transfer of the titles of the properties to the long-suffering homeowners.

I would like to say a sincere thanks to the new Minister of Housing and Lands. I am sure that the new

property owners would want me to extend their thanks to him as well, after having been forced to wait, as long as they have been waiting, and through as many former Barbados Labour Party housing Ministers as they were forced to wait through.

Finally, it took the removal or as some may suggest, the eviction from office of the Barbados Labour Party and the installation of a new Government to give them the hope and results that they were so deserving of, from the outset. The right of ownership and title of their property is something that every Barbadian man and woman aspires to as they move forward in life.

Mr. President, this leads me to another issue which is one of total lack of an effective and functional housing programme, under the former Barbados Labour Party Administration. This is clearly evident to the Barbadian people and no masking of the problem as was done by the Barbados Labour Party will suffice the situation. Until now, the track record was a pathetic and sickly one. The former Ministers should be fully ashamed of the record of lack of service.

Their attempt to build houses was fraught with ineptitude at every step along the way. From gross mismanagement of the project at Buckeley Meadows to others at Coverley, Lower Burney, Country Road Towers, the resulting situation that engineers' reports suggests that due to the amount of engineering faults and shortcuts taken in the construction of these houses, that the National Housing Corporation should carefully consider to whom they award contracts, as was the case here.

The person who awarded this contract had no prior experience at building anything. Mr. President, therefore, with that background, they could not be expected to deliver housing that was built to effective standards.

Mr. President, only a non-caring Government would have overseen such a programme. We are also forced to examine the incestuous relations that exist at the National Housing Corporation and its contractors. One that you would only get a bigger picture, when a person in a senior position at the National Housing Corporation can sit on a Board of Directors of a company seeking to get contracts in the same entity that they were put there to manage in the first place.

Arrangements such as these, can lead to the type of malfunctioning that has manifested itself here in the National Housing Corporation. It could also lead down the path to corruption and dishonesty. Sir, no wonder that the extent of bad work that existed under this arrangement is now coming to light.

One realises that building contracts were awarded to persons that never even constructed a dog kennel. They sought and received contracts to build houses for Barbadian families and did so to very poor and dangerous standards. That may also explain why a bath facility could be built at a cost of over \$400 000 under a previous programme and a previous Barbados Labour Party regime. It may have been seen merely as taxpayers money that was to be shared among the inner circle. That is not good governance.

Mr. President, not to harp on it, but while on the subject of wastage, may I remind the Chamber about the wastage involved in projects such as 3S Roadworks where work was being done on a rolling basis. Where else in the world would this exist, I do not know? There was also the VECO Prison and storage facility. Both of the above mentioned outfits have a clear propensity for dishonesty in their business practices as was displayed in Court proceedings with both of them.

Somehow, we seem to have had in the past the ability to attract those with less than honest backgrounds to our shores. There is also the Hardwood Housing fiasco. The massive amount of money that was spent on Kensington Oval for the Cricket World Cup, the now famous tree cutting exercise, and the list is ongoing.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. By way of clarifying the record, there was some mention by the Honourable Senator Gilkes of wastage and so on and then he talked about taxpayers' money being divided up among the inner circle. That comment came immediately after a reference to the Bath at Silver Sands.

I would just wish to put on record that the Bath at Silver Sands was built entirely by the National Conservation Commission. I do not know if they are the inner circle to whom the Honourable Senator is referring, but it certainly was not built by any private contractor.

In fact, subsequent to the construction, a report was commissioned by the Ministry from H. L. Toppin and Company who are reputable quantity surveyors and their Report indicated that relative to the nature of the project, the cost was perfectly in order.

Subsequent to that, the Honourable Senator Boyce, when leading the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated, built what could be a platinum bath at Bay Street because the rates and the eventual cost was much higher. I say this only to make the point that it is easy to make these outlandish statements about wastage and so on without knowing what the facts are. I am obliged to you, Sir.

SENATOR P. W. B. Gilkes: In going back to the wastage, the numerous nonfunctional consultancies...

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of privilege. I just wish to apologise to the Chair. It is coming on to the end of the business day and I am doing an urgent matter for my office, so I am listening and paying close attention to the ramblings, but I am in fact not on the floor, so I just apologise.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Just sit down before you go out.

SENATOR P. W. B. GILKES: There were a number of nonfunctional consultancies that were quite the norm within the Barbados Labour Party. Those are things of the past. Looking ahead, we are seeing a new Government programme that is moving at a pace with regard to housing.

Mr. President, we do have a serious and real housing programme that has taken a mere 11 months to effect home ownership to many deserving Barbadians who have lived and paid rents to the National Housing Corporation for 20 or more years. The properties are now theirs. Lands and houses are becoming available across the island under this Democratic Labour Party Administration.

Mr. President, we have seen a major change in the method of operation of this Minister compared to the previous others. He is a hands-on and proactive person. We are seeing contracts being awarded to those that are in the business of building houses and those who have experience in these matters. This is so unlike the former arrangement where if you owned a shovel, you were in line for a building contract.

It is not cutting out the small man, as they too are getting work as subcontractors on these projects. It is about accountability to the people of Barbados. This is the defined difference between this new Democratic Labour Party Government and the expelled Barbados Labour Party collection.

I fully support this Resolution and in so doing I encourage this Minister to continue to press ahead at a pace with his clearly defined housing programme and to continue to make the Barbadian people proud and eager on their path to their most valued possession and joy, the ownership of their own home. This is an aspect of Barbadian life that Barbadians treasure. Sir, under this Democratic Labour Party Government and with God's blessing their desires will be fulfilled.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Hutson

SENATOR J. A. C. HUTSON: Mr. President, I fully support the Resolution, but I would just like to make a comment on what Senator Benn has said as regard Zone One lands. As you know, I am in agriculture and I see lots

of land here, there and everywhere that I think is suitable for housing but when I enquire I am told it is on Zone One.

Mr. President, we are nearly in the year 2009 and I think with modern engineering facilities and practices I am sure these things can be changed and put right.

I also think the time has come now where we have to start to build up. It may not suit elderly people but I think first-time owners can manage it for many years. The island is not getting any bigger, so I think we are going to have to start considering building up.

Mr. President, Senator Benn mentioned about if we have lands that we would like to develop to apply through the Town and Country Planning Department. Mr. President, only on Monday this week I was told by a financier that he has put in applications which have been in there over five and six years and he cannot get a response. Honestly, Sir, this is too long. I know things get lost in every department, in every walk of life, but I think that five to six years is a bit too long.

Mr. President, when one does a development today and you think that you are through with everything, then you are told that you have to plant trees. I appreciate that trees are very important, particularly to attract the rain, but I think the planting of trees should be done by the person who is purchasing the land because if I plant a tree for someone who is going to purchase the land I may not put it in the right place and then it is destroyed, which would be a waste of money and a waste of everything but, I agree that trees should be planted.

I have been in St. George now for over 40 years and I have seen the rainfall patterns change. Years ago, when we see the clouds coming over Gemswick, we knew we would get it. Today now because of the expansion to the airport, the development of the Crane and St. Philip with all the tar roads and the tarmac at the airport, the rain clouds are slipping.

Some come in by the Hilton Hotel and some come in over St. Thomas, but down through the middle where we used to get rain from those clouds, that is no more. That is why I say that trees are very important to cool. When you go to St. Philip you do not see a lime tree in anybody's backyard, it is all concrete and tarmac.

3.10 p.m.

Mr. President, in going back to trees, I think that the Town and Country Planning Department should stipulate the planned planting of things like breadfruit trees, trees from which you could reap something. I think that should be clarified by the size of the plot because on a 5 000 plot, you would not want to plant a breadfruit tree, instead you

could plant a lime tree, but some kind of tree should be planted by the purchaser.

Mr. President, I support this Resolution.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I promise to be brief in the winding up of this Resolution. I want to thank all Honourable Senators for their contributions. I am sure that we all would have spoken very passionately. Sir, I was not too much in favour of the comment from Senator Newton, with reference to another Honourable Senator, the manner in which she expressed herself. I think she spoke, rather than loudly and aggressively, with passion and force.

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. Sir, I referred to no one.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, the point was made and the words were used but I am just trying to enforce that we all spoke with passion and force. I want to thank Senator Inniss for her passionate presentation. Senator Inniss has made reference to land and indicated that in starting a home, you start your life by starting a home and that when you are the owner of a home, you feel that you are on your way to doing greater things.

Senator Newton, I want to discuss with you, at some point in time, perhaps not here, but the land owned by the Panama Estate is something I think we need to discuss at some point in time.

We talked about lands that were not properly vested in the Crown. Sir, I have seen and read about some of this before and I urge that in the future we should make sure that all things are done in the proper way.

Senator Millington spoke about the 500 houses which we promised, and yes we have surpassed the 500 house lots. As a matter of fact, I think the figure now looks like 514. The Honourable Minister in the Other Place was able to become well-organised. Senator Millington spoke about the launching of the housing project at Greens. That is happening tomorrow, and on Sunday there will be the launching of 64 housing solutions at Constant. On Monday there will be the launching of the housing project at French Village.

There are others that are to be commenced in January, Coverley Phase 2, Christ Church; Lancaster Phase 1, St. James; Parish Land, St. Philip; River, St. Philip. That is another 443 that would be coming on stream in the first half of 2009. Sir, we are on our way to getting things well-organised.

Mr. President, I am sorry that Senator Thompson did not bring that box to which the Honourable Senator keeps referring to this Honourable Senate. It does seem to contain some details that we would have been happy to hear. Sir, often when Honourable Senators from the Other Side speak, they do give some history, they do assist us along the way.

Sir, I appreciate some of the things the Honourable Senators on the Other Side bring to the table. The Honourable Senator asked the question, "how does one house a nation?" Sir, the Honourable Senator could check with the Democratic Labour Party and we would show her how to house a nation. The Honourable Senator said that both Administrations have tried but I would want to say that the Barbados Labour Party did not try hard enough.

Mr. President, the Honourable Senator talked about the Votes of the Urban Development Commission and Rural Development Commission that have been significantly cut. Sir, I am yet to hear about these cuts. Of course, the Honourable Senator mentioned the facilities extended by the Barbados Mortgage Finance, the Housing Credit Fund, et cetera. Sir, one would expect that once a Government is in office, that things would happen.

Therefore, one is not discounting the fact that things might have happened under the Barbados Labour Party, but they did not make the connection to the people.

Mr. President, when you could have had a land bank that you could boast about, and no houses are being built, you could talk about providing 100 per cent financing, I could go to a financial operation and ask for 100 per cent financing because my salary would have allowed me, but if the land is not there to put the house on, what would be the use of having that 100 per cent financing? Sir, therefore, you have to be connecting with your people.

Mr. President, I know that the goodly Senator has issued you with a reason she has to be in and out of this Honourable Chamber. I just have to say one negative thing and the Honourable Senator would come running back to her seat.

Sir, if the Honourable Senator is uncomfortable sitting in this Honourable Chamber, she ought to tell her boss, so that in 2009 they could select a new Honourable Senator, who could come and discuss with us the business, rather than rushing in and out of this Honourable Chamber on points of order. It is not good. I did not come here to learn from that kind of exercise. I think we ought to show more respect for this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, this is called the upper House but perhaps for the Honourable Senator this is the lowly place. I know she

does not feel comfortable here and perhaps she might talk to her boss in the New Year and get a change.

Mr. President, I believe we have done justice to this debate. Senator Thompson talked about the Primary Homes Programme that was done.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. President, the Honourable Senator is misleading this Honourable Senate and indeed the wider public who are listening, if the Honourable Senator is seeking to give the impression that I am away for lack of interest. I made a point of getting up and explaining.

Mr. President, the reality is that Ministers of Government are here all day and they are doing Government Business, and while all of us are engaged in the matters at hand, some of us are retirees but others are also working elsewhere full-time.

Mr. President, in the circumstances today, I am up against a situation where my chambers are closing on Friday and there is an urgent matter that I am struggling to get back to them, to have completed to facilitate somebody who has a problem.

Mr. President, I did explain why I was off the Floor and I think in those circumstances it is misleading and unfair, coming from the Honourable Senator. I do not know what other criticisms I might make of the Honourable Senator, it has not been my experience that he is an uncharitable person.

Sir, I am asking you for the latitude in this case, for me to try to deal with this client's work, which is urgent. I will come in and pay attention. I am not ignoring what is going on but I am coming in as necessary. Honourable Senators who are Members of Cabinet can spend the full day doing this work, others do have other things to do.

I am much obliged, Mr. President.

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: On a point of order, Mr. President. I have sat in this Honourable Senate for 10 years and this is the first time in 10 years that I have heard an Honourable Senator on any Side having to give an explanation for coming in and out of this Honourable Chamber.

Mr. PRESIDENT: And that is the point of order, that you have observed this?

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Yes, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: What is the point of order on which you rose?

3.20 p.m.

SENATOR the HON. Mrs. V.E. NEWTON: The point of order, which I would like to draw to your attention is that, as far as I know, there is no where in the Standing Orders of the Senate that a Senator, who may have business to do out of the Chamber and slips out for a minute or two, or more, needs to give any explanation. If so, all Senators would be in breach at some time. Sir, it is the first time and, Mr. President, there are many firsts for me after 10 years in this Chamber during this year.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I have to rule that it is no point of order.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I believe that one of the other firsts for Senator Newton is the first time she is seeing so many people from the Democratic Labour Party sitting in this Senate. However, this day is not the first time that Senator Thompson has been in and out. She cannot give the impression that today is the first day...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator, I hate to interrupt you but since I have ruled that was no point of order, if you speak to it, what you say will be expunged from the record because you cannot speak to it, if I ruled it is not a point of order.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I was going on to speak but not on what the Senator said. I had gone past that. Sir, what I was trying to indicate is that Senator Thompson in her explanation to you gave this House the impression that she is doing business because her Chambers are closing a few days from now. I have been saying that in previous Sittings of the House, the Senator has been in and out with monotonous regularity.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I am sure I am not going to allow the Senate to degenerate into a tit-for-tat. I wish to say, however, that I will not allow debate to degenerate from the standards to which we have become accustomed in this Chamber. I am going to ask Senators again today, to help me to maintain the standards that we are accustomed to in this Chamber. Senator Benn, will you continue, please.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Thank you. The Senator indicated that conveyances take time and she mentioned about the illegal construction of houses by Town & Country Planning. Sir, I well recall that in a previous Administration, Government built houses at Westbury Road without Town and Country Planning permission. If it has happened already, under this Administration, as was suggested, precedents have been

set, not that we will render evil for evil but houses have been built at Coverley without planning permission, under the former Administration. Sir, we talked about Zone 1 and I am glad there was some support for the look at Zone 1 and I trust that something could be done for the future.

Mr. President, the Senator also spoke about the tens of thousands of units and she mentioned a lot of names. Of course, she mentioned some of the names six times. Sir, I wish that the Senator would have come with more details and give the exact locations where all of these thousands of houses have been built.

Mr. President, generally, I thought that the debate was fruitful and we have spent a lot of time on it. I too would wish that the quality of the debate at times was higher. I did comment a few Sittings ago that in my opinion, the level of debate in the Senate is better than what I have heard in the Other Place, from time to time, and I wish we all would maintain high standards when we are debating. I wish that from all persons because, often time, when Senators from This Side seek to heckle, it is not okay but when heckling comes from the other places, it is all right. Sir, I am not questioning your ruling, I am just making an observation.

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

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 2 – TRANSPORT BOARD (AMENDMENT)
BILL, 2008.

SENATOR Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Sir, transport in Barbados has been on the lips of our people for a number of years. This matter was dealt with in the Other Place quite recently and all speakers sought to give the Ministry of Transport and Works a pat on the back for seeking to bring some semblance of understanding and respect to road use in this country. We have had issues in the past with drivers of public service vehicles.

I am happy to see the number of buses on our roads are now more road worthy and I believe that we should congratulate those persons who have formed themselves into a cooperative to look after the maintenance of buses of the Transport Board.

I understand that so high has been the quality of work that they have produced that private people are taking their vehicles there from time to time also to be serviced and maintained. Sir, if that is so, I have no reason to doubt that is so, those persons must be congratulated. I would

also like to congratulate the unions for seeking to keep them together in the manner they have been kept.

We have heard less threats about strikes and dissatisfaction in the manner in which things are being done. Sir, when you antagonise people, they fret and fuss and they do not produce, but when you work closely with people and you encourage them, you can feel safe to know that you have a good system in place and you feel safe on the road.

We have not been hearing about a lot of accidents on the road as it relates to the private service vehicles and I am happy that the quality of service has improved; the quality of the buses as well as the quantity of buses on the road. Sir, I am happy to think that drivers of the ZR vehicles have taken note of the way in which the Transport Board has been going.

Mr. President, I want to laud the efforts of the Ministry of Transport and Works as well on the school programme that was introduced recently, where school children are now able to travel on buses free of cost. It has been reported that schools are now able to function a lot better because there are less stragglers coming in. Children get to school earlier than they used to. They do not come to school with the pounding in their heads, when they have been travelling in other forms of vehicles and you could only hear “boom-boom, boom-boom” when you get in the classroom.

15:30

It has resulted as well in a tremendous savings to parents who in some cases might have had two or three children on the bus, and with two bus fares, sometimes \$2 a day, \$10 a week, \$40 a month, that is a tremendous savings, multiply by two children is great.

That \$40 can buy a ham for Christmas. I am sure the parents have been putting aside the bus fare either on a weekly basis. It might buy some extra tins of high protein food called sardines, or a cheap source of protein or a small ham.

Sir, I am happy that the overall behaviour in schools, as reported by the Minister of Education and Human Resource Development, that things have improved. I hope that we would see this reflected in the behaviour of school children not only at school, but also when they come back on to the streets. It would also reflect, perhaps, in the academic achievement at school, less students have to stop down, higher grades at school and more passes at CXC ‘O’level and ‘A’levels.

I am happy as well that the Minister of Transport has been able to put the Transport Authority in place. I am

encouraging prospective business persons who want to get into transport using their ZMs and Taxis. A facility was extended recently where the Minister has given opportunities for more persons to apply for permits to drive and operate a ZM vehicle and Taxis.

Sir, in this short submission, I am happy that the Transport Authority is in place. The Minister of Transport has done a very good job in putting a system in place for the Transport Board and I therefore urge that this Bill be read a second time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Walters.

SENATOR the Hon. A.B. WALTERS: Mr. President, I rise to support this Amendment to the Transport Board Act. In rising to support this Amendment, there are a number of things I would wish to say about the transportation system in Barbados, having had some experience both as an HR Manager at the Transport Board during the period of 1982, and as the General Manager of the same Transport Board between the period 1987 and 1989, therefore, I should have some reasonably good experiences and some things to say about the Amendment.

Sir, the Amendment seeks to add two additional Board members. The thinking is, those additional Board members would bring the additional skills that would be required at the Executive level to assist in the management of the public transportation system.

There is always a debate. This debate probably started in the 1980s, of the difference between public transportation and private transportation. Sometimes one has to ask the question, does it happen in other places and is public transport a success? I have also worked in a public transportation system in another far land that certainly was a success.

Mr. President, in London, certainly up to very recently, the only transportation system that you would have had outside of the taxis would have been a transportation system with buses covering London, Greater London and in various Counties there would be bus transportation systems, which were public transportation systems, supported by the local councils. The other transportation system, for the most part, was a taxi service. The black taxis are known worldwide and offer quite a good service that is, if you know London well, because if you do not know London well enough, the taximan, on occasions, would carry you for a ride which is far longer than the one that you should have paid him for.

I remember having an experience in my second year in London, coming back from a trip overseas and getting a train to Victoria Station to go to Victoria Bus Station, no more than 150 to 200 yards away. I made the error of

getting on board a taxi and probably ended up paying about £10, when the fare would have been 10P. Sometimes you learn by your experience.

Sir, However, public transportation is still a necessity in Barbados. We have not yet achieved that lofty goal, which was put out some time ago, of having a car in front of every home, or having two cars in front of every home. We have not yet gotten there. Therefore, there are persons in rural Barbados, from Bayfield to Connell Town, Belleplaine, Bathsheba and all corners of Barbados, whose transportation needs have to be serviced. Those transportation needs, certainly in the last 50 years or so have been serviced very well. You must also recall that we have moved from a system of private concessionaires, and over lunch a few minutes ago, I remarked to a colleague of mine that the private transportation was such, and I lived in a village in Christ Church, if you missed one of the three buses that ran on the day, you had to walk at least three-and-a-half miles to get to your destination.

Sir, if I missed the Yorkshire bus and the only bus that was available, under Mr. Trotman's system, that was going to Boarded Hall, I had to take up my feet and walk from the Y and walk the length of Yorkshire road to get home.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. A.B. WALTERS: Sir, it is still a necessary position in Barbados, that persons have to be provided with transportation.

Sir, Senator Benn made mention of some of the initiatives which have taken place in the transportation system in Barbados, and one of those is a recent innovation of carrying school children free. There are a number of other things I would wish to speak on in relation to how you deal with transport issues. One of the things that I found very early in the transport system, is that somebody has to take the bull by the horns and to provide a level of training for the operators, because sometimes it is a level of indifference.

Sometimes you cannot take a person off the street and make them into a good public service vehicle operator that essentially calls for some time training the various operators. I worked at the Transport Board in the days when there were 1 400 persons operating that system. Conductors and driver operators.

15.40 p.m.

On one occasion, I remember this vividly, we brought 50 new Mercedes buses to Barbados and among the things we had to do was to make sure that the crews who were going to man those buses were properly trained.

Therefore, we took 100 people put them into the classroom, gave them some theoretical work and practical work and said to those operators that this is the manner in which we want you to operate this bus, because it is the taxpayers' hard earned money that is going to pay for these buses. Therefore, we need to make the buses last approximately 10 years, and not two years.

Sir, there used to be a very high accident rate on the public transportation system, which I am glad to report, has been reduced. Sir, we probably still have a high accident rate in the private sector of our transportation system. Certainly, on the public sector, one gets the impression that the young men and young women who now operate the buses have taken the lead out of their shoes, and have slowed down a bit.

Secondly, there has to be a good Fleet Maintenance Programme. There is no sense buying 200 or 300 buses over a two-year period or whatever and at the end of the first year or second year, you only have 40 or 50 working buses out of that fleet. That there must be some fleet maintenance programme. I believe that a decision was taken in the early 1990s to move the workshop operations out of the Transport Board into private enterprise.

Sir, that system seems to be working quite well. My own view is that if you are operating a transport system there are going to be occasions, when you need to operate a 24-hour fleet maintenance position to make sure that when you put the bus in at 2:00 in the morning that at 5:00 the following morning when you get up and you put the key to turn it that, in fact, it is in working order because that used to be a particular problem.

Sir, for me that would be a particular problem if you are operating in a much colder climate but in a warm climate, you do not expect that if you put down a bus at 2:00, and at 5:00 the driver says to you that the bus is not working.

Therefore, instead of having a 5:00 bus going to Greens, St. George, you have to look for another bus and the bus does not get there until 6:30. It means that the people who are standing at the bus stop at 5:15 will get to work late. Therefore, your fleet maintenance will make a difference to how people deal and rely on the transportation system.

The third area I want to touch on before I sit is the one to do with route planning. The demography of Barbados has changed significantly, so that sometimes where you will have sent a bus 20 years ago, it makes no point sending a bus there anymore. I suspect there are some new areas in St. Philip where the bus service needs to be enhanced substantially. When I say that, I also have to say that depends on whether you are looking at working class

or middle class ridership, and the middle class do not normally. I do not know the last day I rode on a bus except when I am in London. I do not want to get on the tube, so I cannot say to anyone that I actually have driven on a bus, certainly in the last two or three years, not even for pleasure, and that might be a bad thing.

Sir, in terms of our route planning, if you look at St. Philip and Christ Church, one of the routes which used to be a lucrative route, say for the public transportation system, was the Silver Sands route. Now there is really no point in today's world, putting a bus on the Silver Sands route, because since 1984 or thereabout, almost all ZR taxis and minibuses have taken over that particular route. Therefore, you would do well to send whatever resources you have to a place where there is going to be a much better ridership and where the private sector believes they are not in the position to make a lot of money out of running up and down in a particular area.

Those are some of the concerns that, certainly, I hope the additional members of the Board, take into account when they are placed on the Board following the passage of this Amendment.

I would want to commend the management of the Transport Board certainly for the way in which they were able to put the school programme in place in September. I hope that we are able during the next few years to keep the ridership in that school programme as high as it has been and that we are able to have the number of buses available during that period, although I am having some difficulties.

I am having a rethink whether we need to look at flexi-time and those kinds of systems, because by 8:00 in the morning when schools are in, and you have large numbers of buses on the road along with large numbers of other vehicles on the road, going in the same direction for the schools, it is really gridlock.

Mr. President, for the life of me, I cannot understand why in Barbados in 2008 we are in gridlock. What it is doing to average working people in Barbados is giving them high levels of stress. Therefore, by the time most people get to work by 9:00 they are in no condition to give you any work until about 11:00 in the morning, because they are stressed out, having to stop and start in the traffic.

I think one of the things we may have to do is, to begin to move some of the major schools out of Bridgetown or begin to stagger working hours with school hours. This is among one of the things that the Transport Authority and the legislators may have to look at, to see how we can deal with that issue.

Lastly, I want to say that it is quite probable that in the new year, we will be assisting in looking at some of

that flexitime by opening the retail sector on a 24-hour basis.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. A. B. WALTERS: Sir, that may keep some of the traffic out of Bridgetown for a while, because it is also noticeable that the people's shopping habits have changed significantly. We are having a lot of traffic problems at the moment because it is a week before Christmas, but peoples' shopping habits have changed to the extent that a lot of shopping is now done late on Saturdays and on Sundays, because the Shops Act now allows for shopping on Sundays.

It is more likely for people to be in the shops trampling over each other, and Christmas is not a very good time for shopping in certain places because you would get trampled over, if you are looking for a ham, a cake or some alcohol.

Therefore, one of the things we certainly would like to look at is some flexibility in terms of working hours on a 24-hour basis and that will certainly ease some of the transportation problems. It also means that we may have to put on a 24-hour transport system. This 24-hour transport system is currently available in cities like London, if you know which bus. If you do not know which bus to catch, it is of no use to you.

With those remarks, Sir, I would wish to support this Amendment.

15:50:05

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Inniss.

SENATOR Miss P. I. INNISS: Mr. President, I would like to give my support to the proposed Amendment to the Transport Board Act, which in essence seeks to bring two additional members on to the Board to improve the talent of the Board and the overall running of the Transport Board.

Mr. President, I just want to make a few points of interest because, as has been said by the Honourable Senator before me there continue to be some problems in the Transport Board. More importantly, within the last few months, and for sure with the introduction of the free transportation of school children, the Transport Board has been strained. I have had occasion to speak to members of the Board and the workers in other capacities.

Sir, the very first day in which school children were allowed to travel free on the Transport Board buses was amazing. Previously, you would see children loitering or

just walking around, but the atmosphere within Town had changed. I think it is shared by many.

I think Barbadians on a whole saw those persons working within the Transport Board actually trying their best to make a change and to do something that was positive and uplifting for Barbadians. That gave me a very good feeling and I would like to commend those workers who, in essence, tried to improve life in general in the Transport Board.

I want to look at some of the problems that are presently still facing the Transport Board. There is, as the Speaker before me said, the problem of routing which continues to be a serious problem. Yes, there has been major changes within the routing system in Barbados in the past few years. I am quite convinced that members of the Board whom I have spoken to are really concerned about this issue.

We have to find ways, in similar manner that has been done with the introduction of the free transportation for school children to solve the problem of routing in a timely manner even if not to the extent of buses being available for the specific routes. The Transport Board speaks of the issue of insufficient buses.

These are, therefore, financial issues to a Government. Mr. President, it cannot be over-stressed that the Transport Board has a problem with insufficient buses. How do we deal with that in the immediate future? It has to be addressed by ensuring that those routes that are functioning, are functioning at the most optimum and that while they do not service the route extensively for an extended period of time, at least when they are, they are reliably on time. For many years the Transport Board had a problem with not being able to service the routes in correct times.

I am really hopeful that the future and indeed next year will be an exciting one for the Transport Board. I have heard talk of park and ride probably coming into being shortly. I do not want to pre-empt a Minister or those who are responsible, but I want to give my full support to such a system while bearing in mind the fact that any park and ride systems will be travelling on the same routes and probably a gridlock situation, as occurs early on mornings, may arise.

Park and ride systems are viable, sensible and workable options which alleviate transportation problems all over the world. I have been hearing that there is the hope of erecting car parks in some areas outside of Town. I think a very good idea would probably be to introduce this park and ride system to corporations. You can pick a well-established company within Bridgetown and encourage that

group of business persons to join up on a park and ride system.

Sir, rather than just hoping that Barbadians buy into a park and ride system, you encourage a business to be a part of the core persons doing a park and ride maybe, a week or more. Sir, there can be then the possibility of asking business persons to park their cars on the outskirts of Town and give them incentives to do so.

We heard about the stress this afternoon of driving through Town. We can have a park and ride system where a group of workers for a big corporation get on a bus, or whatever form of park and ride system, get a cup coffee and a newspaper, talk with your workmates and begin the day's process before they go into the office by doing all the calling that happened very often as they are driving to work. Sometimes business persons park on the side of the road and make important phone calls. Many business persons begin their day before they get into the office, so a park and ride system can be useful.

Mr. President, I would like to applaud that system also as it relates to simple energy conservation. We have to look at conserving energy especially in these high economic times that are coming. This Government has to probably identify ways of dealing with energy issues. One way of doing that is by reducing the number of cars on the roads and encouraging persons to park and ride with specific regulations.

Mr. President, the Transport Board has a lot to do. As has been said previously, there is public transportation which is lucrative and profitable in other parts of the world. I am not mistaken when I say that our Transport Board does have a debt problem, so how can the Transport Board deal with such? We can probably introduce the concept of having a private system or a paid system in the same manner that we have tour operators.

These are possible opportunities for creating more revenue and developing a transport system further. I think that the Transport Board can look at other ways of making the Board and the business a profitable one. We have to deal with some of these issues.

Mr. President, when we are finished speaking here most of us get into our cars and go home, but there are those who are parked at bus stops for hours on end waiting for transportation. I know the hour is getting late so we may be tired but transportation for us here may be slight but for another person outside in the blistering sun, it is not a slight thing. Therefore, it is for us to help support the Government by giving them ideas to improve a system which would help an entire society.

With those few words, Mr. President, I support this Amendment and all that the Transport Board can do for the immediate and the coming future to improve transportation in this country and our lives by extension.

I thank you, Sir.

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, I rise to support the Amendment before us although it has not been said yet why the membership of the Board is being increased from seven to nine because seven is the usual number, but I am sure that Senator Benn will give me a long explanation when I sit.

Having said that, Mr. President, I commend the Government for the initiatives it has taken in relation to transportation. I am sure that as Senator Walters said that with the establishment of the Authority they would be looking at the problems on an ongoing basis and would try to come up with solutions.

Mr. President, while I know the school children are being well taken care of, I am not sure that the problems that existed with regard to the public service vehicles have been solved, and it would be interesting to know what are the plans for that particular sector of the industry. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Does any other Senator want to make a contribution?

Her Honour SENATOR Miss K. F. IFILL: Mr. President, I rise to support this Amendment before us with very few words. Sir, to me, the increasing of the number on the Board from seven to nine speaks to a policy which seeks to recognise that our transport system has many challenges.

As a little girl, and I am sure in your young days too, Mr. President, you too learnt this phrase: 'Many hands make light work.'

Mr. PRESIDENT: I can hardly remember them.

Her Honour SENATOR Miss K. F. IFILL: I will recall them to your mind then, Sir. Many hands make light work and therefore to me the increasing of this Board represents an opportunity to give the Transport Board the increased capacity to deal with some of the challenges.

4.00 p.m.

Mr. President, I would like to commend the current General Manager of the Transport Board and his team. They have done a sterling job over the years. Regarding the implementation of the free school bus system, many naysayers thought that it would have been fraught with

problems but it went off without a hitch on its first day. Up to now, I do not think there have been many dissenting voices against the policy and against what it has achieved. Mr. President, I heard long and exhaustive discourse in the Other Place in relation to other problems within our transport system and with the poor quality of roads. Sir, it has been a long time since I have looked out a car window, I will confess, and so I would welcome the opportunity to be corrected, but I do not think that roads have become bad on January 16. Sir, to the best of my recollection, Station Hill has been in a state of disrepair for a considerable amount of time.

Sir, I do not think that we could achieve improvements in such a short space of time, while recognising the years of challenges that have gone before us. I am not saying that nothing has not been done to improve the road works system. What I would want to say is that those who are calling for roads to be repaired in two to three days, I would call to their recollection that many of those roads that were repaired speedily, where the pot holes were filled in with marl, as soon as the rains came, the marl was washed away and the pot holes returned.

Mr. President, I would call to their recollection the times when roads were repaired, where two weeks later, the National Petroleum Corporation and other companies would come along and dig up those beautiful new roads, to lay new pipes. There was poor communication.

Mr. President, I do not think it is right to expect these things to be achieved immediately. However, I think that a policy such as this and others that have come on stream, with others in the pipeline, indicate that this Government is willing to recognise that there are challenges and that it has to put plans in place to deal with and to cope with some of these challenges.

Mr. President, I too, like Senator Newton, have for a long time been concerned with the PSVs. There are many challenges there. Sir, taking the school children off these PSVs is the first step, and I am very sure that other steps will be taken. Again, the problem with PSVs is not one that has come up overnight, and it is not a problem that will immediately go away. It is one that has to be given careful consideration.

Mr. President, regulations must be put in place, but we must remember, though there may have some of these PSVs drivers and owners who do not give sterling service, there are others who work hard and do give good service. Sir, we cannot throw out the baby with the bath water. We must recognise that these people need concessions and therefore we cannot take a cart blanc approach and throw out everything. I think this is why it is being considered so carefully.

Mr. President, there is some work still for the Transport Board to do, and I am sure my brothers and sisters with disabilities, who are listening to my voice, would want me to add that the bus system for the disabled needs to be further addressed. There has been some improvements. Nobody is saying there has not been, but I am sure with the increased capacity on the Board, that further attention would be given to this and to other areas that are problematic.

Mr. President, with these few words, I am obliged to you.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, I would wish to thank all Honourable Senators who have made a contribution to this Bill. Sir, the Object and Reason of the Bill is to amend the Transport Board Act, Cap. 297, to increase the number of Members of the Board from seven to nine.

Senator Newton, seven is the Biblical number and nobody wants to move perhaps from the Biblical number, but I am sure that the increase in numbers still adds quality and quantity to the contribution of those Board Members.

Sir, we have a Transport Board that is very important to this country. They have done well, as Senator Ifill has said. She lauds the efforts of the General Manager and Staff of the Transport Board and with a Transport Authority in place, we are sure that the increased number of persons will do justice. We will have a wider cross-section of thinking and contribution to the Board.

Senator Walters mentioned the areas in Barbados to which he has visited. He mentioned his experiences in England. I did not have a lot of experience in England. I do a lot of walking when I go there, especially in the summer but I would have thought that perhaps the roads have been improved upon so greatly that more buses and other vehicles can now traverse areas which they could not have traversed before.

Mr. President, I know the Honourable Senator mentioned Silver Sands, and as much as Senator Walters has indicated that the ZRs and other privately-owned transportation have taken over the route in Silver Sands. I am appealing to those persons to operate with a degree of patience and understanding. I see too much of these persons taking chances, for example, where they are passing out each other in difficult areas.

Sir, when driving and they pass you on the street to get ahead of another vehicle, you want to stop and cringe a little bit. In this case I whisper a little word of prayer for them. Senator Walters also mentioned the agony on the roads on mornings. When we drive, we have to give ourselves perhaps another half hour to get to work,

especially when school children are in school, when more people would be at work as well.

Mr. President, I would want to encourage PSVs not to take the stress on the road but to take along a CD or cassette with spiritual music, country music or any music of their choice and listen to it. Maybe they could turn the radio to some good stations, I recommend Maurice Norville and Larry Mayers, they are the two good guys on morning, but we could do things to keep our minds focused and to reduce stress.

Senator Inniss spoke in her contribution to street-lighting in other places and about the park-and-ride. I am confident that once the road users and everybody has settled down, that the Minister with responsibility for transport would want to pay some attention to the quality of our roads. Sir, I am also concerned, as Senator Ifill has mentioned, about the road in Station Hill. I have a concern about the road at Station Hill, St. Peter, and about the road between Mount Brevitor and French Village. That is one of the worst roads on the entire map, as a matter of fact.

We had contributions from our goodly Senator Newton and Ifill but I would want to say I am confident that the Minister will pay attention to the need for street-lighting at Date Tree Hill. There is also a need for a bus service in Gays, St. Peter, and those areas where people have to get off the bus and go across the gap, I am sure that all Honourable Members would be asking the Minister of Transport to make that service available.

Mr. President, before closing, I would want to indicate that I am urging drivers to be more alert on our roads. I am urging that they would be more observant in relation to stopping at stop lights. That creates an impatience as well, where there is somebody at the beginning of the pack, when the lights turn from red to green and there is absolutely no movement because somebody up front is paying attention to something else or is on a cell phone, where seconds would pass before somebody blows a horn and jump you. If it is a green driver, who would have had the handbrakes on, when they hear the horn, they would panic before driving off. Sir, we have to be more observant on our roads.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. President, we have to be more observant on the roads. I am calling on our drivers to be more considerate to drivers who have to come from minor roads on to major roads. As a matter of fact, I would like to see the Transport Authority working closer with the Royal Barbados Police Force in identifying areas where traffic has to come from a minor road, for example, off Arthur Seat in St. Thomas, coming from Automotive Arts to come on to the highway. It is a bottleneck there and traffic extends way back,

especially with those people dropping their children off at Lester Vaughan School, coming off Edghill and coming down by Automotive Arts in St. Thomas to come on to the highway.

Mr. President, there are other roads like that. I am hopeful that there would be more consultation, coordination and collaboration between the entities. I am urging less use of cell phones by drivers. Sir, a few weeks ago, I saw a Transport Board driver with a bus three-quarters full and a cell phone in one hand and, Sir, that bothered me.

Mr. President, yesterday I saw a driver. I almost said a lady - I do not want to discriminate but she is a good driver, I think because she had about five children in a nice van and she was handling the wheel with one hand, seeking to make a movement from a major road on to a minor road, she had the cell phone on one hand and the right hand conducting the steering wheel.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Sir, that is why I said she was a good driver but it is dangerous. I would urge our drivers to drive at a respectable distance behind the vehicle in front of you. I would like to see us being more considerate and understanding at roundabouts. If you come down the hill from Simpson Motors, a lot of traffic comes from Hinds Hill, heading towards Warrens Polyclinic and that creates a bottleneck there, and drivers come down and cannot get ahead because above is blocked and rather than leave enough space for vehicles to come down from Simpsons Motor and those wanting to go up Hinds Hill, the roads continue to be blocked. Sir, we need to be more considerate.

Mr. President, I have just said that I urge the Ministry of Transport and Works to work closely with the National Conservation Commission and with the farmers in this country because many of our farmers have failed to replant their "Khus-Khus" grass on the hedgerows and water finds its way off the fields washing a lot of mud into the road and a lot of the road are being dug up because a lot of water is no longer finding its way into wells and into gutters that used to be clean years ago and this is why we see so much damage to our roads. Mr. President, it takes a lot of cooperation between and among the various Ministries.

Mr. President, with those few words, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR Hon. H.LaV. BENN, the SENATE resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT: The Senate is in Committee.

Clause 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR Hon. H.LaV. BENN, Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT reported the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR Hon. H.LaV. BENN, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Transport Board (Amendment) Act, 2008.

ORDER NO. 4

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING UNDER THE SPECIAL LOANS ACT, CAP.105 BY THE GOVERNMENT OF \$35 million FROM THE INTERNATIONAL BANK FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING AND IMPLEMENTING THE SECOND HIV/AIDS PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROJECT.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Boyce.

SENATOR the Hon. D.W. BOYCE: Mr. President, a few months ago, Parliament of the country adopted the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan and the National HIV/AIDS Policy Framework. Sir, in that framework it was opined that HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death in this country among the group of people 15 and 44 years of age and there was an estimate of 1.7 per cent of people in the population living with HIV/AIDS in 2004.

16:20

During the course of last year, the first project funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development was completed, and recommendations were made that we move onto a Phase 2 of a second project, to continue this programme of trying to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in this country.

The objectives of the second project are to increase the knowledge within the community in the transmission mechanisms and how to prevent HIV as well as other sexually transmitted diseases. Secondly, to effect proactive behaviours to prevent and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Thirdly, to strengthen the treatment, care and support services for those persons living with HIV.

Fourthly, to boost the education opportunities for those persons.

Fifth, to build capacity and strengthen the institutions, both Government and private sector that cater to the effective and similar programmes for these persons.

Sixth, to strengthen the institution's structures to enable us to have better and more successful data and surveillance of the problem in Barbados.

Mr. President, the matter of reducing the incidence of HIV/AIDS is not a simple matter, but it is a matter that we have to go at for our resources, because it is a very expensive ailment from the emotional, social and economic side. The Estimates in 2004, the expenditure on HIV in a year is equivalent to \$10.3 million. If one were to capitalise that, with inflation and the incidence is increasing year after year, we did nothing that would put the capital value of such expenditure close to \$2 million in my Estimates.

Sir, apart from the economic cost of treatment, there is also the loss of productive time of those persons who are suffering from the disease. That must, given the percentage of the population that we hear is infected with HIV/AIDS, also contribute an equal amount, in my view, to what the cost of maintenance and treatment would be.

There is a matter of the loss of time of those family members who care for these persons. Of course, the emotional suffering and social suffering that we all go through when the situations arise.

Mr. President, the current Administration was pleased to continue the work started last year, and to get this second loan from the World Bank concluded in good time so that we could continue the programme of trying to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country.

The total programme of \$35 million of which there was a small front end fee of \$87 500; there are some fees for consultants of US\$3.5 million; the rest of the money, \$21.4 million is for the purchase of goods and other services in the execution of the programmes.

The funds are expected to be disbursed over five years and between now and 2013. The interest rate is London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR), plus 2 per cent of the fixed rate, and the loan would be repaid over 30 years at the rate of 2 per cent of the principal amount outstanding on each payment date, with two payment dates per year being February and August 15 in each year.

Mr. President, the loan agreements have to be ratified and executed by February 8, 2010, the latest, and ideally within 90 days within the signing of the loan at the end of September.

I therefore, would like to recommend to this House that this Resolution be adopted and so move that this Resolution be now passed.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Millington.

SENATOR the Reverend P.A.V. MILLINGTON: Mr. President, I just want to speak briefly about AIDS and my concerns. Only yesterday I saw a very beautiful attractive lady who is HIV positive. This is a fact. She has no shortage of boyfriends. She said bluntly to one person, "Somebody gave it to me, and I am going to give it to somebody".

My concern is, she is not the only person that has this mindset in Barbados. Only recently it was publicised that 800 diagnosed positive did not return for treatment. That is a frightening statistic. It is not that we should shut shop and do nothing about it. The fact that even though we are spending these large sums of money, except there is a change in lifestyle we are doomed.

I remember the words of Mr. Slosberg, years ago, which evoked some controversy. I always felt there is an underground Barbados. We have an underground society that a lot of people do not know about and the reality on the ground is, there are many young people who loathe the use of contraceptives, mainly condoms, and they have no problems at all.

They are irresponsible in their behaviour and many times they behave as if my friend can catch it, but not me. Sir, when I saw the lady I was in shock, not a blemish on her skin, not a mark or spot and she changes boyfriends on a regular basis. It was confirmed to me yesterday, and she said it bluntly, "somebody gave it to me, and I am going to give it".

I am going to be very brief on this. Despite the large sums of money that we are spending and our desire to have AIDS controlled, except there is a change in lifestyle in Barbados, we are looking at something catastrophic. I do not want to sound dramatic, but in addition to the lost of revenue, care of sick persons and the cost of the drugs that are used, we are looking at people signing their death warrant. They are having a good time. It is literally eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we shall all die.

Sir, I really believe this is a serious thing. I do not know what we can do. We can continue to urge people about lifestyles but it seems to make no difference. It is if people in Barbados, or people around the world, let me deal

with Barbados that I know about. The younger generation seem to have a death wish.

Asides.

SENATOR the Reverend P.A.V. MILLINGTON: It seems to me that they have a death wish. They have no intention of changing their lifestyle, so we have to brace for the worse while we do the best we can. I am hoping that we can spread the message wherever we can, youth groups and church groups, but I do not know what to say in this Honourable Chamber because people have made up their minds, like, I want to die. You cannot tell me. It is my life and I am going to live my life. You cannot tell me anything about it. That is not the first person that I heard, for a fact, who was ill or diagnosed with HIV as positive and said the same thing, "somebody gave me, I am going to give it to as many people". It is a frightening thing.

Sir, I was in entertainment after leaving school, 1968/1969. I have played in the Calypso Tent. I have played in every major hotel in Barbados, including many of the Embassies in Barbados, and the lifestyle is the same.

16.30 p.m.

People are just doing whatever they want. I do not want to talk about rape, because that is the most horrible thing where you can be raped and be infected. It was not willingly, and it was not voluntarily.

I am just hoping to bring a measure of sobriety and thoughtfulness in this whole subject of HIV/AIDS. Even though we mean well at heart, we want people to change. We want to prevent it through medication and counseling but it seems to me that the people have made up their minds.

I have been told by one or two young ladies who have been intimate with their boyfriends, that the boyfriends insist that they do not wear condoms. Things like that, so even though a person may try to be responsible, the other partner is saying, I do not want it that way.

Sir, all I can say is that we will try to do the best we can. We have to pray and counsel. We cannot throw up our hands in desperation. It is critical. This only came home to me this week, when the person stopped my vehicle and said, you see that person over there, not a spot, not a blemish and, Sir, it is frightening. I hope that we will all continue to pray and do the best we can to halt this scourge in our society.

I thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Marville.

SENATOR R. O. MARVILLE: Thank you, Mr. President.

I had not intended to say anything on this, but I do want to say I think that successive Governments in Barbados have made a serious attempt at stemming the problem. I think there has been some success but I believe, myself, that the level of success is way below, for instance, where a country like Uganda has achieved.

I think Uganda achieved that success because they understood the culture where the ailment was spreading and they dealt with it. I think we can preach at them, talk to them but unless we can infiltrate the group that puts the idea in the heads of the leaders, we are not going to change the situation at the base.

We have all sorts of statistics. We know all sorts of things. We know that the vast majority of people with HIV/AIDS are between 15 and 49 years of age. This tells us something immediately. We are dealing with a workforce or the potential workforce. We are therefore dealing not with a decimation of the population, but with a decimation of the significant segment of the working population. Therefore, it is something that concerns us all. We have to infiltrate the culture, work with it and try to change it. This is one thing.

We ourselves have to change. The fundamental reality is that we are a society that, in several ways, is still Victorian in its overlay but extremely sexual at the base. We refuse to listen. I have said before in this Chamber, that I have known of cases, where there is sexual activity going on at our schools, in places like the playing pavilion, which I thought was sacred. You did not even say a bad word in the pavilion. It was part of a sort of higher experience.

We are not looking at those things. We are not trying to do anything about them. I know of young women who practically use abortion as a form of contraception. They have had abortions two and three times in a year. One cannot seriously tell me they do not understand what they are doing. The point is, we are not getting to these people. We are not talking to them. Sir, not only are we not talking to them, but we do not recognise that one of the fundamental problems with the 800 people who are out there, is that somehow they felt ostracised by the society.

Sir, until we can recognise that these people are like us, if less fortunate, and deal with them as people and understand the realities of the ailment, so that we do not feel, well, I cannot sit on the bus with this person because he or she has HIV/AIDS, or that sort of absurd behavior, or I do not want that child in a school with my child, until we can get beyond that and understand the sort of problem that they have, we are unlikely to be able to make decent contact with them.

Again, I am in support of the Resolution because I think this is a battle we have to win. If we lose, the society loses a great deal of its population and its workforce, and in several cases, a great deal of its mind.

Thank you, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Inniss.

SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS: Thank you, Mr. President.

I rise briefly to also support the Resolution, as it relates to the special loans to help facilitate the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Programme. I wish to echo what has been said here before, and to offer my very small contribution.

Indeed, as has been said by some of the speakers before, we have a problem. The expenditure seems high. We have loss of productivity. We have strains on our society. We have strains on our families. We have the emotional suffering that is touching homes and persons all around. We have the realities that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is still increasing. We have in this place and in the Other Place, in times before, persons who have been saying the same points with all determination and conviction that something has to be done, as far as HIV/AIDS is concerned. Something has to be done as far as mind sets are concerned and to change them. We have heard all, such as how important it is to drill home a change in behaviour that it is a serious matter, so seen in the monies that are being allocated for it, Sir. Yet, the reality is that the HIV/AIDS epidemic is continuing.

Mr. President, I am totally applauding the injection of funds to assist, and applauding the efforts of all those persons who are working in the programme for HIV/AIDS prevention and, more so, speaking in my small way that there can be change. It has to be, for sure, a change in behaviour.

Sir, I am of the firm conviction that more has to be done to have a change in mind set and attitude towards HIV/AIDS. I think this can be done. Sir, with all the effort and work that is being placed, I do not think it is reaching, as has been said before. We have a serious problem within the communities. I traverse communities in the areas that I travel in St. Michael North East, where young people do not care. How do we reach them? Sir, in my very short submission, we have to find a way to reach them.

Sir, I think that the concept of self worth and self value is too little in our society and I would implore all of those who are involved in this HIV/AIDS programme. Sir,

the Commission has \$35 million to be targeted towards improving self worth. It has to be teaching all those who make themselves susceptible to HIV/AIDS to understand the values of their own worth; to understand the fight; to help those community workers, those coaches of little groups within the different housing units. They are starting programmes. They develop programmes for communities to help those young people. I think that message has to go to them. Let them also invoke a change in attitude.

Mr. President, I know people say that I get too scientific with this, but I will not apologise because I think for those who say so, it is a matter of ignorance. I have seen persons change their attitude towards HIV/AIDS because they simply better understand what it is. There is an ignorance, and I do not mean that in any derogatory sense, about what is HIV/AIDS. Yes, we know the speeches about using condoms but they do not understand what it is doing.

Sir, from my own experience, I have seen that it has brought about change. Persons who are at university and have conducted courses came to me and said that after that course, they see things differently. Many Barbadians do not clearly understand what it is doing. If we carry a programme to target that and it has developed more self worth in them. I guarantee that there will be more change towards self worth in the future.

16:40:05

We do not have to be scientists to get this concept. Senator Thompson went out in the sun just now and I am sure that some of her DNA is mutated, because that is a natural phenomenon, and her body is fighting now to make changes and corrections to that. I am not going to reduce my harping on that. Your body fights every germ and every problem that comes your way on a daily basis. All the struggles that are encapsulated within your body make a difference.

Young people need to understand that HIV is just a DNA or a RNA wrapped around a protein and when it goes into your body, it changes your whole body form, it tricks every single cell of your body.

Mr. President, in simplistic science, I am not talking technical, when they see these little creatures under a microscope, when they understand how their bodies are taken over and what their body does to fight this disease, when they understand all the different scientific approaches that teach children what HIV does to them, what they have taken in and what this disease can do, makes a difference because they now realise that they are indeed marvellously and wonderfully made.

Mr. President, I feel very firmly that this is indeed one area that we have not exhausted and we have not carried this message sufficiently. Most persons involved in the HIV campaign are doctors, psychiatrists and persons of that background who continue to carry that message. We have tried many other ways, but for some reason they are not really getting there. This is one approach that has not been exhausted.

Mr. President, I am hoping that those in charge take this on as well and try to make a change towards dealing with this HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Does any other Senator wish to make a contribution. It appears not. Senator Boyce.

SENATOR the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Mr. President, I thank you very much. I just want to thank Honourable Senators who have contributed to this Resolution for the points made particularly in understanding the culture of people.

Mr. President, this loan covers a programme that has been defined very carefully and quite widely so as to capture all the different forms in which one could reach people and interact with them and get them to understand the issues as they would affect them and their families.

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

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ORDER NO. 5 – RESOLUTION TO AUTHORISE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO RAISE ONE BILLION DOLLARS BY THE ISSUE OF TREASURY BILLS, TAX RESERVE CERTIFICATES AND TAX REFUND CERTIFICATES TO PAY OFF, AT MATURITY, BILLS ALREADY ISSUED AND OUTSTANDING

SENATOR the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: Mr. President, in introducing this Resolution to the Senate, I just wish to indicate that the current limit of the Treasury Bills, Tax Reserve Certificates and Tax Refund Certificates borrowing by Government is \$700 million and the Resolution is to move that limit from \$700 million to \$1 000 million.

It is not an indication, Mr. President, that one would go tomorrow and borrow an additional \$300 million. It is to provide a limit above which the Government cannot borrow by way of Treasury Bills or Tax Reserves Certificate or Tax Refund Certificates. It enables us to be

able to fund the short-term needs of Government's operations.

Mr. President, the Treasury Bills mechanism is used for Government to manage the timing differences largely between when expenditure occurs and when revenue comes into Government's coffers. Those expenditures, in the case of recurring expenditures, are steady expenditures every month. In the case of capital expenditure, they can be lumpy expenditures which even though they may be financed by way of loans or by capital receipts, one needs to get their projects executed and to be able to execute them on time and to save cost and so on, so you have got to be able to fund them. The Treasury Bills are used to provide that short term liquidity for Government to run its operations properly.

Mr. President, as the size of the Government's budget grows then the need for liquidity also grows, to some extent. This limit has not been changed for a very long time. In 1994, the limit was \$700 million. The time has come for that limit to move bearing in mind that at the end of 2007, the Treasury Bills outstanding were \$690 319 000 which is just \$9 681 000 short of what the limit is. Mr. President, as Government's expenditure gets bigger and the projects we have to do come on stream, there has got to be some liquidity to be able to run the programmes smoothly without the usual hiccoughs occurring in the execution of those projects.

Mr. President, the figure of \$1 000 million is not a figure that is out of line with what traditionally has been the case.

Mr. President, \$1 000 million in Treasury Bills limit represents about 29 per cent of the Estimates of Expenditure for the country for this fiscal year. In 1994, the limit was \$700 million and the expenditure was just over \$1 billion and the limit then represented 65.1 per cent of the expenditure in 1994.

Mr. President, the change in limit at this time does not take it outside the bonds of reasonableness. Indeed, it is far lower than it would have been in 1994.

Further, Mr. President, the limit that we are asking the approval of this Senate is at a maximum of 29 per cent of this year's expenditure and as the years go on would become a smaller and smaller percentage. Indeed, this potential figure is actually less than the ratio of Treasury Bills issued and actually outstanding to expenditure in the last eight or nine years. Indeed, in one year, we were up and over 30 per cent of the Treasury Bill outstanding as a percentage of the expenditure. Mr. President, we do have the financial situation in the world to deal with which will impact on Government's revenues and which would require Government to continue to do some things to keep

employment from declining drastically and to keep the economy growing at least steady. Therefore, it is prudent at this time to move that limit from \$700 million to \$1 000 million or \$1 billion.

With those few words, I therefore move that this Resolution do now pass.

4.50 p.m.

Wednesday, December 17, 2008

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Newton.

SENATOR the Hon. Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution. Sir, there is one simple point I would like to make. Sir, it is refreshing and educational to hear the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance speaking on financial matters because the Minister is well aware of the facts and speaks concisely and to the point. I would wish that we would hear him in the future speaking more frequently on financial matters. Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR the Hon. D. W. BOYCE: 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 – SECOND READING OF THE ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008.

SENATOR the Hon. H. LaV. BENN: Mr. President, this Bill before this Honourable Senate to amend the Road Traffic Act, to make a driving licence valid for a period of one year, three years or five years, from the date of issue, and will allow the holder of a driving licence to renew the licence for a period of one year, three years or five years. Previously persons had the opportunity to pay either one year, for those whose pockets could only afford one year, or perhaps it was a bit more economical to renew it for three years and save a few dollars. As a matter of fact, it also saves that driver from having to go to the Licensing Authority every year, although the danger is that in that three-year span, drivers oftentimes forgot the renewal date.

I am hoping now we are doing the one year, three years and five years, that it is somewhat economical because there is initially \$50 fee for one year; \$125 for three years, a saving of \$25; and \$200 for five years, with a further saving, averaging \$40 a year. There are some of us who could manage \$50 for one year and there are some who could manage to pay for five years.

Mr. President, I believe we ought to support this Bill before us. I now beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Thompson.

SENATOR Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, I want to make a very brief interjection, Sir, clearly I have to support the Amendment to the legislation. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill goes back to pre-January 16 and therefore it is something which had a history in the Cabinet in which I sat. The point I want to make is that, and it is a suggestion, for what it is worth, to those who are amenable to listen to suggestions and feel that there can be merit in those suggestions from This Side or from persons outside the umbrella of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. President, this was a matter which went to Select Committee and members of the public were invited to make comments. Even though I was a Member of Cabinet at that time, I sought to write to the Clerk of the House, to whom public comments were to be tendered. The Clerk told me that he never got my letter. In fact, I was making suggestions to the Select Committee which was reviewing the legislation. That suggestion I would want to repeat here.

Mr. President, Senator Benn made the point that there are increments of one, three and five years, for which drivers can pay for their licence, but I think that as a Barbados Labour Party Government we missed an opportunity, which I think continues to be missed.

Mr. President, I wish to apologise for the break. As I indicated to you, when I left London it was minus 4 degrees and going down to minus 12, so it was horrendously cold. I came back into the Barbadian sunshine, very glad to have it, but the change of weather has affected me.

Mr. President, the point I was making, which I think both Administrations are missing an opportunity, is that the way the legislation is currently structured where drivers pay their road tax at one time, their licence at another time, and their insurance at another time. I believe we should put a system in place where the paying of these three things converges with your birth date. Sir, I think you have a week's grace period after your birth date to bring your licence into order. I think we should put a system in place, and it could be done. There would be some overlap, you would have to organise with the insurance companies and arrange for people to be covered during the hiatus period but it would be convenient if all of them could have the single date coinciding with their birth date.

I have had the experience of not paying my road tax, not because I wanted to be criminal but not recognising that I had paid the licence and the insurance but that the road tax was another date from the two of those things altogether. Of course, the sticker does not come off the windshield. With time, it fades in the sun and I do not

know any driver who checks it religiously every month to see that they are still in good standing. Therefore, if there could evolve a system where all of the road traffic requirements coincide with persons birth date, so that persons would know that their car is insured for a particular period that perhaps runs from such a date.

Mr. Speaker, even if the licence coincides but not the renewal for the insurance, the process becomes easier to manage but it does present a difficulty and an inconvenience when at three different times during the year you have to be remembering the three different dates and to organise them at different places, at different times and so on. Therefore, if we could have a convergence of the system which warrants for convenience to the motorist, it might be better.

Mr. President, perhaps too, with the licence card, which I am assuming should be computerised, it should automatically allow a person reading it on the system to be able to tell whether or not all payments were made. Sir, I believe it could be done by one swipe of the card. I believe all the things could coincide and for the convenience of the authorities, for example, the police...

Mr. President, when a police stops you and asks you to produce your licence or wants to check your road tax, that police and you are in essence having to check three different things, for three different times, whereas, if there was a co-ordinated or convergent system where you use a single card that would allow the police to know whether you are up to date, within the Law, or outside the Law, that would become easier for the management of the system.

5.00 p.m.

There is no overall oversight of the three systems together so people are able to get away with it and there are a tremendous number of people driving without proper insurance coverage, putting a large number of people at risk.

Sir, that reminds me that mine is due so I am going to have to pay mine. I think I paid half of it before I traveled but I know I have to pay the balance. Sir, the point is that unless you are one of these well-organised persons, you can easily miss one of the trigger dates because, while the license coincides with something that comes back to you very easily, your birth date, the others do not.

I would just wish to suggest to the Administration that for the management of the system from the perspective of the individual and the oversight from the police and the Licensing Authority that if we could have a convergence system with a single card that allows the authorities to be able to read immediately your status on everything that would, in fact, make good sense, good management, reduce

cost and ensure that persons are kept within the Law and are much easier to police.

Sir, that is my single contribution to this. I am sorry that the Clerk did not receive my letter at the time when it was going through previously, and I would hope that at some time it would be considered since I think it could be a useful management tool to implement it in that way.

Mr. President, I am much obliged.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Before Senator Marville takes the Floor, I just want to confirm if it happens again, that I have the assurance that the Clerk would see to it that your letter reaches the appropriate place.

Senator Marville.

SENATOR R.O. MARVILLE: Mr. President, serendipity has befallen me as my licence, insurance and road tax, all fall on the same date. I think it is because I lived so much outside of Barbados that when I came back with a car, it was about the right time and everything fitted into place. However, I do see the point.

I would like to go further, however, and say that now that we have a card, there could be a lot more information put on that card. I know the problem is, different people want different numbers over all sorts of ridiculous things. Everybody has an identification number and there is no dispute about it. We could add four figures, no more, to that identification number, which would give an indication whether the person, who is driving is a diabetic, has particular allergies, et cetera; things that are important, in case of an accident.

Sir, I am not inventing anything, since I have lived outside a lot, I have been in places where this is the norm. Sir, in Scandinavia, if you take your driver's licence, it tells whatever the authorities need to know. It does not tell anybody else because they do not know the code and they cannot read to assist them unless they can hack into the mainframe. Sir, the point is that it is an extremely useful tool.

Mr. President, additionally this question of the sticker on the windshield has annoyed me for the longest time. If you take two places, Surinam and Maryland, they both use a colour-coded sticker, which gives a number indicating the month, a colour with the year written on it and it is fastened to the front and back of the car and the police would know automatically what the colour is; what the year is and he does not have to stop you to look at a bit of useless paper, which you cannot read after several months, anyway, so you then have to go back and look for other papers and things of this sort.

Sir, this is ridiculous. If we are going to do something, let us do it in the fashion of a developed country. Sir, we are always talking about this developed State and I should make the point that these are the things that distinguish them from us.

Mr. President, I believe these are fairly simple things. A sticker, which is made of a plastic material, a bright colour; blue, red or green; identifies the year, the month, and therefore, it is not something you are going to miss easily. It is very clear too that this sticker must come from the Licencing Authority so you cannot get a sticker unless your licence is paid; your insurance is paid and your driver's licence is up to date. It is a very straightforward issue.

Mr. President, if you did this sort of thing, apart from coordinating the dates as previous speakers indicated, I think we would be well on our way.

Sir, I support the Resolution.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Hutson.

SENATOR J.A.C. HUTSON: Thank you, Mr. President. I support what Senator Marville and Senator Thompson just said but what worries me about what Senator Thompson said is that with these three bills coming on one day, poor John might not be able to afford one payment, so that could have an effect on many persons on the island.

Mr. President, this may be a stupid question but, as you know, when you reach the age of 70, you have to go to the doctor each year to have your eyes check...

Mr. PRESIDENT: I wish to draw to your attention that the President has reached the age of 70. I had to go to a doctor and he had to give me a certificate that I am competent to drive. You soon will need a certificate to say that I am competent to sit here.

SENATOR J.A.C. HUTSON: Sir, what I am getting at is this. If you are age 69, can you renew your licence for five years? Sir, as I have said, it may be a stupid question but I would like to know.

SENATOR Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. I take the point that Senator Hutson is making about hardship but with your insurance, you can pay in instalments. I think that an instalment plan can be worked out to facilitate those persons on whom hardship might fall. I do not think it is beyond us to have a better managed system; better regulated system and to put in place the mechanism for giving support to people.

Sir, it might not be a large percentage of people. It may be a small percentage of people, who may have genuine hardship when the three coincide, particularly, given the increases in the last Budget, Sir.

I am much obliged, Sir.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Does any other Senator wish to make a contribution? Senator Benn.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, again I want to thank Honourable Senators for their contributions. The proposal by Senator Thompson about road tax and licensing is a good one but I am sure there are things that would have to be worked out. Sir, whereas, we pay our road taxes and our licences with the Authority, our insurances are paid with various companies and then there are times, when according to the age of the vehicle, you have to get it checked for road worthiness and have it valued.

Sir, I do believe it would take the Supervisor of Insurance to work closely with persons in the Ministry of Transport and Works, who are responsible for these things. It is a good suggestion and I believe it could work.

Senator Thompson, I did not know that if you did not pay, you would be a criminal. Is it true that if you did not pay for a period of time, you would become a criminal?

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation. I think that Senator Benn is attempting to be playful and facetious at this Christmas time. The truth is that it remains an offence under the Road Traffic Act, and the penalties are fining and confining under that Act. Whereas, a Magistrate, properly directed, if you forgot to pay for six months or a year and it was a genuine error, might not want to confine you. Sir, the truth is that somebody could get it in their head to confine you for not having paid, if in fact the Act does allow.

17:10

It is a criminal offence, given the way the Road Traffic Act is structured. The truth is, you may want to look at whether to take it out of that category of offences, because in a lot of them road traffic offences are really financial and economic breaches more than attempts to do wrong. If you do not pay your road tax on time, or if you do not pay your licence on time...now insurance is another matter because that is the most grave of the road traffic payments which you need to make, because in the event you do not pay, somebody can be grievously injured.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss H.E. THOMPSON: Sir, I take the caution of the Chair.

You might want to look at moving it out so that people in genuine error are not unduly criminalised or penalised by conviction under the Road Traffic Act.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: I thank the Senator for that explanation. I also support Senator Marville in his urge to have more information placed on the card. I think it is a good idea. Again, having issued the card, I wish that these things would have been taken into consideration early. I am sure that we can add to it.

Sir, Senator Hutson, when you get to that magic figure of 69, perhaps you might want to be one short of the three score and ten that the Almighty has given to us. It might be a heads up for us to think a little more positive as to whether we should extend it for five years. Maybe it did not tell you at that point in time that at 69 you need to keep your head up, anyhow.

Sir, I want to make a call on the Licensing Authority, regarding the outstations, particularly at Hometown. I go there from time to time, as a resident of St. Thomas, to pay my road tax. In previous years, driving a company's car, I did not have to do that. It would have been done at the office for me. I do recognise the cramped facilities at Hometown. The very people who work there work in cramped facilities. When you have to go up the stairs there, if you are 69, Senator Hutson, you have a different problem.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Sometimes the lines get very long and stretch all down the steps. I am urging the authorities to take another look at the facilities at Hometown, to see if another place can be found not because of the stairs, but of the cramped facilities.

Asides.

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: People should be able to even pay online. People can do a lot of things online.

I think that we would have to talk with our people who are versed with the technology, to see if they can upgrade the technology to allow for online payments, et cetera.

Sir, I am happy with the support given to the Bill and now beg that the Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

COMMITTEE

On the motion of SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN, Mr. PRESIDENT left the Chair and the Senate went into Committee on the Bill, Madam DEPUTY PRESIDENT in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Madam CHAIRMAN: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motionS of SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN, MADAM DEPUTY PRESIDENT 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 motion of SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR the Hon. H.LaV. BENN: Mr. President, this brings us to the end of Government Business for the day. I beg to move that the Senate do now adjourn sine die.

Mr. PRESIDENT: May I take this opportunity to wish all Senators and their families a very blessed Christmas and a very healthy and prosperous New Year.

I was also told that I must indicate to Honourable Senators that as they go down the stairs to collect their packages. Please get the packages as you leave. I am sure that they are going to make everybody happy.

The question that the Honourable Senate do now adjourn sine die was put to the Senate and agreed to and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.

16.20 p.m.

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Order No. 4, HIV/AIDS loan. The notice of the Resolution gives the borrowing as ‘US\$35 million’, the Order Paper title as ‘\$35 million’, and Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce’s breakdown mixes ‘\$87 500’, ‘US\$3.5 million’ and ‘\$21.4 million’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Opening. A heading ‘SENATE’ and a stray time ‘11.20 a.m.’ appear between the President’s announcement and the suspension of Standing Orders. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 6, Committee. The heading ‘COMMITTEE’ appears twice in succession, and the third reading is recorded in an ordinary paragraph. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Senators’ names. Senator Miss P. I. Inniss is once labelled ‘SENATOR Mrs. P. I. INNISS’, and Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn appears as ‘SENATOR the Hon. H.L. BENN’ in the PRESENT list and once as ‘Hon. H.LaV. BENN’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The Senate met on Wednesday, 17th December, 2008 at 11.10 a.m., with the President, His Honour Senator Dr. Branford M. Tait, in the Chair; prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah. Mr. President announced that Senators McClean, Derek Alleyne, Sandiford-Garner, Sir Roy Trotman, Kerry Symmonds and the Very Reverend H. E. Crichlow had asked to be excused. On the motion of Senator the Hon. H. LaV. Benn, Standing Orders 22(1) and 45 were suspended, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008 was read a first time, and notice was given of three Resolutions.

Senator Benn moved the Resolution approving the Judges Remuneration and Pensions (Conditions of Service and Allowances) (Amendment) Regulations, 2008, which had not been moved at the Sitting of 10th December, and it was agreed to. He then moved the Resolution vesting 4 827 square metres of Crown land at Six Roads, St. Philip, in the National Housing Corporation, explaining that the matter

dated from 1980 and that 10 low-income houses had been built there without the occupants being able to obtain title; he described the HELP programme and 500 lots at \$5 a square foot. Senator Miss H. E. Thompson objected to his remark about the former Government ‘securing themselves’, and he withdrew it. Senator Miss P. I. Inniss and Senator the Rev. P. A. V. Millington supported the Resolution.

Senator Miss H. E. Thompson, a former Minister of Housing and Lands, set out what had been done in housing between 1994 and 2007, including the Housing Credit Fund, the land bank and the transfer of titles, and argued that tenants still without conveyances should have their payments refunded. Exchanges with Senator Inniss led her to withdraw a remark, and Mr. President appealed to Senators to maintain the Senate’s tradition of debate. After the suspension Senator D. K. A. Griffith, Senator P. W. B. Gilkes and Senator J. A. C. Hutson supported the Resolution, Senator Hutson raising the hardship of the Zone One policy. In reply Senator Benn listed housing projects to begin in January; Mr. President ruled that a point of order by Senator the Hon. Mrs. V. E. Newton was not a point of order. The Resolution was agreed to.

On the Transport Board (Amendment) Bill, 2008, which increases the Board from seven to nine members, Senator the Hon. A. B. Walters spoke of the need for public transport and a fleet maintenance programme, and Senator Inniss, Senator Newton and the Deputy President, Her Honour Senator Miss K. F. Ifill, also spoke. The Bill passed all stages.

Senator the Hon. D. W. Boyce moved the Resolution approving borrowing from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the Second HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Project, noting an estimated 1.7 per cent of the population living with HIV/AIDS in 2004; Senator Millington, Senator R. O. Marville and Senator Inniss spoke, and it was agreed to. Senator Boyce then explained that the Resolution authorising the Minister of Finance to raise \$1 000 million by Treasury Bills, Tax Reserve Certificates and Tax Refund Certificates raised a limit of \$700 million unchanged since 1994, against \$690 319 000 outstanding at the end of 2007; it was agreed to.

Senator Benn moved the second reading of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2008, allowing driving licences to be issued and renewed for one, three or five years. Senator Thompson proposed that licence, road tax and insurance dates be aligned, Senator Marville that more information be placed on the licence card, and Senator Hutson asked about older drivers. The Bill passed all

stages, Mr. President wished Senators a blessed Christmas, | and the Senate was adjourned sine die.

|