THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, May 23, 2000

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, May 23, 2000.

PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M. (Cantab.)
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs) (Minister of the Civil Service)
Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs) (Leader of the House)
Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)
Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, K.A., Q.C., LL.B.
Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)
Mr. G. W. PAYNE, LL.B
Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of the Environment, Energy and Natural Resources)
Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform)
Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Hon. R. D. MARSHALL (Minister of Public Works and Transport)
Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation)
Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN
Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B.
Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)
Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS
Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.
Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)
Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.
Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)
Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil., (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)
Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc. (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, May 09, 2000.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, May 09, 2000, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let these Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I am commanded to lay the following:

Parliament (Administration) (Salaries) Order, 2000;

Value Added Tax (Refund) (LIAT (1974) Limited) Order, 2000;

Value Added Tax (Refund) (Personalized Executive Services) Order, 2000;

Annual Report and Accounts of the Barbados National Bank 1999;

Annual Report of the Central Bank for 1999;

and on behalf of the Minister of Tourism the 20th Annual Report for the Port Authority 1998.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the following Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of the day's Sitting: Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now the order of the day.

ORDER NO. 5 – THE PENSIONS ACT, CAP. 25

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the Honourable Prime Minister, who is not yet in his place because he only came back to the island last night from his trip to Bahamas and China, I am pleased to move the amendment to the Pensions Act, Cap. 25.

This is a very short piece of legislation but in the context of Government's policy to Public Sector Reform, it is an important piece of legislation. It is really just two clauses and its purpose is to make provisions for persons who were casual employees in the Government Service on or before July 01, 1971 and who have now been appointed or will be appointed as Public Officers to retire at the age of 55 years with a pension under the same circumstances in which Public Officers receive a pension on retiring at that age.

In Clause 2, it is provided that this section applies with the necessary modifications to a person who:

(A) was employed in the Public Service as a casual employee on or before July 01, 1971;

(B) who was or is appointed as a Public Officer in accordance with the Civil Establishment Act or who is appointed to an unestablished office as defined under that Act.

That really is the amendment, but one has to set that amendment in the historical context of this matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on September 29, 1997 the Right Honourable Prime Minister announced in his Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals for that year, that Government was proceeding to implement a programme of converting public and casual employees of the Crown to the status of Public Officers with a view of enhancing their security of tenure as well as making adequate provisions for their retiring benefits.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that for many years prior to the Civil Establishment (Amendment) Act, 1998 and the Pensions Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1998 there were various categories of Government employees. First of all, you had public officers who were in essence the full time employees of the Government and who were provided for under the Civil Establishment legislation, Chapter 21.

Secondly, you had public employees who were full time permanent employees whose posts were not provided for by a Civil Establishment Order but who nevertheless enjoyed terms and conditions the same as or similar to public officers except that they have never been contributors to a thing called the Widows and Children Pension Fund. I hope that this widows and orphans business will soon disappear from not only the nomenclature of the Public Service but generally. I believe that some work is being done in the Ministry of the Civil Service and the Accountant General's Office to look at the Widows and Children Pension Fund. I would like to see the back of it. This is a personal view.

In respect of public employees who were the second category workers, those posts were listed as an appendix to the Schedule of Personal Emoluments which we get with the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. Those public employees could be either monthly or weekly paid.

Thirdly, you had temporary employees and there was no precise definition of a temporary employee. It usually referred to unappointed officers working in posts established under a Civil Establishment Order or unappointed officers who are in posts which have not been established under a Civil Establishment Order but which were created on a temporary basis by the Ministry of the Civil Service.

The fourth category of worker in the Public Service is the casual employee. Again, as far as I am aware, there is no statutory definition of casual employee, but by designation

and by practice, casual employees were those whose services were only required when and if there was work to be done. They were paid usually on an hourly or weekly basis.

We have had casual employees as part of the Public Service perhaps as far back as the fifties and the sixties. Many of them worked with the Ministry of Public Works under its various designations dealing with MCW, MTW or now MPT. There was one significant dissimilarity between casual employees and other workers in the public service. Unlike public officers, they enjoyed no security of tenure and until the enactment of the Casual Employees Pension Act in 1962, they had very little to look forward to in terms of retiring benefits.
11.30 a.m.

In 1979, the then Solicitor General was asked for advice on the definition of casual employee and he said among other things and I quote:

> "The term 'casual' would appear to convey something in the nature of chance employment."

He went on to say and I quote again:

> "A washerwoman who habitually goes to a private house to wash clothes every Friday and on alternate Tuesdays is not engaged in casual employment because it is stable as well as periodical."

However, that may be, in 1982, three years later another opinion was sought of the Solicitor General and he advised, and I quote:

> "If the employment is periodical and regular then there is stability and hence the employment is not of a casual nature."

So the tenure of these casuals has always been shrouded in some element of doubt. Prior to the establishment of the National Insurance Scheme, casual workers received retirement benefits under the Casual Employees Pension Act, Cap. 20 in the Laws of Barbados.

Those casuals who joined the service after July 1971 only received a gratuity payment under that Act because they would now receive pensions under the National Insurance Scheme. When they retire as public officers there will be some differences in their retirement awards, as is pretty evident. Take a maid, in Government who works for 400 months, thirty-three and a third years, if she is classified as a public officer her retirement benefits, based on an average annual salary of $14 000 would give her a gratuity of approximately $29 000 and a reduced pension of $7 126. If she is classified as a casual employee her retirement benefits would be $12 000 gratuity and NIS pension of $8 500 approximately. If she were classified as a public officer she would get an additional benefit. She would be able to retire at 60 with full superannuation benefits while as a casual worker she would have to wait until she was 65 to receive a National Insurance pension.

The casual workers who were employed before July 1971 and who retire as public officers under the 1998 amending legislation will now be entitled to two pensions, a National Insurance pension and a Government pension. This brings some equality and fairness to the system because they are now given a right, equivalent to that of a public officer who has been in the service before September, 1976. So there are benefits in being a public officer and it is to the advantage of these casuals that they are put on a basis similar to that of public officer.

Two obvious benefits are, first of all, a greater security of tenure, in that, like public officers they can only be dismissed by the Governor-General acting on the advice of the Public Service Commission. Secondly, they will be entitled to additional sick leave. Whereas they got 14 days as casuals they will be entitled to 21 days as public officers.

It is anticipated by the Government that over time the category of casual worker will disappear and an option has been given to them to become public officers. That was considered necessary on the basis of legal advice that you could not dictate that they should become public officers. You had to give them a choice to make the decision as to whether they would opt to become public officers. I am advised, Sir, that they are going to be given one month on an appointed basis within which they will indicate whether they wish to exercise the option of becoming public officers.

In respect of statutory boards, I suppose this is something that we have to address. Employees of statutory boards, particularly where the statutory board does not have its own pension scheme, presently receive superannuation benefits under two Acts, the Statutory Board Casual Employees Pension Act, Cap. 383 and the Statutory Board Pension Act, Cap. 384. Under Cap. 383, the pensions are only paid to casual workers who were employed before November 1, 1975. Employees who joined the service of a scheduled statutory board after November 1975, receive pensions under the National Insurance Scheme when they reach age 65. The new legislative arrangements that have come into effect since 1998 will now see all employees of scheduled statutory boards receiving superannuation benefits under Cap. 384. So former casuals of statutory boards would be able to receive gratuity and pension at age 60.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this side we think that this change in the status of these workers is perhaps the most significant improvement in the conditions of service of Government employees. I think it can be said that the resulting benefits to these workers are probably four. First of all, they are no longer second class employees working only

where there is work to be done. They are now guaranteed year-round employment.

Secondly, their security of tenure is greatly enhanced and that is important. These casuals who are now converted into this new status have the opportunity to benefit from commercial activities. Let me put it another way. We know in our experience as MPs that we have been approached by some of these people who have gone to banks to raise loans and the banks are reluctant to give them loans because they had no security of tenure. All of that will change and their ability to get loans and for their own self-improvement and for example, the improvement of their houses and so on, will be greatly improved by the security of tenure which they have now been given because the banks will be able to treat them almost like permanent employees.
11.40 a.m.

Thirdly, I think that their retirement benefits are obviously greatly enhanced and in most cases, according to the analyses of the Ministry of the Civil Service, their retirement benefits will, in most cases, double under the new legislation from what they were likely to get before the law was changed by us in 1998.

Fourthly, they will be able to retire at age 60 and receive a Government pension – this is very important, Sir – they can retire at 60 and receive a Government pension up to age 65 at which point they will then start to receive the National Insurance pension. When they were casuals, before the change of this legislation, that five-year period, 60-65, was a period with which they had to go without a pension so that this is a great boom and benefit to these workers.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, since the legislation has come into effect about 4 000 workers have received letters of employment.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes, the majority of them have opted to come over to the new scheme. That is a significant number of persons who have been contributing in the public service of this country for almost over 20 years. I am grateful to the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central who is whispering to me from his seat behind that that is what you could really call empowerment. It is a very profound thought, if I may say so to the Honourable Member.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will recall, Sir, that in our Manifesto of 1994, we committed ourselves to bringing new public service legislation. In particular a new Public Service Act. I do not believe that there is anyone in this House, on either side of this House, who will deny that it is absolutely necessary in the context of contemporary Barbados to have modern legislation regulating the operation of the public service. You cannot talk about public sector reform – and I am a cynic – but you cannot talk about public sector reform unless you look at a new legislative statutory framework for the operation of the public service. If we are to compete effectively in the new global dispensation, it is vital that we reform the public service not only in terms of its mechanisms, in terms of the procedures which beset the public service but we have to provide a new statutory framework recognising the rights of workers in the public service and recognising the changes in the status and the approach to public service employees.

Indeed, I am not sure that the General Orders under which public officers presently operate are relevant in today's society. There are aspects of the General Orders that offend me as a lawyer. I am not sure that the General Orders are in fact law. I do not see them have any statutory instrument number. The General Orders may well be rules of guidance for the good administration and governance of the public service but the General Orders need to be completely reformed and all of the legislation which relates to public officers.

It is a massive task because the legislation is to be found in a plethora of primary and secondary legislation. You will find things in the Civil Establishment Act, then in several Civil Establishment Orders and so on. Then you have the whole business of pensions – The Pensions Act, Cap. 25 and several Amendments and bits and pieces in Orders and so on. The reform of public sector legislation is not an easy matter because of its complexity and variety of legislation both of a primary and secondary nature.

In pursuance of our Manifesto commitment, which I believe we may have repeated in the Manifesto for January 1999 Elections, the Government has started the process of reform of public service legislation. On April 8, 1999, a Committee was set up under the Chairmanship of the present Head of Civil Service, Mr. Erskine Griffith, to draft a policy framework within which a new Public Service Act should be prepared.

I had to speak to somebody in the Press last week who told me about a piece of legislation which had nothing to do with me or with my Ministry and to explain to them the procedure. I do not think that there are many people in the public or in the Press who understand how legislation comes here. It bears repetition. I may not have ever said it in this House but I am going to say it now. The Press, who have a habit of calling me on Saturdays and Sundays and apologising, each time they call on Sunday they say we are sorry to call you. I say yes, because the paper on Monday has nothing, so you want a story, so you call me and disturb me on Saturday and Sunday. I see one or two here today, who can call me at any time, but they always want a story. I see three of them in here who can call me at any time.
11.50 a.m.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS : Somebody called me recently and asked me when am I bringing Seat Belt Legislation.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS : Sir, Seat Belt Legislation would be something that is required under the Road Traffic Act. The office the Attorney General does not have responsibility for the administration of the Road Traffic Legislation, that is the Ministry of Public Transport.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS : Sir, in that Ministry they would have to make a judgement as to whether Seat Belt Legislation is required. If in the Ministry of Transport, they think that it would enhance the safety of drivers to have Seat Belt Legislation, they would then prepare a policy paper, in that Ministry which would argue the case for or against legislation, bring it to Cabinet, with an invitation to Cabinet, to agree to the introduction of Seat Belt Legislation and if Cabinet agrees the invitation would then go on to say and to instruct the Attorney General to draft the appropriate legislation.

At that time having had a policy paper setting out, not only the arguments but also the basic content for the legislation, then we will, in our Ministry, be able to draft the legislation and discuss it with them. When they are satisfied, when it comes back the Attorney General will certify that it is in order for consideration by Cabinet, and if approved, may be introduced in Parliament. That is the procedure. Similarly for Health, Education or whatever Ministry from which it originates.

Now, Law Reform matters are different. Matters of Law Reform can originate in the office of the Attorney General under the Committee for Law Reform. Which is Chaired by Mr. Griffith, the Consultant to the Chief Parliamentary Council. Initial legislation must start with the Ministry that has responsibility for the subject and come as a policy paper. That is how Government policy then originates and when we collectively agree in Cabinet that this is a policy we want to follow, then it becomes collective policy for which we are all responsible as Members of the Cabinet.

Before we could determine the content and extent of new Public Service Legislation, we thought it appropriate to set up a Committee to hammer out the policy and the parameters of new Public Service Legislation. So the Committee set up under the Chairmanship of Mr. Griffith, is to develop a policy framework which will then come through the Ministry of the Civil Service to Cabinet, ultimately, for us to agree to the policy. If there is a mistake then we will issue the instruction for drafting.

Now that Committee which has been meeting and doing a lot of work has a number of persons on it who have vast experience both in the Public Service; the Private Sector and the Unions. For example, in addition to Mr. Griffith, you have the Cabinet Secretary; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the Civil Service; the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform, the Permanent Secretary, Foreign Affairs; The Chief Personnel Officer; The Chief Parliamentary Council; The Director of the Office of Public Sector Reform; Mr. Edward Bushell, Divisional Manager of Human Resources, Cable and Wireless Bartel; Mr. Patrick Frost, The General Secretary of CTUSAB; Mr. Joseph Goddard, The General Secretary of the NUPW; Mrs. Marguerite Estwick, of PriceWaterhouseCoopers; Mr. David Cumberbatch, I am not sure if he is still on, he used to be at the Tourism Authority but I think he has resigned; Dr. Neville Duncan was on but he has now gone as Professor to the Mona Campus; Dr. P. I. Gomes, Executive Director of CARICAD and Professor Fiadjoe, Professor of Public Law at the Cave Hill Campus of the West Indies, Faculty of Law. I gave you, Sir, because I do not think that we have ever given this information to the House.

The Terms of Reference of that Committee are:

(c) Accountability of public officers.

(b) The establishment of a code of ethics to guide public officers on standards of behaviour.

(c) The functions of the Commissions established for the management of the public service.

(d) The mechanisms for handling grievances.

(e) Appointment, promotion and discipline in the public service.

(f) The establishment of a Board of Permanent Secretaries and officers of related grade.

(g) The management of training in the public service.

(h) The establishment of a framework for staff relations in the public service.

(i) Misconduct.

(j) The conditions of service of public sector personnel.

(k) The structure of the public service.

(l) Safety in the public service.

Those are the broad Terms of Reference. So you will see it is a massive mandate that has been given to this Committee. They have broken themselves down into five sub-committees.

I have been advised that the work of this Committee is at a very enhanced stage and the report on the policy framework ought to be submitted to the Ministry by July this year, Sir. I want to make it clear that this is the policy framework. After that you will have to deal with the drafting of legislation. I do know that Professor Fiadjoe has some ideas about the drafting of the legislation. I am not sure where he will draw on for his precedent but the present Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Kenny Anthony, when he was a Member of the Faculty of Law staff at Cave Hill, had in fact drafted a new Public Service Act for St. Kitts. I am not sure if it was ever implemented but I have seen a draft. In the Region, Governments are looking at the reform of the Public Service and the enactment of 'modern' – I do not like the word 'modern'. Every generation says it is 'modern'. In 1879 they were saying they were 'modern'. In 1902 they were saying that they were 'modern' – contemporary legislation.
12.00 noon

I can also report, Sir, that with the assistance of the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) the Ministry of the Civil Service is undertaking a quantitative-based job evaluation of the entire Public Service including Statutory Boards. So that there is a lot of work ongoing in the Ministry of the Public Service with a view to Public Service Reform.

I must place on record that it is my experience that the Ministry of the Civil Service is one of the hardest working ministries in Barbados. I do not think that they have all of the staff that they could probably do with, this is only my observation but they do a tremendous amount of work. Some of it at great speed and in a short time and I would like to compliment all of the Officers but especially the Senior Management of the Ministry of the Civil Service for their devotion to duty and quality of their outputs. It is not everything that we ask for in individual ministries of the Public Service that we get but I will say that they are very thorough in their analysis.

The one comment that I would have to make, not a criticism, an observation is that perhaps we spend too much time passing paper between individual ministries and the Ministry of the Civil Service to resolve a request. If you ask for two or three additional staff, it goes in a letter to the Ministry and they send back to ask for all kinds of information. There is a to-ing and fro-ing of correspondence that I think contributes to the bureaucracy. We need to get away from that. We need to make more use of sitting around the table. I have seen it recently and I hope it is working to our benefit. I do not know the results yet and I do not know what the Ministry is going to say.

Let me give you an example, Sir. I established a working party to advise me on the establishment of a scheme to compensate victims of violent crime. That is something that we have been committed to in 1994. We were not able to do it in our last term. It is on the international agenda and it is on the U.N. agenda. Even Trinidad has gone ahead and done it. They started after us but they have their legislation ready. However, the working party reported and broadly what they recommended was a scheme with a cap. I think they are saying that nobody should get more that $25 000.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: As a small country, we cannot follow the English model. The English model Criminal Injuries Compensation Board would almost triple the system here because they award compensation to a victim based on principles which we would use in private practice for personal injury cases and some of them can run up to $1 million. We are not following that. We are making a contribution to persons who have been victimised by saying, "the state recognises that you were injured and we are contributing something."

Now, the working party recommended a number of things to be done. One of them is that they should have a separate statutory board. I rejected that recommendation because we already have legislation in the Community Legal Services Act which provided for the State funding legal representation for criminals. I do not see why the criminals should have their representation funded by the State and on the other hand the victims are left out in the cold and the State not do something for them so I am trying to balance the interest of the criminal and the interest of the victim.

My decision is that we should amend the existing Community Legal Services legislation by having a part of that legislation deal with compensation for victims. One part should deal with financial support for the criminal. The other part under the same statutory board should deal with compensation for victims. All we will do is to make a small expansion in the Board, perhaps add another member and we would have probably two officers, an investor to follow these things, investigate them and a little clerical support. I think the cost of the new administrative structure would be in the vicinity of $120 000 a year for any additional staff and so on.

When we sent the proposals to the Ministry of the Civil Service for their comments, because they have to comment as to whether the staff structure that we recommend is appropriate and viable, they started passing paper and I said, "let us have a meeting." We had a meeting around the table

in the Ministry in the Conference Room at the AG's office and in an hour we had been able to clarify all of the concerns of the Ministry of the Civil Service so that the Paper could be reworked and sent back to them and they would have understood, having discussed it in a collective setting, they could have understood the content of our proposals.
12.10 p.m.

I am, therefore, calling for more of that on the part Ministry of the Civil Service. Let us sit around more often when submissions are made and we can ...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes, to settle it. Otherwise you will pass the file and time will be consumed in the to-ing and fro-ing of the file and the matter can languish. I am just throwing that out as a suggestion because I think that it is a system that can work and can speed up the process and keep people better informed because passing paper can be a very sterile exercise.

I send three pages of stuff to someone and a fellow goes through it and says but what does this mean, I do not quite understand this. Some submissions can be terse and not sufficiently expansive, whereas, if people sit around a table, they can get a better appreciation of and for the problem than if they just pass papers.

I am not saying that the Government files must always have a paper trail and I am not saying that we should cut out the paper. What I am saying is that you discuss the issue, you to and fro it among yourselves around the table and then you come to certain decisions and it can be a fall off. Further to our meeting of so and so, it was agreed as follows or you would recall that we agreed as follows, 1, 2, 3, 4, – finish. These are aspects of public sector reform that I would like to see.

In the Chambers of the Attorney General, I try to encourage, for example, with personal injuries cases, an approach like what we use in private practice. If I had a personal injury matter on the behalf of a client with the Honourable Member for Christ Church West working on the behalf of an insurance company, I will send my claim, and all of the documents and then we would agree to a conference and we would meet in a conference and go through it. Now If I ask for $200 000 for general damages and this, that, that, that and the other for special damages, we will go through them. On Special damages, he will say, yes, I have the document here, I agree to that. The repairs to the car show whatever and we were there around the table trying to come to an agreement and we then exchange a letter saying these are the respective positions. If we do not agree on the general damages, he would show us some cases and would say we cannot give $200 000 for this, I am going to offer you $130 000 and I say, well, I want to read those cases and he will send some more cases but we will shorten the time.

Now, in the Attorney General's Office, what I found was that people were writing letters and there was little follow-up so that for years cases remain unsettled because of the bureaucracy. I told the Solicitor General that once he has a claim that is right for settlement to get together with the private sector lawyer around the table and go through the items in the claim and see what he can agree to and if there are areas outstanding he should agree to meet again with a view to further refinements of their respective positions and come to a decision.

I am one for the round table discussion in the public service which can help to resolve matters more quickly than if you just pass paper and somebody forgets and put it in a file and leave it there and then nothing happens for months and in some cases for years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is really a Bill of one clause which is trying to clear up an anomaly which we found out after we have done the amending legislation in 1998 and which will now put those few persons who may have been disadvantaged on a proper basis and we are providing in the legislation for its effect to be retroactive to 1998.

With those comments, Sir, I have the greatest pleasure in moving that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when one listens to the acting Prime Minister, one gets the impression that everything is well...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. I am not the acting Prime Minister. I reverted to the Attorney General. I said so when I began this morning but the Honourable Member never listens to anything. When I began this morning, I said that the Prime Minister came in last night and he is the substantive Prime Minister.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I have no evidence that the Prime Minister is in the island and I am told that when he is out of the island that the Attorney General acts as Prime Minister. So I stick to my point.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you please withdraw that statement?

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Honourable Member by imputation is saying that I am lying to the House. I spoke to the Prime Minister this morning at 6.45 a.m. So I can tell him that he is in Barbados.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you withdraw that statement?

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I will withdraw it, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: What I would like to say is that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas acts so much that he should be in Hollywood.

Sir, the first glance at this Bill gives the impression that if the casual workers accept these proposals that are offered, they will be in a better position. I am glad that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said that they have a right and they have to decide whether they will accept these proposals or not.

I am glad that that particular point was made because when one looks at the figures, a worker who retires at age 60 and lives beyond the age of 72, that particular worker is worst off than before. I am going to tell you why I am saying that.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, do not jump up. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas will jump at it at first chance because when he discussed it, it did not sound so to him but I am giving him the facts now. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas stated that a public servant – that is the casual worker – who accepts the proposal will get $29 000 as a gratuity and will get a pension of about $7 100. I am right that you said that, Sir. If that workers accept that pension for 12 years at the age of 72 that worker would draw...

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of elucidation. The Honourable Member has obviously misunderstood what I said. I drew two distinctions, Sir. In giving the example of the maid, I said that if she were classified as a public officer, her retirement benefits based on a service of 33 1/3 years would be – a gratuity of $29 000 and a reduced pension of $7 100.

On the other hand, if she were a casual employee, her retirement benefits would be a gratuity of $12 000 and NIS pension of $8 155.21.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Could you proceed?

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am glad for the clarification because I will continue with my point which says that if that worker lives for over 12 years drawing a pension that worker would have been better off drawing a pension as a casual employee.

One of the things that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas must understand is that although the person is drawing a larger amount up front, the truth is, the person will be drawing a larger pension and that the longer the person lives the more money the person will stand to earn. The truth is, those casual employees should seek advice from some person who have some financial knowledge and who will be able to tabulate the figures for them. It is easy to get in here and say, Sir, that you can take home a gratuity of $29 000 as opposed to $12 000, it might sound like a lot of money, but the truth is that if the person lives for 20 years the person would have been better off as a casual employee. They would have been drawing a higher pension which means that, let us say if it was $1000 a year more, the $17,000 difference would have been erased in 20 years.
12.20 p.m.

One must understand that even though the gratuity is higher it does not necessarily mean that the pension will be higher for the employee. One must also recognize that in this Parliament we were told people are living longer in Barbados. If people are living beyond the age of 72, this proposal even though it sounds good at face value, it is not necessarily in the interest of casual workers. The only thing I can tell you is that they will get seven days more. Instead of 14 days, they will be able to get 21 days sick days. That is not important because you do not go to work to be sick. You go to work probably to get a higher wage and also to put down a pension. The Attorney General must understand that, even though this proposal sounds good up front, it does not have a basis and a long-term plan. They are looking at it only on a short-term basis.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know that a lot of people will challenge what I have to say. Well, you will challenge it. The truth is the figures are here to prove that I am right. Another thing I want to say to this House and people must understand this. This proposal is a reduction in cost to Government because when you tell a casual person that they will retire now at 60, everybody in Barbados knows that when you retire the pension is smaller than the salary. Government is finding a way out of reducing its payout by making the proposals to casual employees and giving the impression that they are doing something in their interest. The truth is that they are not. A lot of people might look at it as $29,000 when they get 60 years, they run and decide they are going to retire. When you really look at the total cost, the only person that will be gaining is the Government of the day.

I want people not only to listen to the figures. I wanted to do exactly what I have done and, if they want to borrow my calculator, they can do it. This is really a shame. Government has come here today and I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas happens to be the person who brought this proposal to Parliament because later on we will be told that it was the Honourable Member

for St. Thomas who was in the position, as it happened to him when the Ways and Means Account went over, he was accused of breaking the Ways and Means Account.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order, Sir. We have just gone passed Easter, but the Honourable Member is like a kite that has popped. He is spinning all over the place. You do not know where he is about to land.

Sir, the point of order is this. The Honourable Member said that I was acting Prime Minister when we broke the Ways and Means Account. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never heard the Prime Minister say that and I never said it. What I said, Sir, was...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Who broke any Ways and Means Account? Sir, there was no Ways and Means Account that was broken. The Ways and Means Account is Government's overdraft with the Central Bank. It went up to about $60 million dollars or whatever it was in December. What I said I did and what was done was that we took money from special deposits. The Government had $200 million in a special account with the Central Bank and we took the $16 million or $17 million from that account and reduced the overdraft. Yes, I did it but I did not break any Ways and Means Account. How can you break an overdraft? I paid the overdraft. It is just like you have an account with the National Bank with $10 000 but you are overdrawn at Barclays Bank by $5,000 and you take $5,000 from this and clear it, that is all that happens. You must not say that I broke any overdraft in the Ways and Means Account. It is foolishness. It is nonsense.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to apologize to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas for admitting that he is the one that cleared the Ways and Means Account when it was overdrawn. I want to congratulate you for doing that and you are not guilty. It was left for you to clear. I want to thank you for that.

Sir, I am saying that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas finds himself in a situation where he has come before Parliament and he has admitted that the casual workers have an option. One must ask why would they have an option when this is supposed to be in their interest. It is clear to me that somebody within the Civil Service has recognized that there are certain people who could be disadvantaged because of this particular proposal. They perhaps have said to the casual workers, look you have an option, if you accept this, then it is up to you. But they should have said to the casual workers that if you live beyond a particular point in time in your life that you will be worse off. I have not heard this in Parliament today and I am expecting the Honourable Member for St. Thomas to admit that the advice given to him should have included this particular point.

I am saying that it seems that people are living now in the nineties. I was fortunate, or unfortunate depending on how you look at it, because the people tell me that once you have served the Lord and you live to be a certain age, the Lord is happy when he receives a soul who has served him faithfully. I have some who have served the Lord faithfully over the years and they have gone to their Lord and they have been over the age of ninety. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West can bear me out on this particular point. I am saying that there are many people in Barbados who are now living over the age of ninety. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East can bear me out too that there are many people reaching the century mark. If you have people after retirement who are now retiring at 60 and living up to 100, a simple calculation is 40 years and let us say the difference in pension is $1 000, it tells you that is over $40 000 that they would have received if they were casual.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Look, when I am dealing with figures, the Honourable Member for St. George North should keep his mouth shut. There is over $40 000 in pension that they will receive instead of accepting a higher gratuity of $17 000.

I want to know who will receive over $40 000 more and will go and accept $17 000. The statistics prove in this country that people are living longer. If people are living longer, it means then that you should advise these people properly. I am saying that Government has not advised the casual workers properly. All they are saying is that they have an option. What is the option? Why are they having an option? The truth is that the option is, if they accept it because it looks good up front, they cannot come back and blame Government when their grandchildren say to them, look, if you had remained as a casual employee, you would have received more money in pension, but you allow the Government to put $29 000 in gratuity at you. It looked good, and you accepted it. I am happy to know that the Democratic Labour Party introduced something called free secondary education and that there are many grandchildren who could tell these people that they cannot accept this, that they have to remain as a casual worker because you tend to get more if you remain as a casual worker than if you become a public servant. The only way this would benefit anybody is if they decide to die before the age of 72.
12.30 p.m.

If they die before the age of 72 they would gain but if they live beyond the age of 72 they would not gain because of this proposal. The break-even age point would be the age of 72. People must understand that when they

come to this Parliament and when a proposal is given to them they must understand what they are bringing before Parliament.

I honestly believe that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas brought this proposal to Parliament because he felt it was a good proposal. The truth is that now he understands and if he wants to borrow the calculator he can borrow it and work it out because he accepted it in good judgment from the public servants and all the other people within the Ministry of Finance who would have advised him on this particular matter because he was acting as Minister of Finance and he had seven consultants and none of them said to him that if persons live beyond the age of 72 that they would have been better off.

I am saying to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas that when he leaves here as he said that after today he would not have the authority to talk to the consultants because the Prime Minister is back in the country.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The Honourable Member is reflecting on the integrity of the public officers by suggesting that they would have misled the Government on this matter. I do not think that it is proper to impute improper motives. Substantive legislation came here in 1998 and nothing that the Honourable Member is saying here today he said then. What we are doing today is just clearing up an anomaly for those who were in before 1971.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with seven consultants at the disposal of the acting Minster of Finance, one of them should have recognised, the same way that I sat down here with a simple calculator and not a computer, they had the opportunity to put these figures through their computers and to advise the Prime Minister properly and they did not. I can only come to the conclusion that the same way that when we were dealing with Land Tax that the Prime Minister said that the figures were put through the computer in the Ministry of Finance that the civil servants would have done the same thing with these figures. If they had done them, Sir, the computer would have shown that at the age of 72 these people would have been better off.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the implication is still there where the officers are concerned. To say that one of them should recognise it is tantamount to saying that all of them should have recognised it. Instead of saying one, all he has done is to say the same thing and all he has done is to rephrase it but the implication is still there. I am asking that it be withdrawn, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Thank you, Sir. I know that you have better judgment than that. You would not allow that in this Parliament.

In the age of modern technology, Sir, you do not have to use a calculator like I did to get these figures and to present them properly to the Minister of Finance. All they had to do is set up the formula, put in the figure and come to the necessary conclusions. Those conclusions should have shown the civil servants that after the age of 72 the casual workers would have been better off. What is wrong with that? I am stating a fact that if they had done their work and had advised the Minister properly they would have recognised that. You want to accuse me for using my ability to calculate?

I am saying that the same way that I sat in my seat, and I know the Honourable Member for St. Peter when he uses the calculator would recognise that I am right. You cannot come before this Parliament to give the impression that the causal workers will be better off because of this proposal. They must understand this.

I am hoping, Sir, that at least one of the Ministers would take the time out to do some work and to calculate these figures and to advise the House appropriately that this is not their intention and if they do not do this I will then believe that this proposal was well planned and executed to make sure that the Government reduced its expenditure bill.

Not only that, Sir, it gives the Government the opportunity to reduce something else. At the early retirement age of 60, it allows the Government to get back what they gave prior to the election. If they retire early, it does not mean that they have to employ more people. So they automatically reduce the number of people employed in the public service. That is a point that people must understand. When you come with this proposal it looks good and glossy but when you really look at it and you look at the meat of the matter you will recognise that under the meat there is a hidden agenda.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You are a Minister and I expect you to represent the interest of the people of St. Philip. I should not have to be in here doing it for you. I could have come in here and I could have spoken only for the people of St. Lucy but it so happens that it seems to me that there are certain people who are not prepared to speak on behalf of their constituents and I take the opportunity to speak on behalf of everybody including those poor humble casuals of the Honourable Member for St. Philip North constituency who would not have seen this particular point at this particular point in time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am saying that this proposal looks good but when you take a serious analysis of it, it is really a sham. It has no good intentions on behalf of the public servants and I believe it might have been an error, that the Government thought they had something good but now

they have learnt what I had to say on this particular matter and seeing that they claim to be a caring Government that they will rethink it and come back with something that is more appropriate in the interest of the masses of this country who happen to be the casual workers in this country. Thank you very much, Sir.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I listened with interest to the comments of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy and I think that he has problems with money management. Most of his comments were directed as to how people who are going to take the option whether they want a higher gratuity and a smaller pension, something that has been going on in the civil service and the private sector from time immemorial, as to how they propose to manage their lives and to manage their money.

The Honourable Member is mistaken if he believes that people in Barbados at the level of the casual workers have not got the acumen to make that determination for themselves and to spend their money properly and, what is more to invest their money properly. People when they reach retirement age have the option to claim their pension whether it is a private sector pension provided under an insurance policy or a Government pension, and some of them opt to take the larger proportion in a gratuity and a smaller pension. The reason why this is so is that they use the money. Either they want to use it immediately for some particular personalised use or alternatively they use the money and invest that money at rates of interest that will generate much more than the pensionable amount. If you take the figures which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy took – $17 000 – and you invest that, let us say at the rate of interest of even 7%, you will earn annually more than you will get at a thousand pension. If you invest it at 8%, you are even better off.
12.40 p.m.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: The Honourable Member wants to know where we get 7% from. You get 7% because you take the Government Debenture or you take Government Notes and you will get more that 7.5%. If you invested beyond that period of time you can get rates of up to 8% and possible 9% on some occasions. That is still happening but even at a lower rate of interest the Honourable Member must know that you are better off and furthermore, he must know that you are escaping tax on savings bonds and otherwise.

Sir, it is outrageous to come in the House, firstly, and imply that persons cannot manage their funds and secondly, that the purpose of the Government in bringing the Bill.....

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is deliberately misleading the House. I never said at any time during my speech that the masses of people in this country cannot manage their money. I have always said that those are the people who can manage their money better than anybody else so I cannot allow the Honourable Member to get away with that. At his age and his ranking he should not do.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Sir, it is because they can manage their money that I consider the Honourable Member must be mistaken in the submissions that he has made to this House. He can have it either way, Sir, but he must be mistaken because here is a category of persons who are going to be given an option, not a compulsion, to decide whether they want to go the way of waiting for a pension with all the risk that is involved, including longevity, and the normal discount that you will make or whether they are going to take their money by a higher gratuity which they will themselves invest knowing that they have the ability to manage their money and maximise their position at the end of the day. The Honourable Member is too smart to make a political point in his speech. One must really look at this seriously because this bit of legislation restores or corrects the position for employees who are casuals, put them on an equal standing with those who are on the established staff and gives them the right to opt, and in some cases, to retire at age 55, as has happened with some people in the public service if you have come in before a certain time, or for those who joined the service after July 1971 to retire at 60 voluntarily or they can still continue to work until they are 65. Now, those are the choices.

The problem we have in pensions generally in Barbados in public service and private sector pensions is that people who retire at 60 unless they have a private sector funded pension, found themselves waiting, in many cases, if they were casual employees to receive the state pension at age 65. One of the benefits of the changes made by the totality of this legislation is to get rid of that anomaly and that can only be beneficial to the casual work. This is underscored by the fact that the representatives of workers, the National Union of Public Workers as well the Barbados Workers' Union in particular have welcomed this legislation.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: They have welcomed the legislation because it provides security of tenure for 4 350 people. Its puts them in a better position in terms of their monetary value, it gives them options that they can take and there is no compulsion and it closes anomalies that occurred in Barbados.

I have, in my own constituency, in Brathwaites Gap, people who, before this legislation was passed, came out at age 60, took only the gratuity that was available to them, under the Democratic Labour Party, and under ourselves before, and found themselves in those five years in hard

times. Now, an unconscionable Government would do nothing about it but a progressive and humane Government that sees these anomalies would try to deal with them and that is all the Government has done. Therefore, there must be an area of public life where we must stop making the broad assertions that I heard the Honourable Member made. The Honourable Member knows that if his Party wins the Government tomorrow they will not repeal this legislation because it would not be in the interest of the people for them to do so. I believe that they are more sagacious than even to make such a suggestion at all in their Manifesto or as part of their policy. That is why I have, in this House whenever I have spoken on pensions say, let us look at the broader picture. We cannot say that all the sense on pension resides over here but I have already said that when we dealt with state pensions, I have been more than pleased that the Leader of the Opposition himself when he has spoken and for the former leader of the minority Party when he was in here have both taken a very high stand in seeing that national pensions is an area of our civic life at the moment that we must leave aside the partisan considerations and try to get the best possible regime available.

Sir, at the moment there is legislation being formulated to deal with a greater regulation of private sector pensions. The Committee which I happen to be a Member has completed the first draft together with the regulations and that is now going to the Ministry of Finance for Government input and Government's policy. The Social Partners have made an input both from the private sector and the public sector and I would hope that that bit of legislation is considered by the wider Barbados because, Barbados in reforming its pensions law has to carry a two-tiered system. I do not subscribe to the views of those persons in Chile, the United States and in some of the other developed countries who believe that state pensions must be wiped out completely and that everybody would then go to providing for their own pension. That may be alright in some instances. In Chile it is not even worked out as properly as possible. I believe that you are going to have to maintain, in small economies like ours without the financial opportunity or sophistication that you can get in larger economies, a situation where the state sees to it that at the end of persons working lives they have some security of at least a pension coming from what we call the social security system – a two-tiered system.

Also, we should encourage employers to provide the second tier for their employees just as the Government provides a second tier in the public service here. What this does – Government's second tier – is that the Government now, not only for people on the established staff but it is providing it for those who are casual employees as defined by the Honourable Attorney General in his speed and ensuring that they have now two tiers or two legs to stand on to support people into their old age. We have encouraged that, Sir. I believe that both political parties subscribe to this view. Nothing that the Leader of the Opposition has said in the last two years in this House, will disabuse me that he and his party supports the view that we have to strengthen the pensionable position of persons. The exact reason the Honourable Member for St. Lucy said, Barbados' health system in the last 50 years has improved to the stage that we now have in our country a profile of the developed world in our health system. As much as you may criticise, on a day-to-day, some of the things that happen at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, our health resources, both prevention and cure, have widened tremendously in the last 50 years that our people are living longer. So persons born today on average will live 11 years longer than people like myself. And the average for females in Barbados is about 78.4 and the average age for men is somewhere like 74. And that has very serious implications, therefore for pensions, how we provide them in their ages of retirement. Therefore I believe that the Government is on the right track in bringing this legislation, as it will be on the right track, when the legislation reaches this House dealing with the Reform of Private Pensions.

12.50 p.m.

So, one of the things that we have to do with private pensions as well, is to ensure that if I move from employer "A" to employer "B" that pension is portable, and it goes with me through my working life because I have an equity in it. We also have to ensure that once a pension vest after "X" years, whether it is 10 or 15 years, that the employer cannot draw back the employer's portion of that pension for any reason if relationship of employer or employee is terminated.

I repeat it again, Sir. First we must insist on portability of pensions so that the pension follows you and goes with you in your employment. Secondly, where the employer and employee relationship is truncated or terminated, once the pension is vested in your right and that the employer cannot take back his contribution to that and merely give you your contribution. And thirdly, we must ensure that where surplus occurs in pension funds, because of the proper way in which pension funds are invested, that surplus is shared both by the employees and the employer in a winding up situation or whatever situation that maybe required. These are fundamental criteria for the reform of our pension laws as we advance and want to give our people a better life, not only in their working life, but in their retirement age as well.

Sir, in addition to the reform being planned for Private Sector Pension, the Government has engaged the services, I think that it is through the Inter-American Development Bank, of experts who are working alongside our own experts here to reform Public Sector Pensions as a whole. Public Sector Pensions are now met from the Consolidated Fund, the annual taxation. We do not have, within the governmental sector, a retained Actuary, following what is

a very vital part of our financial and public affairs. We must move to the stage, therefore, where in the reformation of the Public Sector Pensions, and there are several. There are about 25,000 public sector employees, Government is the biggest employer in this country, and it must therefore bring on stream the resources to deal with questions such as these. And if there is one bit of advice I would like to offer from the back bench, is that the Government must continue to offer scholarships in Actuarial Sciences; it must ensure that people to whom we offer these development scholarships return and give service; but in the meantime, it also has itself to retain, permanently, Actuarial staff to help it in planning this very important sector of the relationship between itself and the public services. It can only reform the public service, not only to get higher productivity but to compensate that productivity by higher incentives including higher pensions.

Now, Sir, these are things that the unions know, and I have heard the unions talk about, those of us who seriously studied the public affairs of Barbados have to address these questions and address them in a non-partisan way. Whether the Government is the Government of the Barbados Labour Party, today, or the Democratic Labour Party, whenever that comes, these are issues that have to be addressed at this time in this country if we are to get a better Barbados. And in my years that I remain in public life I would speak about them in this way, Sir, so as to give the benefit of the knowledge that I have acquired to the country.

Sir, I said that we have to reform Public Sector Pensions. We are also looking at the issue of the reforming of the National Insurance Pension. I said to the House before, we had a very beautiful debate in the last session, where the Leader of the Opposition, as well as the former Leader of the Minority Party, made contributions, that we have taken very seriously at the National Insurance, because there were very valuable contributions. And I wish to give the House the assurance that there is no paper at the National Insurance Board that any Member of the House want that is not open. Ask for it and it shall be given to you. I don't believe that any of that information should be withheld from anybody, and I have given instructions and the Board has given instructions, that whether the Leader of the Opposition or anyone wants access to papers within the National Insurance that there are available there for them to see. They do not have to drop off of any truck, Sir. There is total transparency in that office.

1.00 p.m.

Sir, we have a very serious problem in our National Insurance but we are addressing it. There is an internal committee, under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Chairman, Mr. Stephen Alleyne, who is a distinguished Actuary, which is looking at all sorts of problems. We have co-opted onto that Committee, other persons. For instance, one of the more knowledgeable people on state pensions and social security is Dr. Frank Alleyne. He has kindly consented to make his knowledge available to that Committee.

Sir, we are trying in that Committee to face the problems in a non-partisan way. The problems of people living longer and the problems that our work force is going to become smaller because Barbadians have not been having more children so that there will be less people, even if work is available in the work force, to contribute to paying as you go.

This is one of the serious problems that we have where there is a plus to have family planning, we can reach the stage where family planning may mean that our population remains static whereas, those persons who depend on pensions, who are entitled to pensions, the numbers of them increase because we are living longer. We have to address that problem as well, Sir, and we have to also address the problem as to how we integrate the State pension into the private sector pensions and there are other problems.

I am happy to report that the investment income has grown significantly and that is taking up some of the cushioning, some of the effect of short falls in benefits. As employment continues to remain high and as employment comes down we are also getting more contributions and that is helping the situation. These are serious problems that we hope by the end of the year the Committee would have reported. We will keep the House informed and the Opposition in particular, at all stages. The report will be made available to them even before it becomes public.

In addition, Sir, the Actuarial Report which is due for the triennial ending December 1999, is now being prepared. We have retained the services of the Government Actuary Department of the United Kingdom. Yesterday when I check, we have sent some of the information and there is still more information needed. When that report is available that too, will assist us in planning the measures which we will discuss with the public at large and the social partners before making recommendations to the Government and coming to this House for this House to take whatever steps possible that are required to shore up the Social Security Scheme. Also, to ensure that those of us who are pensioners and those of us who live long enough to become pensioners will feel safe in their positions.

I am happy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to support this legislation. I do not believe that it is the end of all problems and that it solves all problems for public sector employees in pensions but I do believe that it is a progressive measure which goes some way to answering some of the problems that are confronting our workers and that must be cause for concern for those who reach retirement age.

It is only now that people are becoming conscious that from day one of when you begin to work, you should put

something aside for the days when you cannot work. We are no longer seeing the extended family concept where you can go and have your meal and be taken care of by grandchildren and great grandchildren.

I have in my constituency, Sir, too many old ladies in particular, who have retired many years ago and some of them find it difficult to pay their rents to maintain something proper over their heads. Three or four of them band together to rent a two-bedroom apartment but as rents go up, it puts stress on their pressure.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: I have the problem, Sir, and it is between black and white. The upper class and the lower class, the same problem is occurring. It is a national problem that we have to address.

I also have in my constituency, and I do these to see what are the limitations, Sir, cases in which people who have retired from this public service have found their pensions inadequate. That is why whenever the Prime Minister brings a measure to increase the annual pensions for public servants, I like to see us compensate, not only those of us who are in the House or the Civil Services that are working but I would like to see some of it go to those who work, before retirement.

Sir, I would like us ideally to be in a position where we can index pensions but when we do the figures, not the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, or the Honourable Member for St. Peter, but when the Actuaries and all of the advisers do the pension figures, we must be realistic and say that we cannot reach that stage immediately.

The other thing, Sir, is that once again pensioners raise the issue with us of the taxation of the National Insurance Pension because they argue that when they are working that money is taxed so it should come out untaxed and we are looking at that. We are doing the figures on that and when the figures are available we would want to come and bring a rational solution to that problem.

I just want to say to Barbadians that we must not be irrational and throw out the baby with the bath water or kill the goose that laid the golden egg. What we need in this country at the moment, is a very rational approach to some of the fundamental problems that are going to confront us to survive as a small society in a world that is becoming globalized with those people who are in the bigger nations like vultures, taking everything for themselves and leaving us on the outside merely to pick up the crumbs. We have to guard against that in the way we safeguard our present generation as well as in a way that we reward and sustain the older generation.

Sir, that is why I am happy to make whatever contribution I can in this area and commend the Government on this step. I hope that this legislation would be improved generally when we deal with it later this year or next year, or as soon as the Government is available with the report which it is getting on the Reform of Public Sector Pensions.

You will notice I have not spoken anything about the pensions of Members of Parliament because that is a sore measure that seems to divide the whole country and divide the political parties and divide the whole region. Now, I also have been long enough in public life to say this to the country, Caribbean countries and Barbados in particular are very fortunate in the fact that we spend very little on civil governance. We should be happy that by and large here in Barbados we have Parliamentary representation down through the years of a reasonably high standard and at a high standard of civil governance. I do not know any allegation of corruption and what not that can be proved or have been proven against the politicians or the political system.

Aside.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: Not in Barbados and I will say that I have seen politicians leave this House and gone on Sir, in days of penury from both sides of the House...

Aside.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: What the Attorney General calls gentile poverty. Some from both sides of the House have had to cross partisan considerations to support and maintain people who have made contributions as Ministers. Some of them have passed on now and given long years of representation.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has one more minute.

Hon. Sir HENRY FORDE: I am going to finish, Sir. If there is one thing I wish to do in my remaining years, is to argue with the public and educate the public about the necessity to ensure that people who make the sacrifice at the political level, do not in their old age find themselves at penury doors and that is one of the objectives I have set for myself. I think I now have at least the degree of credibility that the country may listen to some of the words I say on that, Sir.

I am much indebted to you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House be now suspended until 2.15 p.m. this afternoon.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this House be now suspended until 2.15 p.m. this afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.
1.10 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are just two points that I would like to make in relation to this Bill. These are really along the general lines of the question of integrated public pensions with private schemes which is a matter which many years ago was the subject of some considerable studies and I feel that efforts should be pursued with a view to arriving at an all party consensus in that area.

Indeed, as all Honourable Members have said, the statistics indicate quite clearly that the demographic situation in Barbados has changed dramatically and that over the course of the next 20 to 30 years the question of pensions will loom very large in our scheme of things.

There are a couple more points that I would like to make, Sir. In my opinion, the recent decision of the Ministry of Finance to resume the provision of money for the purpose of financing the non-contributory pension scheme will have a beneficial effect upon the National Insurance Scheme. Those of us who remember the origin of the ship and of the burden of the non-contributory pensions to the National Insurance fund will recall that that was intended to be a temporary measure. As usual in these matters, temporary sometimes becomes permanent so that will have a beneficial effect.

There is still another problem that one can identify in that area and that is, that an anomalous situation will arise where people have contributed for a slightly lesser period than the mandatory number of contributions for a contributory pension. There will be given back their contributions but still they will be eligible for a non-contributory pension. I think that that has to be looked at.

I understand the reason for giving back non-contributory pensions because the scheme does make provisions for that to occur but in the context of the assumption of liability by the Government for that, I think that there should be some integration, even if it means that you can give a slightly higher tranche to the people who have made a contribution but not sufficiently but the point is that it should be integrated.

In my own constituency, I am increasingly coming across another problem. It is generally believed that there is an agreement in existence between the United Kingdom and Barbados and between Canada and Barbados with respect to the reciprocal recognition of pension rights.

I am also coming across quite a number of people who have lived particularly in the United Kingdom who have a seriously reduced pension because they no longer lived in the United Kingdom. They now live in Barbados but they are not eligible for a Barbadian pension because they have not work here long enough and they do not get a top up from the Barbados Pension Scheme in anyway. When one pursues it even through the efforts of the Embassy with the Department of Health and Social Security in the United States of America ... and we are increasingly getting back letters saying that they have a reciprocal agreement with the Government of Barbados and they do not understand the situation. This is something that needs to be dealt with. Many of us have quite a few constituents who have now retired. Some of them came back to Barbados in their fifties and they now get a pension after living here after 15 or so years.

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Well, I do not know what is going to happen in the next month or so now that the Fund has gone down because the amount that I have come across which is like a minimum pension is like $900 per month or less than $250 a week. Now, that is an area that we have to see about.

Sir, I am also of the view that a comprehensive approach has to be made now to encourage self-employed persons to make provision for their future. I am very worried about it and this is not a worry that we have had recently because Honourable Members will recall that the concept of permitting savings schemes up to a certain amount to be exempted from income taxation was something which originated in the 1980's because it is only by inducements ... and the greatest inducement is to relieve a tranche of savings from taxes.

Now, at the present moment, I think it is calculated that some $20 000 to $25 000 in savings schemes can be made with the benefit of tax deductions but I do not think that that is sold enough in Barbados. In periods of boom, particularly in the construction industry, some top quality skilled operatives in my opinion should be targeted by the financial services people with a view to encouraging them to save more which will in turn require legislation to make sure that there is not what is known as 'mis-selling' of the benefits of pensions.

Many Honourable Members in here may not be old enough to recall when industrial insurance first came to

Barbados in the 60's and the 70's. We use to receive a lot of complaints from people who were promised that if they put in 25 or 30 contributions they will get an automatic pension after they reach a certain age. It took some period of time working on the Insurance Act and for us to be able to get the hang of that. Barbadians are not that foolish because sooner rather than later they found out that some of those schemes were just too good to be true.

The question of pensions is a very important part of public consciousness at the present moment and I believe that the time has come when we should have a much more comprehensive approach because all of us agreed that something has to be done about it and it cannot be postponed.

I thank you, Sir.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the main purposes of this amendment is to preserve that right which casual employees who were employed in the Government service before July 1971 had, that is the right to retire at the age of 55.

Sir, I want to begin by saying that I do not really believe in the whole question of wholesale early retirement. By that, I mean retirement from work as opposed to retirement from one job to go and do something else. I mean retirement from work out and out. If I had to advise any casual employee or any other employee for that matter, certainly, I would be very much against the idea of retirement at the age of 55. This does not say that there would not be a few for whom retirement at the age of 55 would be beneficial.

There are persons I believe who are casual employees and who may want to become carpenters or plumbers or to engage in whatever skill they have, who may want to work on their own. In this regard, as I have said, they could be that few. I know of an instance where someone who was employed as a teacher at Combermere School who had the option of retiring at age 60 and that person eventually became perhaps one of the leading insurance salesmen in Barbados.

There is a fortunate group of people for whom this amendment can bring significant benefit. In looking after this group, I think that what the Government is doing is acknowledging that it is a State responsibility to take care of those who have contributed to the maintenance, infrastructure and the upkeep of this country. We also have to observe that Government takes this responsibility very seriously.
2.30 p.m.

Indeed, they take it so seriously that as a means of guaranteeing survival when work is no longer possible on your part that Government extracts what we can call from you a 'forced payment'. Government does not really make it optional. I believe, Sir, if it did, those among us who are irresponsible would have to endure what could very well be quite an unhappy retirement.

I believe as I said, Sir, that 55 is still quite young. As the point was made this morning, I do not see any harm in repeating it that people in Barbados are indeed living longer. We cannot, Mr. Deputy Speaker, afford to exclude from our workforce older persons and older members of staff. Indeed, I think that it should be the other way. I think that we should encourage them to work even longer. Obviously, this is going to have profound consequences on the way in which we view the world of work. We have to be very sympathetic I believe to those older people. It is going to require from us a fundamental change in attitudes if we ask people to work longer.The whole question as to how we view the recruitment and the retention of the older workers. It has been a common practice in Barbados, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for some of our leading companies to offer early retirement to workers as a convenient way of shedding expenses and also to providing opportunities to recruit younger workers.

With life expectancy increasing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that this whole question of asking them to retire early is a widespread waste of human talent. I wonder sometimes if it makes sense for individuals to retire five to ten years earlier than their parents retired when indeed they are in far better health than their parents were at that age, when they have better working conditions than their parents had and when they are expected and likely to live even longer than their parents lived.

I believe that there are, like me, many Barbadians who would like to see the average age of retirement rise to approximately 65. Indeed, it would be a step towards ensuring that when people retire, they retire at what is indeed the official pension age. I feel, Sir, that any move to have the labour force work to have a working age of 65 would go a long way towards or settling the problem of old age dependancy. Dealing with the problems of the elderly, I believe, could almost be met by more work participation by the over fifties. As I said, Sir, that fifty-five is a bit young and even sixty to be Government's definition of old age.

I believe, Sir, that in the 1940s people who retired honestly expected to live for an extra ten years at the very most after they retired because the life expectancy then was nothing near to what it is now. Today after you retire from work that life expectancy stretches into some twenty years and in many cases 25 years after you have retired. When the Old Age Pension was set at 65, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the average age of longevity in Barbados was somewhere around 62 and today we are living at an average

of 70 years plus. Indeed, there are people living to 80 and 90 years quite regularly in Barbados. Even as I speak, Sir, there is a lady in my district who is celebrating her 102nd birthday today. People are living, as I said, much longer than before. Sending home people at 60 years not only means that this country will be missing out on years of potential productive labour but it will also mean a much higher pension bill for the Treasury.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I want to say now is not really meant to be a criticism of the N.I.S. Department. Instead, Sir, I believe that it is a suggestion that has some merit in it even if I say so myself. I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the working adults in Barbados today who are contributing to the N.I.S. and who are not yet receiving their contributory pension should receive an annual statement from that Department. I believe that they should get from the N.I.S. every year, Sir, an annual statement. In this day and age where we have computers and so on, that should not be too difficult to do. Sir, I feel that the main purpose of such a statement should be to ensure that the working history of the worker is accurate and at the same time to help the worker plan for his or her retirement. The statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, should include an estimate of how much money you are likely to receive in your retirement since your benefits are based on what you have earned and what you have contributed. I think that demands an accurate summary of your working career.
2.40 p.m.

The statement should also tell you whether you have worked long enough to qualify for certain benefits when you reach retirement age and it should also tell you how much money you are likely to receive if you retire at sixty-five or if you retire at sixty, depending on which option you exercise. That statement, I believe, should give you an annual break-down of your earnings from your first job to your present job. It should also tell you the amount of contributions to N.I.S. which you have made during your working life.

I feel, Sir, that such a statement would be a very critical piece of information and that it would go a long way towards correcting some of the mistakes which go undetected by the present system. I challenge anyone in here to tell me that the system which we presently use is foolproof and that mistakes are never made.

I say, Sir, without any fear of contradiction that in particular women who change their names, whether by getting married or whether they get divorced and revert back to their maiden name or whatever that they will find that on occasions they are missing years because of the question of the change in name.

I believe, Sir, I would not say that mistakes are widespread but I do believe that you do get the occasional mistakes being made and that such a statement would fill a crucial vacuum in the present system. That is what I am advocating should be done, that we should have this statement being put out by the National Insurance department to give you some idea as to where you stand in terms of the number of contributions you have made.

Both the Honourable Member for Christ Church West as well as Christ Church South made valuable points concerning the whole question of private sector pensions and I would begin by saying that I know that in a house in my constituency there is a husband and wife who both worked at banks. Indeed, they started off at the same bank but the wife remained in the same bank for her entire career. The husband moved about to two other banks and eventually was getting more money than the wife. Eventually they both retired. Even though he was getting more money, when it came to the actual pension the fact that she had remained with that particular bank all the while paid off because her pension eventually was more than his. Even though he was working for more money than she was, eventually she got a bigger pension. I say that by way of introduction to my next point which is that gone are the days when employees spent their complete careers at a single company or bank.

Nowadays, workers are tempted to switch jobs every five years. They do not think twice about moving from one to the next. Your father, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my father might have remained, but in this day and age a lot of people shift jobs in a way that they did not before.

Knowing that particular situation, therefore, I caution that while job-hopping may mean bigger salaries and while job-hopping may mean new business opportunities and so on, it can also bring that little bit of financial instability when it comes to retirement planning like the case I explained where the husband had moved and because of moving from here to there he virtually lost.

You see, Sir, in job-hopping what you do is light the flame and that is the flame of benefits and then by moving on you tend to extinguish that early flame. Time after time having moved you eventually lose. In most companies the benefits are based on the salary plus the length of service and those workers who remain with companies will more likely earn maybe twice the benefits as those who leave their employers every five or six years.

Of course, we have to realise that we have not fully developed in Barbados the concept of portability of pensions which the Honourable Member for Christ Church West mentioned this morning. It is really a new feature but I guarantee that company paid pensions are treated as being portable and they can follow that same job-hopping worker that I was speaking about, that the portability of pensions can follow him from one company to the next. The thing about

it is that the way in which it is done you do not have to go through medicals and all that. It is just a matter of continuity and your equity is what really moves with you.

I would like to urge companies to try to synchronise their pension plans to come as close to one another as possible. It is possible to move from one company where the terms and conditions are one thing to move into another company where the same terms and conditions do not exist. Maybe it would be a much better thing to do, to have the pension plans almost resembling each other so that when this movement occurs it is much easier for the job-hopping worker.

Again, I want to make the point that even though the question of affordability of pensions is a way of helping the job-hopping employee and although companies are trying to come up with ideas of helping them the responsibility of looking out for themselves down the road still rests with the employee himself to ensure that he has adequate provision made for his financial future.

The other thing that I have been noticing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there are a lot of people in Barbados who receive benefits. Indeed, they receive things like severance pay – that is a classic example – from their employers and, believe it or not, Sir, they spend in the twinkling of an eye all that they would have accumulated in that previous service. They spend it as soon as they get it. What they do not realise that they are doing is that they are spending a large chunk of their life virtually. All they have to depend on after spending that would be the couple of years they work afterwards. In that short time very often they do not accumulate enough to make it comfortable for them in their retirement.

I think that is an obvious mistake with a lot of workers in Barbados today. Some people when they get their severance pay, say things like I always wanted to see Canada and they will go and see Canada. They will say they always wanted to go to London and they will go and see London. On the other hand, in looking after their future if they had invested in mutual funds or something or put it in a fixed deposit then they would be doing a lot more for their retirement than simply taking up the severance payment and spending it. It is far more advisable even to take that money and put it in a separate account and use it during retirement.

If I had to hazard a guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would guess that there are six out of every ten Barbadians who will retire below the poverty line and I believe that much of that is self inflicted, that there are some people who could have a much happier retirement plan than they do but they would have made a mistake in the way they handled things like their severance pay and so on. I would think that the common sense thing to do is to put money away when you have it to ensure that there is something there when you are not earning any money. I also think that one of the best times for you to actually put money away and save money for your retirement would be somewhere between the ages of 45 and 55. I use that age because, Sir, I believe that that is the time that even if you have children they begin to work for themselves and they are not a burden to you any longer. I also believe that that could very well be the time too when things like the mortgage are paid off and you can concentrate thereafter on looking after yourself.
2.50 p.m.

It has always been a concern of mine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are far two many Barbadians who are not looking out properly for themselves in their retirement days. I think it was the Honourable Member for Christ Church West who made the point this morning that from the very first day you start to work you should be thinking about putting aside something for the rainy day, about putting asides something to be of use in your retirement because in your retirement, Sir, even though you are not working you still want to maintain a fairly comfortable standard of living. I think that it is about time that Barbadians wake up to this particular thought.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, when people stop working automatically they stop earning but they do not stop spending. They still need money to spend in their retirement years. If one works for a Government one is assured of a pension when he or she retires, what we call a non-contributory pension. If you are working in a private enterprise in some cases the employer puts in place fringe benefits for his or her employees. These fringe benefits may be group life insurance or pension plans. The employer can put up to 15% of that employees's salary into a pension plan and the benefit on his part is that the portion he puts in is a tax deductible expense for the company. The employee, if it is a contributory plan, is asked to put a contribution also. In most cases you have a situation where a plan would be a 10% contribution by the employer and 5% contribution by the employee but the whole amount goes into the pension plan and it is for the benefit of the employee and not the employer.

There is a provision in the plan that says if the employee leaves the employment of the employer he or she is entitled to the contribution that he or she has made to the pension plan. When he takes out this portion of the money he has the option of putting it into another pension plan within a period of time without the money triggering taxes. If he decides to take the money out and invests or spends it – he is finished with the pension plan altogether – he is required to paid taxes on the money.

One is never too young to get involved in a pension plan.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: The Honourable Member for St. John is saying it has to be an approved pension plan. One is never too young to start a pension plan. The reason for that is, if you start a contribution to a pension plan from your early years, say from age 25 or 30, you have the opportunity where compound interest would help you along the way. If you start a pension plan and you plan to retire at say, age 60 or age 65 and the pension plan is started at age 45 or age 50, you would then be required to put more money into that pension plan because you do not have enough years on your side for compound interest to help you. There are other vehicles of savings, there are treasury bonds, mutual funds and real estate. These are other investments that you could involved in but the company's pension plan is a safer way of doing things. As I have said, it is a way where a fixed amount can go into the pension on a monthly basis where your employer is helping you along the way to save for your pension.

As it relates to individuals, for instance, there are some individuals say, doctors, lawyers and architects who are self-employed people and they cannot contribute to a registered approved pension plan for themselves. They can do it for the benefit of their employees but they cannot do it for themselves but they have the opportunity of contributing to a registered retirement savings plan where, as far as Barbados is concerned he or she can put into plan about $4 000 a year and have this money as a tax deductible expense for income tax purposes.

I would just like to say that when people have this money invested in a pension plan...

Asides.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: Well, they have to wait to age 60 or 65 to get their money out but I believe that some opportunity should be given to these people, like if he or she is a first-time homeowner and is trying to find a deposit for a house, he can approach the insurance company or the carrier of the policy and take out part of that money to use as a deposit for his home. As I have said, this would just be for a first-time homeowner and it would not be allowed to everyone.

Sir, the pension plan is a good way of saving money for your retirement and if one decides that he or she wants to retire before age 60 or 65, there is a provision that gives a person the option of having an early retirement, at age 55 at a reduced pension.

By and large, Barbadian people, no matter what age, as soon as they start to work should look at some way of saving money for their retirement instead of putting a burden on the State.

Sir, I thank you.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be long. I just wanted to say we are not opposing this piece of legislation. We supported the initial piece of legislation that was brought here but that pensions, like other kinds of investments, are subject to different view points. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy made it quite clear that there are circumstances, and we can all think of circumstances, in which a scheme, even one such that is contemplated by this legislation, may not be advantageous to somebody who has a long lifespan or somebody who takes certain options in their working life, or, for example, has as happened in other countries in the world where there are adjustments to the exchange rate, or where there can be a variety of other factors which at this stage you cannot foresee or which could impact very significantly on retirement earnings. That is why when you are in your most productive years people often try to squeeze every cent that they can to put into pension plans or into savings, if they are fearful, that at the point of retirement there maybe factors which may reduce their ability to live at a lifestyle commensurate to that which they have enjoyed in their earning years.

3.00 p.m.

So approaches differ. And the Honourable Member for St. Lucy put forward a projection that suggests that there maybe circumstances in which a person, for example, who wants to take a larger gratuity and invest it at an earlier stage would be disadvantaged by the legislation in some circumstances. There are some people who do that. There are some people who believe that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush. Give me my money now, let me invest it and I can find a high enough rate of interest or a secure enough investment to get a desirable rate of return. There are some people who do not think that they will live to pension age. Fortunately politicians do not fall into that category and because of that we then start to look at pension issues more seriously. But there are other people in the system who do not believe that they will have a long period of retirement and therefore they much prefer to have an early gratuity or lump sum payment which they can then use in they working lifetime to enhance their quality of life.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip North was speaking about this issue of portability. It is even more serious than we sometimes imagine. We have encouraged in Barbados a scenario where workers knowing that there is something known as severance payment, basically adopt a stance that the employer has something for them and some of

them will do anything to remain in that job even though aptitudes may way surpass the job, even though the level of remuneration is below what they could be earning in a better job, they stay in that job because of a perception that the employer has something for them. And therefore since the severance payments schemes is not portable, that is if you change jobs every four or five years, and are fortunate enough to be paid severance, three or four payments of severance, whereas another person who works to age 65 received nothing because you have not paid severance beyond the age of 65 under our existing legislation. So it is possible that a person may remain in a job for practically all their life and come to retirement with the idea or the notion that money has been built up for their benefit they never enjoy.

So it has two impacts. One our present severance payments scheme that people, as I say, tend to become immobile in the work force. They tend to remain in jobs until such time as circumstances would permit them to receive a severance payment, and then it is also unfair because of that clause in the legislation which essentially does not permit somebody who has worked to 65 to draw any gratuity or any other lump sum benefit. They simply go on either to the non-contributory pension scheme or if they made contributions they get contributory pension. But if they have not made provision for their own pension arrangement or if they do not work in Government they do not benefit from any lump sum payment. And the vast majority of private sector workers who are not in companies that provide pension schemes are going to fall in, precisely, that category.

What we are talking about is the average domestic, the average shop assistant working in a small business, employees in a small printery, employees in all of those small enterprises and many medium-size enterprises that have not been able to afford to put in place adequate pension schemes, or pension schemes at all, and a long-standing worker in one of those enterprises in the private sector reaches the age of 65 and either goes, if the employer has not been paying National Insurance contributions, although I believe that the levels of compliance are much higher, may get a non-contributory pension and once the payment has been made would be entitled to a contributory pension.

I think that we have to find a way to be able to give a person who is in those kinds of circumstances a lump sum payment, that is what I think our National Pension Scheme should also be considering.

The second point, I think is important, is that you have to make a distinction between a guy or a worker who changes jobs every 5-7 years, as the Honourable Member for St. Philip North spoke about, and draws out small amounts, and somebody who works for 20 years in a job and at mid-life when they are now making the last two payments on their mortgage, their children may now be winding down university and so on, they lose that job, and when they most need to have some additional resources other than those, let's say that are provided by the unemployment scheme that we have in place, and that there maybe an opportunity somewhere at that mid-point in relation to our severance payments scheme to ensure that those individuals can get some cash in their hands.

I think that we need to find more creative ways and be frank with the people of Barbados about the extent to which our severance arrangement, as presently designed, maybe having the opposite effect to what, in fact, was intended or what I assumed was intended in terms of putting a safety-net in place for workers and this is very important.

I think that all that would have been said in this debate today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, point to the issues that were raised in a debate we had about two or three years ago on the National Insurance Scheme in Barbados, in which recommendations were put, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, related to them today. Recommendations were put in ways which we could ensure the continued viability and effectiveness of the National Insurance Scheme.
3.10 p.m.

The second point that I want to make is not because issues of retirement have suddenly become of major significance but because I think that the role which the resources of the National Insurance Scheme can play in Barbados is something that we need to debate more in this Chamber. I think the time has come for us to have greater oversight whether it is through a Committee of Parliament or some other arrangement, of the activities of the National Insurance Department.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church West said that if we did not have this debate today he would not have known that the information that goes into the decision-making of the National Insurance Board can be made available to any citizen in Barbados but particularly the Opposition, if we wish to have it. Well, that will be by request. I think that on the basis of furthering parliamentary democracy and awareness in Barbados that we should have a standing arrangement.

We now have a Standing Committee on law and order in which one gets an update on what is happening and I believe the Public Accounts Committee, when we can get a quorum, gets an update on what is happening in relation to the Government's financing. It is also vital to my mind, because of the critical nature of the retirement issues as well as those resources that are available to the National Insurance Scheme, that we should not be exposed only to sporadic information but should have oversight in a regular

and consistent fashion over the operations of the National Insurance Department.

The third point that I wanted to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this short intervention is that we all acknowledge that retirement issues are becoming more and more significant and everybody has identified the reasons why – the changing structure of our population. But there are other structures that are going to impact even more on the security of workers and their abilities to buy into secure pensions or other arrangements, the developments that impact so severely on workers as a result of what people loosely call globalization or trade liberalisation and the new forms of employment.

The new "contracts" that workers will have to enter into to find employment, particularly at the low and mid-end range of skills, are going to militate against people being able to make consistent contributions, either to a pension fund and in many cases you are going to find that employers are going to avoid their responsibilities to make regular contributions to the National Insurance Scheme.

What is emerging on the global scene, and if any of you take a look at the latest Human Development Report, they speak about it because it is a trend that is occurring and is even impacting on developed as well as developing countries that are high on the index, is the fact that workers are being rented basically from a pool. They are being given short contracts in which one is not sure who their employer may be. They may work at a variety of different locations. They may be doing task work for a short period of time. Task work that involves, as I say, the use of many workers in a specific location on one day or one week and in another location on another day. As there are more flexible contracts of employment developing, the question will be, whose responsibility is it to make payments either in concert with the worker to a pension scheme and who is to make payments to the social security authorities in our countries for these workers.

As I say, even in countries where compliance is high, even in countries where you have to have a social security number to do anything, even in countries where their welfare and social security system is well-developed, you are still finding that these flexible work arrangements are creating greater insecurity for workers.

Sir, we are dealing today with Government workers and for the past few debates, we have been having and we have been dealing with workers who function in a relatively secure environment. The threat to Government workers in Barbados did not exist in the 1960s. It did not exist in the 1970s. It did not exist in the 1980s, except those who were laid off in the 1981 IMF Programme. It did not exist significantly in the 1990s except those people who were laid off in the IMF Programme and as we go into the year 2000, it is still not that group, that is the most vulnerable. But as our economic arrangements change, it is clear that large numbers of workers in the private sector throughout the world are going to become increasingly vulnerable to new forms of employment arrangements, in which their security and ability to plan for their families and for themselves are going to be obliterated.

Sir, all of this is happening against the background that every effort is being made by Governments to level the playing field and provide guarantees and binding arrangements to facilitate private sector investments and decisions which affect private investment. So that every facility is being made to level the playing field and provide for the owners of capital in these new arrangements but very little is being done and of course the owners of capital are able to come and say, "Well, let me pick up the latest legislation."

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: This is under successive Governments. I do not even want to get into a partisan debate on that.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of our desire to secure higher levels of investment and higher levels of economic growth to attract investment to our shores, to provide jobs for Barbadians and all of the other lofty goals that we have set for ourselves in the past three to four decades in the Caribbean, we have moved more and more into a scenario where we provide very strong guarantees to protect the investment both of Barbadian private sector investors at the top layers of the private sector and foreign investors. Every facility is being made to secure the rights of those investors their abilities to take money out of the country. As I say, there are tax-free rights in some piece of legislation. We give them guarantees that for 30 years nothing will be done to alter their status, but no worker in Barbados other than one in the public sector, can feel that those kinds of guarantees apply to his or her employment.

We do not have minimum wage legislation in this country. Sometimes when you tell that to people, they are shocked. I was meeting with some Commonwealth fellows the other day and they were talking about ways in which countries have dealt with problems of poverty. We do not have new unfair dismissal legislation yet but we need it urgently. We do not have new legislation, particularly to deal with the health threat to workers. Well if to say it, I am glad, Honourable Members on that Side seem to say that when I complain that it has not come, I am launching an attack that they must take in a partisan way.

3.20 p.m.

I wish it had come under the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) but whoever was in office, I would be saying exactly the same thing, that we cannot say that we are moving in the right direction on the cusps of the 21st Century, signing protocols and doing all kinds of other things and when one looks at the balance sheet the greatest deficit in terms of action is in relation to the workers in Barbados.

It is not just so in Barbados but it is particularly so because of the constant pledges that we have made. We have made pledges about minimum wage, new occupational health and safety legislation, unfair dismissal legislation and new trade union legislation. All of that, if passed by this Parliament during this term will send a very strong and important signal to workers but that signal needs to be sent because at the end of the day, the new economic arrangement does not otherwise provide any security for workers anywhere in the world. Now, what little we can do in Barbados therefore to maintain the relationship that our Parliament has to passing legislation in advance of and in the support of the rights of workers we need to do it because it is vital that that new legislation be put in place.

Beyond that, when we speak about trade liberalisation, globalisation and the CARICOM Single Market, we must start to factor into those presentations the real threats that exist to the security and rights of workers, hard won rights which workers by might and by cooperation with Government in passing new legislation have won down through the decades in Barbados and elsewhere. I think that it is those threats that we need to pay more and more attention to rather than focusing our attention on the leveling of the playing field for capital and investment decisions to be made in a climate of protection.

The final point, I wish to make is that the present statutory boards pension legislation permits – and I have said this here before – statutory boards as a matter of discretion to grant gratuities to workers who have been in their employ for 10 years or more. That is my recollection of the provision of that legislation. It said the board may grant a gratuity. What has happened is that Boards have been extremely uneven in the manner in which they have discharged that obligation. Some Boards will be very liberal and will recommend that persons should be entitled to some form of gratuity or benefit and other Boards will say no and some Boards will give some workers a gratuity and will decline to give other workers a gratuity where that discretion exists.

I believe that legislation was a pioneering piece of legislation which obviously did not want to put greater burden on Government than was feasible at the time. I believe now that we need to bring some certainty into that area of our pensions' law and either make it mandatory for that pension to be calculated in a particular way so that workers at statutory corporations who come under the purview of that legislation would be entitled to a pension.

In that regard, the Attorney General may also be aware that the posts to which the pensions are applicable are scheduled and that very often you may have a new post which reaches the schedule before some of the positions that have been there for a longer period of time. I think that we need to have a very thorough review of all of the posts that have been scheduled under the statutory boards pensions legislation and update that legislation by removing the discretion from the Boards to grant the gratuity and establishing the principle on which it will be granted and ensuring that there are no anomalies in the application of the legislation to positions that exist in that piece of legislation.

So as I have said from the outset, every individual is going to have a different perspective on what is desirable in terms of investments decisions for their life cycle. There are some people who are going to see the legislation that is passed today as advantageous to them but there must also be the opportunity in this Parliament for Members to put an alternative point of view, as was put by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, which may be attractive to those persons who may either want to have more flexible pension arrangement or which the Government can then deal with by raising the overall level of Government pensions or the applicability of the formula for which pensions are calculated or by a variety of other means which would ensure that persons who live a healthy life, that after retirement they can get a level of remuneration through their pensions on which they can live comfortably.

I thank you.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this Side a number of important and insightful contributions were made to this debate and I wish to thank all Honourable Members who spoke for their contributions. The Leader of the Opposition also made some useful suggestions and comments that the Government will of course over time bear in mind in dealing with this very difficult and complex matter of pensions, not only in the public service but pensions generally.

Sir, I cannot include the Honourable Member for St. Lucy in any congratulatory comments that I make. Sir, it was difficult to understand the sense or the tenor and the content or even the extent of what he was saying. I would wish him to have some lessons, Sir, so that in the future he could speak more intelligently and I will be grateful to him, as Reverend Wes Hall would say, to illuminate the dark crevices of my mind.

Really, Sir, I could not understand the contribution of the Honourable Member having regard to the fact that the parent legislation – if I could put it like that – to this amending Bill came here in 1998. As I understood it, Sir, it was warmly welcomed by Both Sides. The Other Side was more substantially provided for at that time.

3.30 p.m.

Sir, there are perhaps four brief points that I wish to make just to reinforce what I have said in the opening. Casual workers employed after July 01, 1971 were not entitled to a pension. They could only receive a gratuity and they had to rely on their receipt of a pension at age 65. That has now changed.

Secondly, casual workers who retire at the age of 65, will only get a pension if they were employed prior to July 01, 1971. For that category, the retirement was compulsory at 60, so that essentially there was a period of five years between 60 and 65 which had not been dealt with under the previous legislation. That gap is now closed, Sir. That is the best way I can reply to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I will just ask him since he has a very close rapport with the people of St. Lucy most of whom he knows by their first or surname, to find any of those 4 000 casual workers who have been the beneficiaries of this legislation within the last year and ask them if they are better off or worse off as a result of the legislation. Nothing that we say from this Side will ever persuade the Honourable Member for St. Lucy otherwise. He is impervious to reason and reasonableness.

I, therefore, beg to move with those brief remarks that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, the House resolved itself into Committee of Supply, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. G. A. CLARKE, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, seconded by Hon. G. A. CLARKE, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Pensions (Amendment) Act, 2000.

ORDER NO. 7 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 OF LAND AT WOODLAND IN THE PARISH OF SAINT GEORGE

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are here today seeking parliamentary approval to vest 5.94 hectares of land at Woodland, St. George in the National Housing Corporation for the purpose of road construction and housing development. Basically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the land that was acquired by Government sometime ago has already passed this House. Today, we are asking that this 5.94 hectares of land be vested in the National Housing Corporation. For those of you who are aware of the Woodland Plantation, it is situated near Greens Village, St. George. It is between the Woodland Estate and also Drax Hall Estate. It also butts and bounds a small tenantry owned by the Waterman's which is an old name in the St. George history.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Woodland area which is almost twelve acres of land is ideally suitable for small scale agricultural lots, although it is a housing development. We are using this type of development for persons who would require small farming.

The tenantry has always been agricultural in nature where small holdings were undertaken for the growing of vegetables, cattle and pigs. It is also important to know that this village of Woodland comprises about 14 houses in total. It is situated almost a half mile from the main road. It was Government's intention sometime ago to resite the 14 homes at Woodland. However, during the last session of Parliament, it was agreed that Government should acquire the land on both sides of the road leading into Woodland. We have done so and we recognize that once we have acquired the land on both sides of the road, it will give the Government the opportunity to include those persons who want to do small scale farming. Lots will range, Mr. Deputy Speaker, between a quarter of an acre of land which is just over 12,000 square feet to half an acre of land. So that we envisage there may be possibly 32 spots in this area and they will be facing onto the side of the road because we have acquired the roadway as well as the land adjoining the road. This will be used for small scale agriculture.
3.40 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hope that within the next three or four months that we will be able to accommodate those persons. A number of people have been asking for small agricultural lots in the area and in other areas we have had requests from persons who are seeking not only a 5 000 square foot of land for house spots but to do small scale agriculture in the area. It will be in keeping with Government's programme of providing access to land which is important and this is what we are trying to do, provide some access to land to persons who want to do small scale agriculture.

With those few remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a difficulty with this particular debate for several reasons that

when we were doing the Estimates I got the impression listening to the Minister of Housing when there was a heated debate between the Front Bench and the Back Bench that this land already had house spots on it. I would like to find out from the Minister of Housing if it is a different piece of land at Woodland or if this is the said piece of land that had the heated debate between the Honourable Member for St. George North and the Honourable Member for St. George South.

At the time of the debate it was stated by the Honourable Member for St. George South that the only thing that was done at Woodland was a road constructed on the same land that was compulsorily acquired by the Government. Today I am hearing from the Minister of Housing that they will be constructing a road and that they will be putting house lots on this said land.

I want to know, Sir, from this House which statement is correct, if the one during the Estimates was correct or the one we are now discussing that was said by the Minister of Housing. It is clear to me that if I am to follow what is being said today, I would have to side with the Honourable Member for St. George South and I would have to come to the conclusion that the Honourable Member for St. George South was correct when he said that he did not get any of the lots in St. George when we were dealing with the Estimates and that the Honourable Member for St. George North has now corrected his error by bringing this particular debate before this Chamber. I am saying to the Honourable Member for St. George North that if that is what he is doing he should admit to the House that he made an error earlier in the year and that the Honourable Member for St. George South was correct when he stated that he did not get any house lots at Woodland. I am clear in my mind that this is not the first time we are discussing Woodland during this session. I want to know who was right and who was wrong.

If the Honourable Member for St. George South was wrong I would expect him to get up and admit to this Parliament that he was wrong and that he misled this House by saying that there were no house lots on the land that was acquired at Woodland and that he is prepared to apologise to the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we find ourselves in this situation and as the Shadow Minister for Housing, I would like to know which one of the Honourable Members has misled this House because I consider it to be a rather serious matter and we need to get some clarification on this particular matter.

Another thing, Sir, it is a rather interesting point raised by the Honourable Member for St. George North. He said that at one stage they thought of relocating the fourteen houses that were located on this particular land but then they were convinced after a debate. I would like to know what debate convinced them that they should put in the necessary infrastructure to keep those people on that piece of land.

Then, I was reminded of a heated debate in this House about a piece of land called Deane Town where the people of Deane Town – and it was not in this Session, in a prior session so the new Minister on the Front Bench would not have to remind me that I should not speak about something in the current Session – were privileged to have one of the best pieces of real estate in Barbados and the distance from the main road was no half mile but yet those people were removed from Deane Town and placed on Sion Hill when the Government could have done the same thing they are doing today. That is why I am calling on the Government to make sure that when those lots at Deane Town are allocated that the first set of people that should be the beneficiaries of those lots would have been the people who were living there in the first place. I personally think that those people were deprived of a good piece of real estate. Seeing that they are now thinking along the right lines I would like them to correct the error and offer those lots at Deane Town to the rightful owners.

To the best of my knowledge, if you go into Deane Town you can see coconut trees that belong to those people and I would like those people to be the beneficiaries of their hard work. The infrastructure is there because of the St. Silas Development and the cost will be reduced. I am calling on the Minister of Housing to ignore the wishes of those who would not want to see poor people owning land like the one at Deane Town and to prove me wrong that it is not the policy of Government to deprive poor people of owning land like the one at Deane Town.

If the Minister of Housing does not revert to a previous Minister then I can only come to the conclusion that because Deane Town looks down on Westmoreland that the Government of Barbados would not want poor Barbadians to own land looking down on the rich. I am begging the Government to have a heart and to show me that they are progressive and that they are willing to give poor people land to look down on the rich and that they have not deliberately removed those people from Deane Town and put them in Sion Hill on the lower plateau because they were trying to protect the interests of the rich and that they did not want anybody of that standing to look down on those people who live at Royal Westmoreland.

I am also aware, Sir, that there has been a great demand for that land and that some very high prices have been offered to the Ministry of Housing through National Housing for the land at Deane Town and I would like to find out from the Minister of Housing how many people have agreed to sell that land at Deane Town and how many of them

are foreigners willing to pay as much as half million for a lot at Deane Town.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have to tell the new Minister of Tourism who replaces his cousin that he has to behave on the Front Bench and cannot behave like the Minister of Public Works. He still believes that he is on the Back Bench. I know you got there by accident because you happened to be in the right family relationship but do not behave like that, Sir. You deserve it. I feel so. Do not mind that others might not believe you deserve it. You are my boy. Keep quiet!

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those people who originally had land at Deane Town have a right to have an offer made to them to purchase this particular land. The same offer that has been made now to those people who are living in Woodland that they, the people of Deane Town, will also get the same offer.

I must admit, Sir, that I will support this. I also want to send a warning to Government: that I will expect the houses to be near to the road. I do not want to see lots to the road and the houses to the back so that the plantation owner could easily come back and tell the Government, well, you know, you have to allow me to subdivide more of the land because the houses will be affected by the cane fields. There is a particular trick that is played in Barbados where people deliberately subdivide land in such a way that it continues like a cancer that once permission has been given for one piece, the houses are constructed in such a way that they can easily use the argument that you have to protect the houses from the cane fields so you get rid of the cane fields. This is the St. George area and this is the mecca of agriculture in this country. I have always argued in this Parliament that if there is one thing that we should protect in this country is our good agriculture land and that the last thing that we should tamper with when it comes to agriculture is the land in the St. George Valley.
3.50 p.m.

We have to be very careful. They went to Constant, they went to Lears, now they are at Woodland, now they are are Bulkeleys Estates. I am saying, Sir, that if you do not watch it, soon from now they will want to replace Bulkeleys Factory and build houses there too.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am grateful to the Government for the new aggressive approach it is taking in relation to the development of St. George South. I agree with the the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that St. George is – he said mecca, but I do not like these Middle East terms. St. George has been for centuries, the bread-basket of the nation. The contribution that St. George has made to the overall development of Barbados has never been truly appreciated. I have spoken *ad nauseam* in this House for many, many years of the need for Government to show some appreciation of the contribution that agriculture has made to the development of this country. It is that which generated, along with the coining of the expression by the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, the two Barbadoses concept. There was the argument that rural Barbados was lagging behind urban Barbados in terms of development and particularly in services, whether it was services of transportation, roads, recreation, whatever.

It is for this reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that rural development as a concept came into the thinking and into the policy of the Barbados Labour Party and significant progress has been made. I, at times, felt that it could have been faster and recently I had reason to state on the Floor of this Parliament and express my view about a situation in my own constituency. Now there is an aggressive approach to development in my area. The same Woodland has had a new state of the art barber green road. I could not drive up in there for many years as the Parliament Representative because when you got to a certain point the road was so bad, or what passed in those days for road was so bad that it was a little dangerous for me to go too far for fear that the car may turn over in the gully to the left. This has changed and we have a barber green road up there and maybe before the middle of the year is finished which is just a few weeks, we will be playing some serious road tennis up there because of this new road.

I have heard the Minister, he knows the area as well as I do, say that there are 14 houses.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: – It is a family – all the people up there, I think with exception of one family are related – the Holligans.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: It is the Holligans cul-de-sac so to speak. Many years ago when the Barbados Labour Party of the period 1976 to 1986 was in, I had agitated inside the Government for development in Woodland, particular the road because it is a long, long stretch of road, dark with canes on both sides and it was dangerous for anybody to be going up there during the night. It was suggested at the time that it would have been cheaper to move the people from Woodland down to the corner by Greens and that the Government would have paid for the relocation and build the groundsills and build the houses up for the people. But the people said, no. They want wanted to stay, so to speak, in the ancestral part. They stayed on and the road has finally been done and I am glad about that.

Now, this is the second stage of the development where the lands that lead from the main road up to where the people live in what was formerly the tenantries – we do not talk about tenantries in St. George South anymore by the very enlightened and creative policies of the Barbados Labour Party these tenantries are now freehold lands. The word tenantry and freehold are antithetical, Sir. Up in there is not a tenantry anymore, people are living well, building nice houses, bungalows and such but this land on both sides as you go into the tenantry is crying out for development. I am glad to see that the decision has been taken by the Government to use this ten acres for this development. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand that they will have about thirty small units for farming because the lots are going to be about a quarter acre each which is a little bit too big for the type of housing planned and people will have land around the house for kitchen garden and other forms of small agriculture. I have asked the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South to re-institute extension services in the Ministry of Agriculture.

There was a time, Sir, when I was early in politics that the extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture were an important arm of the Ministry and it moved around Barbados in small communities in rural Barbados providing advice and technical assistance to people so that they could use the little bits of land around their house for the benefit of themselves and their families and indeed, for the community at large. To allocate these 30-odd lots to persons who have no interest in agriculture would be, in my view, a horrible mistake.

Therefore, I would want the Ministry of Housing, if they are prepared to listen to me since I know the people in the area and so on and I am the one who did the agitation, if they would listen to me, and the Ministry of Housing agrees with me, that only persons who are interested in using the land around them for agriculture, that only those persons be assigned lots by the National Housing Corporation. This is not to shut out the large number of people from St. George and I speak of the parish of St. George – St. George North and St. George South – who constantly on a daily basis, contact me and say that they want house spots badly. When I walk around in St. George people say, I have bought lumber and it is under my mother's house rotting and I want a piece of land or a house spot to build a house and a house spot has not been forthcoming. Any initiative on the part of National Housing Corporation and the Ministry of Housing in respect of provision of lots for housing in Barbados and more particularly in my constituency will be greatly welcomed by me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say that persons who are interested in agriculture should have the lots in Woodland, I am not suggesting that persons who are not interested in agriculture should be denied the opportunity to have spots elsewhere. Therefore, Sir, as part of the aggressive new approach by the Government in respect of my constituency the area from the Turnpike up to Ellerton, as you go up the hill on the left, Sir, approval has been given by the Government in the last few weeks for this area to be developed for housing and there will be over 100 house spots available in the Ellerton. Not only for the people in my constituency but people in my constituency will be the major beneficiaries. I am not one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who believes that only persons who live in an area which is being developed should be beneficiaries. These things should be available for the people of Barbados.

There is also the area of Farm Road, about ten-acres of land that is being prepared. Applications are in, filed by me, to the Government, Town and Country Planning for that ten-acre area to be developed for housing. Also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Government is acquiring, as the Honourable Member for St. John is well acquainted, land at Todds in St. George on the border of St. John, the village of Todds which was formerly a tenantry, acquiring land for house spots.

4.00 p.m.

I usually criticise the Government if I feel that my constituency is not being brought into the tide. When things seem to be passing us by I get up and I say what I feel, because my primary responsibility is to the people who elected me, Sir. So when it is time to criticise I criticise. On this occasion I must express my great appreciation to the way in which the Government is going about sorting out these needs for the people of Woodland.

I want to say something else about Woodland. Woodland is like an oasis, it is up inside by itself, about 14 houses. There is Woodland, the plantation some distance away, Drax Hall one side and there is Greens out the other side. There is a symbiotic link between Greens and Woodland. In Woodland, itself, it is an oasis. It is truly a rural idyllic environment in Barbados. The development that is proposed for the extension through these lots must be done in such a way that it does not interfere, seriously, with the integrity of this idyllic rural atmosphere.

It is also going to be important, in the fullness of time, Sir, because I am not unreasonable in my requests that perhaps there could be a linkage with the long cart road that stretches from Woodland to the heart of the former Drax Hall Tenantry. Perhaps in the fullness of time this link might be established because it would allow the people of Woodland to strengthen the ties that they have with the people of that area, because a number of them go to church over at the Pentecostal Church in Drax Hall, and a number of them play cricket for the Drax Hall cricket team. By the way, Sir, there is a great cricket field that was acquired by the Barbados Labour Party Government, and in recent weeks I have seen a structure going up. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want you to get jealous, but I see a beautiful structure going up, a pavilion is being built in Drax Hall.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: When they do things for me I will keep quiet but when things are not done for me I am going to make a lot of noise.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: A pavilion is going up in Drax Hall and the general area of that part of my constituency.

Sir, I will deal with the Honourable Member for St. Lucy's request in my time but in the meantime you should listen and hear what is happening.

I am also pleased to hear that down from Woodland into Greens, as I said that these two communities are closely linked, the Government made a decision to acquire land in the area of the public bath at Greens and Drax Hall Hope for a playing field. Now Drax Hall Hope, Woodland, Greens, Beards Village, Perrogative, St. Judes, over in St. George North, Harmony Cottage, and Fair View are areas with a lot of people. A lot of the people live in this general area but there are no playing facilities, no recreational facilities of any sort in the area. The Government has now decided to acquire land in that general area for the provision of a playing field and the Minister of Housing, the Government's Landlord, has an interest towards the area, because it is an area that butt and bound between St. George North and St. George South. Therefore he is going to be as much a beneficiary in relation to his constituents as I am in mine.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Therefore, he is doing me as much a favour because he has an interest in his constituents as I have in mine. Therefore, if he has an interest he could put extra pressure on his officer in his Ministry to get this playing field to meet the needs of the people of that area.

I, Mr. Deputy Speaker, am speaking as a very happy man. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants to know about some debate earlier. There was a debate earlier and you know what I said. I said that I am not seeing these things happening in my constituency and I want to see them happen. The people of St. George South heard loud and clear what I had to say because the media carried it. It is a good story to hear a backbencher critising the frontbench. They like that, so I know that they would carry it. I am not critising the frontbench today, but I hope the media would be just as generous to say that Tull criticised a few months ago and now he is singing the praises of the Government because the reward has been and continues now to be fairly plentiful.

So I commend the Government...

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Whatever is provided for my constituency is provided for the people of the constituency. It does not work by Candidates. I do not want anything. I live in St. George North and the Honourable Member for St. George North, the representative for St. George North, my MP, is the Minister of Housing and he looks after St. George admirably well.

When I make noise for the people of St. George South, I am making noise for my constituency. These people have been good to me for almost three decades. People who have voted for me over and over and put me in the House of Assembly with a big majority.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know what to do with my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. I will stop at this point and tell the Government that I commend them for the movement that they made in Todds. 4.10 p.m.

I want to put in one caveat, Sir, the surveying services in Barbados can be awfully slow and, therefore, to say that you are vesting the land in the National Housing Corporation for people from St. George to get house spots is only one step. I am urging the Minister to use his best offices to ensure that surveyors get in there in a hurry and drive down some red top poles, because there is no point saying, you are vesting the land and nobody goes in there and back up the work.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Oh, I see. I do hope the Minister would use his best offices to make sure that they go in early and do the surveying work and mark out those spots because I do want the people to think that they have been held on the premise that any promise is encumbered to a fool. They want to move beyond that and to be able to go in get about the orderly development in one of the most attractive areas in St. George and indeed in Barbados.

I am grateful to you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked if the roads were completed. The roads were completed since the last financial year. As the Representative for the Constituency has made the point, they are all barber green and the development is ready to proceed. I believe that if we can get the surveyors in there within the next month, then we can start the allocation of spots. There are a number of people who have come to the National Housing Corporation seeking spots of this nature. They are not only people from St. George. There

are people from all over Barbados, St. John, St. Lucy, asking for small lots to do agriculture.

We would hope that those persons who would use these lots would be primarily those persons who want to get involved in agricultural farming.

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ORDER NO. 8 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE VESTING IN THE BARBADOS TOURISM INVESTMENT INCORPORATED UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT, CAP. 225 OF LAND AT SPEIGHTSTOWN, SAINT PETER TO FACILITATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPERTY

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Resolution before this House seeks permission to vest 702 square metres of land at the site of the old post office building Speightstown, St. Peter in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated for the purpose of tourism development.

On 6th June, 1996 some four years ago, the Cabinet and Government agreed that 20 properties which were tourist related should be vested in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated. According to this decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a total of four properties were vested between 1998 and today. These properties that were vested already include: The old Harbour Police Station, the old Jetty, an open window the one opposite Jemmott's Lane, the old Eye Clinic, Bay Street, St. Michael.

There are also eight other properties that were vested after 1998 and to date these other properties include: The shop in the Town Hall Cheapside Development, the Trevor's Way at Princess Alice Highway, the Old Town Hall at Cumberland Street, Bridgetown, the Savoy at Bay Street, St. Michael and a property at the corner of Wellington Street, Bridgetown. Also, we are vesting the car park at Furniture Limited, Bridgetown, the Old Spirit Bond at Bridgetown and Temple Yard at Cheapside, Bridgetown.

The old Post Office at Speightstown is now to be vested in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated. This property used to house, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Post Office and the Speightstown Branch Library. It is hoped that the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated would use this facility for mixed tourism development. It is understood that they will use it for shops and restaurants and some of the space will be allocated for office accommodation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this site is abutting and abounding, to the west, is the sea and it is situated in the heart of the Speightstown.

There are other properties which are to be vested in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated but there are some problems which we are encountering at this time. There are properties which lie in the Bay Street area and some of them lie within Bridgetown which the Government is now looking at clear titles. Some of these properties have problems of encroachment which we have not been able to settle as yet.

There are a number of properties that the Government owns that they cannot find the title deeds. We are currently in search of title deeds for these properties. There are others that the Government will have to come to Parliament to get clear title such as the District D Police Station in St. Thomas as well as others. For example, the Lower Green Bus Stand, despite the fact the Government is said to have owned that property for a number of years, there is no clear title for it. Jubilee Gardens, we have to establish the title for that one as well. The old Customs House on Prince William Henry Street, the former Fisheries Department and Natural Gas site on Bay Street, we have to get those titles. Again, the titles are not clear and there is some encroachment on the sites.

The land on which the Mobil Oil Refinery, Graves End, St. Michael, is situated has to be surveyed. We have to properly establish the boundaries of this site as well. There are three parcels surrounding the Fish Market on Bay Street, where we are unable to establish clear titles. Apparently this land is owned between the Government and two or three other landlords. Fort Denmark in Speightstown is another one where there is encroachment. It is the Government's property but people are on it. There are many matters that have to be resolved at the Old Fort Denmark site in Speightstown.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the few months, I will be coming to Parliament seeking to give clear titles to most of these properties so that we can get on with the Government's business. The surveyors' plans are here for Members to have a look at.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I beg that this Resolution to vest this lot in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated do now pass.

4.20 p.m.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rising on this matter, I believe that the Minister has a reasonable comprehensive background to the purpose for the acquisition of the property.

If I were not otherwise aware that he lives in Barbados, I would wonder how it could fall so easily from the mouth of the Minister of Housing and Lands to speak about properties which essentially are located on the foreshore in Barbados – in other words on the beach – because at no point in his speech has he come into contact with the most serious concerns that Barbadians have about the inaccessibility of beach land in this country.

I am impressed with the fact that Government appears on the face to be acquiring these properties for other purposes. There is nothing wrong with that but if one were to try to find a semblance of social conscience or an element of foresight in this Government in seeking to grapple with a major issue which Barbadians feel very strongly about, it was entirely absent in the presentation of the Honourable Member for St. George North but I do not blame the Honourable Member because when the Speightstown library was moved, the Honourable Member for St. Peter delivered a speech – and forgive me, I was not present, I can only tell you what I heard on the radio – and I was alarmed because it seems to me as though the message that was being sent whether consciously or unconsciously was that beach land in Barbados and property on the foreshore in Barbados is not for Barbadians but it is to be used for tourism development and that there is something wrong ....

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: When the Honourable Member for St. Peter then caught himself, he said that the Government was going to amend the Constitution so as to ensure the rights of Barbadians to have access to beach lands in Barbados.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I never said that he said so, I said that was my impression. The Honourable Member cannot tell me what impression to have. He talked in here at all levels about his impression about what happened in St. George which does not square with reality and I did not stop him. The people of St. George are constantly telling me about the fact that all he does is walk around on Saturday mornings with short pants on and jogging and so on to try to reconnect with them and that is his only contact with them. I did not interrupt him.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: So give me a chance now. There is no foreshore in St. George. Apparently he has delivered his statutory once a year speech. It has been delivered, so keep quiet. There is no sea in St. George.

I am talking about beach land and that apparently does not concern him but it concerns the Ombudsman sufficiently that he wrote a report and instead of the Government taking on board the serious recommendations that have been made in that report about the lack of accessibility to beaches, about inadequate bathing facilities and a whole range of other issues in this country that we raised, what this Parliament is saying is that we are going to take land which Government owns and vest it in a statutory corporation whose principal responsibility is to undertake tourism investment.

Now, I hope that the Minister would let me know whether that tourism investment is going to be investment principally financed and operated by Barbadians. That may be one palliative but at the end of the day what I am very concerned about, as I have said, is the fact, that this issue of accessibility to beach land is a burning concern of all Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I read the recommendations of the Constitution Review Commission, I realised that all they were recommending is that we should have a non-binding declaration in the Constitution and that access to beach land and the use of beaches by Barbadians is one of the things that the Barbadian society would like to promote or words to that effect and that nobody would be able to enforce that in a court of law.

As I have said, it does concern me that the Honourable Member for St. George North was completely silent in relation to the potential use of any of the sites he identified. He identified the Harbour Police Station, the Jetty, the Eye Clinic, Fort Willoughby and then he spoke about the facility at Speightstown and he said these are going to be used by the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. for mixed tourism development.

I am making a call today for the Government to examine the Special Report of the Ombudsman in relation to his walk along the coastline and the availability of both beach access and the need for additional beach facilities in Barbados. Some of these areas, if not all of them, that are incorporated into the plan and particularly on the West Coast of Barbados and wherever such properties exist, that access to the beach and adequate parking and beach facility should be made available to Barbadians because it worries me that a message seems to be being sent either encoded or in direct language that any time a property which is on the foreshore of Barbados, if it is used by Government for things like libraries and hospitals and so on that that is not good economic use of that land and that what they need to do is to take over those properties, find other facilities or build other

facilities and then allocate those properties exclusively for mixed tourism development.

I am saying, I do not believe that in a country the size of Barbados where the sea is all around us and not very far from us that we should feel that the beach as an aspect of our physical environment is something that we as Barbadians should not be free to enjoy and land that is adjacent to or on the foreshore of that beach should not also form part of the natural patrimony of Barbadians.

I am also going to ask the Minister of Housing and Lands whether he is aware of any proposals by an association of Barbadian businessmen – whether it is in Speightstown or otherwise – to establish facilities in those buildings now that they have become available for mixed tourism use because I understand that proposals have been made to Government by Barbadians for the use of these facilities either for small business or for other kinds of activities.

We will support those kinds of development as long as there are accompanied by provision being made in the development arrangement for access to the beach and for adequate parking and changing facilities so that we can continue or at least make a start toward the processes of honouring some of the very important recommendations that have been made by the Ombudsman in his recent Special Report.
4.30 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I think it is wrong for the Honourable Member for St. John to get up and create the impression that this Government is somehow or other blocking off or encouraging the access to beaches in Barbados or that he is using beach land in Barbados against the interest of the people of this country. It is wrong to say that because it is this Government that has been using the agencies of Government every time someone tries to do exactly what he is talking as he makes an attack on the Honourable Member for St. George North.

The Honourable Member for St. George North has gone on record over and over again facing the heat even at town hall meetings to explain the policy of the Government in relation to the use of beach land and he has not been inconsistent, as he said, with the social conscience of Barbadians. The Honourable Member for St. John should really be ashamed of himself because he is the man who gave all kinds of concessions to the people at Westmoreland.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Well, I know because you are only interested in beaches. You feel that you can give away the rest of Barbados in terms that are not in the interest of Barbadians. The beach is good enough. That stands as a stain on the public career of the Honourable Member.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: The Honourable Member is jealous that I can walk about my constituency in short pants. I understand that the Honourable Member cannot walk in his constituency in short pants.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: I have not been engaged in any verbal jousting with him as frequently as in the past and I thought that maybe he had passed that stage. If he wants to get into that kind of personal thing, I have not lost altogether the steam within me. I do not want to deal with that nonsense.

Asides.

Mr. L. R. TULL: You should not provoke me to say certain things because if I say them you will come outside and say you are my friend. How could you say that? Anyhow, Sir, I am not interested in those diversions.

I really cannot as a Member of this Party and this Government for all of the time that I have been in it, sit back and quietly listen to the Honourable Member for St. John create the impression for the unsuspecting public. That is headline news. What you have seen is headline news. I will turn on my TV tonight or look in the papers tomorrow and see a big thing where the Honourable Member for St. John is telling Barbadians that this Government is sympathetic too in the shutting of access to the beaches in Barbados, it is part of their policy and that it has no social conscience.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House in that he is failing to say that it is not only me but the independent Ombudsman of Barbados who has said that about this Government and successive Governments. I am saying that the Minister has the responsibility to tell us if it will continue.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not true that the Ombudsman has ever said that this Government is allowing, encouraging or causing the use of the shore to be blocked off from the use of Barbadians. He never said that. It is part of the strategy of the Honourable Member for St. John and that is why he has such a serious credibility

problem in Barbados because he never gets it straight. Not because he cannot, Sir, but it is because he does not want to. It is not true that the Ombudsman ever said that.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member for St. George South obviously has not read the Ombudsman Report. The Ombudsman Report in relation to his walk about is a stunning indictment of successive Governments. If he is worried about what it says about the Government he was in, he should say so. But it is a stunning indictment because he has said that this is an extremely emotional issue that Barbadians feel very strongly about. When he carried out the analysis, it is clear that Governments, whether Government Departments, officials or otherwise, have allowed unplanned development to take place throughout the West and South Coasts of Barbados which at the end of the day have prohibited Barbadians from having access to beaches.

I say again that it is a stunning indictment. All that I want to hear from the Honourable Member for St. George North is that this acquisition and vesting will revert that trend and that land on the beach will be made available for parking and for beach facilities for Barbadians. The argument can end there.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Mr. L. R. TULL: That is a point of order, Sir. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, again I must defend the Honourable Member for St. George North not that he cannot defend himself. The Honourable Member introduced a Resolution dealing with the vesting of certain land. The Honourable Member in one of the lowest tricks in debating said that it was a thing to knock down. He is saying that the Honourable Member did not get up and articulate a policy on the use of beach land and its accessibility. That is not what the Resolution is about. Anybody can get up and say any of the zillion of things that he has not said. So what?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. George South made a very serious accusation about the credibility of an Honourable Member of this House in relation to a statement made about the special report of the Ombudsman of Barbados. Sir, I want the opportunity just to read that section of the report and I can read other sections of it including the conclusion which would support the arguments that were advanced and demonstrate that the Ombudsman made very damning criticism against successive Governments in Barbados. On page 16 of that Report, Sir:

"Laxity, Illegalities and Questionable Impediments",

that is the heading. I quote:

> "Successive Governments have not been the best custodians and stewards of our marine and coastal heritage. Examples of laxity of successive Governments the proper supervision and monitoring of the beaches include the building of groins with never a look at the consequences and the benefits to be derived therefrom. Income generating and taxation departments have been slow to exploit the opportunities to obtain income, as fees go unpaid and unregulated commercialization takes place. Structures are built, and interrupt passage along the beach in flagrant disregard of the relevant legislation and regulations. Again, there is evidence that individuals have been willing to dedicate rights of way to the public but the Government agencies have been slow to respond or have not responded at all."

4.40 p.m.

> "A case in point, I was told, is the right of way between Salt Ash and White Sands, Christ Church."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, he then lists a series of blockages which have been condoned by successive Governments and goes on to make the point that:

> "The fears of many nationals are summed up in the fears of a Barbadian woman at Mount Standfast, St. James who came out of the sea to meet us and said most distressingly, "We used to be able to walk from Royal Pavilion to Payne's Bay, but now we are told 'Find somewhere else to bathe'. Where is our heritage?"

He goes on.

> "Nationals, almost to a man, believe that their interests are being ignored.
>
> Many feel that beach front property owners wish to have exclusive rights to use of their land."

If that is not a stunning indictment and criticism of successive governments, including this one, I do not know what is.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Honourable Member is now reading is a modified position of the indictment he made. He made an indictment against this Government and I am talking about impressions, what this body feels and the next person feels. It came through in a very dramatic way and that is what forced me out of my lethargy, his saying that this Government is encouraging or responsible for the blocking off of access to beaches and was unconcerned, negligent in relation to what happens in the foreshore. There is nothing in what he has read that has supported the earlier comments that he has made.

The Report is common knowledge because it is full of what this body feels and the next one feels and the Honourable Member has used the word 'feel' at least three times. He talked about impressions but there is no concrete evidence.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member is launching a criticism on the Report without the facts. The Report is very clear. It is not what people feel. This Report even carries the Appendix to the Port St. Charles Development Act which in section 7 says quite clearly:

> "The land reclaimed from the sea and more particularly described in the Schedule is, without further assurance, hereby vested in the company in fee simple absolute in possession."

It was not the Democratic Labour Party that vested that land in Port St. Charles and, therefore, I repeat the criticism ten times over.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member persists in error. He never concedes anything. He made a vicious attack on the integrity of this Government in relation to the use of the beaches of this country. He can read whatever he likes. He cannot wriggle out of the position in which he has put himself yet again. It is difficult to accept the credibility of the Honourable Member for St. John in important matters of State. Anybody who listens to him could not have been left with the impression other than he is saying that this Government is condoning...

Aside.

Mr. L. R. TULL: Mr. Deputy Speaker, he is saying *sotto voce* that that is what he is saying.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order, I am saying that and I am repeating it, that this Government has continued in a trend and I am making the accusation here again today and I am asking it to answer that. You cannot get on with sophistry in here. Answer it! Tell us that you are going to take steps to stop it! Identify where you are going to put the new beach accesses and the beach facilities! Assure the people you know what is going on and that you are not in here once a year to deliver a speech to satisfy the headlines of the newspaper. Give us the facts!

Mr. L. R. TULL: This is a hopeless cause. I will not get through to him. Everybody who has heard him knows what the position is. I have nothing more to say.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the vesting of this land is a very important chapter in the development of the North of Barbados. I would like to remind this House that to the South of this property there is a beach access used by the people of Speightstown which is very important. The truth is that it is not a very wide one and one would expect that when the development is finished at this parcel of land, that the people of the North of Barbados in Speightstown will continue to have somewhere to go in order to have a sea bath.

The reason why I am calling on the Minister to pay careful attention to this particular matter is that nearly all the areas he has mentioned have already been earmarked by the rich and famous for development. One knows that when the development is taking place that these investors have a way and sometimes divert roads and remove beach accesses and deprive Barbadians of having the right to a proper sea bath.

We have witnessed a situation, and I would hope that it would never happen again, that Port St. Charles was able to remove nearly one mile of beach access from the landscape of Barbados and they have been able along with the hotels in the North to build a road and that road is between the two properties, and thousands of people have to compete for a small area that was left for them to bathe. One would hope, Sir, that in light of the demand for beach access in the North of Barbados that the Government will see it fit not to interfere with this particular one for the simple reason that the beach that was created by Port St. Charles to the North, of which I warned this House, is not a beach that can accommodate large numbers of people.

Fortunate for us it has one of the remaining reefs that I must say is still alive. Under normal circumstances, if the other reefs were not allowed to be destroyed by the developers in Barbados one would easily have asked them to remove that reef but seeing that reef is the only remaining one that shows some sign of life it is difficult now to remove that reef to accommodate the Barbadian public to build on the land at Port St. Charles.

I am hoping, Sir, that the Government will recognise its responsibility to the masses of people of Barbados who do not own yachts and other pleasure craft and that they will recognise that Barbadians all their lives have been using the beaches for many reasons and that they will continue to allow them to have that last privilege of utilising the beaches where they can go on mornings and sometimes late in the evenings to have a sea bath and to have a chat.

There is another dangerous factor. When the Minister of Public Works came to this Parliament and requested that this Parliament give up the piece of land by Six Men's Great House, I warned this House that what they were doing was depriving the people in the North of having a bath. Do you know what is happening today, Sir? Because of the development at Port St. Charles the whole beach by Six Men's Great House has been destroyed. The sea is up to the road by the bridge. When one considers the development that is going on in the North of Barbados and where Port St. Charles has an arrangement with the owners of Six Men's

Great House it is clear to me that the development at Port St. Charles and the disappearance of the beach at Six Men's Great House was not an error.

When you see what is happening in that particular area, it fits in well with the type of pleasure craft that frequents the area and the water level is now right for the rich and famous to sail in their yachts. I am saying that we have to be very careful of what is going on in the land. The Honourable Member for St. James North knows well what I speak of because the beach to the north at Port St. Charles is one that he knows well. He knows about the reefs that have blocked thousands of Barbadians from having the right to a proper sea bath. He also knows that even the machineel tree between Retreat and the Six Men's Great House is now disappearing into the sea. And that the fishermen who used to 'haul up' their boats, as we would say in the north, cannot now 'haul up' their boats in the Six Men's area between the Great House and Retreat corner because all the sand has disappeared from that particular area and the fishermen will now have to look for somewhere in the north to 'haul up' their boats. Not only that, Sir, when you go to Shermans, to the north of the building at Shermans, there used to be boats right there next to that building and all of a sudden there is a car park to the north of Shermans. Now you have a situation that when the fishing season is completed a couple of months from now, the fishermen and the fish boat owners cannot tell anybody where they will haul up their boats and where they will rebuild their boats.
4.50 p.m.

This is a serious matter and it even goes further. The Minister of Public Works must understand that he cannot continue to allow the road at Shermans to deteriorate so that certain people can create a *cul-de-sac* at Shermans to protect their interest and their investment so that people would not be able to humbug them at night because the people were there before the new developers.

I am saying that Shermans road cannot be closed at all because Shermans road happens to be the road that starts by the Judge Gap.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I will tell you why that road is a very important road because I want you to know that it is not the Judge Gap or Shermans road anymore, it is Kellman's Road and the only body who will be able to close that is me so any time that you want to do something and undermine that road, I will take it personally that you are willing to undermine me and I will have to protect my interest. The people at Shermans must understand that that road must remain open and that no investor from London or Ireland must be able to come to Barbados and dictate which road will be closed in St. Lucy. If you want to say that you want to close Heywoods, I have no quarrel with that because I am not the Parliamentary Representative for St. Peter but I am the Parliamentary Representative for St. Lucy and nobody will close the road at Shermans. I am going to tell the Minister of Agriculture also....

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: He is not in his seat? I am going to tell the Honourable Member that he must find some place for the fishermen to 'haul up' their boats at the end of this season.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is very good. He knows what I am about to say. He knows that I do not 'sky-lark' on these matters.

Sir, I am saying that the type of foolish development that is going on in Barbados cannot happen in St. Lucy and people must understand that if they want to come and invest in St. Lucy we will invite them to come and invest in St. Lucy but it must be on the terms of the people of St. Lucy and the interest of the people of St. Lucy must be first. We welcome all development provided it fits in with our thinking in St. Lucy. The day it does not fit in with our thinking, we will not welcome it. That is why sometimes I admire the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West. The only thing is that sometimes he goes off on a tangent. He has to know that when discussions like these are coming that he has to back them because I understand his problems too but he cannot believe that he must be able to defend his constituency and when people want to develop their interest and their constituency that he only has a right to defend his. It is foolishness.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: He has to come in here and learn and grow. I am saying, Sir, that when you look at the Old Post Office straight across to Shermans you are seeing a strange development going on in Barbados because I am told and I have already said this to the Minister of Agriculture who tells me that he will be building a fishing complex in Six Men's. I am not buying that story because any time you build a fishing complex at Six Men's all you are telling me is that you are getting ready to close off the Heywoods road and no fishing complex should be used as an excuse to allow people to say that because they have bought properties for over $1 million that people should not travel on the road next to them and that it will be used as an excuse to divert the road to get my people to move off the road they are accustomed travelling and go on another road.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It has happened already. The Heywoods old road was removed in 1981 by the

Barbados Labour Party to accommodate the project down there. You mean now that they have built the new highway you are going to remove it and put it up by Coleridge and Parry to accommodate them again?

I want to know what is going on. Who are we accommodating? We must learn to accommodate our own first. That is the whole problem in this country. We do not accommodate our own and we always end up depriving our own. That is why we will fail with the Protocols because before we implement the Protocols to teach our people we allow World Trade and globalisation to catch up with us before we implement those things that would educate our people. We must always be in the catching up game. Are we going to wait until all the beaches of Barbados are taken from the masses of the people of Barbados to then come to Parliament and beg us to approve a compulsory acquisition of land so that Barbadians can get somewhere to build?

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is why I want to make this point today. In the Ombusdman's Special Report, I have the privilege of having access to a piece of land at Friars Well and I want to tell the Government that they do not have to compulsorily acquire that. That the people of St. Lucy have a right to walk there as long as I am in control. It is my land and I am giving all Barbadians the right to come to Friars Well and bathe.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, you can come but I would like to see Government doing the same thing. It is not in my interest to do it. It is in the Government's interest to do it but I will give all Barbadians the assurance that they can come and bathe.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: No, the permission will be given by me, not by the Government because if I ever give permission to the Government, two months from the time of giving the permission to the Government, I will hear that somebody purchased both properties on the seaside and that they have the beach access. I cannot trust the Government with beach accesses, not me! Once I have it, I know that everybody, including my friends on the Back Bench, will be able to get on the beach in the north of Barbados.

Sir, I am saying that this is a rather serious debate and that the development is welcomed but it must be welcomed with certain conditions.

I would understand that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas has an interest in this particular debate because even though there is no sea in St. Thomas a lot of people from St. Thomas use the west coast to get their sea baths and he would appreciate the need to have beach accesses for his constituents. St. George people too, I have to put in a word for the people of St. George too. We must protect those from St. Thomas and St. George because at least for people on the west coast somebody might still hold on to their property and allow people to pass through their backyards even though they do not know them.

I am calling on the Government to recognise that in the national interest that they have a right to keep some of these beach accesses to allow Barbadians have the right to get on the beaches. The Noel Roach car park, a development is also coming there.
5.00 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I have been hearing about development in the North and the most hurtful thing is that if you want to buy something in the North it is easier to drive to Bridgetown now than to stop in Speightstown because you cannot find a single car park in Speightstown anymore.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Because there is the wrong type of development. You cannot have development without having some place to park. The amazing thing is that if you do not watch yourself you will be reported by the police for parking illegally even though there are no car parks. Go into Speightstown and tell me where you can park. There used to be one by Pitts, that is now a Complex, and the one by Adriana's is also now a Complex. Would you believe that the Government recognising the type of development that is going on in Speighstown that they would do something about it? The old bus stand, that everybody is trying to move, the Honourable Minister of Education has moved the school from up by Queen's Park because of the congestion and put it up in Husbands, that was a good decision. Do you know what is happening in Speightstown? The school is now in the car park, so nobody has any where to park. Do you know what I am going to do? I am going to move the town to St. Lucy because we have a lot of free land down there and Speightstown will be of no use.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The second town might be in St. Lucy because the others have given up the one in Speighstown.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Well the airport is coming. You cannot stop that, do not care how much you criticise. It states that St. Lucy must get an airport and it is the only place in Barbados you can get a second airport.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I can tell you that in 1976 that he made sure that he put it in the manifesto.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It cannot be a contract because things happen after the manifesto is written, and anybody that tells me that a manifesto is a contract should go where those girls went and where they should not have been.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You are not going to divert me and I am calling on you because you are the Leader of the House. I know that you are not the acting Prime Minister today. As Leader of the House I want you, at Cabinet, on Thursday to tell your colleagues that as a proud Barbadian that you honestly believe that Barbadians have a right to go on the beaches in Barbados and that you must find some land where they can go and have a proper sea bath and that you understand the interest of developing Barbados and that you understand the need to balance the two and in your opinion we have gone too far South and that we need to come back North.

Sir, with this particular vesting, that the Directors of this company must be given a mandate that they just cannot lease out this land, they cannot do as they like, that the interest of the people of St. Peter, St. Lucy and St. James North must be taken into account.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: In this House we are fortunate to have a couple of Coleridge and Parry boys. I am getting a bit worried, because Molyneux Road has now been diverted and I saw nothing about it and Sandy Lane road was blocked. One morning I turned up on Sandy Lane road and all of a sudden I found myself going in another direction. When MPT is diverting a road they tell the public. A big advertisement is in the newspaper and one on the radio because they understand that is their legal duty and that you must watch what you are doing because you are diverting traffic but not the owners of Sandy Lane. They come and divert roads and remove roads and they do not tell you anything. I want that to stop. And I am asking the Attorney General to write, in his capacity, to inform those people of they legal rights and also of their responsibilities.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I know that you will protect Arch Hall people but the only problem is...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I was in here when I told you to buy the 52 acres to the East of the highway and you refused to take my advice, and now the people of Arch Hall are saddled between the Sandy Lane development and every morning they awake they see a bulldozer is coming at them.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes. When the value go up they will have to sell because the people making sure that the bulldozers are coming at them every morning. Every morning they wake up they see 20 bulldozers at their doors, frightening those poor old people on the Western side. You know that I know Arch Hall.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I understand that type of harassment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was living by the Arawak Cement Plant they used to bring the bulldozer and the workers every day , and not the present Arawak, that was when the Government owned it. They made sure that they were blasting next to your house, they brought the bulldozers, they bent steel next to your house and every day, so I understand what they do to get you out. Do you know the next thing that they are going to do in Arch Hall? They are going to bulldoze the mould and put it right around the people to suffocate them and force them to move. That is why I am hoping that the Minister of Health understands that the people of Arch Hall have a right to be in Arch Hall, and encourage the people at Sanitation to cover the landfill properly and stop using the excuse about the clay not being the proper clay anymore.

The people of Arch Hall, today, still have the problem that they had in the early 1990s. Every morning I pass there going to St. Lucy I can still smell the landfill. So you can understand why people would want that smell to come from the landfill because they want to encourage you to sue yourself on behalf of your constituents so that your constituents can tell you that they want to move, and when they move they will close the landfill and the Sandy Lane people will get their wish. But I know you know better than that and you understand those old tricks.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You can be sure, Sir, that the same way that I defended you in the church...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we understand that the development of the country is important but we also understand that you cannot develop the country

without developing its people and if you attempt the development a country without developing its people then the country cannot be developed.

I thank you.
5.10 p.m.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I rise to support this Resolution for the vesting of this land in the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated. My rising to support this Resolution, Sir, rather than doing it quietly from my seat was inspired by the alarmist and outlandish presentation made by the Opposition in which most persons who would not have had the opportunity to fully peruse the document which was cited as the source of the authority for the outlandish suggestion that Barbadians have no access to the beach, they cannot find anywhere to bathe. Those kinds of impressions which the Opposition deliberately attempted to make this afternoon, Sir, would have gone away from here with the impression that our dear Ombudsman had indeed made that kind of suggestion the central thesis in his report.

Sir, thankfully, through the courtesy of the Library of Parliament we on this Side have the report as well. First the report deals with the area between Miami Beach and Heywoods.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House Sir because Heywoods is to the south of Fryers Well, Sir, and Fryers Well is to the north of Heywoods.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Sir, that is an accurate description as saying that the person is the man who lives below the man who lives above, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Anyway, Sir, in this 34 km stretch which is about eighteen miles, the Ombudsman indicated that there were thirty-four clear accesses to the beach in that stretch. Thirty-four clear accesses in eighteen miles. That is in the report on page 3. Thirty-four clear accesses were identified during the walk. See the map at page 4. In the map they are clustered all around from Oistins to Heywoods.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House in that on page 3 of the report, the Ombudsman says:

> "Thirty-four clear accesses in the 34 km stretch from Enterprise/Miami to Heywoods may suggest easy and regular access, but in many cases the facilities are limited and there is a problem of clustering, that is, up to four accesses within a single kilometre, but no access for two kilometres or more. For instance, there are no public accesses between Folkestown and St. Alban's Church in St. James; St. Alban's Church and Goding's Bay in St. Peter; and Oistin's Fish Market and Maxwell Coast Road in Christ Church. The problem of clustering is even more acute with respect to vehicular traffic. For example, between the 6 km stretch of coast from Folkestone to Heywoods in St. Peter, there are no well known accesses which offer adequate parking facilities on the beach. A similar situation occurs between the 6 km stretch from Batts Rock to Holetown."

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, Honourable Member.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Honourable Member will let me get through my presentation, first of all let us look at the reality of the situation because notwithstanding, Sir, the numerous accesses available in that stretch, no reasonable person could expect that you will have an access on every inch of the beach. In some cases, Sir, there is a simple and straightforward issue of even whether there is a beach in that area.

Sir, the Honourable Member and the report mentioned between Oistins and Maxwell...

Asides.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: All along there. I do not know if anyone reading the report would want to suggest that we reshape Highway 7 to make car parks.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: If you wanted to, Sir, opposite Southern Plaza you can bathe along there. Then, there are a few houses which are between the beach and the road that have been there from time immemorial. There is no effort on the part of the Government to bring investors to put anything there, Sir, and beyond that are the rocks and the sea.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I know this area well, Sir. I, like the Ombudsman, have walked the area. Sir, let us not fool ourselves. Like I said, realistically, how many accesses do you need and where do you need them? Let us look at the

big ones. Miami Beach is large and easily accessible. Dover Beach is large and also easily accessible. There are public facilities at Accra Beach and Sandy Beach. As a matter of fact, the Opposition has spoken about the need to enhance facilities and we accept that. The report spoke about that and it is part of the Government's plan.

Sir, for the last few years, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has been pushing to have public facilities placed by what is loosely called Sandy Beach at the mouth of the Graeme Hall Swamp. The Government has acquired property there and will use some of the property that it has owned for years to put in public facilities. That is one of the most beautiful, most popular and most easily accessible beaches in Barbados.

The swim club, Sir, of which my children are members and other clubs regularly use the public beach at Sandy Beach for fish-fries, picnics and other activities, great access. What I will accept as one of the major concerns raised in this report and which would help many people, perhaps like the Leader of the Opposition, who do not know where these beach accesses are, is the signage.

Sir, any person who has not visited Sandy Beach would not know that there is a public beach there. They would not know that there is parking there and would not know that there is easy pedestrian access because we are short on signage. We need to have a programme in Barbados where there is clearer and bolder signage, pointing you all the way along the beach.

Sir, much of the hysteria and the emotionalism that surrounds this matter of beach access, lies on the fact that many people who speak do not go to the beach, let alone know where to find a beach even if they were inclined to go and get some sand between their toes. They would not know how to get to Dover Beach, Accra Beach or Sandy Beach and we could travel further and further along the way but there is access all along the beach.

Sir, the Hastings Rocks to the Esplanade and the Drill Hall, how many people know how to find the Drill Hall and know that there is a beach behind there that is in regular use for picnics and beach parties. It is greatly used and has full access. There is Pebbles Beach, one of the best indications of a model for development that can be used and which is one which can be pursued by the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated as it develops beach properties.

There should not be in Barbados, Sir, any hint or suggestion that the only way to ensure access of Barbadians to beaches is to hinder our economic development by way of restricting tourism involvement. Those of us who are in public life have a responsibility to exercise enough care in our language as inadvertently or otherwise, because you never know what is in the heart of man.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I know better than you. We must be careful, Sir, not to engender feelings of hatred towards our tourism product that even where there are good projects, we have turned the minds of the public against them.

Sir, take the location and the disposition of the Grand Barbados Beach Club, here is a hotel on the beach, the users of the hotel have access to the beach and so does the public. It does not necessarily follow that in order to develop Barbados' tourism product, we have to deny people access to the beach.
5.20 p.m.

What the Opposition is seeking to do is to suggest that the Government is seeking through the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. (BTII) or other agencies to develop the full tourism potential of Barbados, will automatically deny people access to the beach and I want to let the public know that that is not the case.

We cannot afford in Barbados to take a position in which we will want to discourage investments in hotel plants along our beaches. What we have to do is to ensure that in so doing that we also preserve the right of access to the beach and I will continue to hold the Grand Barbados Hotel location as an example of the way to go.

Sir, going along with the beaches that are listed here I want to remind people of the fact that Barbadians can have accesses to the beaches. Such accesses can be found all along Browne's Beach which is now being called Bay Shore Beach and all kinds of fancy names – good old Browne's Beach – which stretches all the way from the Esplanade down to the Bridge and Harbour Police Station. That beach that is going past the Esso Gas Station and coming down toward the Coast Guard Station which was not there in the 1970's when I was a teenager growing up is one of the other points of reality which Barbadians have recognised. Beaches will come and beaches will go but what we have to do is to manage our development carefully.

Sir, along that stretch of Browne's Beach, the Government will install additional facilities to ensure that the public which, right now, have access to parking facilities will also have access to changing facilities and other comforts because these are missing between Pebbles Beach and down through Bridgetown but there is adequate public access.

Sir, going past Bridgetown, there is a beach now forming on Trevor's Way where the taximen park to go into the Port and sometimes people who come off the ship often go there to park out. Then there is Brighton Beach. One cannot want a more beautiful example of public access to the beach than Brighton Beach. In fact, that beach which is off

the Spring Garden Highway has developed as one of the most preferred locations which cruise ship visitors ...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that Brighton Beach is an easy access for people on the south of the highway when he knows full well – and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West can bear me out on this – that there is no walkover to the beach and the highway is a hindrance for people in his constituency in getting to that particular beach.

Asides.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. When I pass by Brighton Beach in the morning, the evening or in the midday, I see many people there. Every morning and every evening senior citizens are there on Brighton Beach making good use of it. In the summer holidays, you will find all the little children from Deacons Farm and the surrounding areas there and it puts to lie the suggestion made by the Opposition that Barbadians do not have access to the beach.

The Opposition will want to be ill-informed and to leave this Parliament today with the view that because of a wicked Government, Barbadians cannot get a sea bath in their own country. That is what they want to suggest that the Report will say but what this Report is saying is that there is a need to preserve our heritage, that there is a need to take concerted action to ensure that our situation does not become worse and that there is a need not to deal only with the issue of access ...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member for Christ Church East is misleading the House by giving the House the impression that the Members on this Side has called the Government wicked. If the Honourable Member wants to say that the Government is wicked, he should not use the Opposition as the excuse for saying so.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a point of nuisance coming from the Opposition but what can we expect from them. The fact of the matter is that the Report, whilst recognising that there is access to the beaches, speaks primarily to the issue of lateral movement along the beach where there are a number of individuals who have broken the law by way of attempting to encroach on the beach by erecting fences and the construction of groynes which have restricted the movement of Barbadians along the beach. So while that Report says access to the beach is pretty good, it is also saying that we have to ensure that all of the agencies – and the principal recommendation is for an interagency committee to monitor activity along the beach to ensure that we will be able to continue access.

Sir, my sole purpose of rising in this debate is to ensure that the contents of this Report were not distorted or misrepresented by the Opposition in their attempt to score cheap political points and to make the very simple point that the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. is neither in this investment at Heywoods at the old Speightstown Post Office, nor in its other investments, will pursue a model of development which ends up causing them to make a choice between beach access for Barbadians and tourism development.

The two – as in the case of Grand Barbados and several other hotels such as Sandy Beach which is right down on the beach and which is one of the most easily accessible and popular beaches in Barbados and several other models of developments – give the lie to the wicked assertion made by the Opposition in this Parliament today, so I have no hesitation in supporting this Resolution.

I thank you.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to intervene on this matter because I am very familiar with the policy of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) in relation to beach access. The Democratic Labour Party has always identified the political potential of distorting the record of the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) in relation to beach access. This is not the first occasion. Both the leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy are very, very skilled in perpetuating the long tradition of the Democratic Labour Party in this respect. It is not only the official hierarchy of the Democratic Labour Party but it is also the ardent supporters of the Democratic Labour Party. Who can forget the famous song which was a masterpiece of distortion which had some political effect in the country.

The position today is, that I am in a position to speak in this manner because for nine years I held the portfolio of tourism and I can recall the debates that took place in the 1970's with respect to beach access. I recall the campaign that was carried out by Father Hatch and Mr. Bynoe ...

Asides.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: That just goes to show you that beach access has political potential. Sir, at that particular period of time I can recall that the Parks and Beaches Commission was mandated to take a map of Barbados and to identify on the map each and every beach access there was around the whole coastline of Barbados. I am very surprised that very few people knew that they could go to the National Conservation Office and see such a map.

Had the Ombudsman gone there and talk to people who were familiar with the history of that map, he would not have made some of the fundamental errors of fact which appears

in parts of that Report. Now, insofar as this Report states at page 3 that there is no access between Oistins Fish Market and Maxwell Coast Road in Christ Church, that is factually inaccurate because the Oistins Fish Market is part of the reclaimed area of land that occurred between 1979 and 1981 and also as part of the Oistins development, an area which is specifically bounded by Welches.

At Welches there were some 14 to 15 houses on the seaside and the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) Administration acquired each and every one of those houses plus the land on the beach side. If you go, you will see that the whole of Welches were resettled with roads, water, light and toilets. That is far more than what you did for them. You will see that between Oistins and a place called "Cashell" that there are only two houses with tremendous beach access. So how can this gentleman say that about where Mr. McConnie, the former Permanent Secretary and the Chief Fisheries Officer learned to swim?
5.30 p.m.

As far as Maxwell Coast is concerned, Sir, nobody knows that area better than me. I was born there. I used to walk and run about there from the time I was about six years old and I know everyone of them. As a matter of fact, I knew one so good that not so long ago a gentleman acquired a piece of land and started to think that he could build on an access. I personally wrote from the Prime Minister down and the Government acquired a piece of land. They just knocked down a piece of the shed too because I know that access.

The first time that I ever went fishing was when I was about 14 years old. I went fishing from a boat there. It used to belong to the Ward family, right there next to Bougainvillea Hotel. It used to be owned by the former member for St. Philip in here. I remember that hotel good, good, good. That is a unique hotel. When they took down the boxing from the front of the balcony, the whole thing dropped down. I remember that well.

There have been numerous cases in Barbados about access on Maxwell Coast Road. Go and look at Dale and Wilkinson in the case of access on Maxwell Coast Road. There are still current cases about Sand Acres. Everybody in those days when they subdivided the seaside, they subdivided the land side. A similar thing occurred in St. James. Every plot on the land side was given an access to the seaside. I was involved in a case with Coral Reef in which the same pattern of development took place. The land owner who developed Coral Reef area on the seaside also owned the land area. Everybody on the land side had access to Coral Reef and we brought a case against Coral Reef and got a declaration that they are entitled to a right of way. I remember that very well.

Sir, this question of beach access is one in which the Labour Party has an honourable record. I will never allow anybody to distort it particularly from the area known as the baggage warehouse at Deep Water Harbour right up to Silver Sands. You did not dare go into Silver Sands because there was a fellow... in 1956 the Barbados Labour Party Administration acquired 22 acres of land at Silver Sands for a public park. My only quarrel about that is that they have a house there that the Housing Authority for six years cannot get moved and it is on Government land. That is my quarrel with that. The area is now being developed as a national park comprising 22 acres. I can even tell you who it was acquired from. It was acquired from the Hutchinson family. That is a gorgeous area.

Now, Sir, when you come to Bay Street, we acquired in our time...I will tell you about the Democratic Labour Party now. Do not interfere with us on this beach property. The Barbados Labour Party acquired the land next to the ice house right up. The Cabinet of the Barbados Labour Party between 1976 and 1981 made a decision based on advice, that the whole of that Carlisle Bay would be reclaimed because of the arm of the Deep Water Harbour, that Carlisle Bay was sealed up and that the beach would get bigger and bigger year by year.

We acquired the Old Batts Company site when I was the Minister. We also got from Dr. Treloff his house in exchange because the people did not want to pay death duties and we said give us the house. It was our intention to demolish it. Do you know what the Democratic Labour Party did? Instead of gradually carrying out the policy where from the Police Boys Club right down to the old ice house, they went and rebuilt on the seaside a whole building – that building in the future will have to be demolished – just where the CARICOM Headquarters were. That is what the Democratic Labour Party did. I will tell you something else. They rebuilt it. I know that.

They should have acquired two pieces, one belonging to the family who live abroad and the other piece belongs to one other person. So there are only three houses. All three want knocking down because that area between the Police Boys School right down should never be built on except for recreational facilities for the public of Barbados. It is a gorgeous area and we are lucky that we have been able to acquire this. As a matter of fact, we should go further and acquire the piece of land which I see advertised now for sale. Everybody knows that development will never be successful. It is too small for anything. It is too close to the road and it cannot hold enough hotel rooms.

I understand that somebody had the gumption to write the BTII and say they would like to acquire a piece of the Government land so they could extend their land.

There cannot be any question that any Government would be so mad. I do not know what will happen in the

Democratic Labour Party. We do not know. We do not know what will happen with them because I have one more story to give you before I sit down.

It is a fact of life that on the St. James coast there are problems. There is no doubt about that. It is a fact of life. I know that the Government owns land at Batts Rock because there are two or three acres and next to that piece of land that the public has been using for a number of years is an area of land which really belongs to the Paradise Complex. But there is also a right of way that goes between the main road to the back of the gas station that takes you down there.

I know that there have been put several proposals that Government should take the land and shift the right of way further to the town-ward side and get more area there and have a road going in at the back of the gas station so that you will have five acres of park land. I know that by heart. People used to play cricket there all the time and Rotary Club is interested in that. This is an area that we have to deal with.

As we go down, Sir, we have other problems. Folkestone belongs to the Government of Barbados. Not enough use is being made of Folkestone. It needs to be developed. It should be the subject of a proper redevelopment plan. By the police station, by the monument. I remember when we built a beach facility there and the first thing the Democratic Labour Party did in 1987 was to take the beach facility and rent it out to a German woman for a restaurant. I can tell you that. The facility that the Barbados Labour Party built at Holetown they took and rented it to a German woman. It was a shame.
5.40 p.m.

It is a fact, that matter came up on the Land Committee and it was agreed that the Government should take the bull by its horns and the Government should acquire as much land as it can in that area.

In Speightstown, just opposite the cemetery, there is absolutely no reason why the Government should not acquire that as a last window to the sea of some significance. It is opposite the cemetery between the Sandridge Hotel. There is an area of land there and there is a lot of controversy about its ownership. As a matter of fact, the Attorney General may well know something about the ownership of that land. It is part of the piece of land we were talking about at lunch today, a special piece of land that we know of. That land could be acquired. It is sufficiently large to give reasonable access to everybody to the sea. We must do that all along the coast.

I also remember one other thing that the Democratic Labour Party did. At Fort Denmark in St. Peter where we had planned a beautiful fishing facility with good public access and acquired the land, the Democratic Labour Party came in. Half belonged to the Government and half belonged to the Cheeseman family. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas would know that well. They are strong Dems. They do not vote for him.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: On a point of order. I cannot leave that one in the records. The one who was a Democratic Labour Party man is dead. That was the old policeman that married my aunt, Cecil Cheeseman. All the others are Bees.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: That is very accurate. I think I see the gentleman now, Sir. He loved Mr. Barrow. As a matter of fact, I now begin to understand how it is that although we acquired that land what was the reason why the whole scheme was abandoned as soon as the Democratic Labour Party came into power. That is the position.

The position is that the Government of Barbados owns land at Fort Denmark and that is exactly what was said – to deprive a man of his property who had the land for all the years is nothing really and all you were doing was buying a piece between the road and your own land.

Sir, nobody should attempt... I caution the Honourable Member that he must remember that the question of beach access in Barbados has a long history. The Ombudsman should be ashamed of the fact that he put in this document that at Rostrevor and around there a beach was created without planning permission. That is not true. You have to remember that prior to Town and Country Planning in Barbados if you wanted to carry out work on the sea-coast you had to get permission from the Government in Executive Committee and that you would have a petition which went to the Government Executive and if you wanted to put up works like a jetty you would have to bring a Bill to Parliament.

What I would say about the Ombudsman Report is that he responded to the complaints and lack of knowledge and the perception of people in Barbados, some of which one can say there are good grounds for concern, particularly between Paradise and Speightstown. That is the area where there is pressure, but do not come on the South Coast! Do not come on the East Coast! What you have to watch is what is happening on the East Coast. What you have to watch is whenever Bath is developed, and it will be developed that you still preserve full access for all of the people there.

I will tell the Honourable Member for Christ Church East that at Chancery Lane Beach or Long Beach as some people call it the Government owns all the land on the hill by Paragon. People have been walking from the time I knew myself from the Silver Sands part all along the coast. Everybody has a 15 foot way to walk along the coast between the houses and the sea because that is where the

fishermen throw their nets. We have to acquire a piece of land in what is now Inch Marlow to make sure that when you go in there you will be able to walk. I see some buildings going on in there and I have drawn it to the attention of the Town Planner and the Minister of Housing that he should take a walk now. The houses are not up yet. Chancery Lane is a mile of beach. It is a gorgeous area. The people use it for walking.

Aside.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: I have never stopped representing all of Christ Church. Why do you think I know all? That is what we have to watch. Chancery Lane is a vulnerable area. It is like the one at St. Philip, Bottom Bay, all well used areas. We have enough land on the South Coast, once we improve it.

Crane Beach is a problem. The public access is Foul Bay. The Honourable Member would not know that particular spot. That wall needs work done on it. I believe that is now part of a study by Halcrow Caribbean Ltd. They did this side first, the West and now I understand that they are doing the South. We would not try to make political capital out of beaches by destroying the facts.

There are some facts that you all have distorted. You must not do it. What we must do is make sure that the areas that we have are improved and enhanced and that we have a proper regime for the beaches. Secondly what we must do is in the areas where we are deficient we must be men and women enough to acquire land. Suppose it costs $50 a square foot the public of Barbados will have it. I believe that land in Speightstown opposite the cemetery in Speightstown on which the Government has now put a good sidewalk, on which some young people sell the prettiest looking oranges and other fruits, that could be acquired to have a proper beach access in the middle of Speightstown so that there cannot be any doubt. Fort Denmark would be improved. Certainly I know that Six Men's would be improved and I know too, Sir, that we agreed that a scheme should be developed to have a beautiful water front along Six Men's Bay between the gap as you go down to Half Moon fort. That is a lovely area.

I remember when there used to be houses there. The late Burton Hinds, the Honourable Member for St. Peter, used to be in here every Tuesday begging Government to move the house on the seaside. He used to come in here and cry, and he could do that good, and say how the waters are coming up and they are moving away the toilet, that people have to use the toilet in the sea, begging the Government to acquire the land. That is an area where we can have a promenade like the Guyana seawall. All those things we have discussed at Cabinet and Party councils and all of those things. It is just that we did not have the time.

That gap between 1986 and 1994 a lot of things happened that should not have happened but we now have the opportunity and what the Honourable Frontbench should do is to make sure, particularly the Minister of Housing, that we exploit every minute of that time to improve the beach areas in Barbados.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to add my couple of words to this. This is very much the whole context of what has been happening with BTII, it forms very much part of a tourism debate. Although I do not plan to spend the entire evening talking about BTII, the Minister of Housing and Lands gave a pretty good treatment of the properties invested in BTII. However, a lot of the properties are vested in BTII and this one in Speightstown now forms part of that vesting.
5.50 p.m.

However, Sir, a lot of the properties that have been vested in BTII have not yet been developed or development has not started. One of the reasons for that is that the entire process of vesting these properties in BTII has taken such a long and drawn out time with BTII only acquiring ownership by way of conveyance of these properties as late as April of this year.

There were some properties that were originally vested in the former BTIC – the Savoy, the Old Jetty, the corner of Wellington and Bay Street, the Old Spirit Bond, the Harbour Police Station and the two storey building next to the Town Hall. These vestings which were done by private treaty from BTIC to BTII have taken quite a long time but most of them have now been conveyed and most of them are now the property of BTII. They have been some other properties which have taken even longer and many of them identified have still not been vested. The reasons for this amounts to things like improper title and no surveying where they had to be re-surveyed. These included the Old Fish Market in Bay Street, the Princess Alice Highway car park, the Old Post Office and the library in Speightstown which is the one that we are vesting this afternoon.

The Honourable Member for St. George South talked about the length of time that it takes to actually vest these properties. I have heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South already in this Parliament make statements regarding why does it take so long to actually vest beach properties and if we could not find a better and quicker mechanism for actually conveying properties, from one agency to another, particular Government properties.

BTII, Sir, as Parliament may be aware is also involved in the Urban Rehabilitation Project. Government provides approximately $800 000 annually towards the operation of the Urban Rehabilitation Project and this Project is listed in

three phases. The design work for Phase 1 which is Bridgetown, the bus Terminal, the Princess Alice Highway, Hincks Street, James Street and the street lighting of Queens Street and Sand Street in Speightstown, that design road work has already been completed. However, there is still some work left to be done in terms of the actual design work for Phase 2 and Phase 3. Phase 2 design work is supposed to be completed in June 2000 and the design work for Phase 3 in March 2001. BTII is overseeing the execution of these design works.

Sir, I believe the most important point and the philosophical point that must be made because I have heard reference made to how these properties were going to be used and in a real tourism sense these properties are going to be used to drive further investment in tourism. BTII also has a plan and what they are looking for ideally is public/private sector partnerships to be able to develop these properties for both tourism use and small business use in which they actually put the land or some other form of equity into these properties and then the private sector is left to put in their own piece.

Sir, whenever the land debate comes up, particularly the land debate as it relates to beach access, I find that there is this pull and push, this love/hate relationship that we have with development of our land and what we need to hold on to as our heritage for our people and this debate can go on and on. I have heard the Honourable Member for St. John state that the most important concern for most Barbadians now is beach access and I really want to know what it is that really constitutes this lack of beach access to which he refers because as far as I know and all the other Members have stated, you cannot have every bit of open window to the sea and expect to speak of development of our land, particularly lands that have tourism potential..

There has always been and will always continue to be concerns about access to the beach but the issue is that Government has to give and will give assurances that development will not take place and will not prohibit us from holding on to our natural heritage, our access to these beach front lands.

Sir, if you look at any of the areas that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South spoke about, the Ombusdman's Report cannot be correct and accurate as he speaks, for example, of areas between Oistins and up to Maxwell not having access to the beach because there are many open windows to the sea. Just in front of where Golden Sands is on the same side there is an open window to the sea. If you go down to Welcome Inn, Bougainvillea and Sand Acres, there is beach access right there to the beach. I do not know of anywhere that people can claim that there is not adequate access to the beach. We tend to engage in the debate and this argument and I believe what the Ombudsman was speaking about mostly has got to deal with legal construction but the Government is not going to engage in any construction that prohibits people's access to the beach or that deprives them of their natural heritage in terms of the beach.

Sir, when I looked at the Land Use Survey that was done and I actually made some submissions in another light to that particular Commission, it is clear that a lot of the hysteria that is sought to be created by some people by whatever their agendas are...

Asides.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: It is clear to me, that most of the access from the Harbour as far as the North Point in terms of the ownership of beach front property where people talk about land being sold to foreigners, less than 8% of the entire beach front land from the Harbour down to North Point is owned by foreigners in the first place. This thing about not having access to the beach – even down the west coast where I am told there are concerns about Sandy Lane, there are still open windows to the sea. I heard somebody talk about Folkestone down to Speightstown but you can go right down through Colony Club road, you do not even have to go through the hotel and there is direct access to the beach if you drive right down. Obviously the highway is a little bit off the beach but if you drive right down through Colony Club road there is access.

I think, Sir, what has been happening is that some people in some quarters have created this mad hysteria as it relates to (1) ownership of land and (2) access to the beach. Sir, I am not saying that the Ombudsman Report does not have some facts in it and that we should not be concerned about this special report but we cannot use that document to create in Barbados a sense of hysteria that some people are seeking to create.

The other thing that is clear to me in terms of the beach and Barbadians wanting to live on the beach – I have always heard from the time I was a boy that the sea don't have any back door and Barbadians are naturally frighten for the sea. Not many people want to live on any beach. People want to have access to the beach when they need to go on the beach and that is being provided for and the record of this Government as it relates to that is a wonderful record. The recent Mullins incident should tell the people of Barbados that we are clear in what this Government believes in terms of access to the beach and in keeping the open windows.

I cannot recall in recent times any recent development that have prohibited people or closed off any traditional windows to the sea. Most of these properties that are vested in BTII are already erected buildings so you cannot have access to the beach there. If you speak about the Savoy, the Jetty and the open window, the Old Eye Ward, the Old

Harbour Police Station, Fort Willoughby, the Screw Dock at the Pier Head and the Old Spirits Bond. The ones that are actually on the beach have buildings already erected there so those cannot be compromising access to the beach because there is already a structure there. What are we going to do, knock down the structure and leave it open? What is going to happen is that these are going to be developed but I agree that the Government must give assurances to people that in terms of these developments that what they are not going to do is close off beach access by putting car parks or any such structures in to be able to create more access to the beach. Right now I do not know that there is a cause for any hysteria.

In terms of the Ombudsman's Report. I think we need to respect the Report but I think we need to understand the concept of balanced development for Barbados. Apart from the development of our people, the greatest economic resource that we have in this country is our land and that land must be utilized to give the most socio-economic benefit to the people of Barbados. At the same time, we cannot continue to have this love/hate relationship with tourism development and at the same time speak to the concept of looking to have development for our people and holding on to our natural heritage. There is a mechanism for doing it in concert so that both sectors are allowed to grow. There are certain people who would like to tell you, on one hand, that we need investment in Barbados, particularly investment in the tourism sector and that we have sand and tourism as an engine of growth and all these cliches and terms that we put down. Then on the other hand, we like to say that we should not sell the land to foreigners or we should not close off a little piece of the beach.

You cannot have total beach access all along the beach and I think that the Honourable Member for St. John understands that. But what we have got to stop doing in Barbados is to stop making people believe that this Government is engaged in some campaign to deprive people of what their natural heritage is, because that is blatantly untrue. All of these developments that we are doing now, certainly, bring a sense of togetherness in terms of these projects.
6.00 p.m.

I heard someone ask who the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was working for? But I know this for a fact that we need tourism development on the one hand and tourism development needs investment. It needs as well, a certain measure of foreign investment, and before someone ask me if I am still working for BHTA, I must make it very clear that I am working for the Ministry of Tourism so that he gets it right before he starts. We need balanced development but we also need, Sir, to be able to capture and contain our natural heritage and that is what we are seeking to do.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: The Ombudsman's Report is in our hands. I am not so sure that the people who spoke to that Report are in the majority. I do not know how scientific it is in even surveying the people, but I do take the point that one Barbadian concern about access to the beach is of enough concern for the Government to seriously take a look at it. However, I do not believe, and I repeat, that there should be this mass hysteria about the use of land in Barbados, about the selling of land to foreigners or non access to the beach. All of those things, in my opinion and the opinion of most right thinking Barbadians is wrong. It is not true and Barbadians have just got to walk the beach themselves or to know their own beach access to be able to tell whether or not that is true.

Sir, with those words, thank you.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I just want to make a couple of points. This property at Speightstown which is being vested was the old Post Office section. It had outlived its usefulness. Honourable Members may be aware, and for those who are not let me remind them, that last December this building was closed and the Post Office took up new premises in the BNB building at Arlington, on the other side of the road. That is how this came to be vacant.

At the opening of the new Post Office in St. Peter, the Prime Minister took the opportunity to mention that this site and similar beach property would not be sold but would be vested in a governmental authority, such as the BTII, for the benefit of Barbadians. So this property is not being sold and several of the others. The BTII needs to have a sufficiently strong book of assets to raise its own financing with a view to developing projects, which we have heard about, and the vesting of this property in the BTII will contribute to its asset value. I will limit myself to Speightstown I am not getting into the beach access debate today. When we deal with the Constitution, perhaps, or when we bring the Bill to the Constitution Amendments we will deal with that.

In Speightstown, the BTII has agreed with my Ministry that a property in Speightstown which was built, I believe under the Democratic Labour Party, as a facility for the Transport Board, was never used. A glorious waste of the taxpayers money.

Aside.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: It is there. A large building in Speightstown. BTII in their plans for the redevelopment of Speightstown was determine to build a new facility for the Police Force in Speightstown. We spoke to them and said that we have a facility there which was never used, it needs some renovation in the sense that you have to cast a floor and we can create a new police station down on the flat in Speightstown, where this building is and they have agreed.

It will probably cost in the vicinity of $1.2 million to do the renovations and fix it up as a police station. So the BTII has agreed that they will fund the renovation of the new police station for Speightstown and it is in our Estimates for this year. In exchange for that we will release the lands on top of the hill where the present District "E" is to the BTII.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: We are going to vest those lands, at some point, to the BTII and in exchange they will be developing the Police Station in St. Peter. We are going to have a new and modern Police Station in St. Peter, below the bus terminal in that existing building.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: In addition to that, Sir, the BTII has recognised the value of the Government's strategy in developing community policing and are willing to assist the Government in that programme.
6.10 p.m.

Just behind the pavilion at Dover we, with the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated, have identified land for the construction of a police station in Dover in this financial year. Ultimately, that will lead to the closure of the Worthing Station and we have gone right in the heart of the tourist belt and right close to where the drugs are in that area.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is misleading the House, Sir. I was in Parliament when the Deputy Prime Minister said that you should not put police stations on beaches. I cannot believe that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas would want me to believe that he can now come and put a police station near to a beach at Christ Church when the Honourable Member for the City objected to the one on the west coast. I do not believe it, Sir. He is misleading the House.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I was not talking about building a police station on the beach. He ought to know where the Dover pasture is. I am saying, behind the pavilion by Dover pasture. Is that by a beach?

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: It is near to Braddie's Bar. Ask your friend Dr. Bradshaw, ask John Clarke.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: That is where it is. When you go around the corner, turn to the right by Braddie's Bar, make a sharp left and it is right there. It is not on the beach. You have a little walk to get to the beach. That is where we are going, Sir.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I want Honourable Members to see not only the Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated side, but also the strategy for facilities for community policing. We are going into the heart of Speightstown and putting the police presence and we are going into the heart of Dover and putting the police presence.

In a couple of months I should be opening a facility in St. George at the Glebe where we are building a lovely new police facility among other things, a community centre, a new post office, a library and so on, but there would be a police presence in the Charles Rowe Bridge, Glebe Land area. I have directed that by the 31st May the police post at Haynesville in that community must be opened. That facility is virtually completed. It was built largely by prison labour. Sir, I hope people can understand what we are doing.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Boarded Hall is remaining but while the Boarded Hall Police Station will cater to the eastern and the southeastern sides of St. George, the Charles Rowe Bridge Police Station will cater more to the northern and northeastern sides of St. George and the heavily populated sections in that area.

Sir, these things will be happening in this year. The Haynesville Police Post right in the heart of the District is to be opened within two weeks, then Speightstown, Dover and St. George.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I do not know anything about Coleridge and Parry School. You went there, you know more about it than me. It did not do a lot for you going to that school.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No, Sir. Sir, I did not say that. What I said was that Coleridge and Parry School did not do anything for the Honourable Member for St. Lucy. He is still a dummy.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Sir, on a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the

impression that I am the dummy. It cannot be me. It will have to be him because I am always dumbfounding him.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please proceed.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, in Bay Street we had the old Harbour Police site and this Government has made a conscious decision that that site should not be sold but rather that there should be a lease of substantial years granted on that site for development of tourism related activities.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: No. District "E" is going to go into Barbados Tourism Investment Incorporated as an asset. No, no, they cannot sell it. I explained that policy already.

I am glad to see that a group of black business people have come together and have developed a project for the old Harbour Police to get a lot of our people right there on that beach. That is a deliberate policy on the part of this Government.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: BS&T could come down below and do their development but our people have a right to have a presence there. It involves some good DEMS too.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy talked about the disappearance of sand west of Port St. Charles, or is that north of Port St. Charles...

Asides.

Hon. D.A.C. SIMMONS: Down by the manchineel trees. I have not seen it myself. I just ask him if he has had expert evidence that that disappearance of the sand is the result of the development at Port St. Charles, or is a consequence of a hurricane that came from the north last October. I am asking if he has the evidence.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I want strongly to support this Resolution. I want Honourable Members to be assured that this Government is very conscious of the need to provide access to beaches. I am not going to reflect on any debate that is going to come up in here but I can also say that the Government is determined to acquire land opposite St. Matthias road to provide an access there.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I will still be the Attorney General. You would like to get rid of me. You have published and have it out that I am going in June.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes. It might be June 2002 but not June 2000. He put it out, 'licking' it all about Barbados and spreading all kinds of rumours that I am resigning to go to the Caribbean Court of Justice. Well that is the worst thing.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes. He published the rumour that I am going to be a judge in a Caribbean Court of Justice, like I do not have any ethical values. I could be here promoting the Caribbean Court of Justice and give up my job and get involved in it. Do you think I do not have any character?

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that I have ever said anything like that. If he wants to tell me that his conrads are saying that, I will support him on that because the only place I would have heard that is from his conrads and he knows very well that they want to get rid of him.

6.20 p.m.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He read it in 'Cou Cou and Flying Fish.' Somebody high up in that newspaper told me about it. John Clarke writes the article 'Cou Cou and Flying Fish'.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He is a relative of somebody at the Mental Hospital.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: ... A person who said that he was a relative of somebody at the Mental Hospital. He was dressed in a cap, dark glasses, jeans and a tee-shirt, two Saturdays ago. John Clarke...

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: You know what I know too.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Anyhow, we are familiar with the rumour machinery of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). They put that one on me, Sir, and I could not believe it when I heard it. How could I do something like that, Sir?

That would be the greatest conflict of interest in the world, to promote a new Caribbean institution to give myself a job in it.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, we cannot discuss that now. No, you cannot talk about George Pilgrim and Senator Forde in the same breath, not in here nor in St. Thomas.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: It is well-known who my favourite would be to succeed me. Sir, when I demit my constituency, the lady would be my first choice.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, as I said, the Government is looking to acquire some property opposite St. Matthias Gap on the seaside to create another access to the beach in the Hastings area.

Asides.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, I am, therefore, obliged to the Honourable Minister for bringing this Resolution and I am pleased to support it.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am happy to wind up this debate this afternoon. I just want to say that the Government through the Ministry of Housing and Lands continues to help in whatever way we can to provide access to the beach for the majority of Barbadians and as the Right Honourable Member for Christ Church South has pointed out, we have been the vanguard over the years in providing access to the beach for the majority of Barbadians.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Resolution speaks mainly of vesting a building – which I believe was erected early in this century which was used by the library in Speightstown and also the post office – to the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. We believe that it will be a valuable investment for the Barbados Tourism Investment Inc. to help to create a tourism product which we really need in this country because one must understand that if we are supposed to maintain our standard of living, it is very important to have investments.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to second that.

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

ORDER NO. 9 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE BORROWING OF THE SUM OF TEN MILLION DOLLARS ($10 000 000) FROM THE NATIONAL INSURANCE BOARD FOR THE PURPOSE OF THE CAPITALIZATION OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION'S GENERAL WORKERS LOAN SCHEME AND FOR THE CORPORATION'S HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Resolution before this Honourable House seeks permission to borrow from the National Insurance Board, the sum of $10 000 000 to recapitalize the General Workers Loan Fund of the National Housing Corporation (NHC).

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt in my mind that the demand for housing finance in Barbados is at this time in a critical position. We recognise that in order for us to maintain a stable housing sector, then finance is important. Finance for housing is important because the demand for housing is great. The demand is great for finance to provide house spots, loans for repairs and to not relocate families.

At this time, the demand for finance in the housing sector is greater than ever before. For example, if one looks carefully at the last published Central Bank Report for last year, one finds that the total mortgage finance for the commercial banks at the end of December, totalled $239.12 million whereas the trust companies and the mortgage companies which includes the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company (BMFC), insurance companies and so on, totalled $308.164 million.

If you add the two of those together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the total demand and outstanding mortgage up to the end of last year were about $547 million. When one compares that to any other period at the end of the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) regime in 1994, the total outstanding mortgage at the commercial bank only totalled $34.557 million. When you look at the other institutions like the trust companies, that total was just over $54 million, so that the demand over the last 5 or so years have increased by many many folds and that is because people at this time are working and we have made the point that whenever people are working, the demand for housing seemed to be on the increase.

Sir, more to the point though, at this time, the General Workers Fund has been doing exceptionally well I should say. I think that the figures speak for themselves that over the last four or five years that the General Workers Loan Fund have loaned to Barbadians more than $37.555 million and that we have done exceptionally well over those periods when we compare this to other periods within the history of the General Workers Loan Fund activity.

For example, we have two basic types of loans. There is the $5 000 loan and then the loan between $5 000 and $50 000. Sir, for example, you will notice that in the year 1998-1999, we have approved loans to more than 1756 persons totalling more than $24 million although we only disburse $14 million. In the year previous to that, we approved $10 million although we only disburse $7 million so that between the years 1994 and 1999 there were a number of persons who got approval for loans from the National Housing Corporation (NHC). In fact, we found that in one year we were approving more than $24 million, whereas the amount of the money that the National Housing Corporation (NHC) had at the time had fallen short by about $10 million.
6.30 p.m.

So that this Resolution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is basically to help the National Housing Corporation to realize what we have committed ourselves to which is more than $10.4 million and we have already a number of persons who are awaiting the funds to either buy a home or to repair a home. There are a number of attorneys-at-law in Bridgetown who have already done their legal work and who are awaiting the funds for their clients.

We have, therefore, asked the Ministry of Finance to help us with this $10 million and we have secured a loan from the National Insurance Fund. This is in keeping with the decision by Government in the last year or so to lower the interest rate. So the demand for loans went up by, I would think, over 50 percent. Because of the 100 percent mortgage and the 6 per cent interest rate, we have lowered the maximum repayment period from 25 to 30 years in one instance, then we are moving again to 40 years. So that the increase has caused the demand and the persons now who are between 60 and 65 years can obtain a loan.

The age limit has moved from 60 to 65 years. We have done a lot of things in order to give people the ability to borrow the funds. We recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the demand is great and we have to help. We are in a position at this time to say that we have done much work so as to re-organize the General Workers Loan Fund. We have set new conditions. There is a new Board in place, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 6 months ago and we believe that if the Board and the Corporation keep within their limit that you will see a new re-organized General Workers Loan Fund.

We believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is a strong demand for more funds. Despite this, the Fund is basically to pay off outstanding commitments, we may very well have to go to the market to get additional funds to meet the demand for loans out there. I can assure Members that the inflows from the mortgages outstanding to date will total more than $9 million per year. We have worked out a programme that the inflows from the loans that we have will total more than $9.1 million per year.

We hope that we would be able to approve new loans within this financial year. We are targeting more than 715 persons this year for the $5 000 loan. This has been a very popular loan in the past where persons were able to obtain a small loan at $5 000 in a short period of time. Now we will have to look at that where persons who obtained $5 000 loans at short request were able to receive loans in less than 48 hours. We are hoping that we can pay attention to this loan and its criteria will have to improve, but we will continue to do loans for $5 000.

We have also asked National Housing to ensure that persons who receive loans to at least bring some security to bear on these loans. For the persons who are self- employed we will have to look at some form of security to ensure that they can pay back their loan. I must say, Sir, that the delinquency rate is not that great. We believe that if National Housing monitors carefully the persons that they approve loans to, which are mainly for persons at the lower end, everything will be okay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are targeting the $5 000, between $5 000 and $15 000, and $15 000 to $50 000. Despite the regulations, National Housing has the ability to give loans up to $100 000. We have made an in-house arrangement that $50 000 will be our ceiling by the next two or three years. We will concentrate on those loans below $50 000 and allow BMFC, which is also a Government institution, to do loans from $50 000 to $275 000. That does not mean that BMFC cannot do loans below, but they will concentrate on the higher end of the market whereas National Housing will concentrate on the lower end. We are hoping, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with the $9 million we would target approximately 700 persons. I must tell you that so far this year we have more than 800 applications in for loans that total more than $12 million. Of course, we are hoping too, to attract money from the Housing Credit Fund.

The Housing Credit Fund, as you know, was secured with three installment loans within the last two or three years. Government has given the assurance that they will provide $10 million in each financial year for the Housing Credit Fund and they on-lend to the credit unions as well as to the BMFC and some commercial banks. We are hoping that in the future the Housing Credit Fund could also on-lend to the General Workers Loan Fund.

We are happy that this loan once secured and guaranteed by Government will be repaid and I can give the House the assurance that the General Workers' Loan Fund which has provided hundreds and thousands of Barbadians with loans over the last 10 years – if you look at the last 10 years they have loaned more than $52 million from its inception. We are happy that the Fund is doing well. Both Parties are committed to the General Workers' Loan Fund. We know that it has helped thousands of people especially

persons at the low end and we know that the demand for this type of fund is out there and I would beg Parliament to support this Resolution. Thank you.
6.40 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a rather interesting remark made by the Honourable Member for St. George North in that they have been able to lend out $37.5 million in loans from the General Workers Loan Fund. What is interesting is that between 1998 and 1999 $24 million of that money was lent out which represents 64% of the money lent between 1994 and 1999. One would wonder how come a Government could lend so much money in such a short period of time and between 1994 and 1997 they could not find $5 million to lend anybody.

It is clear to me, based on the information given by the Minister, that these loans could easily be regarded as political loans. These loans – $5 000 in the right size – could easily be loans that they would have to write off because there was a contract between the voters and the Government where you do one thing and they will do the other thing.

It is rather interesting that National Housing could lend out $24 million in such a short space of time when Barbados Mortgage Finance finds itself in a situation where they have approved many loans – if you were to judge the Barbados Mortgage Finance by the number of loans approved it is the most successful bank in Barbados – the only problem is that they approve loans but they do not give the loans. There are thousands of Barbadians walking around telling people that they have loans approved by the Barbados Mortgage Finance and they do not receive one cent to satisfy those particular loans. Sometimes I wonder – and the Minister will agree with me on this – how it is that those people have not taken the Barbados Mortgage Finance before the courts for the simple reason that the Barbados Mortgage Finance has caused those people to enter into contracts with third parties where some people agree to pay by a particular time and they cannot now pay.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member was making the non-point that the delinquency rate at the Barbados National Housing is very high, that the loans were political and that people were not repaying the loans. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the delinquency rate is less than 11.3% which shows that the people are paying back their loans.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You read the wrong thing. I might have implied that but I did not say it. Barbados Mortgage Finance Department has approved many loans in this country encouraging Barbadians to go and enter into contracts with third parties. Most of those contracts they have entered into they cannot satisfy for the simple reason that they do not allow the people to satisfy the contract they have signed.

I am calling on the Minister to tell the officials at the Barbados Mortgage Finance that when they approve a loan there is the understanding with the other party that they will soon be getting money to satisfy the contract. When the other party cannot satisfy the contract most of them could lose their deposits that they have paid down on property.

I think it is rather unfair for a Government to encourage the Minister to come to Parliament and increase the loans up to $275 000 that you can borrow and do not have the money to lend the people even though they have increased the ceiling. I even think it is ridiculous for the Minister even though he was warned by me on the Floor of the House that when you increase the loan ceiling that what you are actually doing is reducing the number of people that can get loans from the finance department of the Barbados Mortgage Finance. If you are going to keep the amount of money available at the same amount and increase the limit what you are actually doing is reducing the number of loans that you can give people. I warned the Minister about that and one would have thought that the Minister getting that type of advice would have been happy to be educated on this particular matter and would have asked the Minister of Finance for more money to give the Barbados Mortgage Finance.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. I have made the point before that the Minister of Finance has committed Government to provide $10 million from 1998 each year from the Housing Credit Fund to on-lend to BMFC. Of course, the BMFC also attracts financing from the Barbados National Bank and they can also borrow from the market.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: If that is the case, we want them to approve the loans that they want to borrow from the market and as soon as you bring it I will approve it so that those people who are walking around with the approval can complete their houses and they can also purchase the houses they want approved.

It does not make sense to come to Parliament to tell me that there is provision to do something and you are not doing it. It does not make sense. I am even worried, Sir, because I feel that if there is one department of Government that should not be borrowing money it is the National Housing Corporation.

When one considers the amount of land that the taxpayers have spent their money and then that land has been vested in the National Housing Corporation without a cent cost to them and then they turn around and are building houses at a cost much higher than the private sector and then turn around and sell the houses. Even though they are getting free land and high prices for their houses they still have to come to Parliament to borrow money. One must ask what is going on at the National Housing Corporation. They

are getting everything they want, free land, interest free loans. Let me explain this interest free loan.

We came to this Parliament and approved a loan of $50 million for the National Housing Corporation and one would have thought that National Housing would have been servicing that particular interest charge and in the Estimates we were told that the Consolidated Fund had to service the interest so I want to know how it is that in the words of the Minister...

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, the money that was voted for the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure this year was to cover those non-recoverable projects, for example deposits on the units at Flat Rock, Deane Town, London Bourne. The Government has committed itself to the repayment of all non-recoverable projects.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying that there is no way the Government should be lending the National Housing Corporation $50 million to invest in building houses because we were told they were supposed to be using the money to build houses. They turn around and sell the houses at a profit and not only that but they had the land free. That means that they could sell the land at $9 a square foot and all of that money belongs to them.

I want to know what the Minister will tell this Parliament that after selling all of those houses what has happened to the money. If you get free land and you sell it it means that everything that has come from the land would have to be profit. I want to know how the Government of Barbados has given them all the land in Barbados free and yet they are back before Parliament today asking for another $10 million.

Next year they will be back asking for another $10 million. Everyday they will be selling houses and houses and when you look at the quality of the houses they are selling for a high price you cannot differentiate between them and a match box. Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I want you to do is go to Bakers in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. James North. You can describe those houses and tell me if they are not matchboxes. I have a slave hut in my constituency at Broomefield and when I put the tape on the slave hut and measured the one at Bakers, the slave hut, I would prefer to live in because it has more room than the one at Bakers. Even the slave master thought better of housing.

6.50 p.m.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There are no slave huts in St. James North and for the Honourable Member to volunteer this information means that he is enslaved by his own ignorance.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please proceed.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is why the Honourable Member always gets himself in trouble with the Prime Minister. I never said anything about a slave hut in St. James North, I said it was in St. Lucy and then compared it...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Anyhow, you are my friend, you went to school at Coleridge and Parry too so I will defend you this time.

Sir, I am saying that if you have to judge have the Government by the housing policy at Bakers they would have failed. What they have at Bakers is not the verandah to the rich and famous on the west coast because the verandahs on the west coast are much larger than the houses at Bakers. Am I to believe that that is how the Government sees housing for the poor in this country? That they feel that all they have to do is go up there and put up four walls and that is enough to call housing. If I had to describe them I can only describe them as studio units and it is not fair.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, they are studio units, it is not fair to call it a starter home. They are studio units! It is not fair for poor people to be relegated to this type of housing when in another breath you admitted that the people within the tenantries...

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House because the Democratic Labour Party, of which the Member is a strong Member, used to build the same units in Husbands, they built the same units and the same size all across Barbados. They are all starter houses and I must say too that the houses that he is referring to have all been sold and are being occupied. The houses in Bakers have all been sold and the demand for these houses are great and we have to build more of those types.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: That is a rather interesting point. The Minister is now admitting to this Parliament that he recognises that there is a demand by the poor people of Barbados for housing and that they are prepared to give them any type of housing because he understands that there is a demand for housing. In other words, just because you know a man is poor, you do not have to throw anything at him.

I am surprised to hear a comment like that coming from the Minister when I was told in this Parliament by the Honourable Member for St. George South – which I agree with – that poor people have a particular dignity about themselves and if you watch what they do in the tenantries, they start at the back, come forward and they brag about the

lovely houses they have now. How can you have that example in the tenantries, and you can have an understanding of people and how they appreciate their housing in the tenantries and now you can come to what you call a development and build the things that you are building in a development? You cannot put a reasonable argument and you cannot justify what you are doing because what you are saying is that the people of the tenantries have a different concept to housing than what the Government has about them. It is clear that you are out of touch about what is going on in housing as it relates to the masses because what you are building for the masses now will be what they will regard as the kitchens in the tenantries. You can go into the tenantries and measure the kitchens and you will see that that is the same size now. It means that you are far behind the people and that people are leading you in terms of housing.

I am calling on the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East to make sure that the Honourable Member does what he has to do to correct this particular problem and to provide the necessary leadership on the front bench to make sure that problems like these do not occur anymore because the Honourable Member for Christ Church East has assured me that she is his leader and I have no reason to doubt that because if you are in the race and you drop out to let somebody come forward....

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a situation in the country where we must wake up and understand that you cannot tell me that there is a particular grouping of people that have large families and then you do not make provision for those people to expand their housing needs. You tell me that when you go into certain areas and see families with twelve children and see three generations living in one house and then you can go and build what we regard as the matchbox size house for that type of family.

It runs contrary to everything that the Government has been saying. I am saying that even if they had built the house that size what they should have done is provided the necessary land size for future expansion. Instead of providing the necessary land size they have limited the land size and they have also limited the house that is on a particular piece of land. The Minister must understand that these criticisms should not be coming to him. Being a rural person he should understand how rural people think and to see this type of housing in rural is an insult to the people of rural Barbados who feel within themselves that they must always have a large land area to operate. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North, if he were the Minister of Housing would never have done a project like this because he understands well what rural Barbados is all about and I am a bit surprised that the Honourable Member for St. George North, who finds himself in the belly of rural Barbados, can come up with a land and housing project like this.

I am calling on this House to give a particular command to the Ministry of Housing that he has to change the housing policy of the Ministry and he has to respect the views of the people.

The Honourable Member for St. Thomas understands quite well that the people of Arch Hall had a different perspective about housing than he had and he readily agreed in the church that night when he said that he wanted units at Arch Hall and the people said no, we want house lots and we want proper size house lots. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas did that and if that was true why is it that he would sit in a Parliament....

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, on a point of order. I have 46 lots.... Why would the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, allow the Minister of Housing to bring that size house lot to St. James North and that size house when the Honourable Member understands quite well how the people of rural Barbados operate?

7.00 p.m.

I am saying that the Minister of Housing must change the policy and must understand that he cannot only build a house for a husband and wife but he must build a house for a family . And he must understand that the husband and wife will get children and the children will get children.

Asides.

Mr. D. St .E. KELLMAN : The Honourable Minister would have agreed for Sandy Lane to own from St. James to St. Thomas. So why can't poor people get a bigger lot?

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN : I am saying that the amount of land allocated for the houses cannot be enough land and you must have the adequate amount of square footage for future development.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, how can I feel that 8,400 square feet of land is not big for me but I could feel that 4,000 square feet of land is enough for a poor person when I am poor also? We do not want one thing for ourselves but we want something else for someone else. At the same time the rich and famous are buying a whole plantation to live on but poor people must be satisfied to get 4,000 square feet of land , and we must provide all the other land for people to come and buy it by half an acre and so on and we feel happy about that. We have a Parliament of 28 people who all look like me and yet we are making provisions for other people but we cannot make proper provisions for ourselves.

I am saying that this housing policy must change because if we do not do something now, 10 years from now we would not know Barbados. Already Barbados does not look like the Barbados that we knew before. Up to 1991 we did not have Port St. Charles or Royal Westmoreland. Bless Royal Westmoreland because that is what saved the tourism industry, the villas up there because when Sandy Lane went out without a plan, it was Royal Westmoreland that picked up the slack. But we must also understand that if you have people and they do not have anywhere to live that you are going to create problems and you are going to create social problems within Barbados.

It does not make sense having two groupings of people within a country. If you have one set of people who have everything and another set who do not have, you are going to create social unrest. I am warning you to study what happened in the year 1937 and understand that if we as politicians do not do the right things, that we might be inclined to create that kind of climate, which we do not want. So it is a warning to you to recognise that because a man is poor it does not necessarily mean that he is prepared to accept anything, because he is poor does not mean that he does not have ambition. I am saying that any Minister of Housing in this day and age must recognise that poor people have ambition also.

I thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, just two quick comments. The first point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this debate is taking place at a late hour and, therefore, I assume that is the only reason why the Minister would not have kept his pledge, following on the Estimates debate, to give us an update of progress in relation to the National Housing Corporation. The only thing that he updated us on is a matter which firmly contradicts the position he adopted in the Estimates debate. So I believe that we need to resume the housing debate.

The Minister needs to tell what is the current financial status of the National Housing Corporation ,which was in a very sorry state up to March of this year. We need to know what is the position with the existing projects, not only in relation to housing because NHC is also undertaking commercial projects. We need to know what the position is on the interest repayments on the debt and whether the amounts that are being recovered by way of rents and payments for the purchase of land and or units is covering the interest payments on the debt. What is the most significant aspect of the Minister's presentation today is the fact that there is a vast gap between approvals and disbursements and that is not common to NHC. If there were a vast gap between application for units, approvals and the granting of units, that is a long standing trend.

I have noticed that with this Barbados Labour Party Government all the information that has been made available to me, is not through the House. For example, we looked last week at TVET and the different amounts allocated and amounts actually disbursed to the Council. But the Urban Development Corporation is a very good example of a Corporation that approved significant amounts by the way of loans for the Urban Development Fund, I think it is called, by way of grants and loans for house repairs and that kind of thing and the disparity to the amounts approved and the amounts actually disbursed is unbelievable. You have approvals in some cases which are 1000% greater than the actual amounts disbursed in a given fiscal year. So what you have is a situation between the establishment of those Commissions at the time, when I last saw a quarterly report, that you had in every area approvals which had been granted, very close to the election it is true, and people are still waiting for disbursements, as I say, whatever the loans are, I think the urban enterprise loans, rural enterprise loans and housing loans.

Members on that Side should feel very uncomfortable about it because they know that their constituents have been given these approvals, have been told your loan is approved, your unit is approved, your Urban Development Fund, whatever, is approved, and yet sometimes three years pass and nothing is disbursed. This is something that needs to be carefully examined.

I give as an example of that, again the project at Gall Hill. I believe that people are occupying those houses now because the NHC came up with a creative arrangement where they let the people pay what they would be paying, if the mortgage was put in place. Let us say that you had a loan of $50 000 and your monthly payment was $500, well you pay them that $500. I think that they take out a portion for occupancy and then the rest goes into the mortgage. I have no problem with it but this has had to be done because of this very significant discrepancy between the approval of the units or whatever approval we are talking about and the individual actually accessing what has been approved.

Now it is a very dangerous development. I will tell you why it is dangerous. It is dangerous because what you end up doing is raising people's expectations beyond what is possible. Very often when you have a second look at the application you had to tell the person sorry. Of course it was near elections and our views may be different, now you do not really qualify. That is one scenario that happened.

A second scenario that occurs is that the person's financial circumstances over that three-year period has deteriorated. So whereas they may have qualified at a time when they were made redundant and they went forward for a loan or whatever, and their financial position looked okay, by the time you are now reviewing it for disbursement they are in penury and there is no prospect of them being able to either repay or to engage in gainful economic activity.

Likewise with the houses. Somebody may have a lump sum. I had a good example of that. The nephew was involved in an altercation, got charged and the money that they had as the deposit on the house had to go to pay the lawyer. Their circumstances changed and that is how I found out that the National Housing Corporation had developed this creative arrangement with the occupancy.
7.10 p.m.

I am saying that significant expectations had been created out there and the actual data that is being made available, I did not bring the report with me but I recently saw a quarterly report in the Urban Development Commission and I was alarmed that in the period up to 1998 and, I think, the first quarter of 1998, at what they showed as the difference between what had been approved and what had been disbursed.

I know that based on what we granted the Urban Development Commission in the last Estimates, they could barely work down the amounts that would be required to be disbursed to cover all the commitments that appeared in that report. I have seen it constituency by constituency. I can tell you all that had been approved, what has been disbursed, to whom and what is outstanding.

Sir, what the Minister, therefore, would have told us today is very important. As I say, it demonstrates that while the Government is telling people, "your loan has been approved, your application has been approved," very often a significant period of time can pass before people actually get into their hands, the resource, the house or whatever. This gap between promises and performance or approvals and performance and what is speculative and what is reality is too wide. It affects all of us. It is not only a problem with the Government and when the Government goes out of its way to make those pledges, you create problems for everybody.

I have a major headache with that Gall Hill project. Every day of my life somebody calls me.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: These are approvals done since 1994. The circumstances of the project...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Yes. The actual grant of those lots, as the Honourable Member for St. George North will tell you, it was made in 1994 but the project never got underway until 1999. It got underway, the Government changed its approach to the project and then decided to build houses. This is a good idea. Houses were built and we looked at the applicants again and allotted houses to the applicants who had been approved since 1994.

They got ready, went and marshalled resources in the family and decided whether they wanted a two-bedroom or three-bedroom unit. A year passes and then a fellow comes back to me and say, "You know, Skipper, when I went to look at the house, I had $10 000 put down but the car broke down, my nephew is in prison and I had to give the lawyer $4 500 last week." *et cetera*, so you are going to have to go through another round of problems trying to solve these things.

I do not think we always necessarily understand that and then what happens is that the National Housing Corporation was cash strapped so it started to badger people to come and pay in money even though they did not have the keys and people in Barbados functioning at that level do not necessarily always understand the way in which these legal transactions are undertaken and of course, they want to know why they are paying in money at this stage. Meanwhile, the houses have stayed there empty for a year.

This is just one example but I understand that this has repeated itself in several National Housing Corporations' projects. It may be an administrative problem but it is a problem that must be solved. It has repeated itself in the Commissions, both the Urban Development Commission and the Rural Development Commission. Public officers working in there obviously want to give people commitments, get them out of their hair and the people do qualify. They then tell them that "your loan is approved," but they do not tell them that they may not be able to draw for three years. That must not be done because as I say, it ends up creating a level of expectation which cannot be subsequently met.

I believe that this is a matter which the Minister needs to bring before the House and let us understand what is the real level of commitment that the National Housing Corporation has out there. What is the level of commitment of the Urban Development Commission, what is the level of commitment of the Rural Development Commission and assuming that these are legitimate commitments, then the Government is going to have to find the resources, mobilise those resources and clear that backlog.

If not, you will have a situation as existed for the past 20 years in the National Housing Corporation where you had 5 000 approvals for units and not a single unit available. So everybody tells you, they have a number. You have an approval and you are told to call the National Housing Corporation every Tuesday to ask the officer if the number has come up as yet. So I mean that is an impossible situation which creates more pressure for people who are involved at our level, in terms of trying to solve the problem of the average Barbadian.

I hope that that is a matter that the Members on that Side are carefully examining because it can be a very explosive situation if you do not manage it well.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in winding up, I just want to say that the National Housing Corporation is reviewing policies we have in place. We can assure the Honourable Member that all his concerns will be addressed and I just want to say finally that I believe that in time we could have a full debate to answer all the questions that were raised today.

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

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that concludes Government's business for today. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Tuesday 30th May, 2000 at 11.00 a.m.

Sir, I may have indicated to some of my Members at lunch that we were going to adjourn until the week after next but Members of the Opposition are going to be away. In that week the Legal Affairs Committee of CARICOM is meeting 7th to 9th June in Jamaica so the Opposition and myself have agreed that we meet next week.

On that date, we will certainly debate the Resolution to take note of the Green Paper on Disabilities, a very important Paper, Sir. I wish to remind Your Honour that we had asked for Your Honour's permission for some of the unfortunate disabled people to come to the House and to have some of the teachers and the people who use sign language, explain the debate to them.

I remember you had agreed, Sir, that you would accommodate that request. I just wish to let you know that we will be doing that debate next Tuesday and I expect that the request will be facilitated.

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday 30th May, 2000 at 11.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

7.20 p.m.

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