

MEMORANDUM FOR CABINET BY THE HON. MINISTER OF WORKS AND HOUSINGDisposal of Government Dwellings and Building Land

During the discussion of the extension of the Housing Act in the House of Representatives, certain measures were suggested which should tend to help towards the solution of the housing shortage. These were:-

- (a) The embodying of the Housing Act into the permanent legislation.
- (b) The sale of Government owned dwellings to the tenants.
- (c) Home ownership plot to be granted on permanent emphyteusis, instead of on a temporary emphyteusis of 150 years.

It is the Government policy to embody Emergency Laws into permanent legislation wherever this is possible and necessary. In the case of the Housing Act, the Government must retain powers to requisition property affected by its projects or required for Government evictees. It must also safeguard the tenancy rights of those families accommodated in requisitioned houses but not recognized by the owners as the legal tenants.

As regards the suggested sale of Government dwellings, it is a fact that Government is already helping would-be home owners with a £250 grant and £600 loan at 6% on plots available at Sta. Lucia and Msicrah, but this may not be the most that Government could and should do to help solve the housing problem. Apart from the fact that it should be the aim of the Government to see each head of family owning his residence, it is unfortunately true that Government dwellings, especially those pre-1939, fetch uneconomic rents and cost too much in maintenance for which very little is provided annually. Because of lack of proper maintenance, damages to Government property are on the increase and such property may at some time become a dead loss. It would therefore be in the interest of the public and of the Government alike were pre-1939 property be granted on perpetual emphyteusis or conveyed to the tenants who are willing to buy. Money derived from such sales could be very usefully employed in the erection of modern houses and flats.

The assistance being given to would-be home owners is still not what one would desire. One improvement which has been suggested over and over again in the House of Representatives and in the Press, is the duration of the lease of home ownership plots at Sta. Lucia. It is most probably correct to say that the very poor demand for these serviced plots in modern, airy and well planned surroundings was due to the fact that the emphyteutical grant is for 150 years only and not in permanency. The Minister of Works and Housing is not personally against permanent emphyteutical grants, provided the groundrent is revised periodically - say after every 50 or 75 years on the cleared site value.

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There will be 1,500 plots available (750 at Sta. Lucia and 750 at Msierah) and of the 50 at Sta. Lucia advertised, only under 20 applications were received. If the response to the new call for applications for plots is again poor and if Government does not agree to granting the land on permanent emphyteusis, it is the intention of the Minister of Works and Housing to extend the field of application to building contractors.

Hon. Ministers are asked :-

(a) to agree that the Housing Act be embodied into permanent legislation.

(b) to agree in principle that Government dwellings erected before 1939 should be sold to the tenants.

(c) Home-ownership plots at Sta. Lucia and Msierah to be granted on permanent emphyteusis if the demand for plots on temporary emphyteusis remains very low.

15th February, 1965.

M.W.H. ~~23/62~~

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