

## Urban Development

HC Deb 28 March 1983 vol 40 cc132-54 [132](#)

§ 12 midnight

§ [The Under-Secretary of State for the Environment \(Mr. Giles Shaw\)](#)

I beg to move, That the London Docklands Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Greater London Council and Southwark London Borough Council) Order 1982, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th January, be approved. This order is made under section 141 of the [Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980](#), and effects the transfer of approximately 132 acres of land, known as the Southwark site, from its present owners—the Greater London council and Southwark London borough council—to the London Docklands Development Corporation. The Southwark site was to have been released by the authorities for a major development proposal by Lysander Estates Ltd. Because the local authorities have withdrawn from negotiations with Lysander, that scheme cannot now proceed. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State therefore, on 23 December 1982, made this order vesting ownership of the site in the LDDC.

The order was laid before the House on 17 January and it was declared hybrid and was open to be petitioned against for a period of 14 days. Four petitions were received against the order: one from each of the joint owners, the Southwark council and the GLC; one from the Southwark trades council; one from the Southwark docklands campaign and a number of local tenants associations.

The GLC opposed the order, arguing that the site had been the subject of a major private sector development proposal, the details of which had been negotiated between Lysander and the owners. The owners had now withdrawn from those negotiations, and wished to pursue the contingency plan which had been prepared against this eventuality by the borough council. The GLC argued that it was accordingly better placed to secure early development of the site than was the LDDC.

In its petition the GLC also argued that if the order were approved it would leave in the council's ownership small areas of land which would be severed from the Southwark site, and that the order incorporated other areas of land which the council required for the construction of the A200 Lower road improvement scheme.

The borough council in its petition similarly argued that following the withdrawal from negotiations with Lysander it was best placed to secure

early development by implementing its contingency plan which provided for public housing, open space and industrial development.

The Southwark trades council argued that the Lysander scheme had always been unsuitable for this site, and that what was needed was industry and public housing related to local needs, which the trades council believed could be provided by the local authorities.

The trades council supported the contingency plan prepared by the borough council and further argued that to vest the site in the LDDC would pre-empt the borough's local plan for the north Southwark area. The council also contended that the corporation's performance in the Southwark area could not justify the Secretary of State's belief that the LDDC would secure early development of the site.

The collective petition of the Southwark docklands campaign and local tenants' associations argued that the [133](#) Southwark site should be developed for the benefit of local people and not on the lines of the Lysander proposal. Concern was also expressed that, if vested, the opportunity would be lost for the provision of further public housing, community facilities and industrial development which was related to the needs of people in the borough.

The order and petitions were referred to the Hybrid Instruments Committee in another place. It considered whether any substantial ground of complaint was made which merited an inquiry by Select Committee.

My right hon. Friend, in his representations to the Hybrid Instruments Committee, pointed out that the development of this site has been one of the matters aired before the previous Select Committee which had considered the designation and constitution order establishing the corporation and defining the urban development area. He explained that at that time of those proceedings there was no proposal to vest the site, as negotiations were continuing between the local authorities and Lysander and it appeared that a satisfactory scheme would be agreed and would proceed without delay. However, counsel of the Secretary of State, in summing up the Government's case, stressed that if the development did not proceed, Southwark's chances of finding another developer must be doubtful. In that case the LDDC would be better placed to secure an alternative development for the site.

In their report the members of the Select Committee agreed that that view was the right one. They also stressed that a change of approach was required in the dockland area, and that the need was to attract private

investment. They concluded that the LDDC was more likely to attract that investment than were the local authorities.

My right hon. Friend explained to the Hybrid Instruments Committee that, since the petitions were deposited, assurances have been given to the GLC that in those cases where severance of land may be caused by the vesting order, the LDDC will purchase that land. The GLC has also been assured that land required for the construction of the A200 Lower road improvement scheme will be dedicated for highway purposes.

My right hon. Friend also explained to the Committee that the contingency plan prepared by the local authorities would rely heavily on direct public investment in the provision of services and public housing. The authorities recognised this. My right hon. Friend explained that there could be no reasonable expectation that such resources would be available and that in those circumstances it must be doubted that the plan could be implemented. He also referred to the concerns expressed by several of the petitioners regarding the provision of public sector housing in the north Southwark area. He told the Committee about the agreement that the corporation had made with Southwark for the provision of improved accommodation, including 550 new dwellings, for many of the borough's tenants in the north Southwark area. My right hon. Friend concluded that the matters referred to in the petitions had been so fully canvassed in the proceedings on the designation order that, having regard to the circumstances in which the vesting was now proposed, the petitions disclosed no substantial ground of complaint on any new matter. The petitions, together with my right hon. Friend's representations, were considered by the Hybrid Instruments Committee in the other place. The Committee took the view that none of the points raised was of such substance as to require investigation by Select Committee.

[134](#) The corporation is firmly committed to the regeneration of this part of dockland. For this to take place, the site must first be cleared of contaminated silt, levelled, consolidated and generally prepared for development. The LDDC is already funding the completion of a distributor road in the Surrey docks area at a cost of approximately £1.25 million, and these reclamation works will cost a further £1 million.

The corporation would have commenced a full survey of the site to identify the extent of site clearance necessary, but an application to the local authorities for permission to enter the site was refused. The LDDC has commissioned two leading firms of planning consultants and chartered surveyors, which are advising on development options for the site. There will be many options for the corporation to consider. This will ensure that the

site's development potential is realised as quickly as possible, utilising the private investment which was so clearly identified by the Select Committee as being necessary for the regeneration of the area.

I referred earlier to the concern expressed that vesting this land will reduce the availability of public sector housing. This area demonstrates one of the most serious imbalances in housing tenure in London. The latest census figures show that the north Southwark area within the LDDC boundary has over 90 per cent. public sector housing. We are determined, through the provision of more private sector housing, to redress that imbalance. The LDDC has already made a start in the area, with construction already under way on 290 houses, and a further 320-plus in the immediate pipeline. An additional 2,000 houses are programmed. The LDDC is also making available a site in its ownership in this area for the provision of 27 houses for old people, which are being constructed by the Royal British Legion housing association.

I referred earlier to the agreement that the LDDC: had made with Southwark for the provision of 550 new dwellings. This arrangement, known as the Downtown agreement, would have secured the early relocation into new homes of those families presently occupying substandard blocks of flats. The LDDC would acquire those blocks and demolish, or in one or two instances refurbish. An immense improvement to the quality of life would have been made, but I must tell the House that Southwark has reneged on the deal. Alternative means of assisting the tenants are now being considered by the corporation, but I am sure the House will want to join me in condemning the parochial attitude which places an extreme political viewpoint before the improvement of so many people's quality of life. The Southwark site represents a superb opportunity to introduce essential variety in housing, employment and industrial prospects. Vesting the site in the LDDC is clearly the only way of securing early development and the prospect of long-awaited improvement of the area and many local jobs. I commend the order to the House.

12.10 am

§ Mr. Ted Graham (Edmonton)

This is a debate which, alas, will be all too short, and it is necessary for hon. Members without direct dockland constituencies to make a contribution. Nevertheless, I think that the House will have its debate enriched tonight by the presence of so many Opposition Members who can speak with local experience from their dockland constituencies.

135 I refer in particular to my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), for Newham, North-East (Mr. Leighton), for Bethnal Green

and Bow (Mr. Mikardo), for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), and for Lambeth, Central (Mr. Tilley), and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Stepney and Poplar (Mr. Shore). I am pleased to see the hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) in his place, and I am sure that the House will listen with great attention to what he has to say about the site, which is in his constituency. This is a new Peninsula war—the Surrey docks peninsula war. It can be summarised in clear and simple terms. What is the task? There is a job of work to be done for the communities and the people of this part of south London, of docklands, and that job is to develop the industrial sites, public housing and community facilities.

What mechanism is best fitted to carry out the task—an anti-democratic, non-elected committee of placemen, the LDDC, or a joint committee of locally, democratically elected people, working with local community groups, aided and supported where necessary by the Government, especially with Government money?

The crucial question to be asked and answered brings us to the reason for the debate. Is it right for a Secretary of State, when he finds democratically elected people refusing to give away their land at knockdown prices, to use his parliamentary bulldozer to smash them into the ground and hand valuable public assets to a Government quango which has yet to tell the local people what is in store for them?

Southwark and the GLC very willingly began what started out as a beautiful friendship with Lysander Estates Ltd. in April 1981, and the main elements were not wild or far out. They were certainly not over-communityoriented—offices, shops, industry, hotels, conference centre, exhibition centre, 250 dwellings, museum, community facilities and roads. Even so, the desire to get the 130 acres used overcame the very strong desire of local people to build more houses, more workshops and more community facilities.

The case for the vesting order has not been made out. When the former Secretary of State said on 23 December last year that Vesting this site in the LDDC is clearly the only way of securing early development", he was utterly and dogmatically wrong.

If the present joint owners, the GLC and Southwark, were the recipients of the same sympathy, the same resources and the same ministerial muscle as Lysander Estates Ltd, and the LDDC, action to develop the site to the satisfaction of local people and the Government could be just as swift. What we have is ministerial prejudice on a scandalous scale.

What has caused a relationship which could have worked, and which both the GLC and Southwark were prepared to make work, to founder and

eventually to perish? The details of the terms agreed can be restated and the programme, timetable, conditions and aspirations can be reviewed and reassessed, but in this short debate the guts of the issue can be stated as follows. Lysander, faced with the normal commercial problems that beset any project of this size and complexity, sought their [136](#) redemption by reneging on its agreements. Nothing emerged relative to detail during 1981 and 1982 that was not known or could not have been seen.

When, in July 1982, Lysander returned documents that were based on its original promises, it tried to alter them in fundamental and unacceptable ways. First, there was a radical reduction in the premium and licence fee to be paid by Lysander to the joint owners. Secondly, leases were to be given at the same time instead of in phases as was agreed. Thirdly, the approval of all plans by the joint owners was to be watered down. Fourthly, restrictions on the disposal of housing land to Lysander were to be scrapped. Fifthly, rent reviews at 10-year intervals were to be scrapped, community housing provisions were to be jeopardised, arbitration provisions were to be scrapped and there was an insistence on the power to rescind all agreements at the will of Lysander. No self-respecting public body would tolerate such arrogant behaviour.

When the GLC and Southwark sensed the net effect of uncertainty that this bombshell from Lysander created, they recognised that the salvation of the project would lie in their own hands. In July last year they produced their own joint plan. First, it would reduce unemployment by creating industrial space to provide 2,000 jobs in 41 units comprising 130,000 sq ft of space. Secondly, they would build 733 dwellings with gardens for rent, which are still sorely needed in the area. Thirdly, they would create open space and community provisions in consultation with local groups. It was a financial package—a mix of help from the Greater London Enterprise Board, Southwark and rents from the projects. Nobody should tell the House that there is no way to forward the project other than by vesting the land in the LDDC.

Is the track record of Southwark council in these matters so bad as to compel Parliament to deny it its right to build and develop for its own people? Before the advent of the LDDC in 1981 Southwark had created more than 50 developments, at a cost of more than £35 million, in docks clearance, housing, roads, playing fields, parks and environmental improvements.

Since the secret society of the LDDC came into being, there has been a history of deliberate frustration of Southwark and GLC initiatives by the LDDC and the Department of the Environment. We are already aware that



the officials of the Department of the Environment are busy on behalf of their masters, the Ministers. We are indebted to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South for drawing the attention of Standing Committee E on 24 March to some such activity.

[§ Mr. John Tilley \(Lambeth, Central\)](#)

Will my hon. Friend confirm that this is more disturbing evidence that either officials or successive Conservative Secretaries of State for the Environment seem to regard the south bank of the Thames as their personal fief? First we had Vauxhall Cross in Lambeth, then we had Coin Street on the border of Lambeth and Southwark and now we have this Southwark site. In each case the Conservative Government have changed the rules because they do not like what the local council has decided. Does my hon. Friend agree that in each case we are getting architectural disasters that ignore the needs of the local community? We can almost say there is a constitutional outrage, as the Government are riding roughshod over the rights and duties of local authorities.

[137](#)

[§ Mr. Graham](#)

I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I intend to show that this shoddy and shabby episode is part of a series of decisions that were taken by the former Secretary of State for the Environment—relating to the south bank especially, but to London generally.

I refer the House to last Thursday's debate on the [Ports \(Reduction of Debt\) Bill](#). My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South drew attention to the cosy relationship that exists when he quoted the minute of the LDDC for 10 November. It said: The Chief Executive informed the board that he was meeting Terry Jones on 11 November 1982 to seek an assurance that the PLA has resisted offers made to them by the GLC. My hon. Friend said: On reading that, I assume that Mr. Terry Jones was a minor functionary of the PLA. I have since inquired and discovered that Mr. Terry Jones is a senior official of the Department of the Environment, whose responsibilities are for London in general and the London Docklands Development Corporation in particular—for the LDDC especially. That shows the matter in a very serious light. It would be bad enough if the LDDC said to the PLA, privately and secretly, 'Do not accept that money'.—[Official Report, Standing Committee C, 24 March 1983, c. 45.] That clearly shows that when it suits the Department of the Environment it is not above seeking to manage or manipulate or to make things happen or not happen. Why does it not work as diligently to help local people to attain their objectives? Will the Minister take the opportunity to comment on a very serious episode?

We are denied any detailed knowledge of LDDC proposals for the site. Is it to be the old Lysander scheme? As the proposition will need to be at least as commercially viable—that is, profitable—may we expect increases in the number of offices and shops? Plans have already been approved for an additional 32 million sq ft of office space in London, much of it along the south bank. It is estimated that more than £1,000 million will be spent on building offices, many of which will be left empty. What are the Government doing to bring some sanity into the use of resources and to give places such as Southwark a feeling that the Government care about the people who live and work there and want to go on living and working there?

I make a last appeal to the Minister and the Government: drop the vesting order, send immediately for the GLC and Southwark council to produce their plans and costings for getting the site brought into productive community use. The Under-Secretary laughs at the prospect of the Secretary of State taking an initiative that might salvage something from a disgraceful episode. I have enough faith in the right hon. Gentleman to believe that he will at least look at my suggestion. Let him examine the snags holding up progress and give the GLC and Southwark the same ministerial and financial resources and muscle as he intends to give others. He should seize the opportunity to give local people, who want to create their own sensible, viable scheme, the chance to do so.

Failure to do that will earn the Secretary of State the reputation of caring more for private profits than for principle, more for dogma than for democracy and more for financial institutions than for local people. That is why we shall vote against the vesting order.

[12.23 am](#)

[§ Mr. Peter Bottomley](#) (Woolwich, West)

I suspect that the House would welcome a short intervention from me. I can see from the number of Labour Members who wish [138](#) to speak that the fight for nominations for the Vauxhall and Lambeth, Central constituencies will take place over the entrails of Southwark and GLC land.

It is clear that there is great ignorance on the Labour Benches about what has happened, or not happened, to land along the Thames over the past 15 or 20 years. When I stood for the GLC in Vauxhall in 1973, the Vauxhall Cross site was empty, and there is still no building there; the Coin street episode had started, and has still not been resolved; the Southwark dockland site was becoming empty and only now do we hear that the GLC and Southwark council will, if asked, bring forward detailed proposals. For years and years, jobs have not been created, building has not been started, homes have not been built and land has remained sterile. Even in



the past six months there have been two by-elections in Southwark and we have had no detailed proposals, but only political rhetoric.

It is always a delight to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton (Mr. Graham) defending London Labour councils. He does that better than many, because he believes that they have been disgracefully slow in reacting to all the opportunities. Of course, it is difficult to know how seriously to take the views of any Labour Members on this issue. If we had asked four years ago whom we should listen to, we would have been given the names of Robert Mellish and John O'Grady. We are now told that because they are involved in the LDDC we should pay no attention to them because they are old hat, and we have to listen to the hon. Member for Edmonton and perhaps one or two others.

In two or three years' time, unless a grip is taken on the land, we shall find that the same arguments are going on and successions of Labour speakers will stand up and then be disowned. The people of London want to see action. The Government are right to expect the LDDC to get that action, and it is right that the House should pass the order.

[12.26 am](#)

[§ Mr. Nigel Spearing \(Newham, South\)](#)

The hon. Member for Woolwich, West (Mr. Bottomley) has not done his homework. My constituency is the area of the former dockland joint committee, which was a democratic body. I can tell him that considerable expenditure on roads and drainage took place in my constituency and houses were about to be built. No fewer than 8,000 were programmed, and many are now started. Unfortunately, however, through the Government's intervention, instead of many of those houses being for council accommodation by rent with gardens, they are now largely privately built and occupied. I wish the occupants of them good luck, but it was the interference of the LDDC and the Government that changed those ambitious and constructive plans.

The LDDC has its powers from the [Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980](#), section 136, which charges it to secure the regeneration of its area by bringing land and buildings into effective use, encouraging the development of existing and new industry and commerce, creating an attractive environment and ensuring that housing and social facilities are available to encourage people to live and work in the area. Those are precisely the plans that have been suggested by the GLC and the London borough of Southwark. Consequently, no fewer than two schemes have failed, because prior to the Lysander scheme there was the well-advertised Trammel-Grow scheme, which did not get off [139](#) the ground, again because

it was not sufficiently viable. It was right that my right hon. Friend the Member for Stepney and Poplar (Mr. Shore), who was then the Secretary of State for the Environment, reserved the Government's position on that scheme. It has not been a surprise to many of us that the Lysander scheme did not get off the ground, because the Estates Times, in a report of 11 February 1983 had a headline about doubt over the viability of docklands shop plan, and a story telling in detail why the Lysander scheme will not get off the ground.

Now we hear from the Minister that we are to approve more consultants, to find out what sort of plan might get off the ground. All the time, the GLC and Southwark have a plan ready. We in dockland are fed up with the LDDC spending huge sums of money on ridiculous scarecrow posters all over London and going on television, but not being able to produce sound schemes.

The local preferences are clear, and I expect that we shall hear some of them in a minute from the hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The LDDC does not appear to want to carry them out. It is disgraceful that the vesting order did not go before a Select Committee—I do not wish to criticise the other place, but that should have happened. As it did not, there can be only a one and half hour debate on the subject, and that is not enough time for a proper discussion of the issues involved.

Is the LDDC a proper body to be charged with the job of regenerating docklands, not just the site about which we are talking? I shall refer to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Mr. Graham) concerning the conduct of the LDDC. It is true that persons from the three London boroughs involved—this does not now include Woolwich—are members of the board. But they are not there as leaders or former leaders of the boroughs. They are on the board merely as persons having been nominated by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Act.

Anyone appointed to a body in a personal capacity, even though he has experience which qualifies him, has to go along with the majority view of the board. What is worse, when the board does not publish its minutes and is not open to public scrutiny in the sense that a local authority is—it must not be forgotten that the LDDC has powers of planning and powers of vesting, which is extraordinary—it is not open to "municipal" persons to talk about the confidential matters that come before the board. Hence, there is suspicion, crossed wires, misunderstandings and distrust.

I do not believe that the LDDC is a fit and proper body, and we had this out during the Committee stage of the 1980 Act and in the debates on all the vesting orders that have come before the House. I have a special reason for

drawing attention to it in this debate, because of what is happening in my constituency and the stewardship or lack of it of the LDDC.

I shall not describe in detail the Royal docks area. It is 2 miles long by about half a mile wide, and 600 people work there at the moment in short-term lets but having nothing to do with the docks. The docks will never again be what they once were, but it would be possible to make them available for mixed use—a certain amount of shipping, bulk cargo, recreation for local young people and national sporting bodies, redevelopment of some of [140](#) the area for works and workshops and, above all, the use of the three dry docks for ship repair. A ship repair firm came into those workshops recently but had to withdraw because the PLA said last year that it would lose £500,000 on maintaining water access. The LDDC will encourage any activity in this area, even if it floats on the water, but it must not float into the river. It says that it is not particularly concerned about water access.

When the GLC heard that water access to the river was allegedly costing £500,000, it wrote to the PLA saying that it would guarantee those costs for 1983. The PLA—surprise, surprise—suddenly found that it could break even in 1983 and that it did not want assistance from the GLC. I explained the correspondence in detail in the Committee which considered the [Ports \(Reduction of Debt\) Bill](#) only last week. Magically, in 1982 the PLA claimed that it lost £500,000, but in 1983, on less activity, it claims that it can break even.

The LDDC remained silent when this controversy was going on. It appeared to have no view on whether water access to the docks should remain open. It observed some of the meetings, and it received correspondence. It said nothing. I suggest that that in itself was renegeing on its responsibility for the regeneration of the area, because it was cutting out the options. We are to have a local inquiry into the possibility of a short takeoff and landing airport. There was one proposed for the Surrey docks back in the early 1970s. But it is not beyond the bounds of possibility for all these other uses to be there as well.

I now come to the quotation made by my hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton, which I shall read: The Chief Executive informed the Board that he was meeting Terry Jones on 11 November 1982 to seek an assurance that the PLA had resisted offers made to them by the GLC. I received this in an envelope, from where I do not know, and I challenged the Minister in charge of the [Ports \(Reduction of Debt\) Bill](#) on Thursday to confirm that this was a correct statement. He said that he could say nothing because it was outside his departmental responsibility.

We have here tonight the Ministers who have that departmental responsibility. Mr. Terry Jones is a senior official at the Department of the Environment, and it is clear that, if this document is what it purports to be, the LDDC believed that Mr. Jones had some influence with the Port of London Authority, a body which was the responsibility of another Secretary of State. Quite clearly mechanisms had been produced whereby the London Docklands Development Corporation could interfere or put pressure on an autonomous or a supposedly autonomous body, the Port of London Authority, to change policy decisions which had direct and fundamental bearings on the regeneration of a large area of dockland.

I do not believe that the LDDC was acting responsibly in that manner. I am not saying there should not be confidential talks and arrangements between the LDDC and the Department of the Environment. There must be up to a point. I submit to the House that that action was not only improper but contrary to all the tenets of the proper regeneration of dockland. The hon. Member for Bermondsey will confirm that the Greenland dock is in the centre of his constituency, is used for several purposes and has access to the Thames. Why should not that happen to my docks as well? Why can this unaccountable and unelected body approach a departmental official from the wrong Department and get an undertaking, and why can [141](#) the PLA, in producing figures that nobody believes, fudge them with the apparent connivance of the Government? This is very serious. The Secretary of State should, in some respects, be above all this and be acting in a proper and judicial capacity.

I asked the Minister, and he has had notice since last week that I would raise the matter, why the LDDC expected that Mr. Jones could give the assurance concerning the policy matters of the PLA, which is itself responsible to another department?

Given the attitude of the LDDC concerning the continuation of ship repairs in the royal docks, and that closing the water access has meant that that work has gone to Chatham, why does the Minister think that that body is fit and proper to continue to be responsible for this development? Does he understand that in the light of the material now available, the public must conclude that the LDDC and the Government have connived in the closure of water access to the royal docks and must be suspected, as must the PLA, of conniving at, and presenting false figures for the public.

I suggest that unless these matters are disproved, they show conclusively that the LDDC is not a fit and proper body to have the land, now being discussed in the House, vested in its charge.

[12.33 am](#)

[§ Mr. Simon Hughes](#) (Bermondsey)

A year ago a newspaper reported that the area that is now in the charge of the London Docklands Development Corporation was not only the largest development area in Britain but possibly the largest in Europe. The LDDC was charged, in the borough that I represent, with the task of restoring a community to that part of London where community spirit is one of its proudest traditions.

It is sad that in the years since the docks closed in 1970 and up to the creation of the LDDC in 1981, despite considerable efforts by the local authorities, there was not much visible sign of the development that that part of London needed. Since then, as a result of the order passed in the House in July 1981, a corporation has been seeking to remedy that situation. There is however, an unsatisfactory element in the corporation's role. It is undemocratic. It is possible for representations to be made to it only by elected Members of Parliament or by local council or GLC representatives. From a distance, we must seek to influence decisions that should be taken by people elected to take them. For that reason, before becoming a Member of Parliament, together with most of the groups and political parties in my borough and constituency, I opposed the setting up of the LDDC.

Since then, it is a further sad comment on the way in which matters have gone that such an important issue as we are debating could not be examined by a Committee in the other place and is being debated at a time most of the real world would regard as ludicrous for a subject that is so important, both to London and to those individuals whose futures are our particular concern. It is essential, however, to consider what we should do in the ridiculous position we find ourselves.

One attitude is exemplified by the local authority in my area. For reasons of its own, Southwark council has decided not to speak to the docklands corporation. That is an irresponsible attitude, which is not in the interests of the people whom the council represents. Indeed, local people have often told me this, particularly in recent weeks when [142](#) I have had even more occasion than usual to listen to their views and repeat them. Sadly, that attitude has other manifestations. Some tenants of Surrey docks live in council property that is in an appalling condition. Indeed, 70 per cent. or 80 per cent. of some properties are boarded up and empty. Some blocks have only one or two families in them. They find that they are the subject of debate between certain authorities but that there is no progress while the corporation and the local authority will not speak about their future. The downtown tenants of Surrey docks are the sufferers while the intransigence of Southwark borough council compounds the lack of democracy of the

docklands corporation, by not acting together with it and not acting in the interests of those who live in the area.

There are further problems, some of which have been referred to by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). About 700 people are employed in the area of Greenland dock, but firms there have received notices from the development corporation threatening them with closure and removal. I have been active, together with the GLC member for my constituency—who is a member of a different political party—in seeking to ensure that those firms and the jobs that they represent can remain in that area and provide a future for those who work there.

Such problems would be obviated or lessened if there were a democratic body. We are considering a site of 120 acres, which is jointly owned by the borough council and the GLC. It represents 80 per cent. of the new build land and of the available space for Southwark. It is a sufficiently large site for me to say that no one developer should be charged with its development. Its value is between £8 million and £10 million. It should be used to meet the desperate needs of that part of London. It should be used for both public and private housing. Only tonight, at a tenants' meeting, I was told once again that some young families can afford low-cost housing and want to buy. They want to settle with their families in the area in which they were born and brought up. I am talking about a maximum of £26,000 or £27,000. At £28,000 it begins to be too difficult for families to buy, even when both parents are working, in a community such as Southwark. Many people, however, cannot and do not wish to afford private housing. Therefore, the development should be mixed. I would be reassured if I knew that some of the site would definitely be given for that purpose, even by the LDDC. From a meeting of several hundred tenants that I attended before returning to the House this evening, I know that another 900 tenants are likely to have to move out of an estate that will have to be demolished and that they will soon be looking for accommodation elsewhere in the borough that has the responsibility of providing them with homes.

The need is therefore for housing, and for jobs for the 20 per cent. who are unemployed in my borough. We particularly need jobs for the young people in my borough who cannot find work on leaving school. They want a future in the place that they know and love. There is also no better place in this city than the docklands when it comes to developing water-based recreational facilities. There is no better place to use for open spaces and no better place in which to let our young people grow up in. It can provide the healthy environment that we would want for all those whom we represent.



A contingency plan has been prepared by the London borough of Southwark and the GLC. It estimates that 2,000 jobs will be available. It provides for 733 homes.

[143](#) It has the advantages of local control, low-cost housing, and homes with gardens. However, it has disadvantages. It has a timescale that guarantees money for only two years. It has the problems of the formulation of the local statutory district plan which are not yet resolved and are not likely to be resolved for a further nine months. It has no build for sale, and therefore does not respond to the clear needs of some of the community that I represent. It has potentially a smaller industrial appeal than other developments could have. So the scheme is by no means perfect, although it has many redeeming and commending features.

However, it is more perfect than the Lysander scheme, which clearly is no longer acceptable, first, because it has at all times included elements that are inappropriate for the Surrey docks and second, because it is clear that the developers have changed their conditions in several substantial ways that make the prospect of decent development by them no longer realistic. We should not condone that scheme or allow it to go ahead without severe criticism and strong resistance.

What, then, is the alternative? It is that we pass a vesting order, handing over the land to the LDDC. Tonight we have a vesting order to give a blank cheque to the old LDDC. If we knew the plans, if we knew what the proposals were, if documents were available to the public, we could judge whether those plans were acceptable, and balance them against the alternatives. However, there are no plans, and the scheme has not been presented to the public.

Whatever the outcome tonight, I hope that I can continue to do what I told those who elected me as their representative only a month ago that I intended to do. I said that I would remain independent of the LDDC, but at the same time that I would speak to it. I would seek to influence it to do what was needed for the area. I would seek to do so in a way that would produce for public discussion the plans for the area. Until we have those, I say on behalf of my party that we shall vote against the vesting order. We shall do so because I cannot sign a blank cheque for my constituents.

From today onwards, however, I shall seek to encourage all those who are responsible, whether in my local authority or the GLC or the LDDC, to produce for the Southwark site the proper balance of housing mix, industry and recreation that is clearly needed, without dogma and prejudice, and to

persuade those affected that their interests are being represented and that that land will be used to the best advantage.

I end with a letter that I received this morning from one of my constituents, and it happens to be about this debate. He wrote: I'm sure that you've been struck by the wealth and skills to be found in the area; it seems to me that instead of trying to adapt the people to the development, one should try and adapt the development to the people. So for God's sake keep Colonel Siefert away from the area". Let us plan with those in authority the area that we want. I hope that we shall soon know the plans, that they will be worked out, and that they will be honestly presented. When the people have seen them, I hope that I shall be able to do my part with other Members representing dockland constituencies to make sure that local people are represented and that influence is brought [144](#) to bear to produce the sort of community that will healthily survive. Our job is to bring back to our part of London the development that it so desperately needs.

[12.50 am](#)

[§ Mr. John Hunt \(Ravensbourne\)](#)

We have all listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who speaks with a close personal interest in and knowledge of the area under discussion. I was struck by his comment about the dilapidated and disgraceful state of many of the council dwellings administered by the London borough of Southwark. That seems to cast considerable doubt upon the validity of the scheme being presented by that borough and the Greater London council. One is bound to say that from what the hon. Gentleman said the borough's track record is not particularly good.

The hon. Gentleman was right to remind us that the London Docklands Development Corporation came into existence precisely because of the long history of procrastination in dockland redevelopment. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich, West (Mr. Bottomley) was right when he spoke of the delay and endless wrangling and rivalry that has gone on over the years between the various boroughs in the area.

[§ Mr. Spearing](#)

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there was no major disagreement between the boroughs but that there may have been between the Conservative Cutler-led GLC and the boroughs? If there was any delay at all, responsibility for it should be laid at the door of that gentleman and his council.

[§ Mr. Hunt](#)

I have been in the House for 18 years and I can recall endless debates and reports about all the difficulties and differences between the boroughs that make up this area. That is a fact that cannot be gainsaid.

Basically, the argument is between private and public housing. My hon. Friend the Minister is right to say that the vesting of the site in the LDDC is now the only way to secure its early development and the long-promised improvement and regeneration of the area.

The briefing material that we have received from the GLC talks about meeting the needs of local people. In a letter to London Members, Mr. Michael Ward, the chairman of the industry and employment committee of the GLC, said: Private developers have already shown that they are less able to invest in this site, particularly in view of present market conditions. I wonder what the evidence is for that statement. Present market conditions for the construction industry are now looking considerably brighter. Therefore, the prospects for private development in the area are better than they have been for some considerable time.

Labour Members must face the fact that a new market for home ownership is being created in the docklands. That is basically what they dislike about the proposals now before the House. The recent history of the LDDC has shown that there is a demand for low-cost housing in the inner city. I remind hon. Members that the corporation started from scratch, and yet by October 1982, 400 of the 601 houses and flats that had been built had been sold at prices ranging from £20,000 to £31,500.

Significantly and interestingly, a large proportion of those houses went to those who were on the waiting lists of the boroughs in the areas.—[Horn. MEMBERS: "That is [145](#) not true. Mr. Mellish himself informed me of that.— [Interruption.] I am astonished. Mr. Mellish devoted himself to the docklands and is concerned with its regeneration. He believes that his work at the corporation will provide the homes that the people of the area want. I prefer to judge Mr. Mellish on his record than to listen to squeals from Opposition Members whenever his name is mentioned. Nearly all the houses have been sold and some have gone to housing associations. The hon. Member for Bermondsey made a plea for mixed development—

[§ Mr. A. W. Stallard](#) (St. Pancras, North)

The hon. Gentleman referred to years of neglected housing in the area. That happened during the time that the man he now lauds to the skies was the representative in the House of that area. The hon. Gentleman said that Mr. Mellish had been a good Member and that he would rather listen to him, but he was the bloke responsible for the neglect.

[§ Mr. Hunt](#)

The former right hon. Member for Bermondsey was never a member of the Southwark borough council and therefore never had direct control of the decisions of that council. I think that Mr. Mellish is capable of answering for himself.

The present hon. Member for Bermondsey mentioned the need for mixed development. Only 5.3 per cent. of households in dockland own or are buying a house or flat. That compares with the average of 27.3 per cent. in inner London. Even if all the new homes in the area are private, there will still be a substantial mix and it will probably be below the average for inner London. There is plenty of scope for private housing, and we should welcome it.

[12.58 am](#)

[§ Mr. Stuart Holland \(Vauxhall\)](#)

We have just heard the principle of private ownership and profit raised to a metaphysical level. We heard the Minister say that there is a need to attract private investment. We are told that the GLC's proposals cannot be taken seriously. In fact, there is no way that the Government's proposals can be taken seriously. They are all part and parcel of the free enterprise philosophy with which they are still imbued, despite the fact that they have made a gigantic mess of the economy, with record levels of unemployment. If Government Members interpret a hiccup in a downward cycle for an upswing in the economy they deserve the ride that they are being taken for. The free enterprise and free enterprise zone approach in the proposals for vesting powers in the London Docklands Development Corporation is fundamentally wrong. It is something that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has put to the House on many occasions, even arguing that it would be a good idea to have in Scotland some of the entrepreneurship that we see in Singapore.

It appears that in this case it is hoped that the entrepreneurship of Singapore will be brought into Southwark. There is virtually no chance that it will happen with the present state of the economy. The author of the enterprise zone proposals and enclaves of this kind, Peter Hall, has said that he is amazed by the Government's policy and that it is not at all what he had in mind when recommending such enterprise zones, although he should perhaps have his mind re-examined since it appears that he thought that he could literally get entrepreneurs from Singapore to come to Scotland or to Southwark and invest their creative talents there.

[146](#) The reality is that there are major structural problems with employment in inner London. They affect the crisis of small and medium firms in the

area, where entrepreneurship and resolution alone are not enough to survive in the economic climate that the Government have created. It is precisely to this that the Greater London Enterprise Board, of which Mike Ward is the chairman, is addressing itself. It is taking on firms that do not have the internal resources to modernise, cannot adapt to new technologies or lack the diversification to undertake risk. Provision can be made for this by the Greater London Enterprise Board, and the Board's intervention is part of the GLC's counter proposals for the site.

I cannot understand why Conservative Members take the view that any municipal intervention is Socialist red in tooth and claw. Such assistance is given by every Government—Left, Right or Centre—in continental Europe. Municipal intervention, whether it is designing a road system, ensuring that there is a decent living environment or providing for urban planning, is the mark of a civilised society. But in the 20th century it should be with the involvement and consent of the elected representatives of the area. Otherwise, there will be a suspension of the rules of the game in the normal planning process only too similar to the suspension of certain of the rules of the game in free enterprise zones in other parts of the world—for example in south-east Asian enterprise zones, where boss figures are put in to run their show their way against the wishes of the local people.

We are told that the market will resolve all the problems and that there is market superiority. A couple of my hon. Friends have already referred to the report in the Estates Times. As the message has not got through to Conservative Members it may be worth spelling out what it says. It was reported last month that Hillier Parker for the London Docklands Development Corporation said that prelets to major tenants were unlikely and that the population's spending power in the area would not support such a large development.

That echos precisely what is happening in the property market along the river and further up river on the south bank. The unwillingness of the private sector to invest its risk capital in small and medium or high technology enterprises in inner city areas is very marked. Lemming-like they all rush to invest in property. The hon. Member for Woolwich, West (Mr. Bottomley) told me that he has been appalled to see for so long the sites by Vauxhall bridge unlet. Perhaps he would care to tell me with what confidence he has now that they will be let in future. There is no commitment whatsoever that the plans will be fulfilled.

[§ Mr. Peter Bottomley](#)

If, 10 years ago, the site had been put up for auction, and if reasonable proposals had been approved, there would be more jobs in the hon.

Gentleman's constituency and I might have been happier to be one of his constituents. All I know of him is his opposition to virtually every plan put forward, and no jobs on the site.

[§ Mr. Holland](#)

It was quite a good idea to give way to the hon. Gentleman. If he does not have a stronger case than that he is wasting his time. Anyone who looks at the position knows that office developments do not bring significant local employment. They do not even bring much through contract cleaning because contract cleaners [147](#) are brought in from a wide area. The white collar workers in offices do not necessarily come from the local area. Also, the demand for white collar office staff is shrinking because of the impact of new technology. This has not in any sense been taken on by the LDDC. The demand for lettable space is shrinking, and will continue to fall. It is striking that the House cannot catch up with the analysis made at the recent Financial Times conference when no one from the property lobby was prepared to say that there was an upswing in the market. Yet Conservative Members imagine this will take place, that all is well with commercial judgment and that the properties can be let.

My answer would be that, instead of putting up these sites for public auction, it is a public responsibility for there to be housing on them. There is a questionable need for office development and a patent and crying need for housing. With the abolition of the strategic housing role of the GLC, the inter-borough nomination scheme is seen by my constituents as an insulting farce. They know when they are put on the inter-borough nomination list that they have virtually no hope of getting a transfer.

Why cannot we meet London's housing needs by building houses, for those in need rather than those who may be able to pay if, God help them, the rent review terms of the Lysander-type approach are used where there are no rent provisions at all but only additional annual rent? If that is to be the case for private housing, only a minority of people on the edge of the river will be able to afford penthouse flats. Constituents of mine and of other Opposition Members who desperately need housing will not get it because speculative developments, instead of investment for housing for local need, are going ahead.

In the Vauxhall bridge site the Department of the Environment Ministers overrode the local authority with grandiose design plans, again with no conditions for fulfilment. In this case we see the local democratic process and the local interest overridden. Local democracy in London needs the London Docklands Development Corporation like a hole in the heart. It will



knock the heart out of the process of accountability in inner London. The vesting order should be opposed, and I shall certainly oppose it.

*Several Hon. Members*

rose—

[§ Mr. Deputy Speaker \(Mr. Bernard Weatherill\)](#)

Order. Before I call the hon. Member for Wood Green (Mr. Race), I remind the House that the Minister wishes to reply to the debate, and I am sure that the House would wish to hear him, at about 1.20 am

[§ 1.6 am](#)

[§ Mr. Reg Race](#) (Wood Green)

I do not represent a docklands constituency, but a large number of my constituents are in acute housing need. I am moved to speak on the order by the outrageous comments of the hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt). It is the view of the Conservative party that people in London should increasingly depend upon the whims of the private market for the provision of private housing. According to Conservative philosophy, someone on a council waiting list should take second or third place.

I should like to remind the hon. Gentleman and the House of the record of Bromley borough council, which, with broad green acres within its area, has built extremely [148](#) few council houses, has sold a large number of them to sitting tenants and has a substantial council house waiting list. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to be in favour of a decent mix of private and public housing in Bromley. It appears that only in docklands is his party and the people whom it represents willing to countenance a decent mix of private and public housing, for the sake, no doubt, of the profits of private developers.

That is a scandal, because in my local borough 10,500 families are on the housing waiting list, and that is the situation in virtually every London borough. We not only have large numbers of people on council house waiting lists, but extremely large numbers of homeless people in bed and breakfast accommodation. The London borough of Camden has 500 families in bed and breakfast accommodation. The London borough of Brent, with acute housing problems, has 500 families in bed and breakfast accommodation.

It is a scandal for Members to pretend that those people should have second or third priority. They should have the first priority, not the fourth or fifth. I do not believe that those who have substantial amounts of money should be able to buy land that has been ripped off the public and acquire flats or other housing on it when there are homeless people and many

others living in bed and breakfast accommodation. But that is exactly what will happen.

For all those reasons, I believe that the Government's advocacy—they have been saying that an unelected and unaccountable body should have the right to determine what goes on in Southwark and the GLC area—is a scandle of unprecedented proportions. They are proposing to hand over a considerable profit to individual private companies.

The advice that is being received from members of the LDDC, such as Mr. Robert Mellish and Mr. John O'Grady, is hardly neutral. They are paid members of the corporation. I am reliably informed that Mr. Mellish receives a salary of over £16,000 a year.

[§ Mr. John Hunt](#)

He deserves more.

[§ Mr. Race](#)

I am told that Mr. John O'Grady receives a salary of over £3,000 a year.

[§ Mr. John Hunt](#)

So what?

[§ Mr. Race](#)

That is his salary as a member of the board.

[§ Mr. John Hunt](#)

So what?

[§ Mr. Race](#)

It is important to note where their interests lie. They have not been elected to serve on a body to look after the interests of the local people. They are paid to do a hatchet job for the Conservative party. That is why they were put there by the former Secretary of State for the Environment. In my opinion—I expect that it is shared by many of my hon. Friends—it was an extremely foolish thing for them to do. However, they did it and I believe that their advice is not to be trusted. Their advice should not be heeded by the people of Southwark and the rest of London.

The elected bodies in London—the GLC and the Southwark council, for example—should determine what happens in this crucial area. It is crucial to south London and to London as a whole. The homeless families in my constituency need homes desperately. If the land is sold, and if the majority of it goes to private development and private home ownership, their chances of being rehoused [149](#) will be reduced. For that simple reason, I believe that all hon. Members who have a conscience should vote against the order.

[1.13 am](#)

[§ Mr. Eldon Griffiths \(Bury St. Edmunds\)](#)

The hon. Member for Wood Green (Mr. Race) told us that he intervened because he was provoked—two can be provoked. I shall make three points and make them simply.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of a former colleague of us all, Mr. Mellish. Our former colleague was a housing Minister, and on behalf of very many in London he was extremely helpful in moving people from Southwark, from the area that we are discussing, into the overspill estates in my constituency. It ill becomes the hon. Gentleman to make such absurd comments about a man who served the House well and who served many of the people well. I say that although I was not a member of his party and I opposed many of his policies. The hon. Gentleman does himself and House no credit by throwing around insults when talking about a former Member of this place, who served it well.

Secondly, the hon. Member for Wood Green and several of his hon. Friends have said that it must be left to the elected local authorities to provide housing for London's needy. I do not disagree with that, but I look at the record. I have had some experience of these matters, because I was a Minister at the Department of the Environment for four and a half years. If there is a lack of housing for the people of many of the Socialist areas which the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends represent, the responsibility lies mainly with those who have run the local authorities in those areas for the past 25 years. Those Socialist authorities have sat there and brought about the housing shortages of which the hon. Gentleman has spoken. He should recognise that his own party bears the principal responsibility.

[§ Mr. Ian Mikardo \(Bethnal Green and Bow\)](#)

Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

[§ Mr. Griffiths](#)

Of course I will give way to the hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Mr. Mikardo). I like him too much to refuse.

[§ Mr. Mikardo](#)

If public money had been shoved at those local authorities as it has been shoved at the LDDC—public money that has been robbed from the local authorities to be given to the the LDDC—the position would have been very different.

[§ Mr. Griffiths](#)

I have almost as much affection for the hon. Gentleman as I had for Bob Mellish, but he knows perfectly well that Labour local authorities and Labour Governments between them grossly failed the people of London by not

providing the houses that they now have the effrontery to blame my hon. Friend for not providing.

In 1970—almost in the middle ages, as it seems now—I went to the Department of the Environment as a Minister. One of the first things I did was to look at the London docklands. I knew very little about dockland, except what I had learnt from dockland people who had come to live in Suffolk—and fine people they were. I flew over the docklands in a helicopter, and travelled through them along the river. I received the advice of the same officials at the Department as had advised Labour Ministers.

[150](#) It is clear to me that successive Governments have tried to move the development forward, but it has not moved. There have been plans, proposals, schemes, and consultation, but there has been no progress. Opposition Members may have strong feelings—they have made them very clear tonight—but nothing has been done. There is an urgent need for something to happen. The order will make things happen, and that is why it should be supported.

[1.18 am](#)

[§ Mr. Ian Mikardo](#) (Bethnal Green and Bow)

I shall bear in mind, Mr. Deputy Speaker, your earlier reminder of the need to leave time for the Minister. I shall therefore make one or two points very briefly indeed.

It was very kind and condescending of the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) to fly over docklands in a helicopter when he was a Minister. I wonder how many of the people there he was able to speak to. Tory Ministers do not care about people; they care about land and property. A few years earlier the hon. Gentleman might have accompanied some of the Junker 88s that flew over docklands. He had no more contact with the people on the ground than their pilots had. Tory Ministers care about the physical things that they can see. They think that they have studied an area if they have studied the buildings and the land—the money-making propensities. They do not care about the people.

The hon. Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt) said how terribly neglected Southwark has been by the borough council. The man who has for a long time been the leader of that council has now been appointed a director of the LDDC. Apparently Mr. Broackes does not share the hon. Gentleman's view of Mr. John O'Grady, as he wants him to be on the board. Is it a very good recommendation of the LDDC that it should have invited such a person to join the board?

My last point is also connected with what I said to the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds. I have seen these matters from our side of the river. We had our vesting order on our side of the river some months ago and we can see what has come out of it. The one element in our experience that is missing from the equation is the people. The LDDC does not take two pennyworth of notice of the views of the people in its area. It cares about those who can come into the area to make profit out of the area, to get hold of the resources that ought to be available to the people in the area. The people who live in the area are neglected and treated with contempt by the LDDC. That is why, sooner or later, it will go out on its neck.

[1.20 am](#)

[§ Mr. Giles Shaw](#)

The debate has followed the traditional lines of anything concerned with the London docks. There are those who do not want any progress whatever to be made, and there are those who are seeking it seems against overwhelming odds—to allow a new regime to make progress.

The hon. Member for Edmonton (Mr. Graham) began by suggesting that it was the Lysander group, and not the GLC or the London borough of Southwark, that reneged on the agreements that were in negotiation. I do not ask him to take my word for it but merely quote the words of the GLC in its evidence before the Select Committee, when it stated: [151](#) In December 1982 both your Petitioners and the Borough Council decided not to continue with these negotiations and not to conclude the legal arrangements". It was, in fact, the responsibility of the GLC and the London boroughs—

*Several Hon. Members*

rose—

[§ Mr. Shaw](#)

I shall give way to the hon. Member for Edmonton.

[§ Mr. Graham](#)

Does the Minister agree that in view of the wholesale changes in the original agreements, which were made by Lysander and reported to the joint owners in July, any self-respecting council would take the action that the GLC and Southwark took?

[§ Mr. Shaw](#)

The hon. Gentleman must recall the size and scale of the scheme. It was to provide a wide-ranging development in that part of the docks. It was to produce 45,000 sq m of industrial development, 45,000 sq m of retail development, 27,000 sq m of offices, and 350 units of housing. It would have provided over 7,000 jobs. If the hon. Gentleman really thinks that the contingency plan produced by the London borough, with its prospect of

2,000 jobs, 540 units of housing and a science park, is an adequate contribution to the development of the site, I have to say to him that it would be nowhere near as effective as the original proposition.

I remind the House that the proposition was entered into by the London borough and the GLC, and was well advanced at the time that the corporation came into existence. That is why this particular land was not included in the original vesting order. Had it not been for the fact that the local authorities had decided to withdraw from it, we would not be having this debate tonight. To argue that the local authority should resume control of this area of docklands is once again to go backwards into trying to find ways in which the local authorities can develop portions of docklands which for generations, as my hon. Friends have said, have not been developed.

Opposition Members have argued strongly about housing and housing land. The hon. Members for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), for Wood Green (Mr. Race) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) were among them. I remind the House that in the London borough of Southwark the district auditor has reported that there are 120 acres of vacant land, excluding this site, available for development. Moreover, Southwark is top of the league of London boroughs with empty properties. It has 4,500 empty properties in its area. It is also top of the league in the hard-to-let properties, with about 14,000 such properties in its area. If the borough wants to concentrate on the improvement of the existing stock or the development of the existing land that it owns, that is what it should be doing. It should leave the development proposals in the hands of those who are committed to a wide-ranging use of development and not merely to the extension of public sector housing from 90 per cent. upwards.

I very much welcome the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich, West (Mr. Bottomley) for the proposition. I also welcome the support of my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Griffiths) and for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt).

The hon. Member for Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) raised a particular problem in connection with the Greenland [152](#) dock, and I fully understand why he should be expressing concern for possible redevelopment. If the plans proceed, the corporation will ensure that it relocates those firms that have to be displaced as far as possible in the immediate area and without loss of jobs. I remind the hon. Gentleman that when the Greenland dock area is developed, it will offer many more new jobs.

The hon. Member for Newham, South raised a problem in a manner that is typical of him. He takes a completely different view from the LDDC in everything that it does, and, he suggested that there was impropriety. There



is no question of the LDDC exerting undue influence on the PLA with regard to the royal docks and there is certainly no question of its approaching Department of the Environment officials for that purpose. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the PLA is not responsible to the Department of the Environment, but the Department has a perfectly proper interest in advancing to the PLA its views about the future prospects of the royal docks, and in keeping itself informed about the authority's negotiations with other bodies. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take it from me that that is how the LDDC will and should conduct its affairs.

[§ Mr. Spearing](#)

rose—

[§ Mr. Shaw](#)

No, I shall not give way. The hon. Gentleman has made a significant attack on people who cannot answer for themselves and I am providing him with the answer.

With regard to the LDDC and home ownership in the London borough of Newham, of the first 120 households in the Cyprus development there, more than 34 per cent. of those dwellings have been bought by people who were previously council tenants, and 19 per cent. were bought by people who were previously council tenants in the borough of Newham. That shows the importance of development in the area.

The hon. Member for Newham, South suggested that the LDDC does not care a fig about the people who live in its area. It is proposing to rehouse them in a manner in which they infinitely prefer to the long decades that they have spent as council house tenants in his borough. If he really wants to know, I shall tell him that the LDDC has spent not £1 million or £2 million, but £7.1 million on 24 projects in Southwark, 28 projects in Newham and 51 projects in Tower Hamlets. I suggest that that is a positive sign that the LDDC takes its responsibilities seriously.

Today's debate is about allowing the LDDC to resume the development of what used to be the Lysander site.

[§ Mr. Stallard](#)

rose—

[§ Mr. Shaw](#)

No. All hon. Members would be right to criticise the fact that there are no proposals before the House on precisely how the development should take place. The reason for that is that the LDDC is a development authority and is not the authority that eventually produces buildings and plans. Therefore, it must produce the land before development can take place.

I believe that the mix of developments, which has been such a feature of the Lysander site, is probably the right type of mix for that land. The suggestion that the Lysander proposal will not be continued cannot be confirmed at the moment, as Lysander may come forward for further development on that site. It would be wrong for the site not to be developed as a wide-ranging project to provide [153](#) jobs, industrial and commercial opportunity and housing. That is the way in which the corporation has been able to provide many jobs in docklands already. It already employs about 3,000 people in docklands or projects related to its activities. I trust that the corporation will develop in that way. I therefore ask the House to pass the order.

§ Question put:—

§ The House divided: Ayes 90, Noes 35. § Question accordingly agreed to.

§ Resolved, That the London Docklands Development Corporation (Vesting of Land) (Greater London Council and Southwark London Borough Council) Order 1982, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17th January, be approved.