

SUMMARY

Within recent years the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has accorded a certain level of priority towards housing the population. In order to make any significant headway in satisfactorily solving the problem, a number of large housing projects were undertaken with the main thrust being towards the provision of completed units, ready for occupation. The fortunes of this oil rich country prevailed during the 1970's resulting in an unprecedented boom in the construction industry, housing included.

In an effort to accelerate housing construction the Government entered into a number of Government to Government arrangements and "design and build" contracts with a number of large contractors. This move resulted in the emergence of 'developers' who were basically interested in developing lands, constructing housing units and selling them to the Government or to the general population.

However, the increase in oil revenues and the accelerated construction activity also induced competition in the labour market. The good fortunes of the oil boom induced economic activity resulting in increased income

earnings for the majority of the population. Increased earnings meant an increase in disposable income and the tendency toward owning a home. The large number of housing units being constructed were encouraging, and, as a consequence, the desire to own a unit was increased. This resulted in an increased demand for housing facilities.

The housing situation tended toward a market demand situation and prices soared. In order to provide cheap housing the Government was forced to subsidise most of its undertakings in the housing industry. The general public realising that subsidies were as high as ten to fifteen percent, began to depend more and more on housing units from the public sector. As a result, Government always had a backlog of at least forty thousand applicants for housing facilities.

This report attempts to investigate the cost of constructing housing units at various Government housing projects, to investigate the type of facilities being provided, to review some of the problems the population are experiencing, and to attempt to investigate some of the contractual arrangements for construction of the housing projects.