

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1986 -91

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, April 4, 1989.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.15 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour L. A. WEEKES, J. P., (Speaker)

His Honour J. J. PAYNE, (Deputy Speaker)

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, B.A., M.A., (Econ.)
J.P., (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Hon. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B.
(Hons.), (Minister of Health)

Hon. P. M. GREAVES, Q.C., B.A., (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Transport, Telecommunications and Immigration and Leader of the House)

Hon. E. E. GREAVES, B.A., Ed.M., (Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES, M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.P., (Edin.),
(Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN, BA., MA., (Minister of Transport and Works)

Hon. M. A. KING, Q.C., LL.B., (Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs)

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN, A.I.C., M.I.A.S., J.P.,
(Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries)

Hon. N. K. SIMMONS, (Minister of Employment, Labour Relations and Community Development)

Hon. H. A. BLACKMAN, B.Sc., (Econ.), (Minister of Housing and Lands)

D. A. C. SIMMONS, Esq., Q.C., LL.M.

O. S. ARTHUR, Esq., M.Sc., (Econ.) .Mrs. M.
BARKER-WELCH, (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Employment, Labour Relations and Community Development)

L. L. BRATHWAITE, Esq., J.P. (Chairman of Committees)

E. BOURNE, Esq.

Dr. E. A. SIMMONS, M.D.

Hon. W. W. HALL, G.C.M., H.B.M. (Minister of Tourism and Sports)

C. A. NEBLETT, Esq., B.A., (Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office)

C. L. TROTMAN, Esq., M.A.

R. L. MORRIS, Esq., B.A., Cert. Ed. P.

J. M. MILLER, Esq.

D. J. H. THOMPSON, Esq., LL.B.

Prayers were led by Rev. Fr. Ivan Harewood. Mr.

SPEAKER: The House is in session.

Before we commence our proceedings, I indicated at the last sitting of the House that permission was given for a recording to be done of today's sitting. I have been informed that due to a technical hitch the CBC are not able to carry through with that recording, and I have decided that they will choose another day when the House is sitting.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Monday 13th March, 1989.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of this Honourable Chamber for the meeting that took place on Monday 13th March, 1989, be taken as read and confirmed.

Hon. B. M. TAITT I beg to second that.

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

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. D.A.C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a formal objection in that the Order Paper and the other papers for today's sitting were only received yesterday, mine at a quarter to ten. Other Members of the Barbados Labour Party Opposition only got the papers yesterday, and there are two substantial Bills. They may not look from the papers to be substantial in terms of the quantity, but I would think that they provide for matters which are worthy of serious consideration and debate, and in my submission, Sir, that was less than enough time for Members to be afforded a reasonable opportunity...

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas is referring to Item No. 2 on the Order Paper, the one relating to pensions. The others are just one paragraph Bills, but the larger one is the one relating to the amendment to the Pensions Bill, and it is our intention to hold this one over for the next meeting. We do not intend to do this one today.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to announce that I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statement for the Month of January, 1989, as prepared by the Accountant General.

PAPERS LAID

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Defence (Rate of Pay and Allowances) Regulations, 1989.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to amend the Explanatory Note to Head 34 - Ministry of Education and Culture, Subhead 13 - Other Institutions, Object No. 17, Subscriptions and Contributions.

Sir, the purpose of the amendment is to enable the contribution to be made to BIMAP, and we will be seeking permission with the concurrence of Honourable Members to have this done today in all its stages.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, a Bill to amend the National Insurance and Social Security Act, Cap. 47 was read a first time.

On motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, a Bill to amend the Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Act, Cap. 372 was read a first time.

On motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, a Bill to amend certain enactments relating to the payment of pensions, gratuities and other allowances, was read a first time. 12.25 p.m.

ORDERS QF THE DAY

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: At this point, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's sitting.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that.

The question that those Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 1.

Order No. 1 was called - National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Bill, 1989.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, this is a relatively simple amendment to the National Insurance and Social Security Act. The purposes of the amendment is to empower the board to hold, dispose of and charge property.

As will be recalled, Sir, the National Insurance and Social Security Programme was instituted in 1966 and it first occupied premises on the compound of the Old General Hospital. Since that time, the operations of the scheme have grown significantly and the entire Social Security Programme is a major aspect of the social and economic life of this country.

As the premises on the Old Hospital compound became inadequate, a decision was taken for new premises to be provided from which the programme might be administered and so there was a loan agreed upon between the Board and the Government for the Board to provide the Government with loan funds out of which would be constructed a Government building at Fairchild Street from which the operations of the National Insurance and Social Security Programme would be administered. That building was constructed some time during the 1970's and it must be, I believe, at least, 15 years old.

Meanwhile, the programme has expanded and the activities of the National Insurance Board have grown to the extent that there have been considerable problems, both

in terms of accommodation space, the quality of the space and the comfort of the employees under the scheme.

Many complaints have been raised from time to time about the nature of the accommodation and these have ranged from the inefficiencies of the elevators, the inadequacies of the rest rooms, the poor functioning of the airconditioning equipment, the inadequate space that is available for the comfort of the officials who work there and a variety of other complaints. Sometimes the problems have become so unbearable that there has been an interruption of work thereby affecting, in some way, the efficiency of the whole operations.

The Board has given very careful attention to all of these problems and, through very farsighted leadership, the Board has looked down the road and has indicated that for current needs and for projected growth, the best decision would be to construct new offices from which the Board could more efficiently discharge the responsibilities assigned to it under the law.

There is nothing new in the resources of the Board being allocated for purposes of accommodation or for purposes of real property. As I indicated a little while ago, the present building out of which the National Insurance and Social Security Programme is administered was put up out of the resources of the Board by way of a loan to Government and the Board currently rents space from the Government.

The Board itself, if my memory serves me correctly, also as part of its investment programmes, has made a loan to at least one other statutory body for the purposes of enabling that body to put up a headquarters building and I refer to the Insurance Corporation of Barbados. Speaking from memory, I believe, the amount that was loaned was about \$2 million. That is a figure which seems to come to mind and if it is not that figure I can get the correct figure and the funds of the Board have also been invested in other real estate activities.

The Board has a commitment to the growth and the development of the economy of this country and it is also concerned about the investment of its funds in order to ensure that, for the present, as well as for the future, there is a steady return on its investments so that out of the prospect of those investments, it would derive the income to help it to meet the demands that are being placed and will be placed in terms of its statutory responsibilities and the Board believes, therefore, that as far as its investments are concerned that it should be playing a more active role in this particular area. 12.35p.m.

There is therefore a need, arising out of the present problems encountered by the staff in the present accommodation. The Board, as part of its policies, is of the

view that it should construct a headquarters which would serve its own purposes as well as in the immediate future, provide space which might be available for rental to Government or to other bodies. I believe the Government itself may have a particular interest in renting some of that space, just as the Board now rents space from the Government.

The building will provide some 80,000 square feet of floor space of which about 45 000 square feet would be required by the staff of the National Insurance Office. The remainder would be available for rental until such time as the Board itself has need of it.

The Board has retained the Architects Selby, Rose and Mapp to design a building for them and it is proposed that that building should be on lands at Flodden which is owned by the Government. That will be the subject of further procedures.

It is estimated that the project should cost about \$15 million and the construction time might be for a period of two years. That is what has been projected.

The Board and the Government looked at the alternatives of carrying out additional construction work at the present site. That particular option would have involved alterations to the existing building by taking in some of the balconies, providing additional car park space and seeking to correct some of the problems which I identified. These may still have to be carried out or done by the Government, in order to upgrade the quality of office space in the building. When the alternatives were analyzed, it was decided that it is best for the Board to proceed with the construction of its own Headquarters, Sir.

I think one of the pleasing aspects of the development of that area of Lower Collymore Rock has been the provision of new buildings which have considerably enhanced the area as have some road works carried out during the time of the previous Government. I believe, Sir, that it is true to say that, in the stretch from the roundabout at Martindales Road and Jemmott's Lane, going up Lower Collymore Rock and specifically from the office buildings on the right up to the junction with Culloden Road, perhaps the least aesthetically appealing building on that side of the road is Government property, the Lands and Surveys Building. We will definitely take steps to upgrade that building and carry out the necessary refurbishments in order to make it in greater conformity with the surrounding buildings.

Nearby then, we propose to place the new Headquarters for the National Insurance Office and we believe that that will also upgrade the real estate and the aesthetics of that particular area.

I do not think that there can be anything controversial about this particular issue. The Board is performing statutory functions in accordance with policies agreed on by both sides of the House.

I am therefore commending this measure to this Honourable Chamber as one that is deserving of support from both sides of the House.

I therefore...

Asides

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: ... Mr. Speaker, with those words, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to second it and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question... The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the concept of a new place of accommodation for the National Insurance Board, to the best of my recollection, was settled in principle over some two years ago. So that I have no quarrel with the idea of a new Headquarters, given the circumstances which exist at the moment.

There are, however, some reservations which I must hasten to express. It is important to distinguish between the National Insurance Board lending money to another organisation for the purpose of investment in real estate and the National Insurance Board investing in real estate. For example, when the National Insurance Board lends money, whether it be to the Barbados Workers' Union for mortgages or to any of the financial institutions, or to the Government or to the ICB, that transaction does not in any way diminish or affect the liquidity of the National Insurance Board, because the Board is not in fact investing in real estate. What it is doing is providing funds. So it is not accurate to say that the Board has in the past invested in this kind of activity. As a matter of fact, when the Board lends money, whether it be to the National Bank or any financial institution, in a sense it could be financing any activity of that institution whether it be in terms of short term lending for distribution or lending for mortgages or whatever you like. 12.45 p.m.

So that this transaction is fundamentally different in character. It is not a transaction which has taken place before. That is why we have the legislation before us. The Board itself will be purchasing real estate and to that extent its liquidity would be reduced. It is important to remember that, unless your costs are right, you might end up subsidizing that building down the road to the disadvantage

of an institution. I believe that is very much the situation with the Central Bank at the moment. The cost of maintaining that Central Bank in relation, when you have to relate that to the cost of building it and the rents that it can fetch, I think the net effect is that it will have a serious impact on the profitability of the Central Bank of Barbados and that there can be no question about that.

However, Sir, I am a little bit disturbed about the projected cost of that building. We are talking about 80 000 square foot of office space for \$15 million which is just under \$200.00 a square foot, somewhere like \$187.00 a square foot or thereabouts. That is a lot of money at today's prices to be paying for office space.

I understand that, in the last 2 or 3 months or so, luxury buildings on the West Coast are being built somewhere in the region of \$175 to \$200 a square foot, \$200 a square foot - \$175 to \$200 a square foot for luxury accommodation. I am talking about the marble finishes, multiple bathrooms in a house, and the kind of thing like that and we are dealing here...

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Well, I have nothing to do with what Life of Barbados is being built at. What I am talking about is office building because I am sure that I could build an office building in Barbados at substantially less than \$100 a square foot.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: \$100 a square foot - Most of these buildings are steel framed buildings nowadays and it is possible still in Barbados to build steel framed structures at less than \$100 a square foot and I know what I am talking about. As a matter of fact, if you look at the quotations being offered now for steel framed structures in Barbados with concrete block fill and so on, those basic structures can sometimes be as low as \$60 to \$70 a square foot.

I would urge the Government to look at this investment as if it were their own individual investment, because sometimes when it comes to public spending one does not take the same kind of precautions and the same kind of cost analysis and so on as you would do in relation to your personal business. I will say that this is far too high. Anything above \$120 and \$130 a square foot, in my view, for this building I would consider to be excessive, and I will urge the Minister of Finance to review this situation. You know people quote all kinds of prices for buildings and, unless you go out there and check out these prices very carefully, you can find that you can end up paying millions of dollars more for a building than you need to pay. So that is my first concern.

Why do I express this concern? I express this concern, Sir, because the initial point I made was that to the extent that money is invested in this building to that extent the immediate liquidity of the fund is effected. In other words, you may own a building. You may own a \$300 000 or \$400 000 house, but if you are broke and you do not have any cash and you have to pay a cheque you may have a problem unless you can raise the money against the house.

Bearing in mind that it does affect the immediate liquidity of the fund one should therefore look and make sure that that liquidity is at an effective minimum. That is the first point and, therefore, you should try to build at a reasonable cost. I do not see anybody out there in the private sector building a 80 000 square foot building for \$15 million. There are a lot of other considerations. There are a lot of other organisations in Barbados that have built at considerable cost and for the same kind of reasons, in my view, that you find those buildings being built at high cost in Government as well. So be careful how you are making comparisons with various institutions that have built at very high cost in Barbados.

So long as you get into the area of renting, when you think of renting property, for that rental to be realistic it has to relate to the capital cost of the building. If I am correct, I believe that the Prime Minister did mention that the National Insurance Board would need about 40,000 square feet immediately or thereabouts which means that, with 40,000 square feet for rental, if you prorate that against \$15 million, you are talking about having 40,000 square feet at a cost of \$7.5 million for rental and if that rental is going to be an economic rental, we are talking of an annual return of somewhere in the region of 13% on \$7.5 million. You will immediately realize that you will have to be generating rents of well over \$³/₄ million, almost about \$800,000 to \$900,000 a year in order for half of that rented space to be at an economic rent. If you build to rent in the context of Barbados today, when you take all the costs down the road, the return on your investment should certainly be not less than 10% and more like 13% in today's world. You are thinking then, at this cost, of being able to rent the remaining 40 000 square feet for about \$800 000 to \$900 000 a year. If you do not do that, you are going to find that the National Insurance Board as the landlord will be called upon to continually subsidize the building and subsidize the space occupied by others, or you may find yourself in the ridiculous situation where there are people now occupying the Central Bank and the rates at the Central Bank are in competition with buildings on Collymore Rock built for \$5 million. 12.55 p.m.

Persons who booked space in buildings in Collymore Rock, buildings built for \$5 million, were able to go into the Central Bank at the same price. Apart from the distortions in the market which that created, of course there will be other problems.

I believe that the Government has a duty to look at the cost of that building again for the two reasons which I mentioned. One, the impact on the liquidity of the National Insurance funds, and, secondly, so as to ensure that the National Insurance Board is not called upon to subsidize the rental space for other people, to build at a cost that is realistic. I believe that you should be able to come in somewhere between \$120 and \$130 a square foot for office building. This is moreso when you are building a large amount of space. If you are building 8 000 square feet, the cost for building that should be significantly higher than if you are building 80 000 square feet because of the various overhead costs.

When you are building office space where the thing is largely open and then you will probably have dividers and so on within the building with a few bathrooms and so on, office and factory space is literally the simplest form of construction you could think about. It is not like a complicated house or an apartment, those buildings should be far more expensive than any kind of office space. A hotel, for example, should be a far more expensive building to build than office space, and anyone who is building office space in Barbados today would know that that is a fact and is part of the real world out there.

I hope that, whereas we have no objection in principle, certainly I had none when the matter came to my attention, and as a matter of fact I sought to encourage it, nevertheless, at the back of my mind, at all times, was that any time any proposal came one would want to look very carefully at the cost involved. I believe that we are building in Barbados in many instances at far too high a cost, and some of the most attractive buildings in Barbados will cost substantially less than some of the uglier ones.

As a matter of fact, on the same Lower Collymore Rock, easily the most attractive building is the one that was built at the lower cost and built afterwards, even including the hurried cost of bulldozing the area beforehand, and that is why I have no quarrel with the architects, because I believe that if you can get a building similar to the one I am referring to, with that kind of finish and that kind of touch that harmonises so well with the present and historic environment of Barbados, that that could be very good indeed.

Asides.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Delaware is due for some refurbishing in due course and we hope to capture the same kind of image as the particular building, which really is a pleasant building on Lower Collymore Rock. I am also attracted to the new Mobil building as you go into the Hilton. It is a very attractive building and I hope that the facade of the building will reflect something with that kind of atmosphere around it.

There are one or two other points I should like to make, I believe that the opportunity should have been taken at this time to recognise that the National Insurance Board is now a major financial institution, and with assets, certainly at the end of December last year, in excess of \$450 million, I think the time has come when that institution should be cut loose totally from the Public Service of Barbados. I think the initial reasons, part of it, were expressed at an earlier stage in terms of accommodation and in terms of reducing the overheads of the National Insurance Board in the early stages when there was that particular relationship between the National Insurance Board and the Public Service.

I think that time has come to an end. I believe it is important that one should recognise that this is a major financial institution, that it should be cut loose from the Public Service, that it should be allowed to develop a personality of its own like other major financial institutions in Barbados. I believe that it will ultimately lead to better administration and more professionalism within the National Insurance structure of Barbados, because the major decisions taken in the National Insurance Scheme are of a financial nature, although of course there is also a significant social component in terms of the payments out of the scheme. It is absolutely important that that umbilical cord that still links it to the Public Service should be severed.

I say this, Sir, because we know the kinds of problems which have developed in terms of the administration of the National Insurance Scheme over the years, and one of the problems has been the fact that that experience in money handling, experience in accounting, the whole range of skills that relate to financial institutions, have never been properly developed from top to bottom within the National Insurance system. I believe that some efforts have been made in the past few years to improve on these areas, but I think that if it is regarded as a financial institution, which it should be, in that way you will be able to develop that kind of expertise which is essential down the road for the proper management of the National Insurance Scheme.

I do not need to go through the kind of horrors that existed in the National Insurance Scheme and the extent to which they still exist, but I believe that there has been significant improvement over the past three years. Nevertheless, there are still many outstanding problems which I think can only be overcome. In a situation when someone goes for a job to the National Insurance Board, it is like going for a job at a financial institution, which will then have the dual aspect of one, the integrity of the institution, and two, providing a public service, which is what I come to now. I believe that, certainly from the number of calls that one would get as a representative from time to time over problems in relation to the national insurance scheme, sometimes from people who are unsure of the benefits which they can get or which they are entitled

to, sometimes from people who have lived abroad and they have problems in getting a determination as to whether they are entitled to an old age pension and so on, the time may have come when some special attention should be paid towards having a section within the National Insurance Building where people can have these problems dealt with. So often they are given the wrong advice by the persons who have interviewed them. So I do not know whether it is a question of a lack of training or a lack of awareness of the rights of people under the scheme. Not infrequently, as a representative, one has to intervene and ask someone at a higher level in the organisation to check out and see what are the entitlements of people, and sometimes the Office is correct, while at other times you find that people have been told that they are not entitled to a benefit to which they are entitled. This kind of thing can cause considerable trauma among people. 1.05p.m.

It would seem to me that there needs to be a department set up within the National Insurance Scheme to deal with queries of that nature, the rights and entitlement of people under the scheme and to make sure that up front they are given the right advice. It is very important because, only recently I had a case of someone who had left Barbados some time ago and came back and was told that they were not entitled to a particular benefit. It was checked out and they are entitled to the benefit. It creates a problem for people like myself because, unless you are a lawyer and are particularly familiar with the National Insurance Act and the various implications and the various amendments and what not, you find yourself in a difficult position as a Member of Parliament advising a particular person. I believe that they need one or two highly trained people who are fully aware of all the implications to deal with these people who are often elderly people, and also to make sure that a proper explanation is given to them when they are not entitled to a particular benefit. Otherwise there are many people out there who would continue for the rest of their lives believing that they have been unlawfully deprived of a benefit to which they are entitled. That is one particular area within the scheme which I think needs improvement and that will do a lot in terms of giving a better service and satisfaction to the people of Barbados.

I am also a little concerned about the cash management of the National Insurance Scheme. As you know, in the past there have been some very serious problems having lots of cash lying around in vaults, sometimes millions of dollars, in the National Insurance Building or wherever the vaults are. I do not know whether this still obtains. I think steps were taken to put an end to that. Sometimes cheques were lying inside there for months or a year until the cheques were stale-dated which created the environment for all kinds of infelicities, plus of course depriving the <>

National Insurance Board of valuable revenue at the same time. I know that some steps were taken to try to reduce the incidence of this problem, but, from what I can see here in the accounts, it seems to me however, that there is still an inordinate amount of cash lying around, cash that is not invested either probably in the forms of cash itself or in the form of current accounts with banks and so on.

I believe that, for a more effective and more efficient management of the National Insurance Scheme, some effort should be made for an improved management of the cash situation within that scheme, which is something completely different of course from the investment portfolio on which I shall make one or two comments. There is certainly room for improvement in terms of cash management where you can see, for example, substantial amounts of cash being around at critical times according to the reports that I see before me here.

The investment profile of the National Insurance Scheme is something that we have to be very careful about. It would seem to me that where you have a situation where over 50 per cent of the proceeds over the years of National Insurance collections are tied up in Government instruments and become a very critical part of Government financing historically, remember that that money has been spent already, it is very necessary to ensure that the fund has some chance of viability outside of Government's operations. I do not particularly like the idea of the funds being fundamentally an insurance scheme being highly dependent for its survival down the road on the quality of financial management that a Government evinces over time. You are talking about roughly half the assets of the National Insurance Board being tied up in Government securities on virtually a permanent basis. They would hardly ever be redeemed. Government will continue to run deficits of one order or another and it is highly unlikely that those investments will ever be redeemed. They may be earning investments, but the point is that they depend entirely on the integrity of Government management of its fiscal affairs, and as has happened in a whole lot of other countries, the pressure on your National Insurance Scheme can be triggered as a consequence of unfortunate developments in Government's fiscal affairs. An insurance scheme should be, as far as possible, independent of that kind of change in the fortunes of Government. One has to bear this in mind when you are dealing with investments within the National Insurance Scheme, and also bear in mind that demands on the National Insurance Scheme will rise considerably in the years ahead. That relates to the fact that the basis of contribution to the National Insurance Scheme was substantially increased some years ago and there will be corresponding sharp increases in payments to be made down the road. 1.15p.m.

However, that is an actuarial problem.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Up to \$2 600. The payment that individuals can make into the National Insurance Scheme. That was substantially increased. I think that self-employed can pay National Insurance up to \$2 600 a month. It has gone on for a few years now so it means that probably in 5, 7, 8, 9, 10 years people would be getting payments from the National Insurance Scheme far in excess of what they would have got before they would have made the corresponding higher level of contribution. One has to bear in mind that about half of your portfolio is linked to Government operations and the other half, as you look through here, you will see are investments in relatively low yield instruments. That will vary from time to time. Certainly, in terms of deposits with the commercial banks and in terms of what returns that you get on Treasury Bills today, that, clearly, cannot compare to what it was 5 or 6 years ago. You are caught in a situation where you have those investments over a prolonged period yielding far lower rates of return - as a matter of fact, probably, just a little more than the rate of inflation in the country in terms of what you will get.

I do not know what is the average amount that the National Insurance Board would be getting now on deposits with the commercial banks but it cannot be that much more than 3% or 4% although they can negotiate and can get higher rates of return than the other depositors because of the large sums that they have available and because, of course, the funds form an integral part of the banking structure as well.

It is very important to remember that since those funds have been lent to the banking system over the past 15 years or so they now form an integral part of the banking system. As a matter of fact, for certain financial institutions in Barbados, there was a time in their existence where they depended very much on National Insurance deposits for comfort and, certainly, to meet their clients' needs.

These general remarks, Mr. Speaker, have centred around (1) not objecting in principle to the National Insurance Board owning its own building at this point in time, given the circumstances, (2) my feeling that every effort should be made to try to get a building that is at market price and at the most reasonable cost that can be obtained - as I said, I thought that any figure approaching nearly \$200 a square foot for office building I consider higher than it should be and (3) bearing in mind that real estate investment is not the primary object of the National Insurance Scheme, and like with all other financial institutions, that is why you very seldom see banks, even the financial institutions in Barbados or anywhere in the world, own their own real estate and for the very good reason that real estate is not their business and any time

you see them buy real estate, they buy real estate often for another reason, not relating to their banking business.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I would not go into those but if you look around very carefully, you would sometimes wonder why banks always rent buildings and very seldom you see them buy buildings until they have been in a place for a very long time. The reason for that is that they never want to compromise the liquidity of their operations as a matter of safety plus other reasons.

Those are the main points that I have to make and one would hope that, on another occasion, one would be able to give this party's views of ways in which a higher return on investments can be obtained for the National Insurance funds whilst at the same time focussing critically on key areas of development in the national economy. But this is not the time or the place. It may well be in another document at a more appropriate time. That is my suspicion. This is not the time or the place.

It is important, Sir, that, before I conclude my speech, I should let you know that the NDP has specific views on how it can maintain over time higher average yields on investment that are equally safe whilst, at the same time, making a major contribution to at least two segments of the national economy.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker,

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party is in support of the decision to enhance the physical surroundings for the National Insurance Scheme workers by building a new building which will accommodate staff and provide commodious and congenial surroundings in which they can work.

From time to time I have been into the offices out there at Fairchild Street doing Severance Payment matters and the fact of overcrowding is evident and I do not think anyone has to make a case for better accommodation for the staff in that department.

The department has outgrown over 22 years the physical accommodation which was originally conceptualized and designed for the staff. This is a matter of necessary progression in terms of the provision of physical accommodation to suit the requirements of the staff and the department to make it even more efficient. I cannot say with any conviction that the National Insurance Department is not an efficient department of Government.

Every department of Government will have problems but I am satisfied from all that I have known of the National Insurance Department, both when I was in Cabinet for a year and I used to see Cabinet papers, and from what I

know through private practice or constituency representation matters, that by and large the Department is and has been well run.

I believe it has been so well run - and it is an institution of which Barbadians can be proud - that frequently people from other countries in the Caribbean particularly come here on attachment to examine our system and to borrow from our system for the enhancement of their own systems. We are a model for small developing Third World countries, It is something of which all Barbadians can be proud. 1.25p.m.

I say, Sir, that all the departments of Government from time to time will have problems. It seems to me, Sir, that the biggest problem in the National Insurance Department is the question of compliance by employers with the requirements of the law. Now this matter is very...

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have asked someone to see if they can cut it out.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I will continue to speak, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: You will continue.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Yes, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Continue.

Asides.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, the question of compliance or non compliance becomes stark when...

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Nobody can hear me. Sorry. Yes, Sir, I was saying that what I perceive...

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: You cannot hear up there. The Shorthand Writers.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: It seems to be only temporary.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, if I come back to the point.

Laughter.

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He does not seem to be a supporter of the Labour Party.

Laughter.

Asides.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: He does not want me to talk.

Laughter.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Apparently, it is downstairs.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Downstairs.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. I have asked someone to check it out for me.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, the big problem that we see with the operation of the National Insurance Scheme, as I was saying, Sir, is the question of compliance with the law and the Regulations. The problem becomes very clear when an employee loses his job or is out of work for one reason or another.

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Or indeed, retires. When he ceases, for whatever reason, to work, and he makes a claim on the National Insurance Fund...

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: ...in good faith in the belief that over the years, the employer had been paying up the contributions to the Fund. Then when he tries to get his benefits, it is found that there has been delinquency on the part of the employer who has been deducting, in some cases, the employee's contribution but never paid it in.

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: The poor employee is left without benefit and without much recourse.

I have come across these. You get them like every week, Sir. I recently had to write to one employer about one, a gardener working for one of these west coast tycoons who have local people managing their property. After two-and-a-half years, I think it was or-maybe more, it might have been three years, the employee was terminated because he and the lady who was the property Manageress could not get on. When he went to claim his Unemployment Benefit it was found that there had been no contributions made on his behalf for the time he had been

working for this lady. So he is out of a job and cannot get Unemployment Benefit through no fault of his own. Now I say that I think this is the area that causes the greatest problems and bears most hardship on unfortunate employees.

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Indeed my friend from St. Peter says that it causes a lot of confusion also.

Perhaps we could hear from the Minister of Finance what plans or schemes the Government has to ensure that there is greater compliance.

Now I know, for example, there are inspectors who come around. They come to your Chambers, they come to offices and you might owe them six months and you have to pay them. That is one way of doing it. I think that we need something more sophisticated and systematic.

Whether it can be computerized, I am not sure if the system is fully computerized, but perhaps the computerization of the system where you can just punch in and get information would speed up this problem and ensure better compliance.

There will always be delinquency, some deliberate, some unwitting. Some people do not remember. Some people are not organized for the necessary deductions to be taken out, the forms signed and so on sent in. We need to move to a more sophisticated system.

So I hope the Minister would tell the House.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition did criticize the system in the sense that he has found it a very complex system which is not easily intelligible to the average person. That is true, Sir. The Regulations, the language of the Regulations, the various bits and pieces of the parent legislation that go together to make up the law surrounding the operation of the NIS Scheme are all very difficult and complex areas. But I would commend to every Member of the House...

Aside.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Well, you said it may provide a field day for the lawyers. It is not true. There are not many cases that reach the court.

I would commend to the House, Sir, this document that was published by the National Insurance Department last year in celebration of its 21st Anniversary. All of us did not get copies, Sir. I hope the Director of National Insurance, as a public service, would ensure that every Member of Parliament - House and Senate - gets a copy of this. Because every day, people come into your offices or

Chambers and ask you about some problem. To go through all the Regulations and come up with the answer would itself take a week and also to find the Regulations because they are always amended and there are lots of changes and so forth. This booklet simplifies the matter very easily and covers every aspect of the National Insurance Scheme and it is in language that is intelligible to everybody.

So I do really recommend that the department makes sure that all of us in public life who have, from time to time, to answer the questions of constituents and others about these problems, get one of these booklets. I do not think then that we would have the great difficulty. I must say, Sir, that when I have a problem that is not easily solvable and I call the Department, I get very good assistance from the Officers in the National Insurance Department in whatever branch. I find that they are responsive and that they have the answers and you are never put off and given the run around. I must compliment the Officers in the Department for that, Sir, and that is an advance on many other Departments where you cannot get information out of them. But in the NIS Department I say, Sir, my experience has been one of tremendous knowledge on the part of the Officers who have to answer the queries and a ready dissemination of the knowledge. So I cannot complain at that level, Sir. 1.35p.m.

Now Sir, the Central Bank Economic and Financial Statistics for December 1988 reveal that in September - let us start with January. In January 1988, the Unemployment Benefit Scheme borrowed \$3,500,000 and in September \$2 million and in October \$1 million. It is on page 45, Sir, of the report. It would be helpful and in the best spirit of open Government if the Honourable Prime Minister could tell us where the funds were borrowed from and why there was the need to borrow in those 3 months of 1988, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: But my attention is also drawn, Sir, to the first column under Severance Payments Scheme entitled "Contributions" and the figures themselves raise some interesting questions. In 1988 in the month of October the contributions to the Severance Payments Fund were only \$42,000 whereas in the month of September, the month immediately preceding that, they were as high as \$177,000. I do not understand it. The year before 1987 for the equivalent month, in September the scheme took \$170,000, and in October \$141,000. I do not know if the \$42,000 that is shown here is a typographical error for \$142,000 or there is some genuine slump. But it is significant that when it showed \$42,000 the scheme borrowed \$1 million. In October, the scheme borrowed \$1

million when this column is showing only \$42,000 in contributions.

These levels of contributions, Sir, I think tend to enhance the point that I was making that there is a problem with registration and compliance. If Government's information is accurate that there have been more people employed in the work force every year, even though the percentage may not drop dramatically but more people are working, there should be a correlative and commensurate increase in the level of contributions to the Unemployment Benefit Scheme. We are not finding that and it is an anomaly that perhaps the Minister of Finance can explain, Sir, and I hope he can explain.

Sir, there are 2 other points that we wish to make in a general way to this debate and they are these, Sir. During the period of the Barbados Labour Party Government it had been agreed that an expert will be brought in from overseas, I think through ILO, to do a complete review and actuarial study of the scheme and make recommendations. We have heard nothing of any significance as to the work of this expert although it is known that he has been in Barbados. He has been functioning. I believe, Sir, that it is correct to say that a report has been submitted to Government and presumably the opinions and the input of the National Insurance Department would have been also solicited and rendered to Government. I think that in an area as vital as the National Insurance Scheme which is a contributor in itself to social and economic stability, from time to time Government has a duty to let the public know the full facts. In this regard the present Prime Minister in 1987, September I think it was, did give the House an update as to the position of the Unemployment Benefit Scheme and so on and that was very proper, Sir. Since then we have heard nothing more and I should be grateful if the Minister in his reply could tell us in what direction the report was pointing and in which direction Government itself is likely to go. If they have not reached the stage where anything has been firmed up - fine. Just say that we have not completed our review of the report or whatever. But I think that, as we are looking at it today, some mention should be made for the public's benefit as to what type of recommendations there were and what sorts of options Government intends to pursue.

I sa> that, Sir, because early this year, by Ministerial Order, the Minister responsible for National Insurance changed in a fundamental way the right to unemployment benefit. Very few people saw what happened, or knew or understood what has happened. I am not saying that it was sneaked through. The regulations were amended by Ministerial Order and the effect of the amendment is that persons who are employed in seasonal work particularly can now find themselves at a great disadvantage in terms of their right to unemployment benefit. The structure - we were hoping to debate this during the Estimates but we did not get to it - the basis upon which persons can claim their

seasonal work has been changed, and I think, Sir, that it behoves the Minister to make a clear statement today to allay any public fear or disquiet that there might be. If there is none at the moment, I wish to predict that after the crop there will be severe social concern among those workers who complete the crop and who cannot start a new job for a period of time that they may be disentitled. I am not saying that everyone will. They may be disentitled to Unemployment Benefits. 1.45p.m.

I think the regulations were published on 16th January this year. I have not brought the Gazette, but the Minister who signed the amendment will know. It is a serious matter, Sir, and we want some indication from the Government as to why this fundamental change affecting the right to unemployment benefit on seasonal work, the method of calculation, has been changed.

Those are the only concerns that I have with the operation of the Scheme, and I should like some answers from the Minister.

I am much obliged, Sir.

Mr. C. L. TROTMAN: Mr. Speaker, I would wish to support this Resolution, but I would like as well to take the opportunity to make some observations regarding the subject so that my own position might be made very clear.

I think it is reasonable to say that the extra space which is envisaged as a result of the building of the new structure would be very welcome. Whereas one would accept the suggestion that is made that one has to exercise some degree of care in the economies that are involved, and I would not gainsay the point there, I think it is fair to say that there has been for some time now a recognition that there have been very cramped circumstances obtaining in the offices of the National Insurance building, and generally obtaining for the staff of the National Insurance Board.

The result that this has had, the result that we have been made to recognise that it has had, is in causing persons to work other than with the efficiency which we would expect from them, to make it sometimes difficult to be able to find the records and therefore to make it particularly difficult for the National Insurance Board to do the work that it was engaged to do and that we expect from it.

One would expect, Mr. Speaker, that with the setting down of a new building and with the finalisation of the plans which have been in place for the setting up of computerisation, there would be very much easier handling of claims. I believe that all working people in Barbados, and indeed employers as well, would look forward to the day when claims would be handled much more expeditiously without the difficulties which currently exist. This will be particularly true, Mr. Speaker, for persons who

are ill or who are injured, because, as no doubt you are aware, a person needs money most when that person is on injury leave or sick leave, but, partly because of a difficulty regarding the physical dimensions, the space problems, and partly for other reasons, we unfortunately in Barbados have the regrettable situation obtaining where persons make claims for sick leave, injury benefits, unemployment benefits and sometimes for severance payment from the fund, only to find that months elapse before they are able to get the claims that are properly theirs. I look forward to the day, Mr. Speaker, when this matter will be corrected and where persons will be able to have their claims much more judiciously and expeditiously handled.

It is my view that the National Insurance Board has done a tremendous job over the years, and the fact that working without very much to copy from for more than 21 years Barbados has been able to do as well as it has done is in no small measure a tribute to the great work which the Board has done, the management has done generally, and the staff as a whole has been able to accomplish over the time, even within these cramped circumstances. Generally one would have to say that the staff is very helpful and that when one wants to get information it is very often quite forthcoming.

Notwithstanding that though, Mr. Speaker, there are still some areas of concern that one would need to recognise. One of those areas has to do with the problem raised by the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, the problem that results from a person contributing to the employer for on-sending to the National Insurance Board in good measure his or her contributions from Darnings. In fact, the worker has no say in this matter, the deductions are properly made at source, and one expects that those contributions would be on-sent to National Insurance. We are finding, regrettably, that in too many instances these have either not gone at all, or they have gone in such a manner as to cause distress and difficulties, even though the National Insurance Board, if a *bona fide* case has been made out that the person is contributing, may still honour the claim that is made.

What though, Mr. Speaker, is of even greater concern for me and for a number of people, I am sure, is that there seems to be an increasing number of employers who seem to be bent on the approach that claims that people who are in their employment are not employed by them as owners or managers of establishments, but are self-employed individuals. It seems to me that this effort to make people work under contracts for service rather than under contracts of service is a new ruse which is being used in greater measure today as a means of having employers escape their obligation not merely to pay National Insurance contributions, but to have their general commitment and responsibility towards their work force when the time arrives later on for payments of benefits of one kind or another, or when the occasion may arise for those persons

to make claims against their employer in the event that the persons lose their jobs through no fault of their own. It seems to me, Sir, that we will have to be careful to make the point that one may not of one's own free will wake up on any morning and determine that John Brown is no longer employed by us as individuals, but is now a self-employed person.

I would hope that this practice would be discontinued as a matter of expedition and that employers generally who are prone to that particular exercise will recognise the lack of merit in it and, in fact, the dishonesty that is involved in it. One gets the impression that, in such measures when National Insurance is made aware, there needs to be some kind of teeth that the management may have under the law to allow it to prosecute and to take the appropriate steps to protect the interest of the work force.

The National Insurance Board, Mr. Speaker, deals in one measure or another with three areas of some concern. Generally, it deals with the matter of social security, then it has a role to play in the collection and the payment of unemployment benefits as well as in the handling of claims and generally the processing of severance payments claims. It is clear that in these three areas it has a tremendous responsibility for looking after the social wellbeing of our people.

I am concerned that, within one of these, within the severance payments aspect of it, we are in a position where we have to move towards correcting a problem which in my view is in dire need of correction. 1.55p.m.

We have had some concern over many months now over the length of time that an individual has to remain unemployed before he can make a claim for unemployment benefits. The position of 13 weeks consecutively or 16 weeks in any 26 week period of which 12 must be consecutive has been a position which is recognised as being burdensome and imposing some degree of problems on the individual worker. I would wish to suggest that the time is now for the Government to note its commitment towards looking at that piece of legislation and to reducing the time that a person has to remain on lay off in keeping with the manifesto pledge of the Democratic Labour Party.

The long lay offs especially in situations where it has been recognised that workers generally are seen as the first area of defence will continue to cause problems. It is true that some employers may endeavour to keep workers on and to restructure their work force or their work arrangement in such a way as to bring the least amount of pain to the worker. But a wage earner by and large has nothing else, Mr. Speaker, to rely on but his wages, and, therefore, we find ourselves, the worker finds himself in a situation where if the employer decides that every time the clouds hide the sun and it seems as though rain is set up,

that the employer is going to send off that worker on lay off, then he has to be in a position where he does not have to wait for as long as the 13 weeks that are currently under the provisions. That may not be even so bad if it is generally understood that at the end of it he might in fact be able to claim for severance and take his chances to find employment elsewhere. The problem generally is where after a long lay off period he is re-engaged for a while and then finds that he has to face the problem all over again. I think it would be wise and expedient for us to look again at that situation and to endeavour to make sure that we do not find the worker in a position where he is not as well off as he had hoped to be as a result of our commitments to him on another occasion.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that, with those comments, I am better able to support the Bill and merely hope that if there is a problem other than the one I understood regarding calculations of seasonal work and of the payments to persons, we should be able to look at it and have it corrected. We always understood that an effort was being made to make the claim easier, but I did not understand and I do hope that there is some error and that nobody is disadvantaged as a result of the order which has been referred to earlier.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 3 o'clock p.m. today.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.

ON RESUMPTION Mr.

SPEAKER: This sitting is resumed.

Dr. E. A. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill, and I only want to make a few comments with respect to some comments that were made. I, like many of the honourable Members of this Honourable Chamber, have sometimes more than a passing interest in the area of construction, and it was interesting to hear some of the comments made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition on the NDP side. I know that he did it out of concern for the Government and the people of Barbados, but I question some of the statements that he made. For example, he said that he knows that he could build \$90 to \$100 per square foot office buildings. That may be true if you are building an office in an industrial estate. We are talking about providing office space for Civil Servants in this country. I challenge the Honourable Leader of the Opposition to bring from any reputable firm in this country

a figure of less than \$140 or \$150 per square foot to build office buildings in this country. As a matter of fact, I want to remind him that the Central Bank building was built for over \$450 per square foot. We are talking about a market value and that building was built over four years ago. We are talking about providing proper facilities for the civil servants of this country. We should never feel that the civil servants of this country who provide a valuable service to this country should not be provided with proper facilities.

I also heard him make the statement that the higher up you go with a building the cheaper it becomes. Whenever you quote in any country for a building, whether it be an office building or a house, you quote per square foot, and the value per square foot is the same if you are building one floor, two floors, three floors, or four floors. That is standard procedure. If the market value is \$90 per square foot, let us say, for building a house, if you are building a four storey house it is still \$90 per square foot. So going up higher does not reduce the cost of the house. That is a misconception of people who do not understand construction. Now normally in construction what happens is

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I really do not think it is in order to misrepresent so blatantly what another Member has said. What I said was that the larger the space, particularly in respect of an office building, then the unit price per square foot will be less because your overheads, your infrastructural costs and so on should be less. That is what I said, the larger the space. I never spoke of going up or otherwise.

Dr. E. A. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I still disagree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. When you are building a building, the unit price per square foot does not change because of the size of the building. If you are building in an industrial area where you are putting up walls, where the renter or whoever takes over the building will go in and put in the infrastructure, that is true. If you are building an office building where you are having central air-conditioning, each floor has to have air-conditioning, each floor has to have its toilet facilities, and I would imagine that if Government is building for the use of civil servants, the finishes of all the buildings are essentially the same. Therefore the unit price cannot change. I have more than a passing knowledge of construction, so I can speak from a position of authority when I talk about this.

Sir, we must not give the impression that to spend \$15 million on a building for civil servants is over-spending. We have to look at what is happening in the market place in terms of building. The Government of Barbados, the people of Barbados have had the experience where they have gone to tender in buildings like this, take the Post Office, and allowed contractors to come in under the market value and then found themselves with a case in court where we had to come back to Parliament and pay the people money. What I

think should be done is this: that when a contract is signed by the contractor that provision should be put in that contract that if the ending date is, let us say, 1st January, that the contractor deliver the building on 1st January and that thereafter as is done in private enterprise, there is a penalty on the contractor for lasting too long. 3.05 p.m.

But you have situations where contractors for Government can come back after and claim all kinds of things when in the contract itself they are putting liberal clauses, like you know, *the force majeure*, or the acts of God, which provide for the contractor to have extended time provided there is flooding, etc. So do not let us come and give the impression that it is so simple and that the market price out there is so cheap.

We know that the building price out there is not what you want to make it out to be and if we are going to provide facilities for our public servants, they have to be good facilities and in today's world you have 10 pay for the facilities. But, as I said, I know that your concern is that maybe we should try to shave it down a little bit and all of us share that concern that we need to look at the contract and make sure that the contracts are well within the limits of what they should be but we must not go to extremes and try to give the impression that the contract is \$187.50 a square foot. You should not give the impression that that kind of building could be built for \$90 to \$100 a square foot because we know it cannot be done.

I want to move on just to a couple more points, Mr. Speaker. I want to agree with what the Honourable Member for St. Thomas said about employers who sever workers and after having not paid their National Insurance funds and then these workers find themselves in difficulty. I want to tell him that we must say it as it is. It is not only people who come from overseas who do this, but we must discourage Barbadians from taking out the workers' National Insurance money and not paying it into the fund and then the National Insurance finds itself in a very difficult position having to pay these people and waiting on the blessings of some of the people who employ all those Barbadians.

There is only one other point I wish to make. It has to do with the requirement on the National Insurance Form for a diagnosis when a doctor fills out a Sickness Benefit Form and I feel that Government needs to look at this very carefully.

It is a matter of integrity of the doctor himself because the doctor finds himself caught in a very difficult situation where your medical ethics tell you that the diagnosis of a patient is confidential between the doctor and the patient and should not be revealed to a third person except with the written consent of the patient but the National Insurance form calls for a diagnosis and this has led to the practice where doctors will write anything on a National Insurance

form because it is unfair to a patient to put down confidential information on the patient's form not only because in a small country it would be unethical to reveal certain diagnoses and, indeed, any diagnosis at all. It leaves the doctor in a very difficult position because * he is supposed to fill out the form where the Government has asked him to reveal the diagnosis and, on the other hand, in his conscience, he cannot write down a truthful diagnosis on the form because it is against his ethics which brings me to another point that sometimes you will see in the newspapers that the National Insurance says that there is an outbreak of influenza as the certificates present to the National Insurance Office. If for one month a few doctors decide that they are going to write down influenza on everybody's form because they are not going to reveal the true diagnosis, the National Insurance might find that the information that they are giving to the public is really the wrong information because what is actually happening is that doctors are not revealing the true nature of the illness to the National Insurance Office.

I am saying that I am one of the people who will write down a diagnosis which has nothing to do with the patient because I think it is unethical.

Let us say, for example, a patient came to a doctor and he had a diagnosis like syphilis or AIDS. Would a doctor be in his right sense to write that kind of diagnosis on the form? I think that we need to look at this in a broad outline.

It goes to another point where there are employers who feel that it is their right to call up the doctor since the doctor has revealed the diagnosis to the National Insurance to ask questions about their employees. I think we need to look at that section of the National Insurance form again to see if we cannot use a broader base of diagnosis in order to obviate the kind of problem that we have.

I have no doubt that our Government will be looking at these factors and I have no doubt that the Members of the Opposition will recognise that when we spend \$15 milliort in providing facilities for the Government Service to work in that that money is very well spent.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak for a very short while on the queries raised by the Leader of the Opposition on the necessity for Government to be very careful on the expenditure associated with this building.

I too share his concern in that, as he so rightly said, the occupation by the NIS of the building and the construction of the building out of their funds, certainly,

would have something to do with their cash flow but in a short look at the returns from this investment, I think the Leader of the Opposition would agree with me that it is a good investment.

The capitalisation will show that the present situation on the projection is about \$187.50 a square foot of floor area. Whether or not you can build it slightly cheaper is a matter for contention but when I did an analysis even at \$187.50 a square foot and you did an analysis as an investment for the 40 000 square feet, I am certain the Leader of the Opposition would agree with me that it is a good wager for the 40 000 square feet.

An analysis would show that at the moment office space is going between \$20 and \$24 per square foot and this is a reasonable office space and this is about medium. Some is going higher and some is going lower so if you take the bottom figure of \$20 per square foot per annum any calculation would show me very quickly that that would bring an annual rental of about \$800 000 and if you took a void situation of 10% void in your rental leaving you with \$720 000 on the expenditure of \$7.5 million that is a return of about 9.6%.

If you go further and you do an outgoing of 25% which would accommodate maintenance, insurance and that kind of normal outgoings on a building, that would reduce a return on that money to 7.2% at the lower end and you would have a 7.2% return per rental against an appreciated asset which would be the physical building.

If you took the upper level of \$24 per square foot per annum, you would find that with a 10% void meaning any time you average a 10% of the office would not be taken, you would have a return of about \$834 000 a year which gives you a return of money of about 11.25%.

If you go further and you should do a further analysis and you have a 25% for outgoing for insurance, maintenance, etc., you would still end up with a return of 8.43% on that money so I am saying that if you take it at the lower level of investment of \$20 per square foot per year, taking 10% voids, and 35% outgoing you would still have a 7.2% return on money and if you go up scale at \$24 with the same 10% void and 25% outgoing you have a 3.3% return of money which, in my opinion, the NIS will find ver> difficult to get a different return on any money that they invest any place. 3.15 p.m.

As a backdrop to this you have further advantage in that you have appreciation assets in the building.

I am certain when you do a detailed analysis that you would agree with me that money spent by the National Insurance Department in this type of venture is not only good because it provides accommodation for people, but

the additional space would bring a return on the capital higher than you would get even if they do a fixed account, plus the fact that they would have appreciation assets in the building which would go down the road.

I think the analysis done in deciding to do this kind of construction is a very good analysis and I think that the NIS and its directorate should be praised for having made the decision and having the foresight for going in for this type of investment which could only redound to the comfort of the people, a safe return on their money and appreciation of assets.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. L. L. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to support this Bill, based on the fact of my satisfaction that a project that has been pioneered by the Democratic Labour Party has reached a stage where we can consider it feasible for it to embark on such an enterprise.

It was the Democratic Labour Party who had to sell this National Insurance and Social Security programme to the people of this country. As a person myself, occupied at that stage in the field of industrial insurance, I knew the impact that this particular scheme had.

I am sure therefore, Sir, that like all Honourable Members who have spoken so far who have shown no disagreement to the concept that is before us today, I am very happy to support this Bill.

Like the Honourable Member for St. Thomas, Sir, I am very much concerned of the incidence of persons who have been working for a period and who have, at the end of that period, not been able to get the benefits which have accrued to them, based on the fact that employers have not paid in the contributions to the National Insurance Fund. However, as one who had been related to this programme at the level of taking the contributions out of workers' salaries, I recognize that it was since 1976 that the system of determining the level of contributions has been changed from a dollar figure to a percentage figure. I think that this is where the problem with the payment of funds to the National Insurance Scheme started. Where, instead of having the card and the relevant stamps affixed to the card, you now have a situation where National Insurance is a percentage of the payroll. I think that a lot of employers have been able to get away with the non-payment of funds to the National Insurance Board as a result of that.

One understands quite clearly that it may be very difficult now to revert to the stamp system. But very careful analysis must be taken of the solution to the problems which we now face with employers who are not meeting their responsibilities to the people from whom they deduct contributions, purely because they are claiming that they are unable to pay their portion of the contribution and are

not paying in the contributions that have been deducted. I believe that something must be done to protect the workers from this kind of situation.

We have, Sir, to understand that the people who are employed in the lower echelons have little to look back on, if they are disabled in any way, if they are incapacitated in any way, but a National Insurance Scheme which provides a benefit for a period that they may not suffer undue hardship. We cannot afford to allow the situation to continue much longer without some kind of redress where employers are not meeting their responsibilities to the people from whom they make these deductions.

I did not intend, Sir, to speak on this particular matter, but having listened to all the persons who have spoken so far, there was no point in my view made as regards what I think is the pertinent point at which the departure came. One has to accept the responsibility as leaders in this country that, when we do things, we have to look down the road to see what the results are likely to be.

I am only calling on the Government to make sure that some scheme is devised where employers are unable to pass off this kind of situation purely because we do not have a proper system of accountability for the funds that they deduct.

That is my contribution to this debate, Sir.

Thank you.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I am indebted to Members on both sides of the House for the unanimous support which this particular measure is receiving. All persons who have spoken have indicated that they support the Amendment to the Bill in order to enable the National Insurance Board to hold property and to construct a headquarters building. I think that is a measure of the consensus that can develop, that can be built and can emerge in this country on matters of national interest.

Let me again indicate that what this particular amendment seeks to do is to empower the National Insurance Board to own property and to manage and deal with that property. Those are powers which the Board does not have in the present legislation. It is therefore being given those powers so that it can construct, manage and own its own property.

I am very grateful to the very careful work that the Attorney-General gives in this matter and the very sound advice that he tenders to the Government in these and other matters.

I am advising, under the Constitution of this country, that he be given additional responsibilities. With effect from today, I am advising that he will have responsibility for the Foreign Affairs of Barbados.

Applause.

3.25 p.m.

He will be styled Attorney General, Minister of Legal Affairs, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Asides.

RL Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, a number of queries have been raised. Let me say that those which we do not address at this particular time we will, in due course, address and we also await with interest any document which may be produced on any matter of public policy. We will certainly look at the contents of any document which any Member or any group connected with this Parliament may in due course issue.

Let me say that the whole question of the investment of the funds of the National Insurance Board is a matter of great concern to the Board itself and to myself as Minister responsible for Finance. There have been papers produced for consideration of the Board on this matter of the investment of funds, both in terms, of the short term investments and longer term investments. This is a matter that has been receiving the attention of the Board and, of course, the Chairman of the Board has been giving very, very outstanding leadership to that particular Board and the members of the Board themselves have been giving very careful consideration to this matter.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Let me say, Sir, that oh the question of the cost of the building, I do not get into the league of those medical practitioners who also may state an interest in building. I know all Honourable Members speak from a position of knowledge in these matters. I heard the Leader of the Opposition say he put up the first professional building in Barbados and no doubt he has. It is against that Delawarian background that he will speak about the cost of construction. But I was very impressed with the arguments advanced from this side pointing out the impossibility of constructing any office building for the figures quoted by the Leader of the Opposition. I must say he did say that he could get it put up. I do not think you can necessarily fault him on those grounds simply because the proof is not there. There is no way of demonstrating that. So we will have to leave the argument at that particular level. But I was most impressed. When you come to construction, one thing you have to understand is that over here we have some

expertise. We have some expertise in this particular area and we have to respect their information.

But let me say here that the figure which I gave is just a working figure. It is a working figure and it also depends on the- time that you actually go to the market and what is happening in the market at that particular time. In any event the building will go out to tender in accordance with the normal procedures and we will be seeking, of course, for the best possible price that is constant with sound construction and efficiency. So I think honourable Members can rest assured that we will seek to get the best possible price for this structure.

I am not, on this occasion, going into the problems being encountered by the National Insurance Scheme. I think that these have been recited from time to time. But I will take the point made by the Member for St. Thomas and in due course we will come to the House to deal with and to discuss those matters. There is still, however, the question which is most outstanding and the one that is most worrisome is the problems relating to the Severance Payments Scheme. That scheme is in difficulty and the Board has been paying considerable attention to these matters. I have been seeking to get as wide a consensus as possible as to what steps should be taken to deal with what is an obvious problem - the cost involved, the outlays of more than what has been coming in and we have some suggestions along the lines that the contribution should be increased and the benefits reduced. But there is a problem here and the Board has taken a particular position and there are also some different viewpoints as to how the matter should be dealt with. As soon as we have come to some final decisions or proposals on these matters and we are in the correct stance, we will be coming to this Honourable House to discuss the issues and seek approval for our proposals.

I think, Sir, this has been a very useful debate as far as compliance is concerned. That also is a problem and I am indebted to Members for raising the particular problem once again. There are certain obligations which are expected to be carried in accordance with the law. The National Insurance Scheme, both in terms of the short term and the long term benefits as well as the contributions into the scheme and the general conditions under which the scheme operates, are all matters of the law and the regulations and it is not a lawless operation. It is one that operates in accordance with existing provisions and wherever it is necessary to tighten those up we will take the necessary steps if such is indicated. If it is a question of administrative procedures, yes we will do so. But compliance is a problem in certain areas. The scheme - we are working on a scheme for the computerisation of the operations. The facilities are in there and it is working and we have recently sought additional staff of 2 programmers but these are not yet in place and I would like to assure Members that we are taking all necessary steps to speed up

the efficiency of the operation of the scheme and this may lead to greater compliance. At least the information would be available on a more timely basis. More work is clearly needed in that area but the Board is well seised and the staff is well seised of the problems and they are working on them. 3.35p.m.

As far as the giving of information and the answering of queries are concerned, I myself, when I visited the offices of the National Insurance building some months ago, did raise this question of the giving of information and the answering of questions and so on. I know that the staff itself, Management and the Board, are all working on this particular problem and they have in mind the establishment of a unit which would be able to answer on a more timely and responsible basis the kinds of queries that may come from the public.

We are taking all steps that are possible to improve the operations and the efficiency of the National Insurance Scheme. I think we have got out of some of the problems that the programme encountered in the past and, hopefully, we are on a path now of improved efficiency, more streamlined management and crisper policy decisions at the level of the Board. The provision of a new building should help in this broad drive for greater efficiency in this very important scheme.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to commend this measure to the Honourable House.

The question that the Bill be read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. B. M. TAITT, seconded by lion. M. A. KING, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. L. L. BRATHWAITE in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. B. M. TAITT, seconded by Hon. E. E. GREAVES, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, the Bill was read a third time and passed and was cited as the National Insurance and Social Security (Amendment) Act, 1989.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 3.

THE NURSES AND MID WIVES (REGISTRATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1989.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Chapter 372 provides for the establishment of a General Nursing Council which would govern the profession of nursing in Barbados, and it has been in existence without too much difficulty. However, Sir, as part of the examination of the provision of health services in the country, when I examined the General Nursing Council, and after meetings with them, it became obvious that there was a small anomaly in the General Nursing Council Act, that whereas in the case of most of the other Councils established and designed for the purpose of administering the particular profession there is a substantive Secretary, that this one has a member of the Council serving as Secretary.

It is obvious, Sir, that a person who is serving as a member, who is also required to perform the duties of Secretary to the particular Council, is not able to participate fully and, therefore, the benefit of appointing that particular member to the Council is lost when that person has to be performing the duties of Secretary. Clearly the duties of Secretary should be performed by a person engaged for the purpose, and hence one wishes to have a public officer perform these duties as is the case in such of all the other Councils, and so, Sir, this amendment comes before this Honourable House.

There are some matters relating to nursing which could be discussed, but I would crave the indulgence of the House merely to respond to one aspect of the nursing profession which has recently been questioned and therefore would require some answer to the House from the Government. That is to do with the Central Sterile Department in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

That Department has, as a matter of fact, two Sisters, two Staff Nurses, 16 female Aides and six male Aides. The two Staff Nurses assigned to the Department have medical problems and are therefore assigned to that Department, because it is easier for them to have their services utilised in that Department than if they were on the ward units. One of the concomitant results of that is that from time to time there will be illness in that Department, and recently these persons were in fact ill and this has apparently been parlayed into reporting sick for the reason of disposable gloves. 3.45p.m.

I wish to point out that according to the reports I have received, the disposable rubber gloves used in the operating theatre were of very good quality and a decision was made to recycle these gloves. The gloves were decontaminated and washed in the operating theatre before being sent to the Central Sterile Department. When these gloves reach the

Central Sterile Department they are washed by means of the washing machine and after washing they are placed in a drying machine. After the process of washing and drying, the gloves are then tested by aids for punctures and weaknesses. The re-usable gloves are then powdered, packaged and autoclaved. To autoclave is to put them into an instrument which burns at a fairly high temperature. I say instrument, I rather say utensil, Sir, because I think that we who are in the health delivery business prefer to use words like instruments rather than utensil. The re-usable autoclaved gloves are then distributed to the wards on demand. This is a matter that has been going on for some time, and it was felt that the re-use of the gloves after sterilisation was more cost effective. This has been the practice at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition will confirm for many years.

I believe, however, Sir, that because of recent areas of questions such as AIDS and other diseases, that someone not familiar with the technique may have raised these questions, and I wish to confirm that disposable gloves are the order of the day at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It is only in a particular area that re-usable gloves for the purpose of saving money are used, and they are decontaminated because they are washed and dried and autoclaved and therefore there is no danger. However, Sir, out of an abundance of caution, I have instructed that the whole question of re-usable gloves be re-examined.

I have to say however, Sir, that we in Barbados must be very careful that we do not become prey to every particular issue that is raised somewhere else in the world and re-apply that issue in a manner that may be destructive. Clearly the health services and in particular the Queen Elizabeth Hospital could not engage in practices that are unacceptable in modern day health delivery, and I want to say that recently the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the health care system in Barbados has been assessed and has been deemed to be of the highest quality in the Caribbean and linked with that of Cuba, except that ours is cheaper than the one in Cuba. I say that, Mr. Speaker, because recently a lot of misinformation is being spread abroad. It is well-known, I am being reminded to state that it is well accepted that the Cuban health system is regarded as one of the premier health systems in the world, and I am saying that recently I have had international experts say to me after reviewing our health system, and I am not here bragging because this would be a conglomeration of the efforts of a large number of people over a long period of time, including the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who has served in that institution as the Chief of Medical Services or as the Chairman of the Medical Staff Committee and therefore is familiar with the place, that the health system in Barbados is very good.

I do not wish to transform this debate into a hospital debate, but I just wanted to point out that any idea that there may be some contamination of gloves in the Queen

Elizabeth Hospital must be wiped out once and for all and eliminated. There is no such thing. However, Sir, out of an abundance of caution, I have instructed that the prospect of a complete use of disposable gloves be examined. That prospect carried with it a price tag. If we reach the point where we are using completely and absolutely disposable gloves, then we may have an additional price tag. It is a price which one is prepared to pay, but I am prepared to * defer to the experts in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in these matters. There is no question that we have people of the highest quality and professional integrity functioning in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and when they indicate that it is proper in certain departments to do certain things, I accept that advice on the basis of the quality of person giving the advice.

To complete my information on the illness, a sick certificate was received for one staff member for ten days commencing on 30th March. Another one was received for another staff member for nine days commencing 1st April. Clearly the two coincide and there is illness in the department. These are the two persons who have had sick leave before and who no doubt will have sick leave again. The leave of these persons has in no way affected either the management of the department or the operation of the theatre.

On Sunday April 2 one aide from the 7.00 to 3.00 shift and two from the 1.00 to 9.00 shift reported ill. These absences which were not considered abnormal did not adversely affect the smooth running of the department.

I took the opportunity of the introduction of this Bill to clear the air on that particular matter which has been making the rounds.

The amending Bill before us, Sir, is not something I think that should excite any undue debate, but I am perfectly willing to answer any questions which any Honourable Member may have, and I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: I beg to second that, Mr. Speaker, and reserve my right to speak.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, it is always of interest on the second reading of Bills before this House to determine what you will focus on when you speak in Opposition, because from time to time the debate as introduced in a second reading can be so different, and so far from what one is called to vote on, one has to be very careful that you speak to and vote on what is before you. Long experience has taught me that one must be very careful about second readings and certainly concentrate on what is actually in the legislation so that your vote can be recorded as for or against what is before you. I say that for a very good reason that shall soon become apparent, not in this debate.

I remember, Sir, if I may stray for one second, some years ago a piece of legislation came before this House and the entire House was taken along a trail that casino gambling was being introduced into Barbados. I on my own sought some legal advice outside the country from an expert and got the advice back that nothing in the Betting and Gaming Act introduces anything in Barbados. What the Bill does is that it makes illegal all forms of gambling in Barbados, and that is what we were probably addressing at the time, but of course the regulations would have been a different matter. With that in mind I am not going to respond to the main body of what the Minister said. I believe my Shadow Minister will have an opportunity to respond to those things after due consideration elsewhere, but what does concern me a little, Mr. Speaker, what does bother me a little is that you actually have to come to the House to get permission for the Council to have a Secretary. 3.55p.m.

Aside.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Is there any particular reason why a public officer should be the secretary of a council? We have a Medical Council. We have a Dental Council. We have a Surveyor's Council and we have the Bar Association.

It may well be that a public officer is a secretary of all of them and that may have been so for a reason at a particular time but as far as I know the general thinking has been that the annual fees payable by professional people have been set at a level or reduced to a level which would cover the administrative costs of administering the professions. It would therefore, seem to me that where the Minister is empowered, along with the profession, to appoint a council, be it a Bar Council, Medical Council and so on, that funds be made available to that council to recruit the administrative staff that they need. The fact that this is a provision in the Medical Council Act or the Dental Council Act does not mean that it is something that needs to be perpetrated. What it really needs is a pair of hands to perform the secretarial work...

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of elucidation.

It so happens that this particular Bill is one of the only ones with the anomaly where an actual board member is chosen to be secretary of the board. All the others made provision for a secretary to be either a public officer or one they employed but this one says that "a board member".

Well, clearly, that could not have been intended that the board member be secretary because the board member is, therefore, not able to function as a board member if he or she is elected secretary. We have seen with the operation of the Act that the actual board member who functions as secretary complained that he or she is not able to participate

in the discussion and I think that is correct. That is the only reason we are changing it.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: The point I was trying to make is that for the simplicity of legislation, these bodies when they are established they should be appropriately funded because the money is raised from the professional people to employ the staff that they require to carry out their regulatory functions. I do not think that these things need to be enshrined in legislation. From time to time there are so many things enshrined in legislation in Barbados that one wonders what kind of freedom of operations people have in various facets of life.

There are other areas, if I may say so, now, in relation to the various councils which I think need some attention. One particular area - I am not a legal expert - which I think needs redressing is the line of appeal against decisions by these councils in relation to professionals.

The Bar Association, as far as I know, since lawyers pay particular attention to that, has a vertical system of appeal to the Court of Appeal. You will find that in many of the other bits of legislation that there is a right of appeal only to a judge in Chambers which is final and I regret that the Minister, being a legal luminary, because I have a great respect for his views on the academic aspects of law in these matters and, certainly, I do not know whether my comments have been overtaken by any provisions in the recent Administrative Justice Act... but, nevertheless, it seems to me it has the possibility of unfair treatment of some professionals within the provisions of those Acts and they should all be brought parallel with what obtains in respect of the Bar Council.

Thank you very much.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Sir, there is just one question I want to ask the Minister. Could the Minister please state, Sir, whether it is true that one has to pay for vaccinations, as much as \$30 for a yellow fever vaccination?

I know somebody who was called upon to pay and it seems to be a departure from former practice where it was free and in the light of people having to pay the Health Levy, I would find it an unnecessary imposition.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Leader of the Opposition's query, as he might recall, the point of view which he has taken is one which I myself took vigorously when we were in Opposition whenever these matters would come up that the right of appeal should, in fact, go as high as possible.

Fortunately, the Courts over the years have so interpreted the law in this regard that even where the legislator has attempted to oust the Courts from the decision

making, as it were, they have not succeeded. In many ways what is written in the law so far as a person's rights are concerned, is not a final statement as it appeared, but an interpretation of all the circumstances and all the facts that can see a person going beyond this right of appeal which is final if the person is able to demonstrate that the process which has been taken has in some way been *ultres vires* or outside the terms of the legislation.

I agree with him to the extent that professions are being controlled and an attempt should be made to bring them all within the same framework and to have general policy position and I have no doubt that in the not too distant future that would be addressed as a legal matter rather than dealing with it piecemeal. I think that an appeal all the way to an Appeal Court is about the least that a person who is in danger of being deprived of a livelihood should get.

I would also hazard the suggestion that where the livelihood is concerned, perhaps, the Administrative Justice Act is of some assistance but, again, one would have to show that one's rights under the Constitution were somehow jeopardized by the decision made and one could use the Administrative Justice Act to get beyond the appeal.

But, having said that, one should also say that the philosophy behind this kind of legislation was that, in the first instance, a profession should be regulated by itself and that it is presumed that those who sit in judgment on their peers will act and carry out their discretion in an honest and fair manner. So if you are judged by your peers to be not acceptable, usually when you appeal to a judge what the judge is concerned with is not the merits of the case because in a discretionary situation once the discretion has been exercised, the judge cannot exercise it for the functionary or body that ought to have exercised it. 4.05 p.m.

But what the judge would be seeking to examine is whether the correct procedure, was followed and whether the body acted on all fours or within the four corners of the particular law.

So I would say that, generally speaking, unless one is living in a pernicious system, these kinds of administrative bodies which exercise a discretionary power are likely, when they are judging their colleagues to satisfy the requirement which has informed the Honourable Member's query.

I would also go so far as to say that it is my experience not only in terms of Barbados but in almost all jurisdictions that where a profession is examining one of its colleagues, there is a profound reluctance - I go no higher than that - to excise a person from a particular profession. Certainly in Barbados, applying the sanctions which would apply in Acts such as ours, Medical Council, the Bar

Council and the Nursing Council. When one examines how they have worked, there is a profound reluctance to interfere with the individual. They tend to bend over backwards in the opposite direction. I have a view concerning the Councils generally which does not concern this debate, and therefore I would not utter it. But it is an interesting thing that it is possible in Barbados to be registered, or it used to be possible in the Medical Council; and once you were registered it was almost impossible to be deregistered on account of unprofessional conduct, if that unprofessional conduct did not go to negligence. So that, for example, until recently it was not possible to remove a doctor who had become an alcoholic from the rolls.

Now, arising out an amendment which we made recently, that would be possible. Similarly here, unprofessional conduct has a very long definition and one needs not spend any time on it. I give the Honourable Member the assurance however that this matter is one which is exercising us on a medium, long-term basis to examine it in all of its ramifications.

On the question of Yellow Fever and the cost of a Yellu>v Fever Vaccine, I am very surprised to hear that it costs \$30 to get the vaccination, if it were done at a polyclinic. I will examine the matter and report to the Honourable Member in due course. All I can say is that is the first time I have heard that you have to pay \$30 to get a ^ Yellow Fever shot. My understanding was that, unless you go to a private practitioner who is free to charge you what he likes, if you went to a public place for a Yellow Fever shot you would be able to get that shot without charge. Or, if there is a charge, it must be nominal. It certainly is a matter which we will examine. Because the attitude which the Government has to diseases of this kind is that prevention is so important to us that the cost of the vaccine is included in our health care delivery.

For example, Hepatitis B, I have not made a great song and dance of it, but we have made a decision that all health workers who are at risk for Hepatitis B will receive the vaccine free of cost. Up until then, it would have cost them \$104 to get the series. We have made the decision because it is important. We have started with those in dental health, those who are dentists, auxiliaries and all the people working in dental health. They were the first. This * regime is going on quietly without fanfare. All those persons who are at risk are getting...

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: All those persons who are at risk whether it is in Hepatitis B or AIDS or any of those chronic diseases and the STDs, and Mr. Speaker definitely knows these matters, all those persons who are exposed, we are...

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: It seems as though I am going to have to educate. Sexually Transmitted Diseases. There are some persons who are not in any danger of having a Sexually Transmitted Disease any more.

Laughter.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: The Leader of the Opposition has a new category, Sir, but I cannot repeat it.

The point is though that we have made provision for all of these persons systematically to be inoculated against these diseases because Hepatitis B in particular is a dangerous one, and we want to make sure that everybody is immune from Hepatitis B, all those at risk persons. We have a regime. We started with the dental persons and we are moving all the way down to the polyclinics.

So that I am surprised and will check to find out what are the circumstances. I think I could give the House the assurance that we will return with the information on this matter of \$30 for a Yellow Fever Vaccine. We brought in the Yellow Fever Vaccine in light of the potential Trinidadian problem which turned out to be nothing.

All I could say is, if they charged the person \$30, then I owe \$30 because I got the Yellow Fever Vaccine and they did not charge me anything. It is specifically forbidden for them to discriminate. So if they gave me and they gave the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East his without charge and some other people we know, then if the person paid \$30, we may have to examine another issue altogether.

Mr. Speaker, I promise the Honourable Member I will get the information. We will get the information and pass it on.

I do not think there were any other questions.

Therefore, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time, Sir.

Hon. M. A. KING: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that this Bill be now read a second time was put and was resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. B. M. TAITT, seconded by Hon. M. A. KING, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. L. L. BRATHWAITE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE Mr.

CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive were called and passed.
4.15p.m.

On the motion of Hon. B. M. TAITT, seconded by Hon. M. A. KING, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. B. M. TAITT, seconded by Hon. M. A. KING, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

Order No. 4 was called - To move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of this Island.

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. L. L. BRATHWAITE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE EXPLANATORY NOTE TO HEAD 34 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE SUBHEAD 13 - OTHER INSTITUTIONS OBJECT NO. 17 - SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Chairman, this is a very simple matter. Under Head 34 Ministry of Education and Culture, Subhead 13 and Object No. 17 Subscriptions and Contributions, such subscriptions and contributions as may be determined are payable to:

- (1) Barbados Workers Union Labour College
- (2) Extra Mural Department
- (3) Barbados Astronomical Society
- (4) Girls' Industrial Union
- (5) National Union of Public Workers

and the sum of \$3,609,800 has been provided in the Current Estimates to meet those subscriptions and contributions.

There were 2 other institutions which should have been included in that provision and the names of those institutions should have been in the Explanatory Notes. Those institutions are: Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity and the Barbados Employers Confederation.

The purpose of this amendment is to include the name of the Barbados Institute of Management and Productivity and the Barbados Employers Confederation in the list of institutions which may benefit from the subscriptions and contributions provided under the Subhead as I have indicated. The amount of money provided, the \$3.6 million approximately, is the correct sum for the total purposes. It is just that the two names were inadvertently omitted from the Explanatory Notes and I am, therefore, moving that the Resolution stand part.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: I beg to second that.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The question is that Head 34 stand part... I am sorry. The Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Chairman, I am not going to delay the House. I think this is the last item. The Prime Minister will recall that, last year I believe it was, during the Estimates debate the then Opposition questioned the use to which these funds were being put by the Barbados Employers Confederation. We were concerned that if public funds are going to be committed to private sector organisations and funds out of the Training Levy that the Government should satisfy itself that those bodies to which the funds were going, and it was a substantial amount of money last week, would, be deployed in programmes that were satisfactory to Government and that would be beneficial to the community at large. I remember the Prime Minister then agreed that he would defer the matter and get some information. What I want to know today, Sir, is if the Employers Confederation has put up a scheme to Government that meets with Government's approval and what is the nature of the scheme, and what are the types of programmes that are being carried with these funds that we are voting.

Mr. R. L. MORRIS: Mr. Chairman, I just want to make a short intervention on the Resolution. First of all to say that I believe that money spent on improving the area of Industrial Relations in particular in Barbados is money very well spent and I know that a substantial part of the funds being provided through the BEC and through the Barbados Workers Union and through other institutions are in the direction of ensuring an improved industrial relations system.

I heard questions asked in the Other Place about where this largesse was going. For anybody to be remotely connected with education to consider \$3 million in subventions as largesse... There are some persons in Barbados who believe that money should only be spent in certain places, but I do not want to deal with that particular matter at this time.

I share the view that there must be some understanding of the projects on which money will be spent. But

I am convinced that this would have been looked at very carefully when the Estimates were being prepared. 4.25 p.m.

I would just like to use this forum again to express my opinion that we need to upgrade education in Barbados relating to worker education. Our economy is an economy largely of workers and the formal educational system does not address several of the problems that people need to know about if we are to have a productive work force, one that is free of the kinds of problems that exhibit themselves elsewhere. Each one of the institutions, each one of the social partners, has a role to play.

The Barbados Workers' Union provides education for about 700 workers every year at a cost of approximately \$350 000. Our subvention from Government was restored to its level of \$25 000 under the Democratic Labour Party after the Barbados Labour Party had seen fit to reduce it to \$10 000 as against the \$350 000 that we put out, and we are continually expanding our programmes.

By now the public is aware that we are about to start a six months certificate training programme in industrial relations, because we believe that the old time concept of Training Trade Unionists just to know a little bit more about what is going on in the world is not enough. We are, therefore, including areas of technical and technological significance in our training, but we are also training people in accounting, in economics, in collective bargaining, in safety and health, and a wide range of areas, labour legislation, that would ensure that we have a better informed work force, and that is vitally important.

At another level, the Barbados Workers' Union, of course, spends money in training staff. We have a young lady who has just graduated from Howard University with a Masters in Business Administration, and that should not be the exception. But in fact all of our people should have access to that kind of training. That training should be provided not just by and for these public institutions, because in the long run, it is not the public institution alone that will benefit, but the nation as a whole. If the Barbados Employers Confederation is able to train its staff effectively, the Barbados Workers' Union is able to do that and Government is able to train its persons in the Establishments Division who have to deal with industrial relations, the entire scenario will change for the better.

We also have a very particular area which we have been concentrating on in the Trade Union Movement, and that is the matter of safety and health and the environment. It is very clear that Trade Unionism in the present context cannot be reduced to bread and butter issues. If we do not have an environment to live in, then there is no need to get money for people, and we have very, very strong concerns about this environment. Those of us who watch the

television and see the concern about the disappearance of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, the fact that the Arctic ice is now only seven feet in thickness and so on, know that we have to be concerned in teaching Barbadians about the environment. When we see a move to plastics, when we see plastics taking over, and we know we cannot get rid of plastics in the environment very easily, we need to train people about these things.

I believe the fact that this Government has upgrade¹ significantly this subvention that is going to these various bodies is testimony of the correct thinking by the Government of the need for spending funds in terms of worker education and in terms of industrial relations - that is where most of the funds will be going - and in terms of training, "and I would like to applaud the Government for having taken this step.

The question of distribution of funds, where the funds are going, and the question of the projects that have been identified and the way they have been articulated in order to benefit, I think these are details that we can look at. I think that aj{ Members of this Honourable House will understand the importance of spending money in relation to these particular institutions.

¹ One does not have to make a case for BIMAP I think it has a place in our country. I am very happy to see that the BIMAP teachers and so on are now being accepted as consultants in a variety of areas, not only in Barbados but they are also consultants in the Caribbean and elsewhere.

I think this speaks a lot for Barbados, because I have always made the point that one of the most important things in this country is our human resources. We have developed our people to a very, very high level and we have to utilise those skills, whether we are talking about doctors or others, as I heard of in an address to BAMP where doctors now have to go forward and make foreign exchange and come back. We have brilliant people in every area. We need to recognise this.

I am not one of those who would say that this Cabinet is not one of the best ever produced. I believe it is one of the best. Those who are saying that we are now the riff-raff of all generations, this present society is producing the riff-raff of all generations, I really do not know how these kinds of comments could be made in Barbados in 1989. I believe that our country is moving ahead very, very well and that the kind of money being spent on this type of education can only augur well for the future.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. C. L. TROTMAN: Mr. Chairman, I had the benefit very recently to speak to a large number of

employers all gathered in one place, and one of those matters which came through very strongly was the demand being made almost totally by them that there had to be greater understanding by all people in the establishment of the work place regarding the commitment necessary for a greater appreciation of the dynamics of that establishment.

Part of what I thought was necessary to convey to those persons was that what in essence was being addressed by those comments was a demand for greater training at the work place, greater training and greater orientation. There cannot be any question but if our young nation is going to make the strides forward that are necessary we have to have a fully trained, properly motivated society where people can be made to recognise that there are just rewards waiting for them as a result for fair effort put forward by them in a day's work.

We are concerned about training persons about their rights, that is to say, training workers regarding what their rights are. We are concerned about training workers regarding what their privileges are at the work place, but as responsible persons we are also concerned about training people and apprising them of what their responsibilities are at the level of the work place and at the level of the nation as well. Consequently, it must be recognised that training is a very important and very vital factor in any society. That training, however, has got to be seen within the context of what pertains now and what is desirable to obtain. Who should train, in fact?

For some time now the IDC as an arm of the Government has been responsible for paying out certain subventions to employers, especially those who set up industries according to our industrial programme and who engage as part of that exercise in a period of training. There cannot be any doubt that this has been a useful exercise in part.

My concern at this time though, Mr. Chairman, is in having us examine the extent to which that training might be able to improve the marketability of the worker. I am concerned, in short, with the utility value to the worker and to the country of that training, because in essence what we could very easily find, and what we have found from time to time is that persons have been oriented in a particular area. They have been trained in a particular area to do a little piece of a job, but that little piece of a job they have been trained for, viewed in isolation or viewed in part with two or three other parts, has no real value to that individual. We have found that when major companies have closed in this country those workers, though they were supposed to be skilled in some instances, and semi-skilled in lesser instances, those skills have not counted for anything.

I would like to think that, in a training exercise, especially where the IDC or the Government as an agency has an input in terms of the money that goes into that training, that discussions would be held and that an arrangement would be made where that person is given a sufficiently rounded training in what the job entails. Thus in the event that the person is no longer able to work in that establishment, the person really has a skill or part of a skill which might be of use to the country as a whole and the country as a direct consequence might be able to derive some benefit from the monies expended in that area of training. 4.35 p.m.

I wish to say secondly, Mr. Chairman, that the employers have a responsibility to train. It is very pleasing to see that a number of employers themselves, even at the supervisory and management levels, are involving themselves in exposure to training programmes. A number of those programmes are being run across Barbados now and employers, it seems, have begun to recognise that they themselves have got to be trained if they are going to be able to manage persons who themselves have got to be trained. That augurs well for the country and for the needs we have for looking at output and looking at just rewards.

In terms though, Sir, of what we do and what Government does and how the employers and other institutions are able to report on the results of the training, I share the view that it is necessary that we be able to indicate satisfactorily how the funds that are given as subventions apply and the degree of training that is necessary. I have that view, particularly so since I am satisfied that it is an employer's responsibility first and foremost to train his work force. If Government is assisting in that, it is only because of a Government's commitment to the community as a whole and Government's efforts or desire to want to see the country progress. But any employer who is concerned about improving his profit margins, any employer who is concerned about improving the quality of the work force he has, should recognise that he has 'a responsibility to train that work force.

If we have machinery we make sure that the machinery is well maintained and well improved, well serviced so that it functions satisfactorily. If we have a work force we have to understand that that work force has to be trained, and* it has to be motivated and has to be properly rewarded. I think therefore that when one examines what employers do and when employers themselves examine what they do, they must recognise their commitment to train their work forces. When therefore the Government moves down the road in the area of subventions, it has to bear that in mind.

Government, Mr. Chairman, had to recognise that we have now begun to use very frequently and very satisfactorily the term partnership, using this to mean that

the employer and the workers and indeed the Government are into a community of interest, of equals. In another place at another time I had occasion to indicate to the Government that when the subventions are looked at, that social partnership has to be recognised, and that the level of the subvention had to reflect the fact that we are now partners, socially equal and equal in every other respect.

I would wish to urge the Government that it begins again to recognise the extent of training that is done by workers' representatives, that is to say, by the Barbados Workers' Union on this occasion, recognise the extent to which that has been able to assist in improving the quality of the worker, recognise the degree to which the training about safety at the work place, about people's national commitment, have been reflected nationally as well as at the work place, that an effort be made to look at the level of the subvention, *vis-a-vis* the level of other subventions, there should therefore be some just reward based on the known, demonstrated capacity of the organisation to train workers for the betterment and the improvement of the country, bearing in mind that the organisation is doing this out of a commitment to the Nation and not because there is any rule that says that it must obtain or must obtain to this level.

Since it is not the primary function of labour to train, I wish to urge that one would recognise that the extent of that training springs in fact from something bigger and much more important. It springs from an awareness at the national level, an awareness of the fact that a worker who is not properly oriented cannot contribute satisfactorily to the well being of the Nation, and in those circumstances, Sir, I would wish that we again review that level of the social partnership and make us truly equal.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Chairman, there is very little I can add to this particular debate. The issues that have been raised are very pertinent to the whole subject that we are discussing or considering here. I need not stress the importance of training, particularly in our situation, where, in order to seek to get that competitive edge and to use our resources as efficiently as possible, we have to use that resource which we are most abundantly endowed with in this country, and that is our human resources, and we have to ensure that as much training as possible is provided at all levels in order that our people can become more productive and in order that our product can be more competitive both in our internal market and in the export market.

In this regard, I think that a very important and statesmanlike speech has just been made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central in which he is stating that training is a matter not only for the Government, but for the employers as well as for the workers' representative institutions, and I think the more often this is said and the more often it is realised, the better it would be for our country.

We have the concept of the social partners and I wish to stress this idea of partnership and wish to stress this idea of seeking to arrive at a consensus in terms of the major objectives for development in this country. I believe that if the workers' representatives, the workers themselves, the employers and the Government can all understand the nature and fully appreciate the nature of the development thrust, the economic problems and the social problems which we face as a country, the better we will be able to approach those problems and to seek to provide the kind of solutions and make the kind of inputs that will improve growth in this country, and that will improve development in this country.

There was a time when it was felt that it was only the Government that had to provide training, and the Government placed more emphasis on education rather than on the training aspect of it. But now we bring the two concepts together of education and training, and we also put another dimension into the equation and we speak also about continuing education and continuing training. We are talking not only about what goes on in the formal class room for those between the ages of five or thereabouts and sixteen, but that this is a continuous process across the life span, that perhaps we have to pay even more attention to those who are in the work place so that they are fully aware of the technical aspects of the job which the worker may be doing and also aware of the environment in which the job is being done, so that matters of safety, occupational health and related matters are all taken into account, also, the relationship and the inter-relationships among workers themselves, among workers and management in order that undue differences and frictions may be reduced and that an environment in which productive work can take place with the minimum of dislocation can proceed. 4.45 p.m.

I hope we never reach the stage where we will be saying that training should be done by Government only or by the employees or the employees representatives only and seek to exclude the employers. The employers make and have made a contribution to the funds which have gone to support these training programmes.

In' some instances, they have made a greater contribution to the fund than the workers themselves on a straight comparative basis although, in terms of the global amount, what may come from the workers would be more. So we have to take all of these things into account, take them into consideration and recall, also, that sometimes the courses put on by a body, let us say, in this case, the employers, may attract funds also from other sources to support what they are doing.

I think the amounts that they have been asking for are not exorbitant amounts. It is good and desirable that in their contributions they recognise that they have a part to play in the training of workers but, also, of their staff as well. If we are talking about the industrial relations climate, the workers representative, the shop stewards, whoever it may be representing the workers at the work place or at ether levels can be as well trained as possible.

If they encounter persons across the table who do not really understand the fundamentals of industrial relations all that will be happening is that we are going to get confrontation and you are going to get, perhaps, a sane and proper approach being met by one that is not informed or well advised so we have to think of training for everybody, the employers, the workers, the workers representatives.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay an especial tribute to the foresight of the Barbados Workers' Union in blazing the trail for the establishment of workers' education and training in this country. If others are now following this particular trend and the pioneering efforts of the Barbados Workers' Union in this particular field have sensitised the Government itself towards a greater awareness of the need for training and have sensitised the employers themselves into a realisation that training at their level is also required then, I think that that also is a significant contribution for growth and development in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I think I have responded to most of the queries that have been raised. We will watch these areas very carefully and try to do what is best in terms of a balanced approach to this whole matter of education and training.

Thank you.

The question that the note as amended stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, the Resolution was read a first and second time and passed.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: That, Mr. Speaker, concludes Government Business for today and I move that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 11th April, 1989 at 12 o'clock noon.

The question that the House do not adjourn until Tuesday, April 11, 1989 at 12 o'clock noon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 4.55 p.m.

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