

# THE

# House of Assembly Debates

## (OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 - 2004

---

### HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

*Tuesday, July 27, 1999*

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.25 a.m. on Tuesday, July 27, 1999.

#### PRESENT

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J. P. (Deputy Speaker)  
Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and Minister for the Civil Service)

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, K. A., Q.C., LL.B.

Mr. L. R. TOLL, Q.C., M.A.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc (Econ.)

Hon. G. W. PAYNE (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Health)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B. (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.,

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary, to the Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.

Hon. A. P. WOOD, J.P., B.Sc., M.Sc, M.Phil. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

*Prayers were taken by Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON.*

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

#### MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, July 20, 1999.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that if there are no errors or omissions that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, July 20, 1999, which Minutes have been circulated, be taken as read.

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

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

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

I have just received from the Auditor General the Accounts and Statements including the Appropriation and Revenue Accounts for the financial year 1997-1998.

#### FIRST READING OF BELLS

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the Health Services (Amendment) Bill be read a first time.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that.

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

---

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

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

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### ORDER NO. 2- HEALTH SERVICES ACT, CAP. 44

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, the Chamber will recall some two years ago an incident which took place on the day that Desmond Haynes and Gordon Greenidge played again at Kensington Oval, and brought joy to all of us, against I think it was a local 11,1 do not now recall. While at Kensington Oval, I received an urgent telephone call from the Public Health Inspectorate that there was a shipment of sugar in the Bridgetown Port and that a dispute had arisen with the importers of the sugar because some of the bags of the sugar in the cargo hold of the vessel carrying them were covered in what was thought to be human faecal matter.

It would appear, as the circumstances unfolded, that at a point at which the ship had stopped since the sugar had been loaded as cargo, that stowaways got onto the vessel and were living in the cargo hold and, of course, they were performing normal bodily functions in between the cargo, as it turned out, sugar destined for the householders of Barbados.

It was on that occasion pressed by the importers and manufacturers that the bags could have been disposed of and the sugar reprocessed and that we should not, as the Public Health Inspectorate and I were attempting to do, condemn the sugar and withhold it from supermarket shelves.

I felt that my responsibility as Minister precluded me from letting sugar that had been covered in faeces, prevented me from letting this sugar get on to the local market and that was the point of divide. Since it was a large shipment of sugar, an issue arose as to who, in fact, should bear the cost for the disposal and destruction of the sugar. Whether, in fact, the Ministry of Health was empowered by the then existing legislation, the Health Services Act, to hold this sugar and condemn it and, in fact, to get the importers to pay the cost of the disposal or destruction or re-exportation as, in fact, they were urging.

We persisted, but later sought an opinion from the Solicitor General's Chambers, as to whether the legislation

which exists in Barbados and the provisions of the Health Services Act are sufficiently comprehensive to allow the Public Health Inspectorate to perform that very important protective role as the first line of defence, in relation to our food imports and food sales and the quality of food, not only produced in Barbados but sold at every level of the society, whether sold to the consumer in restaurants, whether sold on supermarket shelves or however reaching the consumer.

As it turned out, the opinion given to us was that the scope of the legislation which existed was not sufficiently wide to allow the Public Health Inspectors the proper and comprehensive defensive role which they need to play, in the protection of health and in the protection of our food supply here in Barbados. In this regard, we sought immediately to have the legislation broadened so as to strengthen the role that the Public Health Inspectors can play. In this regard, at page 22 of the Barbados Labour Party Manifesto, one will find that the Barbados Labour Party made a commitment in January of this year, and it is, I believe a document of the House to:

"Update the Health Services Act and Regulations to strengthen the powers of Public Health Inspectors to deal with issues relating to food quality, derelict vehicles, abandoned houses and overgrown lots."

The amendment before this Chamber here today is, in fact, a fulfilment of the first component of that promise, that is, to strengthen the hands of the Public Health Inspectors to deal with food and matters relating thereto.

The Legislation before the House then does a few things and I would wish to share specifically with Members of the Chamber what the legislation does. It gives to the word "food" such broad definition that it includes everything for human consumption, except virtually tobacco, which means that people cannot seek to raise fine points of definitions. Is it a substance to be consumed by a Barbadian or by a person living here, resident here or on holiday here or is it not food within the meaning of the Act? So it gives broad scope to the word "food". It deals with the production, importation and sale of food for human consumption.

It also seeks to expand the definition of the term "premises" so that we have powers not only to go into supermarkets for instance, as we now do, or to go on to private homes as in the case of the community interventions that we do, but certainly in this role of food protection and in performance of other duties, it gives the Public Health Inspectors very broad scope in respect of food inspection by defining "premises" in a new way. By virtue of this amendment, the term "premises" will now mean land, whether open or enclosed. I could see that somebody could

be offering meat or food for sale on open land or on enclosed land. If it is enclosed by a tent for instance, somebody might argue that it is an enclosure or that if a tent was there then it was not land within the meaning of the Act. We are, therefore, seeking to tighten and remove insofar as is possible all the loopholes in order to ensure that our food chain at every level is protected.

"Land, whether open or enclosed, built on or not, public or private and whether or not maintained under any enactment and includes any aircraft, ship, vessel, boat, hulk, barge, tent, vehicle, shed, warehouse or any other structure designed and used for the carriage or storage of food or any other item."

11.35a.m.

The powers given to the public health inspectors to go and look at food, of whatever quality, wherever it is found, are now so comprehensive that we can rest assured that what we are consuming at the local level is of the highest possible quality.

It lays out, for the public health inspectors, the process which must be followed when they have done an inspection and find that the food is not up to the quality that we insist on here in Barbados. In this regard, the legislation mandates the public health inspectors to take samples of the food, to retain a sample for themselves and to give a sample to the importers. If an allegation is being made about the quality of food, we want the process to be absolutely transparent and for the importer to have every right of challenge at every step of the way and to have a sample of the food, that he or she can take it to an independent lab or a sector to validate what the public health inspector may be alleging and to see if the findings of an independent lab converges with the lab to whom the public health inspectors are also mandated to send another sample. At least three samples are compulsory: one for the public health inspectors to retain, one which would go off to a lab, a result of which must go back to the importer and the third which will be given to the importer initially.

We believe that process allows for greater transparency and equity in the administration of these functions and in the implementation of these new amendments. A number of certificates should be given under the legislation: a certificate of condemnation of food which the public health inspector, based on the lab results, proposes to condemn and a certificate of wholesome food where, in fact, the public health inspector finds nothing adverse that would warrant his further action. Equally, notice has to be given to the importer that the food is being retained for further examination and again we are trying to ensure fairness at every stage that the person who is affected, that is, the importer, will have every opportunity to know what is going on and to be involved in the process. The form says specifically what the findings of the lab are and what the public health inspector's own findings are from his view and other inspections.

The public health inspector, in order to establish for his own purposes and for the sake of any legislation or queries which may thereafter ensue may also request - and in this regard, Sir, I do not know what is the appropriate point to raise an amendment but at Paragraph 26(a) of the new amendment before the Chamber which reads:

"All food imported into Barbados shall be inspected at any port of entry by a public health inspector."

We are asking that 'shall', which is mandatory, be replaced with 'may' which makes it more discretionary. The amendment then at 26(a)(1) would read:

"All food imported into Barbados may be inspected at any port of entry by a public health inspector."

I was making the point, Sir, that in order to establish the chain of control in respect of the food imported, the public health inspector may ask to see the certificate of inspection issued by the country where the food originated. Did this food go through the proper public health procedure? Is it food which when it left its point of origin was considered by the then exporters to be wholesome food?

They may ask to see such temperature control charts from the vessels as may be necessary because, as you know, Sir, some of these things, foodstuff and medications, have to be kept at specific temperatures or the quality of the items are adversely affected and then becomes unwholesome. In the case of medication, the constituent properties may change. That is a matter, Sir, of which you would know more than I.

The public health inspector, using his own judgment, can ask to see these charts in order to determine if, in fact, during the course of the journey the food or medication was kept at a temperature which it should have been kept at in order to guarantee that it is in fact wholesome. If the chain of protection and temperature control has broken down at any point of the journey, he or she, the public health inspector can then take such decision based on the findings when that certificate is reviewed.

There is a process. The food comes in and the seals of the containers or carriers are broken, the hold is opened and the public health inspectors go in and initially do a visual inspection. They have to determine by sight if all appears well on the surface. Is the hold clean? Are the bags open? Do they appear to have been droppings from any vectors of any sort? Those are the kinds of things when the public health inspectors are doing a visual that they are going to be looking for.

They will then do random samplings of the shipment or of the food and ask that some bags or some cases be broken and they will check those individual cases or bags or containers for food quality. Where, under the legislation, they determine on a visual that something is amiss they can make an immediate consideration that the food may be unfit

for human consumption. In this regard they can detain the food or the shipment for further inspection, seek the opinion of the Government analyst and notify the importer of the detention of the food.

It is going to be absolutely critical and, in this regard, I am glad to see all the chiefs and seniors here today, Sir. I believe it is the first time that many of our public health inspectors have come to Parliament.

It is going to be absolutely critical that they follow the procedure requiring notification and that they use the forms required under the law. If they breach the procedure, it is at that stage that a challenge can perhaps be made legitimately, not in respect of the quality of the food but in respect of the breach of the correct process.

We have gone a long distance to ensure that this process is transparent, comprehensive and protects everybody concerned, the public health inspector as well as the importer. Therefore, it is in their interest and the interest of the taxpayers to ensure that the process is followed. Thereafter, the public health inspector shall take a sample and divide it into three parts, delivering one to the importer or agent, if required to do so, retain one part for future comparison and use, if it is a matter that ends up in court, and submit one to the Government analyst. A notice should then be issued to the importer at this stage, informing them of what is going on. 11.45a.m.

There are provisions for protecting the chain of the movement of the samples. In order to guarantee the integrity of this process, there are requirements for proper labelling of the samples, with the container - information on the container and the batch number. Information on the manufacturer or producer and all of the samples must be marked in an identical way.

*Asides.*

Hon. Miss H.E. THOMPSON: When I say all of the samples, I mean these three parts which they are compelled to be divided into and any other of the shipment that they may divide for what ever purpose, must all be marked in a specific way so that we are able to see visually and guarantee that these are samples from the same shipment.

The law allows for the report of the Government analyst to be used in court. Sir, this is where the legislation starts to break new ground. Under the present legislation there is allowance only for one method of disposal. The existing legislation speaks to destruction or disposal. We

have widened the scope of the legislation so that some latitude may be imported into the decisions that the public health inspectors can take or advise the Minister to take. Sir, I would wish to give an example of the kind of circumstance in which latitude is allowed. We have found in the past, for instance, with chicken wings - let us talk about chicken wings as Barbadians like chicken wings. The BMC imports Grade 'A' chicken wings only, that is the standard for which Barbados asks. In other territories, Grade 'B' chicken wings are acceptable but we do not import them here in Barbados, we only import Grade 'A'. If a shipment of Grade 'B' chicken wings were to come in, we could take a decision that we are not taking them here in Barbados because they would be unfit for human consumption. It would just not be the standard that we take. In those circumstances, we would not want to compel destruction of the food. We would allow the importer to re-ship the chicken wings out of Barbados to a territory or country that would accept Grade 'B' chicken wings. That is reasonable. Why should they incur a loss on a shipment of food, the quality of which is good, but is not the standard that we use here in Barbados? That is the kind of circumstance in which you would want latitude.

Outside of that, there are circumstances in which we would want to order the complete disposal, by whatever method, of the foodstuff. There are circumstances in which you would order the destruction of the foodstuff because disposal and destruction are not necessarily the same thing. One could argue that we could take a decision to dispose of the foodstuff at sea but that would not be destruction. The common meaning of destruction would be to get rid of it altogether, like burning for instance. We may order that it goes into a landfill and lime be put on it so that it is inaccessible to persons who may hear that a shipment, has gone up to the landfill and they figure that there must be some good ones in between and they can get some out. In other countries, there is a high degree of scavenging at national landfills. Thank God, we do not, any longer, have that here in Barbados.

We want to have a range of decisions available to us to re-export, to dispose of or to destroy. This legislation allows us to do that, whereas, the previous legislation did not. Further, there is yet another regard in which this particular amendment, before the Chamber today, deviates from what existed before. In my opening remarks, as I detailed the circumstances out of which this legislative amendment was born, I made the point that a dispute arose as to what was to happen to the sugar. The importer took the view that as far as he was concerned, the sugar was still wholesome so that if I wanted it destroyed or disposed of, that was my problem and I could pay the cost. We took the view that the importer had, in fact, brought the foodstuff in, that we were making a decision and determination on the health and safety of all Barbadians under the legislation, and that the importer should

bear the cost of whatever we wanted done with it. The cost, at that time, I think, was estimated to be extremely high - a five figure, Sir. When we checked the legislation, we really were not empowered to make any such order to any importer or to any offender under the Act.

The Amendment, therefore, before this Chamber, incorporates a provision which allows us to charge the cost of disposal, destruction, re-exportation or whatever decision taken by the Ministry of Health, to the importer. That is reasonable. It is a serious point because if you bring in food that is unwholesome, we are not going to ask the taxpayers to pay for it. You are going to have to bear the cost of having it disposed of.

Were we at the Ministry to bear the cost, the taxpayers would be paying for this kind of thing every year because from time to time, we have problems so the cost must be borne by the importer. That is reasonable because if you affect a man at the level of his pocket, he is going to be more careful to behave in a way that is protective of the national interest. If he knows for a fact that if he brings food into Barbados that is unwholesome, he is going to have to bear the cost of re-exporting or destroying it - and those costs are going to run into the \$60 000 or \$100 000 figure, as indeed they can, depending on the size of the shipment and the method of disposal or destruction used, and how time consuming and labour intensive the process is - he is going to be careful, therefore, to make sure that food being carried for him is carried under the best possible circumstances and that he does not run the risk of bearing the cost of that destruction, re-exportation or disposal. I think that that is reasonable.

It is also good, Sir, in the sense that if you can say immediately to an importer, you have brought in the food, here is the sample, this is the report of the Government analyst, the findings are that the food is unwholesome - you can immediately say that the law obligates you to bear the cost of destruction or disposal. You can get the shipment moved out of the Port or wherever it is being detained, more quickly. It is not unreasonable that we should use a method that is quick, safe and effective.

We need to pause, I think, for just a moment to thank the public health inspectors ...

*Asides.*

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: In my constituency, my image needs no improvement. 11.55a.m.

In this regard, Sir, I think that this is an opportune time for us to pause and thank the public health inspectorate for the role that they play in defending the health and well-being of Barbadians.

*Aside.*

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: It is true and the Honourable Member for St. Lucy was saying that the former Member for St. Michael West was the Minister for seven years and did not once seek to improve the conditions of the public health inspectors. That in four years we have been able to agree and negotiate with them a package of improved remuneration and terms and conditions of service that I think will redound, not only to their personal benefit, but truly serves toward recognising the role that they play in our national health and well-being.

I want to share with the Chamber the kind of work, with reference to figures, that the public health inspectors are doing. Very often, people see them on the road but do not fully appreciate the gravity of the role they play and how wide-ranging it is, nor the number of skills: interpersonal skills, professional skills, technical skills they need to possess in order to fully execute their jobs. In this regard the public health inspectors every year, inspect in Barbados - in terms of protecting food quality because there are other disciplines and other roles that they perform and we will talk about them - 218 bakeries; 4 134 shops, supermarkets and street vendors; 1 072 restaurants and 194 hotels. That is what we have on the ground.

They were able last year, in respect of bakeries, to achieve a 97% licensing rate; in respect of shops, supermarkets and street vendors, a 96% licensing rate; in respect of restaurants, an 89% licensing rate and in respect of hotels an 88% licensing rate. This gives you some idea of the kind of activity that they have to be perpetually engaged in, to guarantee that food in each of these properties is maintained at a level where it is fit and wholesome for the public and the many visitors who come to our shore every year to consume.

This is a good record, but we will continue to strive for full licensing. There are those properties that are difficult and are breaching regulations of one sort or another. Our role and approach has been to try moral suasion, to put mechanisms in place to ensure that they improve constantly and come up to the standard where they can be licensed or where we are happy with the quality of the overall service and food. A 97% and a 96% is a high rate. For those that are in the 80s we have to try to get them into the 90s, because our goal would be to license every possible property in Barbados.

The law requires that where a manufacturing concern has a volume of business that is high, a public health inspector can be stationed permanently in that facility and the cost of the public health inspector must be borne by the manufacturing concern. In this regard and in order again to guarantee food quality, we have public health inspectors placed in many food manufacturing plants island wide and this in addition to the ones on which we do inspections at various intervals.

I have also moved, because of problems that were being experienced at the Psychiatric Hospital, to station a public health inspector at the Psychiatric Hospital and to use them more proactively and aggressively within the Government sector. Very often Government imposes rules and standards for the public which it does not follow and we can at times be the offender. In this regard, the public health inspectors will have to be increasingly vigilant and under my watch, have sought to make sure that Government agencies are held to the same standards to which we seek to hold private sector concerns.

During the course of any year, approximately 1 800 licenses are issued to food handlers for events such as Crop Over, Congaline and other social events and to itinerant vendors and so on. All of this work is done by the public health inspectorate. They have started doing as well, Sir, a number of training programmes for food handlers. They have done training programmes for food handlers in the public sector. We have sought at the Ministry of Health, wherever we have kitchen staff - because very often people come on to these jobs without training - to put in place a comprehensive regime for the training and enhancement of skills, led by the public health inspectorate.

The public health inspectorate has not only been training persons in the public sector, but has embarked on training programmes in the private sector and in order to stop food borne diseases in hotels and restaurants, have done training programmes with the food handling staff of restaurants and hotels. In fact, some 10 000 people work in the food industry in Barbados and the public health inspectorate, through these training programmes, is seeking to make sure that as many as possible of these persons who work in this industry - as well as those who come to the food service industry on an *ad hoc* basis; those persons who perhaps see an opportunity to make money at Crop Over and set up a stall; those persons who are determined that they want to sell at St. Lawrence Gap or outside the Boat Yard on Bay Street or other places in Barbados - all of these persons can benefit from the kinds of training that the public health inspectorate has to offer. That kind of work, though very detailed and taxing and often done outside of their regular hours, really has tremendous scope to improve our national image as being a safe destination for tourists and that is important. 12.05 p.m.

We cannot underestimate how important a consideration it is when a person takes a holiday. There have been complaints in respect of other Caribbean destinations - I am using Caribbean here in its broadest context - that food at a particular hotel is not good and there was a big news story on CNN where hundreds of people left a particular hotel and returned to their country because there was a terrible outbreak of food borne disease.

The role that the Public Health Inspectors play in keeping such outbreaks in local hotels and restaurants to a minimum has tremendous beneficial impact on the tourist industry and on it going abroad. People will ask you how was the food in Barbados and when people can say that the food was excellent and speak of not having had any complaints, not having picked up any diseases, any illnesses and not having had any diarrhoeal problems, that is not a small thing so we really should not underestimate this work. As I indicated, a lot of it is done by the Public Health Inspectors on their own initiative, in their own time and at their own personal effort. Very often we do not pause sufficiently to come to grips with the role that they play and the extent to which their dedication and commitment as a professional grouping have redound to the national good of our country.

The kind of courses that are offered when they do their training in the hotel sector or in the public sector for food handlers, are personal hygiene, the micro biology of food, food sanitation, food borne illnesses and their prevention, the law that relates to food sanitation, the introduction of Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system- and I will speak to that - food safety and the management of disease vectors. The disease vectors, of course, would be cockroaches, rodents and so on.

We have been trying to ensure that Barbados meets its international obligations in respect of food safety and food protection. In this regard, we have moved to the introduction of an international standard Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point system (HACCP). HACCP as it is called is ...

*Asides.*

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Essentially, HACCP is a methodology for the guaranteeing of food qualities at every stage from growth and manufacture to the point of sale. Mechanisms and systems are implemented at every stage, and these are objective standards, to ensure that from the time that cabbage is planted to when it comes to you as the consumer, that it has been grown and kept in the best possible circumstances.

Similarly, in the manufacturing plant, from the time the meat comes in on the hoof you are protecting the food quality. You are looking to see for instance, what kind of raw meat is coming into the manufacturing plant and once it gets into the plant, how it is going to be maintained and processed. In this regard, I would wish to inform the Chamber that we are placing two Public Health Inspectors in the new abattoir and that should come on stream by August 1 or so, my own guess in terms of timing.

So HACCP protects the consumer by guaranteeing food quality at every stage of growth or production to the

point of sale. We have been training our Public Health Inspectors in a number of courses and in the rudiments of HACCP and they have in turn been passing their knowledge onto the consumers and onto other persons in the system. We have been training some of our Public Health Inspectors and they have been going through intensive training. We have been doing rotations in the rudiments of HACCP and they in turn have been passing on what they have been learning to the local public and to persons working within the food industry.

It is this kind of system, knowledge and protection which is going to allow us to meet World Trade Organisation (WTO) requirements. Very often we speak of WTO in respect of trade issues but if we want to be able to export our processed food; to export the fish that we package and to export all of the things that we manufacture; then we have to meet these international standards. We also have to be WTO compliant and we have to be skilled and efficient compliant in the techniques and methodologies of HACCP.

This will have implications for food manufacturers and food exporters and it will have implications for indigenous industries under the WTO regulations. It will have implications for eco-labelling. Already when one goes into the supermarkets, one sees on, let say, cans of fish - dolphin friendly, environmentally friendly and eco-friendly. This is the kind of labelling which tells the consumer that something is organically produced or has not been produced in a manner adverse to the environment or that we have not used an endangered species. Those in the food export sectors of Barbados are going to have to become familiar with all of these regulations and requirements if we are to meet international standards under WTO. The kind of training that we are giving Public Health Inspectors is critical to that whole process and to Barbados being moved the next step of the way as a global competitor and for us to be ready in a way that a lot of our Caribbean brothers and sisters are not getting ready for competition and trade at the international level under the new global regulations and in the new global marketplace. 12.15p.m.

The role of the public health inspectors goes beyond food and industry. They are heavily involved in educating the public to protect their own health in respect of certain types of matters. They, for instance, have been carrying the fight with respect to education on Dengue Fever. They are the ones who are carrying the fight with respect to vector control in the community. They do inspections of the community and they advise householders what they ought not to be doing or what they ought to be doing or if, in fact, they have the same home environment in which all members of the family are protected and their health is also protected. This is an important role for them to perform. It is one of the roles that we have not been sufficiently mindful of.

There has been a view, out there, that people wish to have a more proactive public health inspectorate and we are going to be seeking to do this in three ways:

- (1) by stepping up their activities, communities and individual intervention and the educational programmes.
- (2) by the more aggressive use of existing legislation.

Very often people breach public health laws, whether they are keeping derelict buildings, derelict vehicles, dumping illegally or maintaining overgrown lots because they do not feel or fear that the full force of the law will attend them if they do it. It is the commercial sector in particular that is into the heaviest illegal dumping. It is not the private householder who will throw out his old stove or his extra garbage. It is the commercial sector that will go into the gullies and the open places and dump illegally, rather than go up to the landfill. The public health inspectors have been mandated to more vigorously pursue the legislation on the statute book to prosecute offenders, particularly the big boys, who can and should be doing better. That mass illegal dumping at the commercial level puts our water quality at risk.

People are dumping illegally in the Belle Gully where there is a major catchment area of water. People are dumping illegally at Waterford, at Hothersal Turning, at various places in St. Philip, all over Barbados, even outside the landfill. The system of fresh water that we use is such that we have our underground reserves and we use our natural coral stone to filter the water.

When people dump garbage which is toxic, harmful or potentially harmful if allowed to seep into the water supply they really are putting the whole community at risk and our water supply in the greatest possible jeopardy. Those persons who are doing this willfully, persistently and for profit, because they are paid in many instances to dump in the landfill and they will do it illegally instead, must feel the full force of the law. I feel that once we start a few prosecutions people will recognise how serious we are about this, then those other persons who are doing it will fall into line.

The third regard in which we are going to seek to change how the public health inspectorate is functioning is to look at having them work flexi-time, having them work other than 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. I made the point that a lot of what they do they do not get paid for. They do it on their own time. When one saw in the paper a couple weeks ago a discovery of mosquito breeding at a gully in St. James North, the public health inspectors went on a Saturday in their own time. A lot of what they are doing is in their own time. We certainly have to look, if we are to become

effective at formalising that kind of approach. Clearly the nature of what they do is such that they have to work nights. They have to work evenings. People are at work during the day and must make contact with their public health inspector or can only make contact with their public health inspector after they get home from work.

There are persons who are selling at St. Lawrence Gap, for instance, into the wee hours of the morning. A lot of what they need to do has to be done after 4.30 p.m. and while they do it now willingly and of their own professionalism and concern for national standards we have to seek to formalise and institutionalise this approach.

In this regard, during recent meetings with the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW) I asked - I think it was during meetings with them, if not it was with the public health inspectors themselves and we are going to ask the NUPW but I think I did raise it with the NUPW - that a committee be set up of the Union, Ministry of the Civil Service and the Ministry of Health comprising public health inspectors and union personnel, technocrats from health and from the Ministry of the Civil Service to look at the issue of flexi-time for public health inspectors. It would also look at possible incentive packages which could be put in place and to see how we would structure this flexi-time in order to achieve maximum possible island wide coverage by the public health inspectorate in every area where they are called on to perform a role or service all the time.

Two weeks ago, Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked mischievously, as is always his approach...

*Aside.*

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I would have thought you would have seen it wider and deeper than that but since his role is to create mischief by his own admission, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy raised the question that he wanted to hear about money for the public health inspectors so I will come to the point now where I want to talk about money for the public health inspectors.

I came to the Ministry of Health in September 1994 and for perhaps seven plus years prior to that there had been talk about restructuring the public health inspectorate but it had never happened. We sought to work with the union to set up a committee and the public health inspectors, or the environmental health officers as they are also called to set up a committee. They have an association, a professional organisation, the Barbados Association of Environmental Health Officers and they do excellent work within the scope of that organisation for enhancement of their professional skills and in terms of what needs to be done to improve

things in Barbados. A committee was set up to look at the whole issue of restructuring and by the end of last year ... 12.25 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. I think it is unparliamentary for the Honourable Member for St. James South to refer to an Honourable Member as "mischievous" and I think that she should withdraw those remarks. I was waiting to give her adequate time to recognise her error seeing that she was the chaplain of the House this morning. That type of behaviour would not be tolerated by the Chaplain of the House.

I am asking you for your ruling in this particular matter.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No point of order.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Sir, I was making the point that we tend to see Barbados as static but when you look at all the construction that is going on, the new restaurants and businesses that are going up, you should appreciate that Barbados is growing or certainly the number of businesses. In fact, we found on examination that the number of premises in Barbados grew from 60 000 to 103 000 by 1994. I am unable to say, specifically, at what point the number of premises in Barbados were determined to be 60 000. By 1994, there were 103 000 in Barbados and that gives an idea of how the number of premises that they would have to inspect have nearly doubled.

It was felt that roughly 1600 premises should be in a public health inspector's catchment area but some had as many as 2500 premises. In some areas, for instance, St. James and St Philip and Christ Church which were the three areas of the highest growth, St. James had 119 per cent growth, Christ Church 81 per cent, St. Philip 69 per cent. In this regard, it was determined that we would have to look at the remuneration package of the public health inspectors, given their work load and given their call for an improved package. It was also found that in terms of commercial premises that hairdressing salons had increased by 169 per cent and that businesses engaged in the slaughtering of meat and fish processing and that kind of activity had grown by 423 per cent.

After much discussion with the unions, the public health inspectors, the Ministry of Health and the Civil Service the following package was agreed to. It was agreed that the Chief Public Health Officer would be put on the same level as the Chief Immigration Officer. I have outlined the role of the public health inspectorate in defending Barbados in public health so you would see how important a role the Chief Public Health Officer plays and it was in fact brought to the same level as the Chief Immigration Officer.

It was agreed that 21 new posts of Environmental Health Officer I or II or Public Health Officer I or II should

be phased in during the financial year 1998-99 and 1999-2000; that we would create 4 posts of Environmental Health specialists and that there would be the creation of the post of Deputy Chief Environmental Health Officer or Deputy Chief Public Health Inspector. You can use the two titles interchangeably.

Overall, apart from what I just said, there was a re-classification and a re-designation of posts relating to public health inspectors - Chief Public Health Officer, the introduction of the post of Deputy Chief, the upgrading of the post of Senior Public Health Inspector up several grade levels. The Public Health Inspectors I and II or Environmental Health Officer I and II should also receive an increase in the salary. The public health trainees at that level will remain the same but once they come out of the training programme, then as public health inspectors, they will enjoy the new remuneration package.

In addition to those things, Sir, it was agreed that the implementation date for the regraded posts would be April 1, 1995, so there was going to be considerable back pay for the public health inspectors.

*Aside.*

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I am being told by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that this should have happened in September 1994. If, perhaps, my predecessor in office had left something for me to run with, that would have been possible but I am told, Sir, that when the package for the public health inspectors was evolved prior to my coming to office that what was put before the previous Minister caused him to remark that the mountain had strained and produced a gnat. That would tell you, Sir, that he regarded what came out of his own Ministry as so totally worthless that it could not have advanced the cause of the public health inspectors and, in fact, we had to start the process all over again.

We know perhaps why, because he was so busy at St. Joseph's that he really would have had no time for the public health inspectors.

I am giving to the Chamber the other benefits that will accrue to the public health inspectors: the regrading of posts and the new salary levels going back to 1995; an increase in travel allowance to environmental health assistants from \$24 to \$200 per month, which is a considerable increase and other benefits would also apply to those who have particular areas of training. The Establishment Order which will give effect to these changes, of which I have spoken, has passed the Cabinet and will shortly be before this House. It is now only a matter of time before the public health inspectors have their package or their cash in hand. 12.35 p.m.

Of course, Sir, there are other initiatives that the public health inspectors are undertaking but I wanted today to focus on their role in the protection of food quality and health and safety. We will, on another day, look at other issues relating to the health inspector and the multi-faceted role that they play.

I am very happy to bring this Amendment today before this Chamber and ask for the support of the House in this Amendment which would, in fact, ensure the highest quality food for Barbadians and visitors alike, which would strengthen the hands of the public health inspector. I am glad to be able to announce to the Chamber some of the improved remuneration terms and conditions which the public health inspector may shortly expect to enjoy for their very considerable work.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must admit that I cannot be happy when I consider that this particular problem of which the Minister spoke, about importing sugar, happened some two years ago. The Minister has admitted to this House that between two years ago and today, they could have been more sugar imported into this country with the same problem and that the public health inspectors would not have had the legal authority to deal with this particular problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every Tuesday, we are bombarded in this Assembly with matters not as important as this and a matter that is as important as this, took two years after the gentlemen and ladies who work in the public health directorate informed the Ministry of Health that they had no power to deal with this particular problem. It took two years. What is interesting, is it is clear to me that this has to be a personality problem, for the simple reason that the Minister brought this particular amendment when the Honourable Member was bringing the regrading for the public health officers. The Honourable Member could not approach the public health directorate until she set aside certain problems that the Honourable Member kept away from that directorate.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker,...

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. The Honourable Member is seeking to suggest to the House that the legislative amendment did not come before the Chamber because of the regrading exercise. When the Ministry of Health was advised by the Solicitor General's Chambers of the loophole in the legislation, because we asked for a legal opinion, a policy paper was then formulated and sent to the Cabinet. The policy paper went on to the Attorney General's Chambers for the legislation to be drafted. It has nothing to do with the regrading exercise.

We were waiting for the legislation to be drafted and as soon as it was returned to the Ministry of Health from the Attorney General's Chambers, where the legal draftsmen were drafting it, we brought it here. I believe it came to the Ministry only last week or the week before so we came right away. I would not wish the Honourable Member to be allowed to mislead the House, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Your point is taken. Could you proceed, please.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying, and I stick to my point, Sir, because the public of Barbados knows that there was conflict between the Ministry of Health and the public officers for years since 1994. Every proposal placed by the public health inspectors, was ignored by the Ministry of Health, causing them to have to strike and sick out on many occasions. It is clear that conflict deprived Barbadians of proper health standards because the public health officers did their job and the Ministry of Health failed to do what it should have done. I cannot assure Barbadians that there was not foodstuff that entered this country because the necessary legislation that should have been passed two years ago was not passed. I challenge the Minister to deny that.

There is another piece of foolishness in this Amendment. Imagine, Sir, after two years you have an amendment before this House which puts the onus on the importers. It is the biggest piece of ignorance. No importer in Barbados owns a ship. No importer in Barbados can control who is a stow-away on a ship. Why should an importer have the onus of dumping cargo that belongs to somebody else? It is the biggest piece of foolishness. I am calling on this House and the Cabinet of Barbados to go back and seriously think about what it has done and change this amendment. I will not support an amendment which tells me that the importer is responsible for goods that belongs to somebody else.

The importer is responsible when the ship gets into the harbour. If there is a problem before it gets into the harbour, it is not the responsibility of the importer. What nonsense are they bringing before this House today, Mr. Deputy Speaker? And they are saying that I am mischievous? What we need to do is get rid of the Minister and all this foolishness will stop.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am saying Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a serious point, because of this Amendment, Sir, we can have a situation in Barbados where importers refuse to import goods because they recognise that they will be faced with charges. The Honourable Member for St. James South admitted that the charges are high. I know of no importer who has no control of a ship who wants

to pay those charges. I am asking for common sense to prevail in this particular matter. I am asking for that to happen. I also want the Minister to tell this House how wide this legislation is because the Honourable Member for St. James South glossed over the abattoir and stopped without saying anything. I want to know what effect this is going to have on backyard slaughtering. I want the Minister of Health to tell us this. The Honourable Member has also accused many people. Let me tell you something, Sir. The biggest threat to Barbados is the Government because if they would clean the gutters and debush the country, we would not get the mosquitoes problem that we are getting today. To say that the problem is not in St. James South but it is in St. James North, does not tell me that the Ministry of Health, under the Minister, is performing the right job. It tells me that you have debushed St. James South and you have not done it to St. James North.

We need to get these matters cleared up.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Illegal dumping is also a problem. I want to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is the increase in the number of truck loads that have been dumped illegally since the Environmental Levy, has it had any effect on the country of Barbados. We need to know that, Sir. I also want to know, now that this particular problem is solved this way, if the Ministry of Health, has any other problems that they are waiting to solve like this one? It means that the country is being held to ransom by a Minister because the particular Minister cannot approach the particular civil servants. I think that no country at all, should be allowed to run like this.

Since 1994, the public health officers have been informing Barbados of the particular problems they have in the Ministry - their own Ministry. It took the Ministry over five years to solve the problem. They feel that the only way they can solve the problem with the public health inspectors, is by offering the back pay that they asked for as if to give the impression that they were being held to ransom by the public officers and that is not fair to the public officers.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You can talk what you like but they are points that must be repeated. They are points that will be repeated by myself.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You better leave me because you were the Deputy Speaker and you stopped to be the floating Minister.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I will be my own leader. I am leading today and you cannot lead anybody. I am leading today.

*Asides.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I do not care. Nobody can control me over here. I will take mandate from no one. Any time I want help, I can call on the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and he will come over because he is my friend.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please get back to the subject. 12.45 p.m.

I want to know, Sir, when this amendment will allow the public health inspectors to investigate what is going on at Greenland, the biggest source of mosquitoes in this country. I want to know when fish will be placed in Greenland to protect Barbadians from mosquitoes and I am serious about this.

I want to see this Amendment giving the public health inspectors the power to go to Greenland and to inspect it, Sir, and to make sure that all those mosquitoes down there are eradicated. I want this in this amendment because it does not make sense, Sir, to do this amendment and come back next week, when an investigation is done at Greenland, to have to change this legislation to accommodate that. I want them to do it today and I am hoping that the Honourable Minister of Health would give the House the commitment that she would do everything in her power to make sure that the breeding of mosquitoes in Greenland would stop.

*Aside.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I understand, Sir, that the abattoir in Christ Church will have public health inspectors but that is nothing new, that is expected. I want the Minister to tell this House what effect this amendment is going to have on those butchers out there who do their work on weekends and whether this amendment will cause those butchers to be harassed. I do not want anything to be sneaked into a legislation, giving the impression that you are not dealing with a particular issue when in truth and in fact you are dealing with it. Two months ago, just before the closure of the abattoir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James South giving the public health directorate a mandate. I hope today that this is not the conclusion of the mandate because we have men and women out there who have to survive.

Sir, I want to go back to what I spoke previously, the importer who happens to be a local person and the shipowner who happens to be a foreigner. It is clear to me

that legislation passed in this country is normally passed in the interest of foreigners and not in the interest of the people in this country. If there is one point that I have made today, Sir, the one point that I need this House to consider, is this foolishness where the importer is being asked to take responsibility for something he knows nothing about.

The importer buys good quality products. The importer does not buy inferior products or he does not buy products that have anything spilled on them, so how can the responsibility be his. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am calling on you and the Cabinet of Barbados to recognise that they have made an error and that they need not continue with this amendment but they need to take it back to Cabinet or do the necessary amendment now, Sir, to make sure that this amendment really makes sense.

We might find ourselves come Christmas time where importers feel that this commitment is too great and they refuse to import goods in this country. If I were an importer having to deal with a situation like this where I have not created a problem, I would have to think seriously whether I would import food. Surely, it should be the owners of the ships to make sure that their cargo is carried safely. It is like telling me that because I rent a hotel room, I am responsible for the hotel room and the air-condition in the room - foolishness. It cannot be fair, and this legislation needs to be amended again to correct this particular problem.

We also have a situation, Sir, where people recognize that the public health inspectors sometimes have no time for their families during busy times. The Minister admitted that sometimes they are not paid for the number of hours they work. I am saying, if a Ministry admits that they recognise that public health inspectors work beyond the call of duty, surely, there should be some other prerequisites these officers would be able to enjoy which are different from other officers who do not necessarily have to work the hours they do. We have to have a human face in this particular issue. We cannot ask people to perform well and when they do, we do not compensate them.

I am asking this Parliament to consider everything that has been said by the Minister, take the foolishness out and take the sensible things that she has said, deal with them and throw out the nonsense, as usual, that comes from the Honourable Member for St. James South.

*Aside.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I can say that because she said something about me and it was allowed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we recognise that we must protect the health of this country and that the mandate to protect the health of this country must be placed in the hands

of people who are serious about it. I cannot see any Cabinet of Barbados or any Minister, who is serious about the job they have to do, allowing ship owners to get away with foolishness on the ships and then penalise importers for something they are not guilty of.

This call from this Side, Sir, is to make sure that the public health inspectors get their due reward and also to make sure that the importers of this country are not burdened with something for which they are not responsible. I think it is a fair charge, Sir. That is why I am calling on the Honourable gentlemen on the Other Side and the women who are prepared to think through this particular legislation and amendment and use logic to support me in this particular call that the importer is not the one to be responsible.

I know that there are many men and women on the Other Side who agree with me. I hope that, because they have gone to Cabinet and it has been decided at Cabinet, they are not blinded into a situation where they believe that something is wrong, but they must support it because they saw it at Cabinet and they agree with it. I know when the Honourable Member for St. Michael West hears the truth, he cannot agree with lies and I know that his heart will be in the right place and he will do what is right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, at face value, Sir, this amendment looks correct but after listening to the Honourable Minister of Health, I cannot support this amendment because I have pointed out a serious error.

*Aside.*

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this particular problem that I have pointed out to this Assembly is serious enough, Sir, that I am hoping that the Honourable Members on the Other Side would recognise that they have made an error and correct the error before it comes to the vote. If it comes to the vote as stated by the Minister, then I will have no other choice than to vote against it and I will let the record show that I voted against it because I think it is a serious error and I end on that particular point, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Mr. D. T. GILL: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy was at pains, Sir, to get his major point over, that is, the importer having to bear the onus of the product which has to be eventually dumped.

Sir, I would like to compliment the Honourable Minister of Health for the work which has been done and which is ongoing with the public health inspectorate and I am pleased to see that they are being trained along the lines of HACCP.

Sir, not so long ago we had a problem with the flour when it was discovered that the flour was treated with a substance, bromate, which has been banned in other jurisdictions. Sir, the mere fact that Barbados is a consuming nation and - not getting into the asides, Sir, - I am aware that it has been changed and I am aware that there are more modern and friendly and healthier techniques to use than substances such as bromate. Ordinary vitamin C, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you would know that from your training, could be used in the same capacity. 12.55 p.m.

Sir, Barbados is a heavily consuming and importing nation and most of our food is imported, therefore, I would like to see this Bill in a more complete form. I know we will have to come back at a later stage sometime where you will have a Food and Drug Bill or a Food Bill and a Drug Bill, just as how the time has come for us to have an Environmental Bill and not attached as an appendix to other substantive legislation.

Sir, let us not fool ourselves. We can no longer expect that the way in which food is prepared; the way in which vegetables are produced and the techniques and the technology used for harvesting and manufacturing will be the same today as it was at the turn of the century which we are currently in. Therefore, to feed a global population which is constantly increasing; to get quicker yields and to get shorter growth period and to fight crop resistances, all of these real problems must be tackled in a very scientific manner.

Therefore, for us to sit blindly and say it really does not affect us, or okay, let it go, it is just another one of those things, would be really foolhardy. Therefore, we must be aware of substances which find their way into food we consume. We should be more than aware because we are players in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and we are signatories to lots of conventions etc., therefore, it behoves us to follow from the beginning to end what transpires with the food we eventually consume.

Sir, we know that right now there are lots of trade wars between developed countries. Sir, only recently we had one with Belgium and France, we get France and England, we get Korea and Belgium as these countries seek to look after their health and well-being. We have one country saying: "Well we are not going to import your beef if it contains growth hormones." This is the stand I want to see. If Barbados cannot do it singularly, then the regional body. The Ministers of Health, the Ministers of Agriculture have got to come together at the CARICOM level and make it quite clear what ingredients should be banned from the foods which we import and eventually eat.

Sir, we have seen them tinkering with the hormones which they gave the various cattle and pigs. We see that they are force-feeding the poultry. Although at this stage we are

not importing quantities of milk, we do not know what will happen down the road with a trade free-up and when barriers fall and gates begin to open.

Sir, we also have to look at the genetic altering of certain vegetables - and this was a big debate in Britain a few months ago. Sir, I am not interested if I were to eat tomatoes or English potatoes that were genetically altered but there are those people who manifest certain allergies because of these genetically altered vegetables. The environmentalists, on the other hand, are somewhat wary as to the effect that they can have with respect to "the wild species, or the natural species or the original species."

Sir, we must also be wary - and this I know is done locally - of the antibiotics which are given to animals lactating or otherwise and the ones which create quite a bit of stir are the broad range of the tetracycline and, again, I know that you are at home with matters of this interest.

Sir, we should also know about the intensive spraying and Barbadians cannot get away from it although I am looking at it from an international point of view. Barbadians like spraying heavily. A Barbadian will read that they are only to use a teaspoon to a gallon of water and, you know, they will want to use a pint to a gallon of water but that seems to be the mentality throughout the world even with the bigger countries where you use aerial spraying.

The Honourable Attorney General - he is not in here today - said sometime ago that the time is going to come when people are going to be demanding the right to know exactly what their diets contain particularly those which are imported.

Sir, we also see that the Canadians and the members of the European Union, they themselves, are asking a lot more and are demanding a lot more of their various Ministers of Health and their Ministers of Agriculture and the same will eventually happen right here in Barbados and in the Caribbean. The experience with DDT, for example, is well documented and well chronicled. It is one of the best if not the best pesticide ever synthesised but it had its problems and these problems reverberated well after it was banned.

Sir, there are going to be people who will ask eventually these questions based on ethics or their religious principles. There are those who are health conscious and a lot have been said in recent times, even here in Barbados, about healthy lifestyles. These people along with the environmentalists and all the others will want to know more.

Sir, there are serious problems - I am surprised that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy did not speak to this because I know he likes to speak on matters pertaining to poultry - and we must know exactly why there are problems now internationally with this serious cancer-causing agent, dioxin, which is present in the chickens which are grown in

Belgium. We will have to find out if it is the litter they use, if it is a combination of the litter they use and maybe the sprays that they use.

We must also desist from certain practices. I do not know how common it is in Barbados now but it was practiced here, where the droppings of the chicken were actually recycled into the feed for pigs purely because of the high nitrogen content in these droppings. That, as you well understand or know, was the reason why the offal that was used in the cows' feed throughout Britain, which is a common practice, turned up such a serious illness as the 'mad cow' disease in the animals and eventually in the human population, the one they call BSE, that is Bovine Spongy Form Encephalitis. 1.05p.m.

Sir, we had human beings actually manifesting some of the behavioural characteristics as did occur in the animals so these are things we must be wary of. We must have people trained well enough to supervise locally and to be able to monitor, no matter from which corner of the world the product originates, so that we are not only signatories when it comes to the hard trading techniques.

Sir, it affects you whether you are a vegetarian because lots of vegetarians think they get away because there is this myth that growth enhancing, spraying, *et cetera* are confined only to the livestock industry, but grain, the very nuts which we consume, packaged or otherwise, if not properly scrutinised at the port of entry and tested can slip in with serious cancer-causing fungus. Our directorate, whether public health or otherwise must be alert, well-equipped and well-trained enough to be able to detect and to pick up problems like these which through no fault of ours, we inherit.

Then, Sir, there are those people who, and this is coming now to the local market or the local jurisdiction, will from time to time want to know what slaughtering technique was used, whether you conformed to religious principles or whether there was cross contamination. As the Minister said, so rightly, these are areas which we will have to address and which the new abattoir will have to address eventually.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we need food legislation, as I said initially, on its own. We need to have a body regulating the standards. I know we have the Barbados National Standard Institute (BNSI) but I think their terms of reference are a bit narrow. I know for sure that the analytical tools which they have are not of the standard that will be able to do certain testing. With us consuming such large volumes of imported foodstuff it is time a regulatory body separate from the BNSI, because I know they have standards for maybe corned beef and maybe one or two other food items, be set up by an Act of Parliament to be able to do all the testing and analysing. Within that body there will be more than ample room for the public health inspectorate to play their role.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that next door, Trinidad and Tobago has a food and drug directorate. I know sometimes the pace with which they do things, particularly with neighbouring islands, is somewhat frustrating. At times it even frustrates the players from their local market. I do not think we would want to see a body as partly weighed down in the amount of inertia that that body to which I referred in Trinidad and Tobago seems to be pressurised with.

Guyana has a food directorate but it does not deal with measurements and standards as such. Internationally, in Britain they have the British Standards Institution separate from another institution which looks after the regulation of standards, *et cetera*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may argue that such an institution, such a body would look after food and drugs, or food separate, but I think the analytical tools would not be that different that one institution could not look after food and drugs for the testing of food and drugs. It may be argued that such an institution would be costly but I think for the pace at which things are happening, the rate at which things occur, the rate at which foreign substances intentionally and otherwise find their way into what we consume, we must be very vigilant and at all times present to be able to oversee and monitor what comes into our shores.

Sir, we have heard the Minister speak about the World Trade Organisation. As signatories to this Organisation we should have the infrastructure at all levels compatible with the organisation itself. Again, Sir, although the BNSI does prepare standards for local manufacturing the basic standards which are required in the developed countries do not have that power.

It is no sense saying, Sir, that you have access to what is called the Codex Alimentarius and that is a set of guidelines set out by FAO and the World Health Organisation - if you see what is happening internationally, there seems to be a greater point of convergence between the things agricultural and things medical. Such guidelines are set out jointly by these two international bodies - it is no sense saying you have access to what is right and what is wrong as set down by these two bodies and yet you cannot perform or carry out the actual standard testing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the time has come for not only supervising the sanitary practices but methodologies also, supervising what we call the phyto-sanitary properties to be put in place. It should not be difficult for Barbados to say we are going to do business with those people who are the ISO 9000 and 14 000 compliant. It is now a growing practice. Companies beat their chest when they know that they follow these guidelines and are so accepted. 1.15p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in concluding, we must not only follow the spirit and letter but we must follow what will happen to our human resources. We must make sure that our people's health comes first. We must be wary of the practices which will creep into the society as we trade more freely and trade relaxes a lot more.

We must therefore not put the hard cash of trade as the number one priority but we must also take into consideration the long lasting effects, the cancer-causing agents, the ability for people to lead healthy lives and not aggravate the ailments which are already so common in Barbados such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer.

Sir, it is from that perspective that I look at this Bill and I would hope that in the not too distant future we would have a debate here to look, during a later Sitting, at a wider legislation to deal with food and items for consumption whether it is strictly food or drugs and pharmaceuticals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am obliged to you.

#### SUSPENSION

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.15 p.m.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

*The question that the Sitting be suspended until 2.15 in the afternoon was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly. 1.18p.m.*

#### RESUMPTION Mr. DEPUTY

SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to support the Amendment to the Health Services Act as introduced by the Minister to the House. I commend the personnel with the Health Service of Barbados as far as the requirements and standards that have been introduced over the years for the process of not only the handling of food at various establishments but some of the principles and some of the guidelines that are laid down as far as the health standards of Barbados are concerned. These officers and inspectors from the Ministry of Health, on their daily routine, have been able to maintain what we can consider to be very strong and sound hygienic surroundings in terms of the various establishments across Barbados.

When one considers, based on the records that have been shown, in relation to the registered restaurants, the registered bakeries and various places that they have to

inspect to maintain the qualities and standards that have to be carried out on a daily basis, I think that they should be highly commended for the work that has been done.

There are still some areas within the work which I do not think really fall on the inspectors but it has a lot to do with the householder and some of the people who are responsible. I am speaking mainly in some areas where there is indiscriminate dumping although the Ministry of Health has found it fit to place the various warning signs and to let the general public know that there are penalties for the indiscriminate dumping. I think these are the circumstances that make the work difficult for the members of the inspectorate of Barbados. The householder in some cases does not seem to respect some of the health requirements. In this light, I would also like to draw to the Minister's attention that these goodly gentlemen and ladies who work within the departments of the various polyclinics across Barbados should be assisted in some way. They could be some other programme which could be introduced by way of the television or by way of a promotional programme to educate householders and some of the people who just dispose of their garbage, at any place, at any time across Barbados.

As one who loves to drive and admire the beauty of my country, it is appalling at times to see some of what is done in relation to the dumping of garbage. I take notice of the area which I would like to draw to this Chamber, the area which I think is Kingsland, just above the area of the Drive-In. As you come out of the Drive-In and you go towards that area, for some reason or another, people seem to think that it is a dumping ground. Whenever you pass there is an awful smell and lots of garbage disposed anywhere in that area. If that is something that could be done in this day and age, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think it rests on the shoulders of the inspectorate. I think it rests on the householders of Barbados who seem to just package their little garbage bags and instead of placing those garbage bags where they should be positioned, they throw them in areas where they consider that people, do not use. That is one of the things that I am concerned about.

What I am also concerned about is the handling of food. When we look at the handling of food and we look at the fact that almost 89% of the restaurants in Barbados are covered. You have a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you deal with some of the vendors ... I would like to commend the members of the inspectorate for the work that they have been doing in relation to a lot of vendors along the street. Also, in Crop Over - a lot of people do not know the amount of work that these goodly gentlemen do as far as Crop Over is concerned. Every single stall, every little booth, every little food handler that take place during Crop Over - I have been involved and I can tell you that when people are at home sleeping, those goodly ladies and gentlemen are out there making sure that the revellers for Crop Over are taken care of. That all the health standards and all the requirements that should be introduced are carried out.

I would hope that the same thing could be done for some of the vendors that I see certain places across Barbados, for example, the St. Lawrence Gap area. I say this because I have been a victim of food poisoning only a month ago. I cannot blame the person whom I purchased the product from. I will have to blame myself for not using my eyes. I realised only after in the doctor's clinic that I had purchased something without observing how it was prepared. That was a situation where a steak of fish was wrapped in silver foil, placed in a plastic container, then taken out of the silver foil and put on a plate. I do not know how long the fish was there in the silver foil or how long it was kept in the plastic container. I cannot blame the person, I have to blame myself for not observing what I was buying.

What I would like to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when you look at the St. Lawrence Gap area and you look at some of the vendors that ply that area, because of the amount of pedestrians and the amount of vehicles that pass St. Lawrence Gap almost every minute, I would also like to see some sort of protection, by way of a glass or something, placed in front of the area where those people are preparing the hot dogs, hamburger or whatever for the benefit of the consumer because it is dangerous. If you are some person who is out every night and like to frequent those places, you will probably get a steak of fish or hamburger, but when you consider the movement of traffic and people standing up over these various vendors and carrying on all types of conversations, I think that this is something that the inspectors need to look at, and that it be improved with some sort of glass covering. Even those people who are serving the food, when they are talking, to make sure that the saliva does not have contact with the food served much less the dust from the vehicles that pass the street. That is something that I would like to draw to the House's attention. I am sure that the goodly gentlemen who are involved in implementing the health standards of Barbados will probably take a look at what I have just said and they can see for themselves that that is something that needs to be looked at.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I look at the work that the Ministry of Health has done with these goodly gentlemen over the years, even in my St. Michael North West, where they have carried out the programme of making sure that the residents understand the importance of garbage disposal. That the residents understand the importance of maintaining proper health standards in their very home in relation to plants. They come around in a very gentle manner, they inspect and make sure that everything is done so that you will not inconvenience the other neighbour because you may have plants which may be accumulating mosquitoes and those different types of things. They do not harass you, they seem to educate the householder. That is extremely important because years ago the inspectors would come with a book and a ladle, look into the water and if it was not right, you were placed before the courts. Those days are no more. I have discovered that these goodly gentlemen have been able to come and talk to you. They have visited several

places that I know of and I can tell you that the way they put over what is required as far as the health standards are concerned, I am sure that somewhere along the line, that going in that direction will mean well and be an improvement for the Ministry of Health and the inspectors. That seem to say that, as far as the public health inspectors are concerned, the training which they have been given over the years, has not only been training which they have kept close to their bosom but training which they seem to want to pass on to the householders of Barbados.

Further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what I want to highlight under this Amendment as far as dealing with the packaging of bread and the handling of food ... It is a known fact that most of the people who have to handle food must obtain the necessary health certificate from a medical practitioner. This is something that I believe also must be carefully watched where because of the movement or because of the vast turn over of that particular business that you see people who might not have been able to obtain the doctor's certificate handling those products. I think that you do not want to police it as if they were detectives, but you want the health standards to be maintained. If at any point the health standards are broken down where people could handle food without having the necessary documents that give them the right to handle the food, that is where the problem lies. I would like more policing done in that area. 2.35 p.m.

The law requires that in restaurants, the people who are handling food wear head covers to prevent the hair from breaking and falling into what they are serving. I have seen within recent times some of the established restaurants in Barbados not carrying out the policy as laid down and not carrying out the health requirements. I would also like to appeal to the goodly gentlemen that this is another area they need to look into. Some of the fast food restaurants in Barbados are guilty of it. They are guilty of it from the point of view that because of the volume of business, because of the movement of staff, in some cases, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are people who are handling food within those restaurants that are not carrying out the requirements and are not wearing the caps that are necessarily provided for them to be worn to be protected. That is an area that we need to look at since we have such a high standard of health requirements in Barbados. I think it is easy for one to detect the loop holes and I have been detecting some of the loop holes as far as that area is concerned.

As I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had dealings with the inspectorate in relation to the setting up of the staff at Crop Over. I know that even the young men who sell coconut water on Kadooment Day, are subjected to the requirements on that day. I do not know if they are subject to it in other places across Barbados, but I have witnessed down to the very looking at the equipment, looking at where they are going to store their coconuts. This is what I

consider to be a group of people who are concerned about the health standards of Barbados and because they are concerned about the health standards of Barbados, they are committed to their jobs. Apart from being committed to their jobs, they realise that if the health standards of Barbados should ever fall that they are the ones who would be responsible, because they are the ones who have to carry out and maintain the required health standards.

It is alright for one to understand that these things are put in place but those of us who would have experienced food poisoning - and I am sure that there are one or two of us in this Chamber, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who might have experienced food poisoning - which is not an easy experience for some and that is why I say that when you look at the work that is done by the inspectorate you must commend them. Because with the amount of establishments across Barbados, with the amount of food handling that is done across Barbados, both on a daily basis and on a nightly basis, you would understand that the health requirements of Barbados are extremely high. There are still some loop holes that you need to look into and you need to make sure that those loop holes are not so wide open that they would create a problem for us.

I would also like to draw to the attention of this Chamber and this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has nothing to do with the handling of food, but it goes back to the point where, even in my St. Michael North West there is indiscriminate dumping because there may be a gully dumping because there may be little tracks some place or somewhere that they can dispose of their garbage without putting it alongside the road and allowing the Sanitation Department to remove it. When you get that type of indiscriminate dumping within a neighbourhood, the whole neighbourhood can be inconvenienced because of one person doing something which is easier for himself. I would like that to be policed a little bit more in the sense of the programme that I have just said. If you can establish by way of television or you can establish by way of some sort of PR plan, the seriousness of indiscriminate dumping and give the officers the right, which we can see here, the officers will have the right to visit, not only visit the ships that come into Bridgetown and dispose of any of the cargo that needs to be disposed, but also to be able to visit the homes of Barbadians at any time and be able to call on that householder to dispose of that garbage or to dispose of that problem that may be created by them and inconvenience the other members of the household.

I would like to wrap up at this point and in my short address, I would like to close by saying that I am quite contented with the work done by the Ministry of Health and the officers of the Ministry of Health. But, I would like the points that I have just raised - if there could be some type of observation and something that could be done in those areas so that we can guarantee that instead of having the 96% that

I have seen in some and the 97% that I have seen in some and the 88% that I have seen in some, that the next time that we come to this Chamber to discuss something with the Ministry of Health that we would be seeing 120%, 110% and at least 105%.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their contributions. The Honourable Member for St. Lucy, as is his habit, strayed both far and wide, but I would still like to thank him for his contribution, some of which did not coincide with accuracy or with the point before the Chamber.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Honourable Member is misleading the House by giving the impression that I have misled the House which is a reflection on your ruling, Sir, and I would like you to ask the Honourable Member to withdraw the remark.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed, please.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Thank you, Sir. I should like to also assure the Honourable Member for St. Michael North West that the Chiefs are here and they have heard his concerns and I would wish to urge them to work more closely with all Members of Parliament, Sir, because the whole thing of community protection and the interventions that are needed at the community level require close coordination with several Government agencies and the public inspectorate is one of those.

Complaints about public health conditions in communities, people breeding mosquitoes, breeches of legislation, whether it is keeping pigs or chickens and the odors adversely affecting neighbours and so on, come to the MPs very frequently and there is a need for collaboration between the public health inspectorate and the Sitting Members of Parliament.

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

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

*On the motion of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, the House resolved its elf into Committee, Mr. D. CARTER in the Chair.*

#### COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

*Clauses one and two were called and passed.*

*On the motion of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour, the DEPUTY SPEAKER, the passing of the Bill in Committee and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly. 2.45 p.m.*

*On the separate motions of Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, seconded by Hon. G. W. PAYNE, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Health Services (Amendment) Act, 1999.*

*Supporting regulations will be laid in the Chamber shortly.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this House do adjourn until Tuesday, August 10, 1999 at 11.00 a.m.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

*The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 2.50 p.m.*

## CONTENTS

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

## MINUTES

**Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS**

Confirmation of Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday, July, 20, 1999.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR  
THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. Deputy Speaker announced receipt of the Accounts and Statements for the financial year 1997 - 1998 as prepared by the Auditor General.

## FIRST READING OF BILLS

**Hon. G. W. PAYNE ..... 1**

The Health Services (Amendment) Bill, 1999.

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

**Hon. G. W. PAYNE ..... 2**

Suspension of Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of the Sitting.

ORDER NO. 2 - BILL TO AMEND THE  
HEALTH SERVICES ACT, CAP. 44

Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson, 2, 17; Mr. D. St. E. Kellman, 9; Mr. D. T. Gill, 12; Mr. M. Z. Williams, 14.

SUSPENSION ..... 14

ADJOURNMENT ..... 17

Hon. G. W. Payne, 17.

**SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE**

**GILL, Mr. D. T. (St. Michael South Central)**  
**KELLMAN, Mr. D. St. E. (St. Lucy) PAYNE,**  
**Hon. G. W. (St. Andrew) THOMPSON, Hon.**  
**Miss H. E. (St. James North) WILLIAMS, Mr.**  
**M. Z. (St. Michael North West)**