
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

PARLIAMENT 2003 – 2008

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, January 16, 2007.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, G.C.M., B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker)

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc.(Econ.) (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance)

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B.(Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)

Sir Louis TULL, K.A., Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)

Hon. Dame B. A. MILLER, D.A. B.C.H., (Senior Minister, and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Public Works and Transport)

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.Sc., M.Phil. J.P. (Minister

of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc., J.P., (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P. (Minister of State, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports)

Hon. Dr. J. X. WALCOTT, M.B., B.S., F.R.C.S. (Edin.), J.P. (Minister of Health)

Mr. R. D. JONES, B.A. (Hons.), M.A. Ed. J.P.

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Mr. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Minister of Energy and the Environment)

Hon. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A. (Minister of Social Transformation)

Hon. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc., J.P. (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office)

Hon. C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance) (Minister of State, Ministry of Finance)

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL, LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.)

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

Dr. W. F. DUGUID, B.D.S. (Comm.), F.D.S., FDRCS., J.P.

Mr. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in Session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, December 12, 2006.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the Minutes were circulated, and subject to any observations or corrections, I beg to move that these Minutes be confirmed.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir. MR. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let these Minutes stand confirmed.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Immigration (ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies, 2007 Act) (CARICOM Special Visa) Regulations, 2006.

2. Special Development Areas (St. Peter's Bay SRL) Notice, 2006.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Consolidated Financial Statements of Caribbean International Airways Limited, for the year ending March 2005;
2. Annual Report of the Barbados Port Inc., for the year 2005.

REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Chairman of the Joint Select Committee of the House of Senate and the House of Assembly on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006, I am pleased to report and as well to remind this Honourable House that this matter, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, having been referred to the Joint Select Committee on August 11th, 2006, the Committee met eleven times and has laid its report before this Honourable House, after having had its deliberations including submissions by members of the public. That Report was laid before this Honourable House on December 12th, 2006, our last Sitting, and would have been circulated to Members immediately thereafter.

10.30 a.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: . . .

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you give us them separately, please?

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move the adoption by this Honourable House of Assembly of the Select Committee of the Senate and House of Assembly on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmation without division.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill attached to the Select Committee Report and listed as Appendix Y, which Bill represents amendments to the original Bill before us and reflects the changes of the Select Committee be now the Bill before this Honourable House.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that.

The question that the Report now becomes the new Bill and that the old Bill no longer be the Bill was put and resolve in the affirmative without division.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to move the first reading of the following Bill.

1. The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2007.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44, be suspended for the rest of this day's Sitting.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 7

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Order No. 7 as it stands on the Order Paper be withdrawn.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmation without division.

ORDER NO. 13 – ROAD TRAFFIC (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2007

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am indeed grateful to this Honourable House for allowing the Bill, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill to go before a Select Committee on Friday, August 11, 2006. Sir, the Joint Select Committee comprised members of both Houses of Parliament. Its terms of reference was supposed to receive oral and written submissions from members of the general public concerning the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. It was also to review and examine the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006, and to make recommendations

and submit such recommendations to the House of Assembly.

The Honourable Attorney-General and Member for St. Joseph was elected Chairman of that Committee. It formed within itself a quorum, which was set at three members. It was also agreed among the members that the deliberations of the body would be private. However, the public was invited to submit memoranda on the Bill and oral submissions were permitted. There were some 11 meetings held from August 29th to November 24th, 2006. In keeping with parliamentary practice, the Committee invited and encouraged the public, whether as individuals, professional groups, organisations, community-based groups, officials and unofficial bodies with special interests, and generally anyone who may have assisted with the work of the Committee to submit to the body.

The Committee was also empowered to invite persons or summary witnesses under the law to attend its meetings to give evidence toward formulating a well-informed and balanced report on the captioned subject, the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill. Sir, officials from the Minister of Public Works as well as the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel were invited to sit with the Committee to provide technical, legal and administrative support. It is important to note that memoranda were received by the Committee from more than 12 persons and organisations, which are listed in the Appendix.

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Barbados Police Force was represented by Assistant Commissioner, Mr. Oral Williams and other inspectors and members of that organisation were also specially invited by the Committee to make comments on the Bill. Other oral submissions were received from other organisations with interest in Road Traffic matters and a number of persons, who represented the legal fraternity, as well as engineers and persons who, for years, have called on the call-in programmes and persons who purport to be experts in the filed.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this Bill before Parliament today had consensus of opinion and is designed to carry us forward in this century. The previous Bill, which was withdrawn, had few contentious clauses other than the mandatory carrying of the driver's licence, when operating a vehicle on the public roads of in Barbados. It is important to note that the penalty which that carried was a bit high, \$2 500 or imprisonment for two year or both. The demerit points attached to the offence were also severe. Therefore, the first item on the agenda for the Committee was the mandatory possession of a driver's licence and an insurance certificate.

H121/10:30

Sequence 3

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: The Committee felt strongly, that members of the public should carry their driver's licence and amendments should reflect that view.

Sir, it was, however, felt that a person who legitimately held a driver's licence, but did not have it on their person, if stopped by the police, should not be penalised in the same way as a person who was not the holder of a drivers' licence. Mr. Speaker, it was further agreed that the provision in the Principal Act should remain, but the time period for the presenting a licence should be reduced to twenty-four hours, and a fixed penalty process will only step in after the person's failure to present the licence within a twenty-four-hour period.

Sir, we believe that drivers must practise carrying their drivers' licence and certificates of insurance on their person, when driving a vehicle. In some jurisdictions, it is compulsory for persons to carry their drivers' licence at all times when operating a vehicle. We also believe that in our jurisdiction, an educational programme should be undertaken to encourage and enlighten persons of the importance of travelling with their licences, when driving on the public roads of Barbados.

Sir, members of the public have been complaining that the present driver's licence, a book at present, will sometimes become tattered and too cumbersome to carry. The time has come for us to design a new Barbados Driver's Licence which will conform to a number of modern practices and standards. Therefore, in 2004, the Government of Barbados agreed that the existing driver's book should be replaced with a durable plastic driver's licence, which should have a lifespan of five years. It should also be equipped with a magnetic strip that contains all updated information on the database of the Barbados Licensing Authority. There must also be an encoded card with images of the person, which contains their date of birth, registration number and the type of licence which the person holds.

Mr. Speaker, the police would be able to access the information, through modern computer techniques. We believe that this is the way to go at this time. Sir, that is why the Committee, in its wisdom, felt that it was not necessary for us to make it compulsory for persons to carry their drivers' licences at all times, but rather to allow the police or law enforcement agency, at the time of checking licence, to determine, through the use of computer technology, if the person who is driving the vehicle has a valid driver's licence.

Sir, I want to make the point that a person who had a driver's licence for twenty-five years but has not renewed his driver's licence in the current year, is not the holder of a

valid driver's licence. Mr. Speaker, it is the belief that a person, who has a driver's licence and has not renewed it, has a driver's licence. If your driver's licence is not renewed in the current year, you are not supposed to drive a vehicle on the road.

Mr. Speaker, in the past year, the police have reported a number of persons driving on the public road who were unable to produce their drivers' licences. Sir, the custom is, persons, after forty-eight hours, will turn up with their drivers' licences at the police station. The Committee felt that the whole system of producing a driver's licence and an insurance certificate to the police need to be modernised.

Sir, the record keeping of the police and the Magistrate's Court must be changed to reflect efficiency and accountability. Mr. Speaker, if you are going to have a person produce a driver's licence or an insurance certificate after twenty-four hours, then the police records should reflect that. Sir, a person who is driving and has committed an offence, the records will also show that the person has produced his driver's licence and is that person who was driving the vehicle.

Sir, this was a bone of contention, not only among the police. The police believe that there are a number of persons who are driving vehicles without adequate insurance.

Mr. Speaker, adequate insurance does not mean that you have a licence to drive a motor car, but if you drive a truck, caterpillar, tractor or an omnibus, you must have the relevant class of insurance. Sir, that is why the new plastic licence will contain, for easy reference, the type and category of vehicle that the person is authorised to drive. It is very important to note this.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that the Committee has recommended the same treatment for persons who are carrying their insurance certificates. We are recommending that rather than have travelling with it at the time, even though we will carry out an education programme to encourage persons to do so, the law will state that they will have to produce their insurance certificates within twenty-four hours.

Sir, carrying an insurance certificate is a good thing, but the possession of valid insurance coverage is compulsory. Mr. Speaker, insurance coverage is compulsory by the laws of Barbados, whether it is comprehensive or third-party, it is compulsory. It is the only category of insurance we know of that is compulsory in Barbados. It is known to the Licensing Authority, the insurance companies and the police that many people in Barbados are driving around without adequate insurance

coverage. The only way this is determined is if the person is involved in an accident.

Sir, I have made the point, in other places, that if you do not put your vehicle on the road, then you are not committing an offence. If you have your vehicle off the road, if it is not using the public roads of Barbados, then compulsory insurance is not necessary. As soon as you use the roads of Barbados, then you should have adequate insurance.

10.40 a.m.

Sequence 4

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

House 121, Sequence 05, 10.40 a.m.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: As soon as you use the roads of Barbados, then you should have adequate insurance coverage.

It is true that the Licensing Authority and the insurance companies have a record of the persons who have insurance. The insurance companies remind everyone of their expiry date and the Licensing Authority reminds persons when their road tax is to be paid. Yet, we find that many persons are using the public roads without adequate insurance coverage and without paying their road tax.

This is bad because when there is an accident, some persons may suffer loss. Sometimes that person who has committed the offence may be a person of 'straw', have nothing, and the person would have lost a limb, property, would have to go without compensation. Therefore, we want to encourage persons using the roads of Barbados to have insurance, either comprehensive or third party.

Mr. Speaker, some people believe that insurance premiums are too expensive. Some people believe that it is a waste of time, and one never recovers benefits. Some persons said that they have paid insurance for many years, and have not received any benefits. Sir, the law must be followed, and adequate insurance coverage is a requirement of the law. It is a big risk, and we should encourage persons to pay their insurance premiums, as well as the road taxes.

I am also of the view that when people have a grievance, in terms of rates of premiums, they have a way in which they can complain. There is a person working within this jurisdiction, who looks after the complaints for insurance matters. Therefore, rather than persons deciding on their own not to pay insurance, they should select that person to get the relevant information, where they can make their complaints, rather than going without insurance.

We believe that, if required, the 24 hours allowed to produce these documents is adequate. If you are driving a vehicle on the public roads, you should carry your licence on you but, surely, you should have it and produce it within 24 hours.

Mr. Speaker, there were other things discussed including, the definitions in the Act. This is important and we have gone through the Act and amended many of the definitions.

The Committee was of the consensus that the definition of a “maxi-taxi” should be reinserted as its omission was an error.

The Committee felt the serious situation of overlapping capacities, in most categories of the public service vehicles should be avoided, in order to bring some clarity and certainty to the definition of each category of vehicle.

The Committee felt that the owners of these vehicles should not be given a choice, as to which category their vehicles should be registered but that where possible, the size of the vehicle should be the determining factor. In this regard, it was agreed that a route-taxi would be defined as follows:

“‘route-taxi’ means a motor vehicle that is constructed or adapted to carry no less than 10 passengers and not more than 15 passengers and it is used for hire or reward to transport passengers on a specific route.”

This is important that the route-taxi is a motor vehicle adapted to carry not less than 10 and not more than 15 passengers on a particular route. The routes are defined, and each vehicle should have the route it is travelling noted on the side of the vehicle.

Sir, the carrying capacity of a minibus was also adjusted to carry not less than 16 and not more than 24 passengers. The previous Bill stated 15 and 24. There was some overlapping, and the Committee believed that there should be a clear distinction. Therefore, the route-taxi stops at 15 passengers, while the minibus starts at 16 passengers.

Therefore, if you have a minibus, the minimum number of passengers would be 16 and the maximum number would be 24 passengers. Sir, I should note here that the minibuses also carry the designated routes.

The capacity of a coach was also adjusted to allow for a minimum of 24 passengers, and a maximum capacity of 48 passengers.

It is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the term, “tour coach” was looked at and the members of the

Committee felt that the term, “tour” should be taken off, since they are mainly coaches, so we agreed to call them coaches.

I want to make the point that there will be ongoing discussion and assessment of the category of the public service vehicles, in the future. We are aware that sometimes when many of the minibuses and tour coaches go to the Licensing Authority to be examined, the carrying capacity of them, is more than what the law states.

For example, there are some big buses travelling on certain routes where their carrying capacity is more than 24. When they go to the Licensing Authority, the two rare seats are taken out to adjust the capacity to 24. When the vehicles leave the Licensing Authority, the back seats are replaced, so that these vehicles can carry more passengers.

Therefore, we have to continue to look at how we can make the law relevant to what is happening in this situation, because it is a practicality of what is happening. Sir, they are noted as minibuses, whereas, they should be omnibuses, so we have to look at that as well.

House 121, Sequence 05, 10:50:14

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Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, under the present arrangement, the only body that has omnibuses is the Transport Board, the private concessionaires have minibuses. Therefore, we have to look at this provision again. Over the next couple of weeks we will be looking at how we could adjust to make this more relevant as we look at other provisions under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, a new section 114A, is added to permit the use of wheelchairs and perambulators on the sidewalks. We looked at the issue of sidewalks and came to the conclusion that the provision of sidewalks should be more relevant to what is happening in our situation today. Sir, a sidewalk means a pedestrian pathway or pavement at the side of a road or highway over which the public have a right to travel on foot or in a wheelchair. Sir, the term ‘in a wheelchair’ was added, that was not there before. Mr. Speaker, before, if a person was travelling in a wheelchair on a sidewalk that person would have been breaking the law, so it was important for us to add the term relating to wheelchairs to this provision.

Mr. Speaker, in talking about wheelchairs, I want to make the point that this Government is very cognisant of the fact that we have to provide better provisions for the disabled. Over the past two years, this Government has recognised and has paid close attention to the provision of sidewalks in urban and suburban Barbados and in a number of residential areas. We have set out a clear programme

that the Ministry of Public Works and Transport is now following.

Mr. Speaker, I am not saying that there were not sidewalks before, there were sidewalks before, but they were built at any size, any shape and any height by the engineers in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and in the private sector. We are now instituting a plan - and I hope it would continue long after my time and long after our time - for the building of sidewalks to a specific specification so as to accommodate persons who are travelling by wheelchair or who are using other forms of motorised wheelchairs or things of that nature such as baby prams. We have also agreed that they would have ramps on them.

Mr. Speaker, we met with the disabled community and their Council, and it was agreed that we will start right here at Parliament where we have cut the sidewalk down, and we will continue to do so. Mr. Speaker, if you visit the surroundings of Parliament today, you would see that. We have also done so on most public properties in Bridgetown and we will continue to do so. We will put the emblem of the disabled on these ramps to highlight them. Mr. Speaker, there are other things that must be done on the sidewalks.

Mr. Speaker, Barbados is not a third world country anymore. Barbados is an international community, we are a cosmopolitan country. The city of Bridgetown is really taking off. Sir, I had a visitor a couple days ago and she was amazed at how Bridgetown looks at night. Sir, in this regard, I want to thank the Honourable Member for the City for her input into the redevelopment of Bridgetown. Bridgetown is really looking like a modern city. It is the number one city in the Caribbean if not in the world. However, Mr. Speaker, there are still other small things to be done.

Mr. Speaker, we are not only adjusting the sidewalks, we are doing other things. Mr. Speaker, if you pass through Bridgetown today, you would see signs that are not at the correct height or at the correct location, so we will be adjusting those as well. We will make improvements to the signs for sidewalks and for the roads. Sir, we believe that this is the right thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to inform the House that this year alone we have completed over 40 major roads across Barbados, and we will continue to improve others. To some extent, we have completed the ABC Highway, the second phase, between the Grantley Adams International Airport and Graeme Hall. Sir, work on the widening of the ABC Highway is progressing quite satisfactorily. I am hoping that within the next two to three months, I would be able to give this House a complete update as to where we are on the road programme and of course the traffic management for some of our major streets.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at what is happening in Warrens today, you would recognise that there is a need to improve visibility not only for the tourists but for all Barbadians. We also have to widen a number of streets. Sir, the Warrens plans are before us. We have to do some work within the inner Warrens town centre at night in order to provide better visibility. Mr. Speaker, it will not be business as usual. Some streets would become one way and others would become no entry. Therefore, we would have to do a number of adjustments in that area. Sir, I will inform the House at a later date as to the programme that is happening in the Warrens area.

Mr. Speaker, I want to urge Honourable Members to look carefully at what we are doing. Sir, there are a number of things within the Road Traffic Act, of which motorists need to be aware. Motorists need to be aware of the fact that they must observe the signs. I have been at pains to point out that every road must have signage in terms of the speed limit and what to do on the road. Sir, persons must be able to read international signs. Too many times we find that motorists just travel on these highways as though nobody else exists. Sir, we have had cases in areas where the speed limit is 60 or 80 kilometres, of persons travelling much faster than that. Sir, that is what cause a lot of unnecessary accidents, loss of lives and limbs and damage to property, so we need to be aware of some of these things.

House 121 Sequence 6

11.00 a.m.

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Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, there are also other changes to the various Clauses in the Bill, for example, at Clause 3.

“Section 10 of the principal Act is amended

(a) by inserting immediately after subsection (4) the following:

“(4A) The registration of number plates referred to in subsection (4) shall be manufactured by a person authorised by the Licensing Authority and shall comply with the requirements specified by the Licensing Authority.”

Mr. Speaker, this section before referred to companies and individuals manufacturing number plates. The Bill is now saying that the registration of number plates referred to in subsection (4), shall be manufactured by a person authorised by the Licensing Authority. Therefore, the essence of this point is that in future, persons

who want to manufacture licence plates in Barbados, should be authorised by the Licensing Authority.

Mr. Speaker, this becomes important because we, along with the police, have made the point that there are a number of persons, who are driving about vehicles with fictitious licence plates. Sir, about two weeks ago, a man sent me a letter saying that he was driving his car along Hastings Main Road, and he saw the car ahead of him with his licence number.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it is a serious thing which we have to watch. Furthermore, persons have been stealing number plates at nights to carry out their criminal activities. Sir, being cognizant of these facts, we have to do something about these activities. Therefore, Government would not want to put people out of work but would want persons, who are manufacturing licence plates, to be registered with the Licensing Authority. We believe that it could be done. In some jurisdictions, every year drivers have to put a stamp on their number plates, so that the police can see them, and every year the stamp becomes different, for recognition purposes. I believe if this is done, it would help to minimise some of the problems that now exist.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if any Honourable Member would know the term, but the term “hackney carriage” is an old English term, used in the Victorian age, which we still use today. Those words will be replaced by the term “hire vehicle”, which is more internationally accepted. We also mentioned the fact that the word “tour” should be dropped from the word “coach”, since these vehicles are only used for tour.

Mr. Speaker, other recommendations and amendments have been made. Clause 15, section 121A, deals mainly with the operation of the “fixed penalty” and how it is to be administered. Furthermore, section 121A to section 121G all deal with fixed penalties for ticketing offences. Of course, we have already explained that under this section, there are certain times, if an offence has been committed, the police can give you a ticket which can be paid at either the Magistrate’s Court or provisions will be made at post offices. Sir, these fines can be paid over a period of 21 days, and there will be specified forms used for this purpose.

Mr. Speaker, under this section, members of the Police Force or traffic wardens are required to sign and date the summons. The section that is very important, section 121B deals specifically with the type of offence and a notice that the police officer or traffic warden should give to the person who is offending. It speaks about the regulations and what has to happen.

Mr. Speaker, 121B sets out:

“A notice referred to in section 121A shall be signed by a member of the Police Force or Traffic Warden and shall

(a) state the date, time and place of the giving or affixing of the notice;

(b) contain a statement of the offence alleged;

(c) contain such particulars of the offence as are necessary for giving reasonable information of the allegation; (d) specify the period during which, by virtue of section 121C(3), proceedings may not be taken for the offence; (e) contain the amount of the fixed penalty; (f) specify the Magistrate’s court or Post Office to the Clerk of which the fixed penalty is to be paid;

(g) specify the address of the magistrate’s court at which the person is required to pay the fixed penalty within the specified time and the date and time of appearance.”

Mr. Speaker, these regulations will form part of a future discussion. We will discuss such regulations as the fixed penalty, among others, which will come into force when this Act is passed. Of course, we will specify a date when the other regulations would come into force. I wish to state that the Committee has looked at the type of regulations and amendments necessary, including the fixed penalty. Sir, much work has been done by this Committee, in getting this Bill to this stage.

Mr. Speaker, the Committee has also looked at other administrative work, in relation to traffic wardens and the need for them to have ongoing training. Sir, the law does state that in the execution of their duty, transport inspectors, traffic wardens or members of the Police Force, can stop a vehicle. The Committee believes there is the need for ongoing training for traffic wardens, in light of the fact that their duties have now been expanded. We believe because of this additional responsibility, there is indeed the need for such extensive training.

Mr. Speaker, in the Definition Section, the Act talks about “articulated vehicles”. These are large vehicles, which carry heavy materials, which can sometimes exceed the law by carrying excessive tonnage. Therefore, the Act will now give the transport inspectors the power where, not only can they stop these vehicles but they can also have them weighed, to ensure that owners or drivers do comply with the law.

11.10 a.m.

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(EDITED)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: There would also be certain route that these vehicles can travel. It is not every road or highway that an articulated vehicle can travel. Sir, sometimes they carry dangerous liquids or loads and we have to be careful about this because these vehicles carry cement or concrete.

Mr. Speaker, we want to encourage productivity and home building but we also want to encourage the use of catches on these articulated vehicles because they carry excess cement and concrete and spill all these things on the road. Sir, we paved the Warrens Road and within two days concrete as spilt on it again. I have asked the Chief Technical Officer, who has powers under this law, to ensure that some administrative practice is put in place to help police with what is happening on the roads, especially with the articulated vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to look at how we can put practices in place and modernise our administration because a number of things need to be done to ensure that the law is carried out. Therefore, a number of things are being done at the present time in terms of improving efficiency at the Licensing Authority, at the Magistrate's Court level and with the Police Force. We need to move them close together so that they can work as one unit. Sir, already, we have seen the Police Force being outfitted with computerised vehicles, the computers at the Magistrate's Court are being modernised as well as the computer system at the Licensing Authority are being modernised. Mr. Speaker, traffic management is not for one entity alone but has to be a multifaceted approach in which we move all four agencies together. We believe this is the way to go not only through the law but through doing a number of other things to make this law worthwhile. We will continue to do the necessary things.

Mr. Speaker, I have covered most of the new provisions. We have looked at the definitions of the Act, which have been amended to reflect a modern Barbados. We have spoken not only about articulated vehicles but about hired cars and we have examined all the new provisions under the law, which give specific meaning to what is an "examiner". The three categories of examiners within the law at the Licensing Authority. We have also redefined what is a limousine, what is the gross weight and length of these categories of vehicles which are being used today. I have also spoken about the fact that we have included the maxi-taxi once again, as constructed to carry eight and not more than 14 passengers.

Mr. Speaker, under the law, we will be looking at the new designation for the vehicles, which are used in the tourist industry, those all-terrain vehicles. I believe that we have covered the Bill, which is now before this Honourable House.

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

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, there it is no doubt that the Opposition should feel proud about the proceedings today. It is clear that if we did not have a vigilant Opposition, we would not be here today discussing the amended Bill. It is clear that our charges were correct and that the Government has now recognised that the Opposition was correct in the charges made against it and has made some amendments.

Mr. Speaker, it is also clear that those persons, who sat at the Committee did not seek to expand the base of those persons involved with the PSVs. Sir, there is no way that in this day and age, when we have a problem with traffic management and moving people in Barbados, that we should be still speaking about limiting the ZRs to particular size. We should be allowing and opportunity for a person to progress. Sir, if a person believes that the vehicle which he is using is no longer suitable, clearly, that person should be allowed to apply to the Licensing Authority, so that they can move from having a ZR to a minibus. If the person operating a minibus believes that the route, on which he operates, it is not suitable, then that person should be given the privilege to apply for an increase in the size of his vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, it cannot be the number. It has to do with the size and the demand on the route. It is clear that the Honourable Member, who accepted this provision for a change was wrong and the Honourable Member should go back and make the necessary amendment to allow for this change. Sir, it is relevant because, if we are to limit the number of vehicles on the road, it is the only sensible way to do it. It does not make sense increasing the number of ZRs, when you could increase the size of the vehicle and allow those vehicles to move more passengers, especially in the peak hours of the day. I do not understand the logic of the Committee on this particular point and the Opposition cannot support the Committee on this particular point.

Mr. Speaker, we are about increasing the efficiency of the transport system in Barbados and this Committee is increasing the efficiency of the transport system but has gone back to the old days even though they were properly advised by this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to find out from the Minister of Public Works under which Head is the Transport Board is allowed to use its buses to transport tourists from the airport to the seaport. I want to know if

the bus is a tour bus or a coach. I want to know the category under which it falls.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I want to know from Minister of Public Works under which category you would find that charter.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: If it is under “omnibus”, as far as I know, the omnibus description is not a tour coach.

H121/11:20

Sequence 8

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I am wondering if the Committee thought that by removing the word “tour” and replacing the word “coaches”, would allow the Transport Board to operate its buses as coaches. Sir, if that was the real reason, it has nothing to do with the tour coaches, but, I nearly said a backhanded attempt to allow the Transport Board to operate as coach operators.

Mr. Speaker, when one considers the confusion within the transport system, it is clear that the transport system and the Transport Board bus should be described as a bus to transport the public of Barbados, and not to be allowed, at peak periods in Barbados, to be removed from the transportation system for the locals of Barbados, to please the tour operators.

Sir, it is clear that the Transport Board is now operating more in interest of the tour operators rather than the travelling public of Barbados. I am saying that it is something the Committee should have looked at and corrected, but instead, they dropped the word “tour” to accommodate the Transport Board, and the local passengers have to struggle, while the air to sea operators are accommodated at the expense of the BT buses, maxi-taxis, ZMs and so on, who cannot get work in this country. The Transport Board is now robbing the poor in this country. There are many people with tour buses who cannot get one trip per day, while the Transport Board can be seen travelling, from the airport to the seaport.

Mr. Speaker, no politician should quarrel about what I am saying, because everybody in here has persons who have an interest in what I am saying today. Sir, to make matters worse, under the regulations, the tour operators were able to dictate to the tour coach owners, that if they employ a vehicle to transport luggage, 20 per cent of what

they charged previously would be deducted. Sir, on top of that, without anything happening, even though the tour coach operators complained about the high cost of operating, the fee from the airport to the seaport was decreased, by a regulation of the Ministry of Public Works. Sir, not only one charge but two charges against the tour coach operators.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, the tour operators were able to increase their fees, while the tour coach operators, through the Ministry of Public Works, saw a reduction in their charges, even though their expenses were increasing. I am saying that it is not fair. These regulations should have been brought before the Committee and subjected to scrutiny, to represent the interest of the masses of this country, but a ‘too few’ were allowed to get what they want, while dictating to the tour coach operators their operating costs. Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if we are going to have amendments, let us have amendments that are fair.

Sir, another thing, we have already recommended, during discussions in this Parliament, that the best way to deal with licence plates, would be to ask the persons seeking to have a licence plate to produce the insurance certificate to substantiate the need for a licence plate. We are now hearing that we want to limit the number of business people in Barbados, they must be scrutinised and must beg somebody for the right to work in this country. I am saying that is wrong and the suggestion of this Parliament should have been followed and not some committee. That is where I object to this Committee dictating to Parliament what should occur, because I object to that, Sir.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. I just want to caution the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that the Committee was selected by this Parliament and not some committee, Sir.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Minister of Public Works has spoken and I have accepted what he stated.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is being facetious. Sir, I just spoke and he is referring to me as the Minister of Public Works. It is not true. Please, withdraw that remark and have it struck from the records.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Minister of Public Work has spoken. I was not referring to the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central. I would never have done something like that. I am aware that the Honourable Member is not the Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please, please. Proceed, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I want to apologise to the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central.

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. I rose just now, on a point of order and stated a fact, to which the Honourable Member gave the impression that I was the Minister of Public Works and Transport. Sir, I would like a ruling.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I will apologise. If the Honourable Member thought that I was referring to him, when I said the Minister of Public Works, I apologise to him. I really meant the real Minister of Public Work, the Honourable Member for St. George North, because he spoke first in this debate. I do not see how it could have been misunderstood, that the Honourable Member could believe that I was referring to him. I do apologise to the Honourable Member. I did not mean the Honourable Member, because I accepted the point made by the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, it would not be some committee. If I said some committee, I also apologise for saying some committee, but I did not mean the Honourable Member.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Honourable Member, just proceed, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is interrupting me, Sir.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: Mr. Speaker, with respect, I have not yet spoken in this debate.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, as I was saying, in order to get a number plate in this country, I thought it was accepted in this Parliament that it was a good idea, that the person seeking to get a number plate should produce a certificate of insurance. That is the only logical request that should be asked of that person.

Sir, am I to believe that people are saying now that you are going to limit the number of persons making number plates? The onus cannot be on the makers of the number plates. The onus has to be on the person using the number plates and not the manufacturers of the number plates or we will limit talented people in this country. This country cannot be about limiting people, while creating a market for a 'too few'.

Mr. Speaker, too often in this country we are seeing things being tailor-made for a 'too few'. Too many times in

this Parliament, I have to complain about this. It is on this occasion again, that I will complain, because there is a good solution. Let the person seeking to have a number plate produce a valid insurance certificate. That is all, simple as that. Mr. Speaker, I do not see any fuss.

Sir, I am happy to hear the Honourable Minister admitting that it was a gross error to seek to report someone for not having a driver's licence or an insurance certificate, on their person, at that particular point. Sir, as we said previously, it was unfair not only to the person, but many persons might find themselves in a situation where they cannot drive a vehicle, but to somebody who can drive, would like to assist such a person in difficulty, but not carrying a driver's licence on them, would be in no position to help that person. Sir, that would be unconscionable.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the amendment now ties in with exactly what was requested by the Opposition. It means now that if you have a driver's licence and you are stopped by the police, you will have time to produce the licence and there is no problem. Sir, previously, if you did not have that driver's licence on your person, you were taking a chance driving that vehicle, for the simple reason, if you were stopped by the police at that point in time, you would have been committing a criminal offence.

11.30 a.m.

Sequence 9

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House 121, Sequence 10, 11.30 a.m.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the Opposition will accept the amendment. We understand the logic of the amendment. Sir, we are not proud to have directed the Government in this direction, because we should not have been discussing it in the first place. It was a basic thing that everybody should have understood but, then again, these things do occur.

Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing the Minister make the point that there are more regulations to the Road Traffic Act. I think it is an affront to Parliament for the Minister to continue to speak about things he has in his mind. He speaks about them when he feels like in this Parliament and we, as well as the 29 other Members of Parliament cannot share these things.

I am not aware, Sir, that Parliament is about having a secret and holding it. I believe that when we come to

Parliament and something affects a Bill, that the total affects of that Bill should be laid. Sir, not even in the criminal courts you can withhold evidence. Why are we doing it in here? Are we at war? Why is the Minister treating us as if the Opposition is some unfriendly agent, and they are protecting some special interest. We are here to represent the interest of all Barbadians.

Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I only referred to the Road Traffic Regulations, because under section 121, the Regulations were discussed. It must be understood by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy that the Regulations would come here and they are subjected to affirmative resolution. Sir, they must be tabled here after the Bill has been passed, and subjected to affirmative resolution.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. George North has admitted that he is anticipating this Parliament. The Honourable Member knows that is not allowed under the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly, but if the Honourable Member feels he can do that freely, then he is free to do so.

Sir, it is also interesting that the Committee has been able to see the regulations, but the Honourable Members of this Parliament cannot see these regulations. I want to know what is the secret about these regulations.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, try to ignore all the asides, please.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Thank you. Sir, I should not have to force out of any person, the things that should be presented to us. Sir, I would not allow for Honourable Members on the frontbench to come to this Parliament and to breach the Standing Orders. I know, Sir, that they can only do that if it slips you, and you would not allow that to happen in this Parliament. I would not allow the Honourable Member to believe that he has a right come in here and discuss matters that should be discussed in the future.

Sir, the Honourable Member knows the Standing Orders, and I know the Honourable Member would not do it purposely. If the Honourable Member has done it by accident, I would ask him to apologise to this House.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I made the point, and I think the Honourable Member for St. Lucy should remember this, that the Act has to be passed and then the regulations would be brought here. I want to be very clear that the regulations would be

brought here and are subjected to affirmative Resolution. Therefore, there is no problem.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, that is the exact side I am making. If the Act has to be passed first, then we should not be dealing with the regulations. The Honourable Member is dealing with regulations, even though the Act has not been passed, and then the Honourable Member gets up and admits that he is wrong. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, the PSVs in this country must also be recognised as part of the transport system. I have observed over the years that the Transport Board is seen as important to the transport system, but all other players are regarded as the enemies. I am saying that it is wrong and it is a type of approach that I do not like. I believe in the positive approach.

I honestly believe that what the Minister of Public Works needs to do, is that instead of this confrontational approach to the PSVs of Barbados, the Honourable Member has to recognise that they are moving the public of Barbados, and any confrontation with the PSVs is a confrontation with the public of Barbados. Sir, when one looks at how the public gravitates to the PSVs, one would understand the connection between the PSVs and the public of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, this is not minor issue. This is an issue that we have to study. Sir, if we are hearing all the negativity about the PSVs, and people are not travelling on the Transport Board buses to travel on them, then we must ask ourselves why. There must be something good about them, and it cannot be all the bad. We need to find out what is wrong and correct all the wrong, so that those persons could be part of the true transportation system, instead of us having a confrontational approach to them.

I believe that the onus is on this Parliament to solve it, and not on the PSVs alone to solve the problems. Sir, when one considers the type of service given to the Transport Board and the service given to the PSVs, one gets the impression that the PSVs are transporting people outside of Barbados, and the Transport Board is transporting the citizens of Barbados. Sir, let me put it another way. It is because the Transport Board transports the tourists, they are treated better, and because the PSVs can only transport locals, they are being treated badly - the Minister needs to answer that question - if not, we would have seen some terminals built for the PSVs. We would have seen better paved roads bus shelters, and other amenities to accommodate that particular service.

It is time for us to recognise that we have one transport system and it is not the PSVs versus the Transport Board, because at the end of the day, the PSVs are not

subsidised by the public of Barbados but Transport Board is subsidised by the public of Barbados.

Sir, if the Transport Board is getting everything and is still being subsidised, and the PSVs are not getting anything, not being subsidised and not being able to have the facilities, something is wrong. Sir, we need to stop this confrontational approach and recognise that they are all moving the citizens of Barbados.

I asked myself, if the PSVs were to apply to do the air to sea transport, what would happen? Sir, if one turned up at the airport to move some tourists, what would happen? What law they would be breaking? I need to find out, because to me, if they turned up at the airport to move some tourists and they are breaking a law, whenever you see a transport bus at the airport moving some tourists, they would have to be also breaking a law, because their definition cannot be any different from the definition of the PSVs. Sir, this is a very serious problem.

Sir, we have to understand that we have to do something. We must have a proper transportation system that involves all. Sir, we have to understand that we have a demand that we should no longer speak about ZRs. They have outlived their usefulness, and we must allow them to have a bigger size bus. Sir, if we are to solve the transportation problem, move the transport and the people who are involved in the transport system in Barbados, then it means that at peak hours, we must maximise the move.

Sir, we cannot have a bus that is allowed to take up to 15, working on a route when the demand is really for a bus that should be taking 24 or even more passengers. We need to remove the numbers of vehicles in the peak hours, and we need to cut down on the turnaround time, so that we could interface with the problems facing the traveling public of Barbados. Sir, because of people not appreciating these particular points, we are now in the situation where we are back to ball one, and we cannot make that necessary change.

House 121, Sequence 10, 11:40:14

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, I know the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central will agree with this particular point because it sounds like something that would come from him seeing that he is a thinking man. If the Honourable Member wants to make a point of order on that one, he is free to have a point of order.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, we also have to be very careful how we speak about maximising what we are doing in Barbados. Sir, we have to consider that if we are going to have a proper transportation system in Barbados, that we have to have the roads to suit. It does not make sense to increase bus fares and as soon as you do that, the roads get worse. Sir, what that means is that the repairs on the vehicles will increase and the demand for higher bus fares will continue.

Sir, the Minister of Public Works and Transport has to understand that it is very important for his ministry to study the impact of the bad roads on vehicles in Barbados and the cost that would be incurred by the country because it is not only a direct cost to the people who own the vehicles. Sir, the Honourable Member has to consider that we do not make motor vehicle parts in Barbados, so there is a bigger picture to consider which will have an impact on the foreign exchange outflows of Barbados.

Sir, when you have a poor road system, it creates a problem for the Minister of Finance, not only in terms of the travelling public in terms of ownership of vehicles, but in terms of taxation and the right to create higher foreign exchange inflows. Sir, I think the Honourable Member for St. Philip South would be able to relate to this, so I would not bring him nor the Honourable Members on this side to this type of argument. I know that others might be lacking in the knowledge in this particular point.

Sir, I will be very careful on what I say on this Report because I saw an article in the newspaper which stated that the police gave 100 per cent support to this Report, so I could only come to the conclusion that they have studied this carefully and they are happy with everything in it.

Sir, as you know, the Opposition do not go against the police, so if the police are happy with it, we have no reason to argue with them. Sir, if any errors occur, the Opposition would refer to the police so that we can get some knowledge on these particular matters. Sir, when you see in the newspaper a particular agency that you respect giving full marks to something, you can only fall in line. Sir, according to the newspaper, the Police Force has given full marks to this particular matter. Sir, we do not want to be confrontational with the police, so we would accept that this Report has some merit.

Mr. Speaker, despite that, we would still want to give some critical support to it because as I pointed out earlier there are certain errors in it that might not have been spotted. Sir, seeing that we are working as a team, I believe that the police should look at what was stated here today, and have a second opinion so that there would be no confrontation because we do not want to have a

confrontation with the police or any other agency in this country.

Sir, when the amendment first came to Parliament we called on the Attorney-General to take charge of this particular amendment. We said that it was the Attorney-General's Office, through him, that should have seen the problems and that it should not have reached Parliament. Sir, we are happy to see that the Attorney-General was the Chairman of this Joint Select Committee, which means that if there are any future problems, the errors will now be on the shoulders of the Attorney-General of Barbados not on the Minister of Public Works and Transport because the Minister of Public Works and Transport gave up the chairmanship on this particular matter to the Attorney-General.

Mr. Speaker, the lashes that were shared before went to the Minister of Public Works and Transport, the Honourable Minister accepted them and he referred this higher job to someone else, so any fault in this Bill will have to lie on the shoulder of the Attorney-General, not the Minister of Public Works and Transport.

Mr. Speaker, I am free to defend the Minister of Public Works and Transport because the Honourable Minister admitted that the Bill was flawed and he subjected it to a Joint Select Committee, which was chaired by the Attorney-General of Barbados, so any errors that would arise now would have to be from the Attorney-General of Barbados and not the Minister of Public Works and Transport because the Minister of Public Works and Transport admitted that he was not capable of dealing with this Bill at this level.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I have never admitted that the Bill was flawed. The House referred the Bill to a Joint Select Committee.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I sought to give the Honourable Member for St. George North some credit, but the Honourable Member is now admitting on the Floor of this House to everyone that he was not aware that the Bill had any errors and it took the Joint Select Committee to accept that the Bill had errors and to slap down the Honourable Minister while being a member within the same Joint Select Committee. Sir, that is what the Honourable Member said just now to this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I waited to hear from the PSV owners. I saw in the Report that they reported. They did not complain that anything they asked for was not delivered. I heard no public pronouncements from them, so I could only come to the conclusion also that they are happy. Mr. Speaker, if the PSV owners are happy and if the Police Force is happy, then the Opposition cannot complain. Sir,

we would give it critical support, not support, because we would not subject ourselves to anything in this Report, it is not our hand.

Mr. Speaker, if we had our way we would recognise the problems that the transport system is having and would be speaking about standing passengers and bigger sizes for the operators. Sir, we would not have regulations that would seek to ensure that tour coach operators work for less money with higher expenses. We would have asked the tour operators to take into consideration the amount of money they are making and the good service that the tour coach owners are offering to them, to consider the price of fuel and to recognise that even though we had two drops in the price of fuel that when we relate the price today to what it was before that there is no relationship. Sir, we could do with a further drop in fuel in this country, so that we could help the PSVs and other vehicle owners in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we operate two terminal companies. We do not operate Mobil anymore. Mobil operated with a 15 per cent but it seems that the 15 per cent is now better than having the two terminal companies.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Minister to know that I support him as it relates to road signage because it is important in Barbados, and people should obey the signage. I also want to say to the Minister of Public Works and Transport that his ministry is doing a good job but that they need to know the various important areas in Barbados. Sir, I saw signs all over St. Lucy but for some reason the people putting up the signs do not know that there is some place called Half Moon Fort. Sir, everybody knows that when they see the word Fort it means that there is some history to it. I can see Shermans and Clinketts.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Somebody is telling me that because Moon Town is in Half Moon Fort, they cannot put up a sign saying Half Moon Fort, because they believe it would highlight Moon Town. Moon Town is international, Sir, we do not need that cheap publicity, we are ahead of that.

Mr. Speaker, based on what is happening, it is also clear that we have to recognise that in order to improve the transportation system, that signage is also important. However, we have to ensure that when that signage is placed, that it is placed in the right places and that people understand the meaning of the signage.

House 121 Sequence 11

11.50 a.m.

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Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it does not make sense putting down signage only to show that you are financing a particular project, the signs must relate to the particular area. It is also important that if people are to continue on their journeys, those signs must be placed in such a way that they indicate the correct locations.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say I find it rather strange that after many years, after having the definition of “wheelchair” as set out in the Bill, in 2007, we now have to change the law in order to accommodate a wheelchair and that as been stated by the Minister of Public Works, that some policemen might report a wheelchair-bound person for travelling on a sidewalk, and I need to study the real reason for this change. Sir, I think it has to do more with the Minister trying to impress on us, the number of sidewalks that are being put down, more so than protecting the interest of the wheelchair-bound persons. I think what the Minister is trying to do, is to highlight to those persons that he is doing some work. I think there could have been a better way without making this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, as said earlier that the Democratic Labour Party are happy to see that the Minister, or the Committee has accepted that the original Bill was flawed. We are also accepting that the amendment is also flawed and that the amendment to this Bill could have gone further. Sir, we are not here to make the laws for this Government, if they are happy with it, it is for them to work with it, but what we will do, is to continue to give critical support to Government.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to say that we are free to criticise whenever there is the need for us to do so. Mr. Speaker, had we gone on that Committee, I could not have spoken in the manner in which I am now speaking because you would have reminded me that I would have been part of the Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I did not say one word to you.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am not saying you would have done that personally, but as the Speaker of this Honourable House, you would have reminded me that I was part of the Committee and that anything I wanted to say about the Report should have been said to the Committee. Sir, since I was not part of that Committee, I am now free to say whatever I would want, that is why I said we will give critical report and that we reserve the right to thrash this amendment, when it needs to be, wherever it has to be.

Mr. Speaker, we would also deal with these matters, even if we have to go on the platform, because we believe this Government has to understand that in the same way they have recognised that tourists are important, they too

have to see the passengers of Barbados as being important. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, first let me say that this amendment to the Road Traffic Act of Barbados is long overdue. Sir, at this moment, I would want to thank the Minister of Public Works and to acknowledge the work that has been done by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, in bringing this amendment to Parliament. I must acknowledge the good work would have been done by the Honourable Member and his team, including the Permanent Secretary, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, The Chief Technical Officer, as well as the Acting Chief Licensing Officer.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are many problems that exist on the roads of Barbados today, that infringe on the laws. Sir, while moving around Barbados, both day and night, I can see where people park indiscriminately on our roads, especially during the rush hour traffic. There are also those persons who park on the sidewalks of Barbados, which is illegal, but people still continue to do it. We have large container trucks that park on the sidewalks, hence the pedestrians are unable to use those sidewalks but instead have to walk in the road, thus exposing themselves to danger of oncoming traffic.

Mr. Speaker, I must also add that when these sidewalks are damaged by these vehicles, this puts a burden on the parent Ministry to repair them. We have to come here and vote for large sums of money, in order to get money to repair these sidewalks. As representatives of the people, we know what exist in our constituencies, where people have to be calling on us day and night, complaining about broken sidewalks and culverts, how these pose a problem to pedestrians who walk these places at nights.

Mr. Speaker, there is also the situation where mechanics and bodywork men continue to block our highways. I believe, at this time, we should be looking for some help for these persons, who still have to earn a living. People say this kind of work is done mainly in residential areas but in many areas of St. Michael, a lot of this roadside work is being done. Therefore, where there is land in some of these areas, I would like the Ministry to assist these mechanics and bodywork men in accessing that land, so that they would be able to stop being a hindrance to the travelling public of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, there are also a number of vehicles on our roads at night, without lighted numberplates. There are motorcycles that do not have numberplates at the back, and these are things that we should be looking at.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, not so loudly, please.

Mr. R. D. MARSHALL: Sir, the Minister mentioned that Barbados is not a Third World country. Barbados is the number one developing country in the Western Hemisphere. If this is so, we are now hosting Cricket World Cup, 2007. Therefore, if we are the number one developing country in the Western Hemisphere, we have to put measures in place, so that we could behave like a number one developing country, hence we are here today with this amendment to the Road Traffic Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned there were a few areas of concern. One of those areas refers to the carrying of one's driving licence and certificate of insurance at all times. He also stated the fact that the General Insurance Association of Barbados (GIAB) has made a submission, because they too have a vested interest in road traffic in Barbados. Sir, let me explain, all persons who are insured, all persons who have a driving licence, have a right to use the roads of Barbados, to drive vehicles of their choice, for which they are insured and hold a driving licence to use. There are a number of persons in Barbados, who are driving around without motor insurance or a driving licence. Sir, I do not mean on their person, but who are not the valid holders of driving licences or insurance for those vehicles.

There are almost 120 000 vehicles on the roads of Barbados today. This number is now growing and will keep on growing because since we as a Government have put people out there to work, when persons are working and making money, they are improving their standard of living and hence would want to buy a vehicle. There is nothing wrong with that.

Sir, people want to get to work, take their children to school, or to engage in some form of recreation, hence they are going to buy vehicles.

H:No.121 (12)12:00 noon

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: Sir, while I hear people taking about too many cars on the road, nobody wants to give up his or hers, they want three cars. Sir, that is where I stand on that.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here today wearing an insurance hat. I am not here to make any case for the insurance companies of Barbados. I am here today, in my submission to protect the people of Barbados. When a vehicle comes on the road of Barbados, it has to be insured.

Sir, you do not have to insure your car comprehensively, if you do not want to, but you have to use what is known as third party insurance. Sir, third party insurance protects the driver of a vehicle, who injures a person or does damage to anyone's property. If I am driving a motor car, I go through Rockdundo and run into a wall at your house, Sir, and I have insurance, the insurance company will repair your wall. If I do not have insurance, the dog is dead, it is all at you, Sir, unless you have a home owner's comprehensive policy, which should repair your wall.

Mr. Speaker, the whole thing about insurance is protecting people. I know that Section 42 of the Road Traffic Act says that you have five days to produce your insurance. In 1998, it was amended and you were give 24 hours to produce that insurance. Sir, we are talking about protecting people and their possessions.

Mr. Speaker, it is a serious thing for people to be driving around vehicles in this country, without having insurance. If I take a motor vehicle and drive it on the road of Barbados and I do not have insurance or a driver's licence, I expose people to risk. If a police stops me and I do not have insurance on me or I do not have my licence, I say that my name is John Brown, I live at Kendall Hill and the police then says that I have X amount of hours to produce my licence and my insurance. Sir, I then call my friend John Brown, told him I would produce the licence at Hastings Police Station, John Brown then goes to Hastings Police Station, said that the police stop him and asked him to bring him drivers' licence and that he is there to produce it but Sir, the police officer, who stopped me is not at the station, so she does not know he brought in the license.

Mr. Speaker, someone may say that it is a minor thing but it is not a minor thing because it comes down to the real nitty-gritty when you have claims. If I drive a vehicle and I do not have third party insurance, nobody can be paid. There are many claims in Barbados on insurance companies, which they do not have to pay because they are not entitled to pay. They do not have to pay if the party insured is not driving the vehicle. It is a very serious thing for people out there to be exposed to all kind of risk on the highway. They believe that as long as they get knocked down by a motor car, they have the number of the motor car that the insurance will pay. For instance, if someone steals my motor car tonight and knocks someone down, the person is injured, maimed or disabled for life, the insurance company is not going to pay a cent. Sir, people believe that because you have insurance that the insurance company will pay but it does not work that way because there is no valid claim against the insurance company.

Mr. Speaker, this is why I believe that we should be asked to carry on us our drivers' licences and insurance certificates at all times because the public of Barbados is at risk every day. I am supporting the Bill but I could be

critical of a few things, which I have alluded to today and, this is the way I see it.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak about taxis and minibuses. When I was Minister, many people came to me to enquire about taxi permits. They say want to help themselves and that they want to get a taxi permit and would be issued a permit because they have to make a living but today, when the Minister says that more permits are being issued, some of those people are complaining that there are too many taxis on the road.

Mr. Speaker, when they wanted a permit, there were not too many permits on the road. Sir, it is like going up the ladder to the roof and then kicking the ladder down. I believe that the floodgates should be open and that taxi permits should be issued on the road and that those who work will get money. Sir, there are people out there who do not work but, if you work, you would make money, that is how I personally see it. We should flood the market with permits and market forces will determine who makes money, that is how I see it.

Mr. Speaker, if you have a taxi or a maxi-taxi in Barbados for five years or more, you can apply for what is known as a duty-free concession on that taxi or maxi-taxi. The application goes to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, then you apply by letter to the Minister of Finance and then you are given that concession. I do not know if it is a one-off thing but it is a concession that is granted to people.

Mr. Speaker, the Transport Board is Government to Government so you are not going to charge duty on the buses of the Transport Board. Sir, the maxi-taxis and the taxis and the buses of the Transport Board enjoy a duty-free status. We have the minibuses and the ZR vehicles on the roads of Barbados and they are making a valuable contribution to the transport service of Barbados. Sir, there are a number of ZRs as well as minibuses on the road, which are 15 and 20 years old, they have more or less outlived their usefulness and we have been putting road taxes on them and this has increased often so I am saying that we should look at the owners of these minibuses and ZRS when they are 15 or 20 years old and give those person the concession of bringing a vehicle into Barbados under a duty-free concession.

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Mr. R.D. MARSHALL: I am not saying that it could happen in five, but every ten or twelve years, that opportunity should be given to these ZR and minibus

owners to help them to ply their trade. Sir, as I said, they are making an invaluable contribution to the transport system of Barbados.

Sir, I agree that you will still have to keep them in check. They are out there doing a lot of foolishness on the roads of Barbados, but I believe that with proper supervision and an iron hand, you should be able to control their behaviour. Sir, at the same time, they are making a contribution and I believe a duty-free concession would be of assistance.

Sir, with those few words, I do compliment the Honourable Minister and his team for bringing this new legislation, and it has my humble support.

I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. James Central.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to make a brief contribution to this debate. Sir, I feel as a member of the Committee, perhaps, I am duty-bound to try to walk the Honourable House through some of the things that were on our minds, with a view to trying to lend a little clarity after the contribution of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by expressing some gratitude to those persons and entities, who would have taken the time to either make verbal, or written presentations on this very critical matter. Some of those entities would have been critical players in the economic landscape of Barbados, for example, the Public Service Vehicles and the Minibus Association Owners and Operators, and, indeed, the Barbados Chamber of Commerce and the general insurance industry of Barbados. Mr. Speaker, you also had civic-minded citizens, persons like Mr. Glenroy Straughn and Mr. Lindsay Bolden, who made it their business to make submissions to the Committee. Perhaps, I should say, while I am in the process of extending gratitude, that I am also grateful to the Honourable Member for St. John for having very wisely, perhaps, spared the Committee the curious quality of advocacy, which would have flown from the lips of the Honourable Member for St. Lucy.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, the Bill that we are looking at, seeks to amend Chapter 295 of the Laws of Barbados, which is broadly speaking, the parent Act.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the Honourable House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, on what do you rise?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is trying to give the Honourable House the impression, that, had I attended those meetings, he would have been there too. The records would show that he was not at those meetings. Sir, if he visited one, it was long enough.

Asides.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, the Bill seeks to amend Chapter 295 of the parent Act, which is the Road Traffic Act of Barbados. The fact of the matter is, we have to look at the parameter...

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please. I cannot hear the Honourable Member. Order, please.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: If a man is so illiterate that he cannot even read the record, I am not getting into that.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. I believe the Honourable Member for St. James Central is grossly misleading this House from the outset, because he said he was going to enlighten the House in relation to the work of the Committee. The Honourable Member was appointed a Member of the Committee, there were eleven meetings of the Committee and he only attended one of those meetings. Therefore, I would think it would be totally outrageous for him to get up in this Honourable Chamber and give the impression that he is outlining the background to the decisions of the Committee, since he never attended any of the meetings. Further, he would be misleading the Honourable House, because he criticised the Opposition for not being on the Committee. He was chosen to be on the Committee and then never went to the meetings, so he cannot tell us what happened at the meetings because he was not there. He did not do the work for which he is paid as a Parliamentarian, and that is a disgusting record in relation to the service of a Select Committee of Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, proceed, Sir.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. John would want me to take time in this debate and go through, seriatim, the record of attendance. Sir, I would not do that, suffice it to say that the Honourable Member for St. John can be called a liar on the basis on his submissions, if I were not in this House. I will go no further on that at this point.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please. I am not hearing you clearly, but did you refer to him as a liar?

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: No, Sir. I said if I were not in this House, on the basis of his submission, he could be called a liar.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. There is no insult that the Honourable Member for St. James Central could deliver that I would even take. If I am to be corrected, and I was hoping he would correct me, he would say there were eleven meetings and he only went to two.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, as I said, we can do two things here. We can get involved in numeracy of attendance or we can deal with the substance of the issue. I am going to choose the latter and I am going to tell you why.

Sir, if we were in the business of gamesmanship, it would be an easy thing to do to forget that, even as we speak, we are all, as Honourable Members of this Chamber, holding in our hands a full and complete record of the transcript of the meetings and, indeed, the submissions made by persons who would have given evidence orally or submitted in writing. I would want to speak to this Honourable House on the basis of those documents which we hold in our hands.

Sir, the fact of the matter is, if we are going to address this Bill, we have, in fact, to look at the parameters of the parent legislation. Mr. Speaker, we are starting with an effort to devise definitions. We are going to go further and try to create penalties and a system of demerit points, which I think has to be addressed by this Honourable House at some length, because it radically alters the way in which business has been conducted on these matters. Thirdly, we are going to prescribe for the circumstances, in which you can mandate the production of licences and insurance certificates on request.

Mr. Speaker, the very curious situation which we faced on the Committee, related to Section 42 of the parent Act. Sir, Section 42 of the parent Act will allow for the production of insurance certificates in particular. Mr. Speaker, under circumstances where the law would have allowed you a period of twenty-four hours, however, a further window of leniency, in my view - a window of opportunity, in the view of others, is provided under the parent Act, at Section 42, for you to have as many as five days, which is really a full working week, after an accident taking place in Barbados, to produce a certificate of insurance. Sir, as has been made clear by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central and, indeed, the Honourable Member for St. George North, when he made his contribution, that window of opportunity also comes in the context of a party saying to the police that they will elect to produce a licence at a station of their choice.

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Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Sir, that arrangement created a possibility for the abuse of the process of the law and it happened in this way. Sir, persons began to shift a burden from themselves to produce onto the police, by making an argument that they had visited a prescribed police station - let us say, Oistins Police Station - and they had submitted the relevant documentation. They did not do so within 24 hours. Rather, they did so within 72 hours.

Sir, there is no built-in system in the police stations in Barbados, and there is no procedure within the law for the police to issue you any receipts or any indication that you came in and submitted your documentation, as you so alleged.

Sir, the police now have to go and fish out a book when a case may have come up for hearing six months later, and sometimes if you adjourn it sufficiently often, one year or two years later, and are compelled to disprove the allegation that you came into a police station and submitted an insurance certificate. Sir, that was the mischief that was being worked in Barbados, and that is part of the mischief which we had to avoid.

Sir, the other side is characteristically flippant in their mood, but the point is that Barbados deserves some solutions to critical issues. False licence plates, in any part of the world, is a very serious offence. We have a pattern of behaviour, manifestly so, and argued by the General Insurance Association of Barbados. This is also argued by some civic-minded individuals, who made it their business to write in, and make recommendations on this point, expressing their concerns about the fact that very often, at the scene of an accident, a police officer takes down the plates on the vehicle, but then subsequently, three to five days later, it has come to past that the plates do not correlate with the Licensing Authority's records.

Persons have left the scene of a crime, a scene of an accident, but in fact, at the accident, a crime could have been apprehended because the vehicle involved in the accident was stolen. This is part of the experience of the insurance companies in Barbados. Sir, this, apart from the circus atmosphere that some would want to create on this matter, is the substantive issue that we have to try to deal with. Sir, the challenge facing us, is how the Committee could confront that issue, speak to sensibly and address, hopefully, that mischief, while at the same time sparing the public of Barbados the hardship.

Sir, generally speaking, the public of Barbados, as a mass of persons, is not involved in this type of activity. Sir, because there is a plethora of individuals in the public domain who practise these kinds of dastardly deeds, then we have to be able to ensure that there is a safeguard in place.

Mr. Speaker, we are faced with a situation in which drivers give false names and information to an insurance company. The Honourable Member for St. Michael West central has already explained to the House that there is the experience of people leaving the scene, having given the police bad or faulty information.

Sir, you are faced again with a very interesting dynamic in the practice of this business. Sir, anybody who has been in an accident would know that there is much truth to the view that the police officers seek corroboration of the information given to them at the scene.

Therefore, if I say that my name is Ishmael Roett then, very often it does not follow that the police officer is going to say please also produce your ID Card or some form of identification to prove that you are the said Ishmael Roett, so I can give any name. Mr. Speaker, people with malicious intent have given any name to the police, and then left the scene of a crime or accident and so, again, a hardship is created.

Mr. Speaker, as I said we were faced at the Committee with a very serious challenge. How do you remove the possibility of those mischiefs being worked in the system, while at the same time, not seeking to criminalise an entire society, and to work a horrific hardship, by way of fines and penalties?

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with the work that the Committee has done. I want to say that the Minister of Public Works and Transport and his staff, are to be commended on the way in which they have readily embraced a dynamic and holistic solution. Mr. Speaker, that solution comes in the urgent acceleration of the process to implement information technology solutions, to help us to get through this difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, what specifically are the information technology solutions? Sir, you would be well aware, no doubt, that much talk has gone abroad in Barbados in recent times, about the introduction of the so-called plastic licence. I personally dislike the term. It is called a credit card licence in other parts of the world. I think, perhaps for a better appreciation and understanding of what we are doing, it may be better to use that terminology.

Sir, with the terminology apart, because that is a trite matter about which the Honourable Member for St. John gets excited, the substance is what we must speak to. This substance is that we are going to, for the first time in this

country, be at a stage where we are going to be encrypting into a driver's licence, fundamental information that would assist a police officer, or a road traffic warden who has been properly authorised, to be able to get the kind of information at the scene of an accident, for example, that is necessary to be produce, so that you minimise, if not completely obliterate the kind of mischief that I have taken the time to go through to explain to this House.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, in Barbados, we will be in a position very shortly to say on production of a driver's licence, the name of the person who holds the licence. Sir, there is the possibility of a computer on board the police car. It is not a very difficult thing to do. Sir, even if we did not seek to put computers on board every police car - as we have all probably know takes place in places like the United States of America, Canada and Great Britain - in this day and age, we can get wholesale little handheld devices like the Blackberry. We can get them in bulk, so that officers are in a position to log into the main database at the Ministry of Public Works and Transport.

Mr. Speaker, on the basis of the information that is encrypted in the licence, you can discover the insurance company, and the make and model of the vehicle that carries those plates, so that you know whether the licence plate carrying J... - whatever the frivolous number was, that so titillates some people - is the licence plate that should be married to the car. Sir, if it is not the licence plate that is married to the car, then an offence probably has been committed.

Sir, whosoever the offender is, and whatever political persuasion and complexion he is of, then that offender must be answerable to law. This certainty can now be brought into the process, Mr. Speaker, by way of using the information technology. Again, Sir, you are going to be in a situation where you can speak sensibly to knowing on the scene, who is the owner of the vehicle and in whose name the vehicle is insured.

Therefore, you would not have an insurance industry crying out and complaining that say for argument sake a 70-year-old lady - and this is a real case - who does not drive but has a valid driver's licence, insures a stick shift lorry, which really and truly is for her son to drive, but he could not get the insurance, and he is operating it on the road.

Mr. Speaker, that type of thing takes place in Barbados every day and it works an unmanageable hardship on the insurance industry. Whenever those fraudulent activities take place and ultimately are unearthed, then the industry passes it on to you and I, and all those people whom we have to represent. Sir, this is a very serious issue and that is why I take it very deeply into

concern, when I view the matter, as something that one cannot likely wish away.

Mr. Speaker, I think that we have come to a very settled and sensible compromise on the point. The solution and the safeguard are to use the information technology, post haste, in order to ensure that real time on the scene of an accident, the police have access to this information, which is critical.

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Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: The compromise in the interest of the citizens of Barbados. There would be people who are perhaps elderly and may become a little forgetful and the people who are very busy, for example, the freighter who gets into his truck on mornings but forgot his licence in the cubbyhole of his personal vehicle, so he does not have it on him when he is driving the truck he drives, will be granted a 24-hour grace period during which time they can rectify the situation, without wreaking hardship on the citizen unnecessarily. Sir, the real protection in law is there by way of the real-time access to information technology, so that the production of the licence or the insurance becomes a backup process.

Mr. Speaker, at section 37 of the parent Act, there is a very clear indication that you are supposed to have your vehicle insured in order to be on the road in Barbados. As the Honourable Member for St. George North has said, it is the one place in the law where you would find mandatory insurance in this country.

Sir, having said that, section 42 subsection 5 also creates a very curious provision in that it allows you to speak to a Superintendent of Police or a person of higher rank to explain the circumstances in which you did not have possession of your insurance certificate, and a determination would then be made as to whether or not there has been a violation of the laws of Barbados, which should be actionable.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say very candidly to you and to your House, that in 1981 when the Act was passed, I do not know what was the rationale for that particular section, but suffice it to say that Barbados today in 2007 is a somewhat different Barbados with a slightly different set of values in the mind of people who are operating out there. Mr. Speaker, there is no room for there to be any uncertainty or any ambiguity - I cannot find a more charitable way of putting it - as to how this thing called insurance on the roads of Barbados operates.

Sir, I believe that the time has come for us to be unambiguous and clear. I make the point of the case in

which a comprehensively insured motorcar can be struck by an uninsured, negligent tortfeasor and arising out of that accident is a personal injury with pain, suffering and consequential loss. The uninsured, negligent tortfeasor might be an impecunious man, and the comprehensively insured vehicle in the accident may have been a vehicle in which a whole family was travelling and somebody might be seriously injured. The reality is that the insurance company carrying the coverage on the vehicle which was comprehensively insured has to compensate whatever the tune of the damages are, but they do not have as an industry any opportunity for indemnification, there is nobody for them to go after, so the insurance company of the insured car takes the full brunt even though their driver was not at fault. Sir, it cannot be fair. Again, whenever those things happened in the industry, we and those we represent pay the penalty collectively because it is all passed on to us.

Mr. Speaker, the flip side of that point is that in a situation such as that same accident scenario, you have the consequential fallout of impact on family life, impact on the labour market, if the person cannot work again or is away from work for a prolonged period of time, and the social dislocation which follows it, so we have a situation which has to be corrected. Sir, that is why I support the \$2 500 fine on this particular matter. Sir, it is a ceiling, but more important than a ceiling of \$2 500, it is also a signal as to how seriously we as a people, not just a political party, must take this issue. Therefore, I feel that is a point on which there is really no room for ambiguity.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the matter of the licence plates, I heard that which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy sought to articulate, and I manage to decipher it as best I could as a mere mortal.

Sir, I feel that the issue of the number plates is really one in which the Licensing Authority of Barbados only want to have knowledge of who is producing the plates. Again, this is a matter where you want to have certainty in law. If you are dealing with a situation in which in the marketplace false number plates are being circulated, then it falls to the Licencing Authority alone to be able to rectify that situation with due care and vigilance, but the only way they will get that vigilance is if we the legislators in Barbados empower them so to do. Therefore, I do not see why they should be a havoc and a tumult associated with ensuring that the people we represent can rely on the Government to provide them with the blanket of vigilance which is expected in any decent democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I will very briefly for two minutes go to the question of the demerit points because I know that it is past the luncheon hour. Sir, section 79 of the parent Act speaks to the question of demerit points. For a long time, Mr. Speaker, since 1981, when that Act was passed, I think

it is correct to say that really has been virtually a dead letter of the law. It was there on the statute books but you Sir nor I can think of anybody who really would have been prosecuted under that demerit point system.

Sir, it is useful, and it bears interesting reading to go back to the legislation and find out what was the mischief the demerit point system was intended to address. Sir, at that time things like driving without reasonable consideration would give you four demerit points; failing to obey a light signal, six demerit points; and overtaking improperly, four demerit points.

Sir, with respect to one of the big humbugs in Barbados - and I am not going to become political on the point - as a road user, I have concerns about some of the PSVs and how they operate. Sir, those who are on the other side and care to read through my questioning of Mr. Forde would recognise that is an issue which was raised at the Commission.

Sir, with regard to the PSVs, some of the critical offences that they have been confronted with repeatedly is the soliciting of passengers, which gives four demerit points; going off route, two demerit points; carrying excess passengers, four demerit points; negligently interrupting the free passage of traffic, two demerit points; and not making appropriate signals, et cetera.

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Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, we have, within the scope of the law, a tool already existing. Sir, I am particularly proud and pleased to be associated with the Honourable Member for St. George North and by extension the officers of the Ministry of Public Works, who have recognised that the time has come for that virtual dead letter in the law of Barbados to be activated.

Mr. Speaker, the demerit point system is not a new thing being introduced. It is not some sort of hardship that is being imposed from on high. It has been there for a long, but successive administrations came and went, and nobody troubled themselves to try to arrest this problem, when it was tiny, now that it has mushroomed and become an avalanche, we are all aghast as to what are we going to do.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that if the law provides for it, then we should try to activate it and take it a step forward. That makes good sense to me. Therefore, I think the proposal is for this demerit point system to come into effect, properly so, and in a way that is humane and fair. Therefore, if one were to take the time to read through

what is being proposed, one would see that if after a period of 12 months, a driver has chalked up 14 demerit points, he would get a six month's suspension of his licence. Furthermore, if after two years, he has chalked up in excess of 18 demerit points, then he might attract a longer suspension of his licence. But at all stages it remains the right of the driver to challenge the fairness of the system, by way of going to the High Court of Barbados, which will be the final arbiter of the process. Therefore, in this process, no fundamental human right would be affected but rather we are saying that good judgment and good management, have now come to bear on a situation, which most right-thinking Barbadians feel is creeping out of control, if it has not gotten there already.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please conclude now.

Hon. K. D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, I was particularly pleased to be given the opportunity to be entertained, every so briefly, by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and I hope that he would have something more substantial to contribute to this debate. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be suspended until 1.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and MR. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

12.41 p.m.

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(EDITED)

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member Christ Church West.

DR. W.F. DUGID: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to make my short contribution to this debate. I listened very carefully to the Minister in his presentation and though I support many aspects of the Bill, there are still certain parts of the Bill and certain parts of the reasons that the Committee came up with, in their consideration of the Bill that I would still like to have aired. I would like the Minister, when he is wrapping up, to give some idea on other aspects that were brought up to the Committee but were not included in the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, first let me speak about the carrying of your licence. I was very happy to hear the Minister say that we would soon be moving to a more cosmopolitan licence that is certainly more portable that you would be able to carry in your wallet. I think it would be not only difficult but also cumbersome to ask people to carry on them at all times, a book that we have been accustomed to and carried over the years. I look forward to the day when we would then be able to carry a plastic driver's license that would be able to fit more comfortably into the wallets of people and would be a more portable licence. I certainly look forward to that.

I would also like to congratulate the Minister with respect to setting a standard on sidewalks not only the height of the sidewalk but also the width of the sidewalks, to have them more assessable and friendly to disabled people. This is a step in the right direction and the Minister and the Ministry as a whole must be congratulated on setting that standard for the sidewalk. He also spoke about jurisdictions that have stickers on to the licence plates but that did not make its way into this Bill. I would imagine that a subsequent recommendation would be coming about having the stickers on license plate. He did not make it clear but I want to expand on that a bit. We heard that many people drive around Barbados without the adequate insurance or the adequate road tax. If a police vehicle is driving behind that car, it is much easier for them to check the back of a license plate than to stop the car and go around to check the front windscreen to see if it has road tax and then to ask the person for their insurance. If on the other hand, the people are required to have an updated sticker on an annual basis, which can be colour coded, which is only presented to you when you have paid your road tax or insurance. This removes the requirements to stop people and ask them physically to produce those documents because it is a stamp to prove that those things have been paid up but it has not make its way into the Bill. Sir, one would have thought that it would be part of the Bill at this stage. I was surprised to see that although it was mentioned by the Minister and is something which is positive for the country that it has not yet made its way into the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act.

Mr. Speaker, while on this, I see that there were extensive presentations done and received by the Committee on breathalysers. The submissions on the breathalyser aspect were vast and large to the Committee, but no consideration whatsoever was given to instituting breathalysers in this country. Sir, I think this is a mistake.

Mr. Speaker, the mortality rate caused by people abusing alcohol and other substances and then operating a motor vehicle is substantial not only in Barbados but all over the world. I have done some research on it, the Road Traffic Act does speak to it as it stands but there is no way of testing the level of sobriety for the individual who we

suspect to be an offender. I would gladly support, and I believe there are other members in here who would gladly support a part to the Bill, which has instituted the breathalyser aspect to this Bill and this amendment to the Road Traffic Act.

Hon. K.D. SYMMONDS: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I rise only to draw to the attention of the Honourable Member Christ Church West that his observations are well-founded but are not accurately being stated because, though the Committee did receive a lot of submissions we were limited to the four corners of that which took place under the Road Traffic regulations. The documentation which is attached, when carefully read, dictates that the intention is and has been in the past, to create an authority, which would then be properly able to administer matters relating to the breathalyser. I do not want the House to conclude that it has been neglected. It is just that it could not properly come before this Parliament at this stage in the concept of the Road Traffic Act. There has to be a creation of another entity.

DR. W.F. DUGID: Mr. Speaker, I would be guided by my good friend from St. James Central, who is obviously suggesting that this would come at a subsequent time. This is absolutely essential and I would add my support to any Bill bringing and instituting a breathalyser in this country because I think it is important.

Mr. Speaker, in the beginning people were averse to the seat belt law but the seat belt law in Barbados saves lives. The seat belt law and the fact that people use their seat belts on a regular basis, save people lives and limbs. The same thing would go for the breathalyser because it would not only save those who would offend the law but it would also be able to support and protect the innocent bystander, who also use the roads in this country. Sir, too often we hear of people, who have recklessly crashed their cars into other people and have taken their lives and may have been inebriated while doing so. I look forward to the day when we will have such a Bill before this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I also heard the Honourable Member mentioned during the discourse that the Ministry was able to complete 40 roads and I support him on that. I think that is an excellent job that he has been doing to be able to complete that total number of roads in this country. There is no question that he and the technical people at the Ministry must be commended for the good work that they have been doing. Again, as the Honourable Member Christ Church West, I think I am free to make this clear, that there is a road that has been getting a lot of public attention recently in the constituency of Christ Church West and in St. Michael South and I am again calling on the Minister to do what he can to get Dayrells Road fixed as quickly as possibly.

I understand that the utility companies have completed their work. The Barbados Water Authority, which was the main cause for all the work being done, increasing the main from a 12-inch main to an 18-inch main, have completed its work.

H121/14:00

Sequence 19

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Dr. W.F. Duguid: Sir, the National Petroleum Corporation, had to change its mains because of damage done during the work by the Barbados Water Authority, has completed its work, now I am asking that the Honourable Minister acts with haste to get Dayrells Road completed as quickly as possible.

Sir, I do not think that I am off-target with this. It was mentioned by the Minister, the number of roads he did, and I think it is fair that we should get this road done. It is a significant commuter road used by hundreds, if not thousands of people, on a daily basis. It has been out of order for a long time. The utility companies have completed their work and I would ask and ask until we get that road completed.

Sir, in addition, there is another matter which he mentioned, which I want to raise because I saw it in operation in other jurisdictions. Sir, that has to do with the testing centre. Many times we get complaints from people who have to send their vehicles to the testing centre. There are difficulties in getting an appointment at the testing centre. The fact is, there is only one testing centre, and we could have more than one testing centre, one in the north and in the south. There is also the possibility of mechanics being certified, the same way we are suggesting that people can be certified to produce licence plates. In other jurisdictions, Britain for instance, there are mechanic shops certified to do tests on motor vehicles road worthiness. Why can we not have a private mechanic shop certified to do the tests or certainly some of the tests for certain categories of vehicles?

Mr. Speaker, these are things we have to look at. We cannot continue in the same vein all of the time. Sometimes we have to look outside of the box and do things differently. Certainly, a single centre, which catered to 40 000 vehicles, must be under significant strain, now that 80 000 are being catered to. Sir, certainly, we have to look at giving other people opportunity. Sir, everywhere you go in Britain you will see mechanic shops marked MOT Certified, which means that the individual or private mechanic shop is also certified to do a test for road worthiness. Mr. Speaker, these are the things that we have to look at as a forward-thinking Government.

Sir, I am going to end on one little point. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the report and we listen to the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, he constantly talked about the 'too few'. Sir, what struck me more than anything else, even though the Honourable Member spoke of the 'too few', there were not even the 'too few' on the Committee to look at the Road Traffic Act. I think that they themselves, should consider, that rather than being the too few, they were none at all. Instead of making a contribution to the Committee, they have decided to abstain from that and abstained from their responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, with those word, I thank you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers? The Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, just a few comments. As one reviewed the various submissions of the eleven meetings which this Committee had, one did take into consideration that this Committee addressed many of the issues raised by this side, and I believe some raised by the general public. Therefore, the Committee should be complimented for taking on board those concerns and obviously, concerns which would have arisen as they went through the Bill, which was brought before this Honourable House, a few months ago. They should be complimented for actually doing their work.

Sir, it has already been said, and I would not want to belabour the point, but the mere presence on a committee can sometimes hamper you from the fullest delivery of what you want to say or do.

Sir, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, surely demonstrated the he really did not need to be on the Committee, because the length to which he spoke today, suggested that his knowledge and understanding of the Bill did not need his presence, even though I believe, with his legal training, he would have been somewhat of an asset to that Committee.

Sir, when we are finished with a Bill, such as this, and we have put in place the kind of legislation necessary to guide the general public, motorists and pedestrians but in this case the motorised public, one should not stop. There is another step and that step has to do with educating. Sometimes one assumes that because of the nature of the society in which we live, that everybody understands. There are a whole slew of people in Barbados who do not understand or maybe do not care, in some instances, to understand. That is why you have the kind of, in some instances, entrenched difficulties that one might encounter along the highways and byways of Barbados.

Sir, the Minister, under the leadership of the Honourable Member for St. George North, now has to

mobilise and motivate its people by extending its arms, through the Government Information Service and to the general media in Barbados, to bring these modifications straight to the minds of the people, and go through a prolonged period of education. Sometimes you conduct a three-week programme, and you believe it is in people's heads, but frequency, recency, repetition, using different media sometimes, these things can become attached to the minds of various persons.

Sir, I know that the last time I spoke on this matter, the tone and mood in which I spoke, there were some persons who believed that yours truly supported the breaking of the law. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that if you had the opportunity to speak, you would say that the Honourable Member who is speaking surely does not. The point I was trying to make, is that no society should really try to create criminals out of its people.

Sir, we know that sometimes, in the circumstances in which we live, there are persons who because of their cavalier approach and the whole pathology, would break the law or try to break the law, that is why we would then have to have that vigilance, within the State system to persuade or try to encourage those persons not to break the law. The law might not be in keeping with their own particular proclivities, but at the same time, once the law is established, passed by this Parliament and the Other Place and brought into law by the signature affixed of the Governor-General, we are asking everybody in the society to adhere to the particular law.

Sir, the fundamental point I am making is, we must have a prolong period of education, into the minds of the public of Barbados where those persons who feel that they should still operate contrary to the law, the law is there to apprehend them and bring them to justice.

I believe some person, who spoke earlier, spoke briefly to what I call our road networks. I believe that the way our roads are laid down, our street lights positioned and things like that can, in itself, cause individuals, unwittingly, to become afoul of the law. Sir, where visibility is poor, sometimes you must come to a dead stop at what is called the major road, but in order to see oncoming traffic, left and right, you ease forward and as you ease forward, there is an officer of the law positioned near a bush to apprehend you, to tell you that you have gone over the major stop and things like this. Sir, there is still a lot of work to be done to bring this Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill and the substantive Act in sync with what happens on the physical roads.

Sir, there are too many of those roads where visibility is poor, sometimes the way the road is constructed, and sometimes the amount of bush that grows

on the left and right side of the road, you cannot see anything beyond your nose.

14.10 p.m.

Sequence 20

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House 121, Sequence 21, 2.10 p.m.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Therefore, there is work in the Ministry of Public Works and Transport for person to do to assist the mobile public, in doing the correct things. Sometimes, one also has the difficulty of one week moving with some frequency, clarity and mobility with flashing lights and as you move to the next week, you are back to the original process. There has to be some consistency, maybe some science, in applying these processes, unless we are into the guinea pig type of action.

Sometimes, while travelling, at the bottom of the hill by BET, you are moving, the lights are flashing and the drivers of Barbados - for some strange reason people might argue - give way, ease, release, come through. There is a lot a caution but you are moving, you go up the Pine Hill and go on your business, or you go straight down onto the Wildey Road.

The next week you are back up to St. Davids, because somebody changed them again, without due notice or attention. It might very well be an experiment. I do not know. If it is, Mr. Speaker, the Minister, his Chief Technical Officer, his Permanent Secretary or somebody else who is charged with the responsibility, must be in a position to tell the driving public of Barbados that this is what we are doing, or this is what we intend to do, Sir, so that the driving public would be more careful in exercising due care and attention, as they travel the highways and byways of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, some three years ago, and I am sure that the residents of Bannatyne Gardens wrote voluminous notes to the Ministry of Transport and Public Works stating that they had a visibility problem, as they exit Bannatyne Gardens, into the Newton/St. Davids Road. I do not know. I have raised that matter through a question in this House and to date, I have not received a response from our previous colleague in arms, the Minister of Public Works and Transport.

When I refer to our previous colleagues in arms, we were all educators and, I believe, that he would have a soft heart for one, who also used the chalk and the board. It seems as though you would have to be on his side for him to give you some easement, in matters such as this. I

believe that the citizens of Bannatyne Gardens also need a response.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: You do not have to take me on. I am just a lowly servant of the people. I am not going to vote for anybody on the side below, unless it was you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that you have declared that you no longer would continue, and you are not running the constituency in which I live, even though I may be a bit more wild, nowadays.

The point is that these things are deserving of a response. If nothing can be done, you say that nothing can be done. If something can be done, then say that. Obviously, one would have to regard things such as this, as amounting to laziness or callousness. I do not place that charge on any individual's head, because I do not know who is responsible for all of these things.

I believe that the Minister, who is in the apex of the organisation of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, must have the ultimate responsibility. Therefore, there must be some answer, especially since it was asked in this House and it is still on the Order Paper, relative to these particular questions. I would hope that within the shortest of time, some answer could be forthcoming from the Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I am not happy and, I believe, thousands of citizens of Barbados are not happy with what I call, the chaos of these public service vehicles. People tend to think that you are beating too harshly on the ZRs, minibuses and sometimes, the Transport Board buses, but that is not true. A society needs order. I do not understand how in heaven's name, people do not understand that in order for a society to grow, there must be order. I am not talking order within the commonest framework of order, but order that emanates from discipline.

Therefore, where you have those instances of persons continuing to deliberately flout the law, break the law, abuse the law in these circumstances, then, any penalty as prescribed that is sensible, must be applied. This is a principle on which we must all stand. It is not a principle from which we must deviate. Therefore, we must ask, we must appeal, sometimes we might even coerce through the penalty in the law to get these persons to fall in line.

I am also concerned, Mr. Speaker, that there might very well be persons, who because of their liberal nature in the use of certain mind-altering compounds, might be driving public service vehicles. I am speaking in a hypothetical framework, and I cast no accusation, because I do not know.

Sir, do not let us play around with these things. I believe that when you put 15, 24 or 48 persons in a public service vehicle, it is not your life alone that you are playing with but the lives of maybe, 45, 50 or 72 people. Sir, 15 multiplied by a wife and two children that is about 60. You might be playing around with 60 persons. The trauma of loss, the pain, the bereavement and the cost of the bereavement are all attached to whatever nonsense is done on the roads of Barbados.

We might reach a point, where persons who are charged with the responsibility of driving others in those numbers, should be tested for mind-altering substances. I am not a lawyer or any of that type. I do not know the ramifications. I am just putting out a suggestion because of the concern for the protection of human life, which is the most sacred of anything, which has been given to each and every one of us by God. Therefore, one might have to zero in one's mind to such particular possibilities, in this regard.

I know persons might be saying that the representative for Christ Church East Central is talking madness, or is out of his head. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that is not the case on this particular occasion. We have to protect the society sometimes from itself. Sometimes we have to protect people from themselves. Any decent law-abiding democratic society sets up those systems sometimes to protect people from themselves.

The other issue, Mr. Speaker, relates to what you might refer to as adrenalin flow, motor madness, motorbike madness. We still have a high level of that in our society. I remember sometime ago in this House, I spoke to persons in the motorcycle madness, moving off from the Texaco Gas Station roundabout and screeching going up that stretch heading east, disturbing persons in the midst of the night. Sir, thanks to the vigilance of the police, there was some abeyance in that particular activity.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: Sir, what you are actually doing is forcing an already stretched police service, because rather than patrolling the streets of Barbados trying to apprehend persons who might be involved in more dangerous deeds, we are diverting those resources to control an indisciplined and unruly crowd across Barbados.

House 121, Sequence 21, 14:20:09

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Mr. R. D. JONES: There are persons who go to one of the best supported sport in Barbados, motor rallying, who become hyped when they see those drivers screeching around the track and doing their dexterity test and whatever else, and when they leave the various locations they

become like those drivers they had watched earlier. Mr. Speaker, this is maybe a psychological thing, how it feeds into the system, so they think that they could do it.

Sir, those drivers do those things in a controlled space, it is when they move it onto the normal streets of Barbados where no permission is given for the particular time, that they create a danger to persons who use those streets and to themselves. Mr. Speaker, how do we control that? I go back to the previous point I made, which is, that we have to be constantly appealing to good sense through the use of the media, through the use of education, through whatever happens in our school and in the formal, informal and non-formal structures which allow for education in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke to the issue of the making of number plates. Sir, when there was a Licensing Authority Division at Oistins, one could have gone in there get the number and then go ten yards below underneath a tree where there were two or three youngsters there with a skill and ability who would make the number plates for you within 15 to 20 minutes. Sir, all you had to do then was to screw them on and then go along on your merry way without providing a hazard to other users of the road.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation as outlined within these amendments where it is saying now - and we have to be careful about this, this is a danger - that all roads must lead to somebody to give you permission to do something. That is a danger in a democracy and eventually it ends up in the hands of a minister who becomes omnipotent. If there are established standards which say that according to the maker or whatever, I do not know, that it should be eight inches, 12 inches or 18 inches by three, let that be the established standard. If it must be reflective or non-reflective, a standard should be created so that if I want to make my own number plates, it is my right, according to the standard, to make my own number plates. Why should a minister in this day and age in the 21st century be giving permission to somebody to manufacture something so mundane as number plates. Does not ministers of the realm have better things to do? This is foolishness, Mr. Speaker. They should set the standards, the demarcation, the dimensions or whatever and allow free rein in relation to the manufacturing of those number plates. If someone goes contrary to that and do nonsense, then that is their problem and they should suffer the consequences of not following the standards as laid down.

Mr. Speaker, there is another point which boggles my mind. Sir, sometimes one hopes that the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central would bring to the table a level of lucidity on some of these issues. In relation to those statements which were made by the Honourable Member St. Michael West Central about opening the

floodgate, I believe that he did not analyse the analogy of releasing the floodgate because once a flood is created you can rest assure that many people will drown. For him to simply say to open the floodgate and to issue licences willy-nilly, because that is what opening the floodgate would be, to whomsoever will come to drive a taxi, a maxi-taxi or whatever he was speaking to, will be problematic in the kind of society that we want to encourage.

I would suggest that as he slumbers, if he is allowed to by the spirit, that he should reflect on that particular statement because it is already argued that there might very well be too many persons receiving these licences. Sir, I do not know, but after careful studies, there might be room for some more licences for taxis. I would have to ask that of the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Transport because I believe there are competent individual within that ministry who should be able to give some guidance and direction on this particular matter.

Mr. Speaker, the society does not want to create a situation where at the end of the day an individual or individuals are involved in failed exercises. In an instance like that, making the statement let market forces determine this, that laissez-faire liberal approach to situations, sometimes must be discarded. Market forces should not always be able to determine the sustainability of life or the livelihood of certain persons within the society. If the society, as a tourist-oriented society and for persons who do not have cars but need transport, would need 5 000 taxi licences, so be it. If in the fullness of time 400 persons disappear off the list and 400 persons are then issued with taxi licences to carry on legitimate business and legitimate trade, so be it. However, the floodgate, as espoused by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, is really carrying it a bit too far over the edge, therefore, there should be even a little more careful understanding and careful analysis of a call for something such as that.

Mr. Speaker, I want all the citizens of Barbados to make an honest dollar, but in order to do that we cannot have the mad scramble that is beginning to appear in this society of persons not only coming to you and asking you if you need a taxi but actually putting their hands on you and saying come, my taxi is ready because of the pressure of trying to get a job even now with the numbers which we have, therefore one has to be careful. There must be the encouragement of other avenues rather than seeing sometimes the many instances of what some people might refer to as 'soft' options even though they might not very well be because you are in a very competitive environment of providing a service, but that is their opinion. Therefore, whatever we can do to remove some of the indiscipline and the chaos in our society must be done.

Mr. Speaker, we also need a fully integrated public transportation system. Mr. Speaker, if we say that the PSVs

are valuable parts of the movement of people from home to work, from work to home or to leisure, it does not make sense having the minibuses in some place that creates confusion and the ZRs somewhere else when the people of Barbados have spent million of dollars constructing bus terminals.

House 121 Sequence 22

2.30 p.m.

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Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, if the Transport Board has over 300 buses, with another 400 or 500 ZRs, ZMs and minibuses, then if we are sapient beings, we could develop an integrated system where all of them could use the facility, as constructed by the people of Barbados, where they would be routed accordingly or side by side, working along with the private movers of persons in a very tightly integrated system. Therefore, the mad rush of persons zooming past each other on the roads, persons stopping and blocking others from accessing passengers or persons stopping because they might have seen two or three persons coming through a tract, could possibly be eliminated.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, whatever we do here in relation to this Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, let us view it within a totally integrated holistic system in our country, one which would try to motivate people to do better, to pay attention to the laws, to ensure that the latest and most modern technologies are employed to facilitate the work of the officers of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, and the officers of the Royal Barbados Police Force and to ensure that, at the end of the day, the citizens of Barbados, both pedestrians and drivers alike, would be protected from those persons or individuals, who, because of their actions, would bring harm to other citizens of Barbados.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join this debate to amend the Road Traffic Act and at the outset to say that I think any effort of trying to bring a greater sense of order to our roads should be encouraged and lauded. I think the effort here today with the Road Traffic (Amendment) Act, is part of a series of measures to deal with the tremendous increase in traffic that we have seen on our roadways in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, much has been made, I suppose, of the fact that the Bill, as originally structured, had to be sent to a Joint Select Committee. I would want to say that the wonderful work that has been done by the Joint Select Committee, as we know, should have been done before the Bill was brought in the first place. Therefore, I think the

people of Barbados should be thankful that through the vigilant work of the Opposition Party in Barbados, we were actually able to see the Government doing the homework that should have done, before it brought something like this that would affect so many people.

I do not think the Joint Select Committee is there to mop up laziness on the part of the Government. I think we were able, in this case, to use it to correct what had gone wrong. Therefore, as a Member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, I do not think that I am guilty of any dereliction of duty for not participating in the Joint Select Committee. In fact, I think we did what was correct, in ensuring that so many people had a say, in relation to the work of this Government and in relation to the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, which is before us today.

Mr. Speaker, much mention has been made about the disorder on our roads and both the mover of this amendment, the Honourable Member for St. George North and his Cabinet Colleague, the Honourable Member for St. James Central, the predecessor for St. George North, the former Minister, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West Central, have all made mention of uninsured drivers on the roads. They spoke about the impact that such disorder could have on many families, such as loss of limb or loss of life. They also spoke about the lack of recourse which victims can have because of accidents involving persons, who are uninsured.

Mr. Speaker, what I did not hear from any of those Honourable Members is what exactly does the Government of Barbados plan to do about this situation. I do not think it is realistic to expect Government would underwrite all of the uninsured drivers in Barbados, but I think there is certainly the case to come up with some kind of measure, cushion or fund, to protect victims of these terrible situations.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of two cases which come to mind, in my own constituency. They are separate cases, one involving a driver and the other involving a pedestrian, where both were involved in accidents with uninsured vehicles. In one case, one of the accidents involved a vehicle, which the person had without permission, which, to all intent and purposes, means it was a stolen vehicle. Sir, no recourse has been brought to these victims and the perpetrators are still very much free men, walking around because of the absence of any real mechanism to deal with this system.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay for Members of the Government to speak about this issue but I think it is only reasonable that they could present us with what exactly are the solutions for dealing with it. Are we going to establish a fund, which persons who become victims in a situation such as this, could access? Of course, this would be over a

certain value because we would not want frivolous claims to be made on this fund. Are we going to do something of that nature? Sir, this has already been mentioned and suggested by this very Opposition. Therefore, I think we need to be very firm, with respect to what we are going to do about the situation and not merely talk about it.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that lest anyone think I am encouraging persons to drive uninsured vehicles because victims would have some recourse, I think we need to be very firm in dealing with persons, who are driving vehicles that are both uninsured and have no road tax paid for them. In fact, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East, a principal of an insurance company, has suggested that uninsured vehicles should be impounded or towed at the owners' expense.

Mr. Speaker, this is a suggestion that we could consider, rather than having police officers flagging down persons in the middle of the road, why not look at vehicles that are parked and if these vehicles do not have a valid disc, they should be impounded or towed to a facility, at the owners' expense, and remain there until the necessary documentation could be provided. Sir, this is done in some North Atlantic countries, where a huge iron device, called a boot, is put on one of the wheels of the vehicle, thus preventing it from moving. Persons would then have to make things right with the authorities, be it road tax, insurance or unpaid parking tickets, before they can get their vehicles back. This could be done here in Barbados with unpaid parking tickets, where we are getting to that stage where we are issuing citations for illegal parking. Sir, I think we may have to look at measures such as those, to be firm with offenders on our roads, without necessarily being too overbearing.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I am not totally won over by the demerit point system. There is a reason I suppose it has sat idle for this length of time, and I am not sure that reconfiguring it, as this Bill plans to do, is going to make it any more appeasable. It seems to me to be terribly bureaucratic, a lot of valuable time, including that of our police officers, who really have their plates full with so many other matters, would be spent in trying to monitor or maintain this system.

2.40 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Mr. R.L. SEALY: I believe once you have your offences clearly categorised and have a firm method of policing that you can effectively see to it that people are

punished when they offend the provisions within this Act and other laws that are relevant to road use but I am not sure that this demerit point system is the way to go. It will call for maintaining a database and for persons, including the officers et cetera, to put information into that and to monitor it. It just seems to me that it could be a huge bureaucratic exercise considering that the number of vehicles continue to climb daily in Barbados. We could maybe look at that and the next time around, not try to revise it but take it out all together and look at a system that may not appear to be so bureaucratic. I believe this is something that we need to look at.

Mr. Speaker, I see the Minister making some notes but if we are speaking about road traffic and about bringing a greater sense of order to our roads, we cannot forget the whole question of PSVs, the public service vehicles. It was touched on by the Minister but I remember hearing a lot about the Transport Authority that was supposed to come into being in Barbados. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South looks up because, at one stage, I believe he had some responsibility for that. I think it is about time that this becomes a reality. The idea of having an overall authority for both Government-owned and privately-owned PSVs where standards can be established; the issue of integrating, rationalisation of routes, et cetera from a national perspective; all of these things could be looked at under the ambit of a Transport Authority.

Mr. Speaker, there is no Party divide on that issue because it has been contained in Manifestoes of both Parties over the years and it is something that I think we could hear about in a debate like this that is basically driving at the same objective that the establishment of that Authority is aimed at. I think we could certainly hear something about that very worthwhile effort that seems to have gone into temporary abeyance and at a time like this, we should hear something about it.

Mr. Speaker, on the subject of order on the roads, just a very personal point I would mention here. One of the categories of vehicles that is covered under this Act, is motorcycles. Mr. Speaker, I have a strong view, that motorcycles over a certain size in terms of the horse power, I would say motorcycles over 500cc should altogether be banned from Barbados, unless they are being used by the police, for military reason or something like that sort. Sir, smaller motorcycles are fine but it is beyond me why any human being, given the size of the roads in Barbados, the closeness of our intersection, would want to mount a motorcycle of 1500cc. Sir, the only thing you could have in mind is either dying or killing. Sir, let us be realistic, the smaller ones are fine. By the way, these motorcycles are more expensive than modest cars very often, so it is not a case of being affordable.

Mr. Speaker, I am just suggesting that we could have modest size vehicles, given our roads. Sir, the speeds of those vehicles are ridiculous and in very quick time, you can get speeds that really do not make any sense for the roads in Barbados. They are obviously designed for highways of much greater width and length in the North Atlantic countries and, if it is, that we want to have an arrangement, where people want to enjoy them for pleasurable purposes, that is fine. We could set up the appropriate arrangements, something akin to Bushy Park and let them go there and do what they have to do.

I do not have anything against car racing but I have a problem with car racing on the roads. Sir, car racing should occur only in certain control area. If it is that people want oversized motorcycles to have the pleasure and enjoying the benefit of them, then it should be done in a controlled environment. Sir, a vehicle that can get to 100 miles per hour in less than three seconds, to my mind, does not have any 'calling' on the roads in Barbados in this environment.

Mr. Speaker, scooters and the ones with the smaller horsepower - the Honourable Member Christ Church West owns one - actually make good sense because the

two-stroke engines are more fuel efficient and there is nothing wrong with that. Sir, as a university student I rode a moped and it was wonderful. You put in a few dollars of gas and it would last for two weeks. I am suggesting that the larger vehicles could be looked at. It has been done in other jurisdiction so I am saying nothing that is totally original but it is something that we could look at. We have to protect everyone including those who sometimes may be impacting on others without realising it. The view is not going to be popular with some but it is a view that I hold and one which I think should be considered in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I end by recognising the effort on the Government to deal with the issue of sidewalks. I think for too long that our roads in Barbados have been a little unfriendly towards pedestrian traffic and while pedestrians do not pay road tax, they do pay other taxes. It is a good move to see that we are going in that direction and something that should be encouraged. I hope it does not remain as ink on our law books but that we would see in the urban areas, like where I represent, where there is shortage of sidewalks and, for that matter, in the rural areas, to some extent where you have dangerous corners et cetera where walking can be very precarious, that this aspect of the amendment would be seen becoming something concrete - I mean that literally and metaphorically. Mr. Speaker, we have to recognise the apparent effort at going in a worthwhile direction, if we are developing.

Mr. Speaker, with those remarks, I say that we have covered some areas. I think it is a worthwhile endeavour to that extent but that we still have some ways to go.

Sir, I am much obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip North.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate. First, I want to speak on the matter of driving without insurance. I believe that matter was addressed by the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central but I also want to speak further on it. The Honourable Member for St. James Central in his address referred to Section 37 of the Road Traffic Act. Indeed, as parliamentarians, we spoke today of the problems of uninsured drivers on the road and obviously, we are concerned at this moment in time. Sir, when we examine Section 37 of the Act...

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Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: ... although we are saying today that Parliament should look at this offence in a very serious manner, it still remains on our books as a summary offence.

Asides.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: We still see it as a summary offence. I know if that the Honourable Member for St. James Central, if he was present at the time, he would have raised the issue of looking at this matter as an indictable offence? Sir, based on the facts, when someone is injured by an uninsured driver, as my friend, the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central stated, there is no special fund to assist those injured persons. In fact, in this Honourable House I called for a Victims Compensation Scheme, but there is still the absence of that.

I have a matter where persons are very seriously injured, and we are trying to find the driver, who is an uninsured driver. We cannot locate the driver and we cannot serve any legal document on him for compensation, and the person and his dependants who are probably accustomed to a certain standard of living, is out on a limb.

Sir, we can say that if we make it an indictable offence we will not be totally sure if it would have a deterrent effect, but at least it will be there on the books, to show that the intent of Parliament is to expand the law, to protect road users and those persons who are vulnerable.

Mr. Speaker, it refers to causing death by dangerous driving. Sir, with your permission, if I may read from a recent Court of Appeal decision, in that document...

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, what are you quoting from?

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, it is a Court of Appeal matter, *Randolph Howard v Queen*, and it mentioned statistical data, in relation to persons who were charged for causing death by dangerous driving. It is dated January 16, 2004. In this matter, it is revealed that between 1999 and 2002, there were fourteen indictments of causing death by dangerous driving, in the High Court. There were fourteen pleas of not guilty, with two convictions for the offence, and on the other hand, for the lesser account of dangerous driving, there were nine pleas of guilty, and three accused were found guilty after a trial. The usual penalty was a fine, which was imposed in 13 or the 14 cases. Sir, disqualification was ordered in only five of the cases, and in only one case was the offender imprisoned. Sir, he was a public service vehicle with 99 convictions for traffic offences.

Sir, even if we are questioning, and we have this debate about driving without insurance, the Road Traffic Act speaks to civil compensation. Sir, why can there not be a specified offence where that person, who is driving without insurance, and causes bodily injury ... Something like that would be captured generally under the Road Traffic provisions, that is reckless driving, I believe in Section 81 and 82 of the Act. I am saying that we can even go further, and expressly state in the Road Traffic Act that it shall be an offence for a person to drive without insurance and cause bodily injuries. We should put a criminal sanction to it and impose a fine or disqualification. Obviously the Court will have discretion to impose a sentence. It could be a custodial sentence. Once there are mitigating factors, obviously, you can even go the route of a custodian sentence.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Government has lost a golden opportunity to drive a position like that. Persons on that side, with the responsibility, should ensure that particular offence is specified in the legislation.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for St. George North speak about the ticketing system. In the Law and Order Report, it was mentioned that the management of the ticketing system has been far from satisfactory. Sir, obviously, if the Honourable Member for St. George North is hoping to expand the ticketing system, he has to ensure that the management is improved. We on this side will support it, because it would ease some of the burden from the Magistrates sitting in the Traffic Court.

Sir, imagine a man is charged with riding a bicycle without a bell and he is sitting down in the court from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m., especially on a Call Day.

15.00 p.m.

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House 121, Sequence 26, 3.00 p.m.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, when there is a Call Day, there could be about close to 100 cases. On a call day, if you are charged with riding a bicycle without a bell, you have to sit in the Magistrate's Court and the police officer has to give evidence. If the officer is sick, it would have to be adjourned for the next week.

Sir, judicial time is precious.

Aside.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: Yes, Sir. It is an offence. That person has obviously contravened the laws of Barbados. Is it productive?

Asides.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: He could be dealt with at the police station. The police officers can engage their minds to other serious matters.

Sir, I cannot recall the Honourable Member for St. George North really expanding on the ticketing system. He did it last time but he did not touch it today. I hope that he would be urged by the Opposition today to go back and look at the ticketing system.

Sir, if we cannot get the ticketing system functioning efficiently, what would be the next step? Sir, all these offences will still remain to be dealt with by the magistrate. Some people mentioned that we could probably go to the establishment of a night court, which would efficiently deal with these matters, if the ticketing system does not function effectively.

Sir, citizens will say they do not know that is an offence or they did not know that for what they have done, they would be given a ticket. Sir, ignorance of the law is no excuse and, obviously, matters like these would have to be published, a person would have to be given notice that if they commit certain acts, they would be issued with a ticket.

Asides.

Mr. M.A. LASHLEY: They are not duty bound to do it, but it will make proper sense to do it.

Sir, there is a system of dealing with matters under the Road Traffic Act, especially by the courts, and that is why I went to the recent judgment laid down in the Court of Appeal, which sets out the approach by the court, in relation to persons who cause a tragedy or persons who seriously injure someone.

In fact, the guideline is set out here and it states here that where there are no aggravating factors and no strong mitigating factors, the length of a sentence should normally be in the range of 12 to 18 months. Sir, that is, causing death by dangerous driving.

Sir, then it goes on to where there is a momentary dangerous error of judgement or a short period of bad driving aggravated by other offences committed at the same time, or previous convictions for bad driving, the starting point is two years. When an offender's driving is aggravated by one or two of the factors, we recommend that the starting point should be four years imprisonment, upon conviction following a contested trial.

Sir, these guidelines were recently set out by the Court of Appeal. Obviously, the court has notice of the habits of drivers on the roads. If it is being done at this level, I am saying that Parliament can strengthen, as outlined before, the legislation, particularly the section 37, that is driving without insurance, because of the consequences that will follow, if someone is seriously injured or there is a death as a result.

Sir, I will say today that I give critical support to the Amendments. The Honourable Member for St. George North, who went through the Amendments this morning sounded like the de factor Attorney-General. I hope that the Honourable Member for St. George North would take a recommendation, in relation to this Bill before the House.

I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, one the fundamental flaws in the system of Government that we practis, is that important pieces of legislation are brought to this House, without prior consultation with the Opposition, or I should say the official Opposition, and even other political parties or interests in the society.

Over the Christmas period, you could have gone, if wished - I am not one of the people who do - to a number of cocktail parties, and you would probably hear people say that they met with the Minister of this or that today and

heard what the Government was proposing to do in this area, what new laws it was introducing, and what new policy ideas it had for particular developments in our country.

Yet, we never hear these things until during the Budget debate, when the Government wishes to grandstand and demonstrate it has been engaging in consultations, with everybody else, except the Members of Parliament, who at the end of the day have to defend legislation that is passed in this Chamber.

It is not our wont to vote against every piece of legislation but, I believe that in relation to this Road Traffic Amendment Bill, when it was brought to this House, it was an extremely shoddy piece of legislation. It was a piece of legislation, which I only learned after it was brought here, that did not enjoy the support or confidence of the vast majority of Honourable Members of the House, none on this side and hardly any on that side. Sir, as it went into Select Committee, there were many Members of Government running for cover, to say how they had nothing to do with it and they said they were never in favour of it. I do not know which Minister they meant.

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Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I do not know which Minister they meant. I do not know whether it was the Minister of Public Works and Transport or the Attorney-General. I have my suspicions but I am not going to go into that now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: No, do not.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You would have believed that it never passed the Cabinet of Barbados or that on that morning a number of people were sick and that the Cabinet was constituted by a minority. It enjoyed no support on the Backbench.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, when my knighted friend, in his previous designation, interrupted me, I would have responded, but I told him today that I am going to behave when it comes to him, so I am not going to respond now that he has been elevated to that very distinguished and limited order of persons unless he troubles me. In this particular debate, I believe the Honourable Member for St. George South who has been in this House with me for nearly 20 years, well not all of the 20 because he would have been in the other Chamber and I know some of the contributions that he has made in relation to matters of this sort...

Sir, what is using the roads all about? We are acting as though it is only a question of imposing penalties, that if you have a breathalyser test it would stop people from drinking and driving and if you impose additional penalties on people after they have been found without insurance and a licence that it will be some kind of deterrent.

Mr. Speaker, the one place in Barbados in which you cannot choose who you are going to interact with is on the roads. You can drive next to the Prime Minister or you could drive next to somebody who is able to get a licence without going through the correct procedures.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: You could drive next to a minister who has not paid his road tax or insurance. I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central calling a J number and he was quite right. There was a minister living in St. John who had a car and there was another car on the road with the same number and I had to come in here and raise it and a week later the licence plate was changed. He was in the Other Place. I am not talking about that lady.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I am talking about under this Government. I should say living in the constituency of St. Joseph but in the parish of St. John. That minister had to run quickly and go and pay his road tax and car licence. Those are supposed to be responsible people, but we are talking in here as if it is only the most irresponsible citizens, people who are at the bottom of the society taking risks and people who have no money. That minister is part of one of the landed families in this country but he had not paid his road tax and insurance. Therefore, let us understand that you can find the height of irresponsibility on the roads and you could meet people who hold high stations in life but who nevertheless in relation to the use of the roads, exercise the greatest carelessness, indifference and negligence.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a problem of seeking to punish aberrant members of society who have no money or who some may view as the poorest of the poor in our society. The question of regulating traffic on the road and the way people use the road and articulate vehicles of varying strength and power and so on is very much a question of social interaction and in a sense social relations.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James Central again pontificating in here about people being affected by the acts of uninsured drivers. I support the establishment of a compensation fund because there are four categories of situations that I can think of that you could come upon in which you could be the recipient of major injuries and yet receive no compensation. There are

insurance companies that will not compensate victims of accidents even where the car is insured but the driver is not licensed.

I had an incident like that many years ago in St. John. A young man got into a large truck belonging to one of the large moving and transportation companies in Barbados, he started it up and drove down Church View and went straight into a woman's house. He was an unlicensed driver. Her \$60 000 house was totally wrecked and essentially were it not for some benevolence from the owner of the company, in her view not enough, she probably would still be sleeping on somebody's verandah. Fortunately, she was not injured. She got no compensation from the insurance company because they said the person was an unlicensed driver. Should the victim of that accident be thrown to the wind in a society such as ours? Mr. Speaker, I am saying no. I believe that it cannot be beyond the good sense of the Government, the insurance companies and the same stakeholders, who have such a great interest in imposing penalties on people, to look at it from the other end and see what could be done to help mitigate the impact of injury, damage or loss as a result of that situation.

Mr. Speaker, you also have people who have no licence and no insurance. Yes, there are a lot of young people who do that. They buy a car for the first time for about \$3 000 or \$4 000, they do not have the licence yet, and they put the car on the road or they are now fixing up the car and they go and test it out and something happens down the road. We know these things happen in societies like ours. These are human things and experiences that we all know about, but something can happen and somebody could be injured as a result of that including passengers in the car who believe that the car is insured and that the driver is licensed.

Sir, it is a badge of honour for a young man to say that he has a licence. I assume that it would therefore be in his interest if he is dropping a young lady somewhere or dropping some other youngsters somewhere to say he is insured and he is licensed, not that they ever ask, but that is another circumstance in which the victims can suffer major damage.

Mr. Speaker, again, I can think of another accident which took place in my constituency in which a fellow got on the back of the motorcycle and neither the motorcycle nor the rider were licensed or insured. The motorcycle hit into a pole, he died, and of course his family received no compensation for the death. The rider himself was very badly injured. There was no insurance and the State therefore had to meet the cost of hospitalisation and rehabilitation. Sir, it could have been a lot worse.

There is a situation where the driver of the car is driving with the owner's consent. A fellow tells you to take his car and go and buy some bread or go down the road but the driver does not realise that the car is not insured and he does not ask because he assumes that it is and then something happens and again you have victims of that scenario.

Mr. Speaker, you also have a situation where the owner has a licence but his car is not insured. Those are four categories in which accidents occur, injuries, loss and damage may flow and the persons who are the victims, very often unsuspecting victims of that damage, receive no compensation.

House 121 Sequence 27

3.20 p.m.

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Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, that is something that concerns us. It is something that we feel strongly needs to be examined as part of the process of protecting unsuspecting members of the public, who become victims of unlicensed and uninsured drivers.

Mr. Speaker, many years ago, when I was first a Cabinet Minister, there was a gentleman who had invented some new kind of licence plate, where it could be detected when persons had not paid their road tax in any given year. I do not know if he eventually got the patent for it or got the Ministry of Public Works to buy into the idea, but I know he said he had been knocking on the doors of the Ministry of Public Works for along time for this particular project. I do not even remember how it actually worked scientifically but obviously more needs to be done, to check on the number of unlicensed, uninsured and non-road tax-paying persons using the roads in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, I do not think that the legislation alone is going to solve that particular problem.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, public education also has a role to play because just as we have advertisements in the newspapers about drinking and driving, where they show pictures of people partying and then becoming involved in an accident, where persons are being told that they should have a designated driver, there could also have a situation in which nobody has been drinking, where they go onto one of the highways in Barbados, in an uninsured vehicle, and a number of people lose their lives and nobody gets compensation.

Mr. Speaker, that to me is even more or less excusable. I am not saying that somebody should be

excused for drinking and driving but at least there is a reason but in situations such as this, where somebody innocently gets into a vehicle, ends up in an accident, becomes paralyzed or otherwise injured, and there is no compensation available, then, to my mind, that is a serious matter. Sir, invariably too, the person who causes the accident might leave the island, if they know they are going to have to end up paying or they find ways of selling off their assets or absolving themselves of any liability.

I believe that not only insurance companies have an obligation but the society, as a whole. Sir, just as we seek and have a Government-owned television station, which sometimes promotes things that it should not be promoting, things that are inimical to the Prime Minister's high moral stance, in recent times...

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I believe that as Minister of broadcasting, he should direct that our locally owned television station, which is funded so heavily by the taxpayers of Barbados, even for dubious activities, should now restore its role as an institution of public education. I believe that not only CBC Channel 8 TV but the other more popular channels should use more public education initiatives to sensitise people to some of these concerns because sometimes people do not think about it. Sir, for example, a fellow might not think about the consequences when he gives his car keys to someone else, to take another person home, or in a situation where he wants that person to go buy bread or ice for a party, in circumstances where something happens, where that vehicle does not have any insurance or road tax paid, or even where that person is not a valid licensed driver.

These are matters to which more attention needs to be paid and for which the Ministry... The Ministry is the public policy arm, and public policy has many components to it, not just law and deterrence but also raising people's consciousness about the way in which they need to function in our society and how they can best protect themselves, and always be on good behaviour. Sir, those are the kind of important things I think this debate should have generated on the Government side.

Sir, I am not interested in how many times people attend a Joint Select Committee. I have sat on approximately seven Joint Select Committees, since being in Parliament, including that of the Sexual Offences Bill, the Domestic Violence Bill, the Offences Against the Persons Bill, among others. The Honourable Member for St. George South has sat on some of those Committees with me. In this particular instance and in those instances, the Government took the point very early that when the draft legislation was sent out and initial objections were made, that once the principal speakers did their

presentation, the Bill would have immediately gone into Select Committee because it often raises moral or other issues.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular instance, the Government ploughed ahead, taking no notice of the Opposition's queries and concerns, until the last minute when somebody on that side, who shall remain nameless, recognised the total absurdity of what the Government was trying to pass.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: No, it was neither the Attorney-General nor the Minister of Public Works, not that I am doubting their ability to spot these things but they did not spot it on that occasion. Somebody higher in the ranking put a halt to the whole process and that is when the matter went to a Joint Select Committee. And it was an afterthought, when somebody said they were thinking of sending it to Select Committee, so that we should nominate two people.

Asides.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Well, I am not doing it like that. If you want to put it to a Joint Select Committee - I am certain you would understand these things, Mr. Speaker - the best way would be to sit down and discuss with us the way forward. We are not interested in passing laws that are absurd, that the courts are going to strike down immediately, or those that make no sense. We are also not going to go along with folly or last minute arrangements, to pull Government out of an embarrassing situation, where it was hell-bent on proceeding, without the best advice possible and without the consultation of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, we will consult on anything but there is a way to solicit that consultation. Sir, I am not going off the topic, but as an example of what I am saying, today the Minister of Energy sent me a letter with the National Energy Policy in draft. I may not agree with everything in it, and the letter says so.

The letter states: "I trust that while the Opposition will not agree with every recommendation..."

Sir, we may not agree with any, but I appreciate the fact that this draft policy has been circulated, at this stage. We can draw a line in the sand, if we want to disagree, or we can say that we have agreed with it and that perhaps there needs to be a number of improvements.

Mr. Speaker, there are many people in this House, who have been fighting for the Committee system to work. It should work, not under duress but under an orderly

process. Sir, fortunately this Bill has come back and has acknowledged the criticisms made by the Opposition, and I am grateful for that, but I am saying that in future the Minister of Public Works, whom I know is not averse to consultation in most things, even though aberrant on this occasion, would seek to do the right thing and would discuss policy issues of this sort.

Sir, as I said, if there is one place where we all meet on mornings, when dropping our children to school, going to the supermarkets on weekend, going to work, going to church, driving around the country on a Sunday, on evenings going back home - and we do not know whom we might meet - is on the roads of Barbados. You could choose whose cocktail party, whose house you want to go to, which separate church you want to go to go, but all of us have to meet on the roads of Barbados, no matter what is our station and status in life. That is why policies in relation to a matter such as road traffic, penalties and arrangements to assist in the smooth management of traffic become so critical in countries such as ours and perhaps even more critical in larger countries where there are more volumes of traffic on the roads.

Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to say that I support the amendments that are being proposed and we have no objections on this side, although our support is critical to voting in favour of this particular amendment Bill.

3.30 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, unfortunately I was not in the island this morning when the Honourable Member, the Minister of Public Works would have given his speech on this matter but I am quite sure, as he was complimented by the Leader of the Opposition, that he went into great detail in reviewing the sections as amended. I am heartened that the Opposition gave its support for it and, therefore, there would be little point in me going through the Report of the Committee, the amendments or the changed sections in the new Bill. I feel it is incumbent on me, having served as Chairman of the Joint Select Committee to say a few words. I would like to begin by thanking the members who served on that Committee. The Committee was, to say the least, challenging and there was robust debate on the matters on hand at all times.

Mr. Speaker, that debate, I can assure you, was conducted with the finest standards that you would expect

of this Honourable Chamber and conducted with decorum at all time. Perhaps the most important aspect of the whole process was the input that we received in the deliberations from the various private sector bodies and agencies. I would like to thank the individuals, who spoke before the Committee at length on the matter of the breathalyser.

Mr. Speaker, when the amendment Bill was referred to a Select Committee, it was clear to us that our remit only covered such matters as has been dealt with in the amendment Bill. Therefore, we could not go so far beyond and look in detail at matters relating to breathalysers no matter how desirous a public purpose it would serve. Sir, in the interest of allowing those particular individuals to participate in the process, we did in fact hear and receive the representations and I would like to offer them our particular thanks.

Mr. Speaker, we also had presentations from private sector individuals, who own and operate public service vehicles as well as various associations, the National Transit Cooperative Limited, people who have such eminence as Glenroy Straughn and Lindsay Bolden, Q.C., all of whom make a significant contribution to the deliberations.

Mr. Speaker, there were few matters that called for deliberation, perhaps more than one section, and they dealt with the issue of having to carry your driver's licence, insurance and so on. I am happy that the Opposition and public generally, support the position as is set out in the new Bill. I want to take the opportunity to say that as part of that deliberative process that we heard representations from the Ministry of Public Works and also from the Royal Barbados Police Force and it was clear to the Joint Select Committee that whatsoever the challenges were in terms of the Police finding out swiftly if individuals had drivers' licences and so on, that in fact, there are matters in train, which would address those issues through technological means.

Mr. Speaker, the Royal Barbados Police Force has made a substantial investment in technology. I believe a few months ago, you would have seen the computer terminals being exhibited that they are going to have in their vehicles and their system is going to interface, seamlessly with new computerised programme that is being implemented by the Ministry of Public Works, particularly that section dealing with the Licensing Department and so on.

Mr. Speaker, it was clear to us that, notwithstanding the fact that the law enforcement agency of Barbados earnestly wanted individuals to travel with their drivers' licences, there was a technological solution that was being implemented, which would cover the same issue. I believe any of us who are fans of United States of America

television programmes, especially police programmes, would see how immediately they are able to key in a licence number and automatically all of the details of the vehicle will come out like whether it is insured. Sir, the fact is that as long as you are able to gather that data in real time, by that I mean, simultaneously, then you can be satisfied whether or not the individual has his insurance. You can equally be satisfied by keying in an individual's name, whether or not the individual has a driver's licence.

Mr. Speaker, we therefore, felt comfortable in circumstances where the technological means were being implemented, in adopting a softer approach to this situation.

Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that I have chaired a Joint Select Committee but I believe that it demonstrates the value of that consultation. I think we have achieved consensus, notwithstanding that the Opposition did not participate in the Committee and I am pleased that they feel able to support the new Bill as it is presently constituted.

Mr. Speaker, those are my comments. Again I want to reiterate my gratitude to the members of the Committee and also to the Clerks of Parliament and their staff, who worked with us over long hours, not just in terms of the process of meeting but also in terms of collating documents, preparing minutes and things of that sort.

Sir, with those words, I am pleased to support this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I just want to join this debate to speak to the issue of public policy as it relates to this Act. The question of reasonableness in public policy must be looked at in this whole desire to understand to what extent can the public sector get involved in setting aside funding in the event that there is an accident, someone is to be accused and that someone is incapable, because of lack of insurance or whatsoever, of compensating the victim.

Mr. Speaker, the question here really has to do with the extent to which the public sector would be capable of indulging in such an act, and the extent to which the public sector would be responsible for an act committed by a private citizen. I am saying that the question of reasonableness has to do with whether it is the responsibility of the Government, whether it is the responsibility of public sector and in this case, can we consider that the public policy is reasonable in its incidence.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that because this particular Act is so complicated, when you look at the definitions that first of all you have to clarify in terms of what constitutes a coach, what constitutes a driver, an examiner, a hired car, a hire vehicle, that you can begin to see the complexity of the problem as it relates to setting policy of this nature.

Mr. Speaker, it is okay to say that in an instance like this where someone who is driving an uninsured car and commits a criminal offence that ends with someone being hurt or damage that the responsibility ultimately should fall to the Government to compensate that individual. Sir, that is reasonable in its thought but, in its execution, it can be particularly difficult and to the extent that we are now asking the Government to assume responsibility for private citizens is really a debate about the philosophy of the Government of the day and to what extent Government should be asked to get so deeply involved in the provision of compensation for such an individual. Mr. Speaker, that cannot be simply shunted aside in a debate like this because it appears to be the political thing to do at the time but has to be looked at in a far deeper way.

Mr. Speaker, the other thing is consistency in public policy.

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Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Sir, again, there are other instances in life where in the ownership of a home, which is not insured, there may be a fire. In that instance, is it the responsibility of Government, if there is going to be consistency across public policy, to give that individual a home if there is an unfortunate fire or something of the sort that causes damage or total damage to the home? Sir, again, it is a question of consistency.

Mr. Speaker, I am not anti the thinking, but I am saying that we cannot, when we wish to, be willy-nilly about these kinds of things, because they are really wrapped around a greater political philosophy or persuasion on the part of whoever is governing at the time. To that extent, I am saying, if you are going to pronounce in this way, in this debate, then there is need for such thinking to be carried across the spectrum, in the event that some person in the society, and I repeat, who fails to insure a home, be given access to a home, provided by the Government, because of the particular instance or circumstances under which that house might have caught fire.

Sir, the whole question in relation to public policy, as it relates to this Act, must not be seen strictly or totally in terms of the Road Traffic Act, but the extent to which Government is going to be responsible beyond what we perceive as the responsibility of Government, and whether Government should then be asked to seek or go into the affairs of the private citizen at that level. Mr. Speaker, public policy as it relates to this must be seen as being consistent across sectors, events and circumstances, and not be confined as in this case.

Sir, the other thing is, this whole question of public policy has to do with incidence. It is understood in the circumstance that in order to drive you have to have a licence, but you can have an unlicensed driver driving an uninsured car; you can have a licensed driver driving an insured car; you can have a licensed driver driving an insured car and you can have a licensed driver driving an insured car. There are four such combinations. Now, the complications, therefore, can be wrapped around not only private cars, but commercial vehicles and public service vehicles and, therefore it further complicates public policy even as it relates here to the Road Traffic Act. Sir, I am saying that you have to be clear about the circumstances that surround the execution of public policy at the point in time.

I, therefore, wish to draw attention to the whole question, which has not been addressed much of, the revision of the fixed penalty and the demerit point system. Again, the question is, if I commit such an offence of not having a licence and driving a car, to what extent should I be penalised? Would it be the same as someone who has had a licence for a number of years but failed to pay for the licence for the particular year? The demerit point system must therefore take into consideration, given again the complexities, that you could have a private vehicle, a commercial vehicle or a public sector vehicle, and you could commit an offence that is regulatory in nature, one that is criminal in nature, and there may be some other classification that the lawyers may know more than I do.

I would think that in this instance, for consistency of policy, a public sector vehicle that is carrying a number of people as passengers, committing a criminal offence, would have to be penalised far more heavily than a private individual driving a private car, committing a simple regulatory offence.

Mr. Speaker, I know of one instance where a driver of the Transport Board -, because I actually wrote the letter of recommendation for the individual - came to a four-cross road and decided, around midnight, that he is going to give the passengers a "dark night crystal". I think that is what he said. He flicked off every light in the vehicle, then he flicked off the outside lights and proceeded through a

four-cross and collided with another Transport Board bus on the other side of the road.

Sir, in all fairness, here it is, a public service vehicle in which a driver took the opportunity to take off all the lights, on both the inside and outside of the vehicle, and collided. He was endangering the lives, not only of his passengers, but certainly the other passengers in the bus he struck on the other side of the road.

Sir, I saw him recently in the newspapers. He recently went to court and said that he is an alcoholic and got off.

Asides.

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Mr. Speaker, I am saying, that in terms of allocating demerit points, we must be in a position where it can be done with consistency to ensure that, in fact, we do not put too much burden on an individual who has demonstrated over a number of years some kind of appropriate behaviour, attitude and driving courtesies on the road. Sir, an individual who would have been driving a vehicle that is loaded with passengers and committed such a criminal offence, certainly, our demerit point system must reflect the circumstances.

I am now satisfied that the revisions here, would have taken into consideration the complications associated with trying to allocate the demerit point system, in this Road Traffic Act. Mr. Speaker, as I said before, you can have a private vehicle, a commercial vehicle or public service vehicles committing a criminal offence, or some other kind of offence as defined in law.

Sir, as I see it, I think that it is important that when we seek to set public policy, as we are seeking to do here, that we understand as a Government, an Opposition or a Parliament that, in fact, we are dealing with a very complicated matter, that attracts the attention of not only those who are supposed to be in the lower echelons of the society, but those who are also in the wider spectrum of the society. Therefore, the consistency of which I am speaking, the clarity, the incidence and the reasonableness, are even more appropriate in this instance where you are trying to introduce a public sector policy that can impact on the lives of every Barbadian, regardless of his status or station in life.

Mr. Speaker, I felt the need to suggest that while we are speaking here of increasing the role of the public service, public sector or the Government, in ensuring that in instances where persons have committed offences and damaged third-parties or other persons, who have to be compensated, and we believe that it is the role of the Government to provide such compensation, that we also understand that there must be issues of reasonableness to

be considered; there must be issues of consistency across policy to be considered, there must be issues of clarity of policy also be considered; and there must be incidents that is, who would be affected and offended by such an act.

In that context I am, therefore, saying that perhaps this amendment to the Road Traffic Act, is a perfect example of the way in which public policy can be fashioned to address all of the concerns, that would allow for it to be considered fair, just and equitable in its administration and delivery.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

15.50 p.m.

Sequence 30

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

House 121, Sequence 31, 3.50 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no other speakers, the Minister will now wind up.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I am heartened by the contributions of Members on both sides of the House. I want to wind up by saying that in looking at this entire Bill before the House today, I remember very vividly going to Sunday School and learning Psalm 1, which simply says: "Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful..." Sir, that is very applicable to us.

Mr. SPEAKER: You must know the next line. Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord..." Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I made the comment because I believe that all of us at some time in our lives have done things that we could have done better, and we could have been involved in consultation. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. John, who made a very wonderful speech today felt that the Opposition needs to be consulted more on measures coming before the House. Sir, I totally agree. Sir, he also confessed that there were several Joint Select Committees of the House before our time and in his time, in which the Government brought the Bill and then the Bill went to a Select Committee. I can speak about the Praedial Larceny Bill that came during the 1991 period. The Offences Against Persons Bill, the Family Law Bill, the Fair Trading Commission Bill, the Utilities Regulation Bill, and there was also a Select Committee that looked at landownership in Barbados, in

which the Honourable Member for St. Lucy did a minority report. Therefore, Joint Committees and Select Committees will always be a part of the Parliamentary life of this Parliament and all Parliaments. The Government agreed from early that the Road Traffic Bill would need to go before a Select Committee. It is not everything that we can agree with every time, so that the widest circulation and consultation are important. This Bill, Mr. Speaker, was drafted since 2001, when we were looking at the Road Traffic Amendment. I am happy to say that we have reached this far and there will be more Amendments coming before Parliament, as time goes on. Sir, there will always be amendments to the Road Traffic Bill. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members talked about the breathalyser testing. A Committee was set up. Cabinet has looked at the draft, and asked us to give further consideration to that aspect of the law. As far as the demerit points system is concerned, Mr. Speaker, throughout the world, especially in most of the western countries, the demerit point system is practised. When motorist break a law, some demerit points are given to them and are put on their records. Sir, this goes to help to punish those persons who commit a crime. Therefore, the demerit system is part of our culture. It has not been working as we thought it could have worked over the years, but we are hopeful that in the coming years, we can do something about the demerit system. In fact, Section 121 speaks about the demerit system and how it is to be operated. It also says under this section what are the powers of police officers, as well as the traffic wardens. Sir, I believe that all Members would want to see the system work better. As far as section 37 goes with the insurance, Members spoke about the concern for us to do more about insurance. Sir, there are too many persons driving without insurance. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central asked what mechanism could be put in place for those persons who drive without insurance. The Ministry is currently looking at a concept of an insurance bureau. This is a concept that is now being undertaken in Canada and the United Kingdom, where contributions would be made by the insurance companies to compensate victims, who have been injured by vehicles that are not insured. Sir, already there exists in England and the United States of America, the insurance bureau, which we are currently studying. Sir, all Members of the House and all drivers in Barbados should be aware of the Drivers Code. There are many persons after reaching their 16th birthday, who want to get a driver's licence. They get a driver's licence, without knowing the code. Sir, you could be driving on the road with a person, who does not understand the code or does not read the signs. They just take it for granted that they can drive and just drive. We would want to encourage persons to read the signs and be familiar with the driving code. Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Member for St. John that there must be an educational programme beyond legislation, where we can highlight issues and inform the public. We would want to encourage

the media, print and others within the country to help us in this regard. Section 10 (4A) deals with the registration of number plates. The law is quite clear under this section that the Licensing Authority is responsible for licence plates. The Schedule to the Bill indicates the various shapes, sizes and dimensions. It says there that the Licensing Authority has to authorise those persons or companies that want to produce licence number plates. Sir, I believe that is an amendment, which is in keeping with modern practices. Mr. Speaker, some Members asked if the motorcycles with more than 1500 cc should be banned. I am not aware of these cycles in the country. The Ministry will look at them, but before we do this, we would have consultation with those persons who import them, and with the public at large. House 121, Sequence 31, 16:00:14

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

HEAD 13

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500 000

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, in the context of the total amount for the Supplementary, to be debated in this Honourable House, though the amount under Head 13 is, in comparative terms a small amount, but it is important. I would suggest it is money to be spent in a program of some consequence to our circumstances here in Barbados, with respect to how we go about the business of work, production and productivity, in terms of developing our national economy.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to speak, perhaps briefly and perhaps also in general terms with reference to the \$500 000, which is required in this vote, in support of the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) programme, which would have been introduced in 2004. This is certainly a project which we cannot, as a Government, fail to continue to support because it has important implications for how we go about the business of improving our quality of service in this country, both in general and everyday terms among ourselves but also in broader terms, the service we offer to those who come here for the purpose of investment and other tourism-related activities.

Mr. Chairman, you would recall that Government has committed itself to the sustained support of this initiative, and we are being...

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I would wish to draw to your attention the fact that there is no quorum.

The Bell was rung, a quorum was obtained and the debate resumed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Members, please proceed.

Hon. Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY: Mr. Chairman, as I was saying, there are some persons who might suggest that the programme, as initially conceptualised, might have been done so in a relatively limited frame. On the other hand, some might suggest that the challenge, which now lies before us, and perhaps the opportunities which attend those challenges, would suggest that the programme had to be expanded and made for more elaborate initiative. However, if you look at it, we have reached the point, by early 2006, where it was recognised that the arrangements within the context of which Government would provide matching funds to the volume of \$500 000 annually, with that which was contributed by the private sector towards the programme, has certainly become a situation where it warranted the commitment of Government for an increase in its contribution, in a matching context with that of the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, to that extent, therefore, we are asking that Parliament would today approve a vote of \$500 000, to enable Government to provide for an increase contribution towards the programme, the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE), in a context where it is anticipated that would be matched by the private sector.

Mr. Chairman, I am, therefore, saying that a programme, which was originally conceptualised to have an attendant cost of \$1 million a year, is now a \$2 million a year programme. Therefore, Government is committed to supporting the project in those terms, hence the need to add another \$500 000 to the \$500 000, which is already given in this current fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, there are some realities which we would have to acknowledge and to which we must indeed respond. The notion of global excellence is now enshrined within the Draft National Strategic Plan: 2005-2025. Sir, global excellence is part of the objective and our national aspiration as a people, for the development of this country towards 2025, but in a context where we seek to preserve what is good of Barbadian traditions and perhaps the concept of Barbadians being a hospitable people, has been part of that good Barbadian tradition. Therefore, those notions carry forward this programme. It is fitting that part of the reality to which we respond, would be that objective, which is expressed in those terms, that we seek for global excellence in today's world, while preserving the Barbadian traditions, hence part of the reality which makes National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE), good sense.

Mr. Chairman, of course, we are now living in an economic context, where we are made to rely more so on the service components for the development of our national economy. The National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) is about improving the quality of service, about improving our capacity to serve and to serve well, and to do so in more general and more specific terms as well. We cannot, therefore, talk about having an economy, which is premised largely upon services, and not appreciate the value of a programme such as National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE). Therefore, in those terms, Government is fully prepared to give this additional amount of funding towards this programme.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to provide service for ourselves, we need to make sure that our service is world-class, that it is first-class, that it meets acceptable global standards, and that we may increase the opportunity to provide for ourselves, as we might in those things which we do together, to produce as a people and a country. Therefore, that service economy context in which we now pursue development is a factor which makes National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) good sense.

Mr. Chairman, the reality of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, the reality of liberalised global economies, the reality of trade and services within the context of a liberalised global economy, are factors or dynamics that reinforce the element of competitiveness. Therefore, we must seek and must find competitive advantages. I think the days of comparative advantage are receding in the distant past.

We must, therefore, seek and find those areas of competitive advantage, and if as a people we come to the point with respect to national economic development, where we believe that an important part of the way forward is through the avenue of developing a service-based economy, then we must bring the element of our capacity to compete to the table. Therefore, if we are going to properly address that reality, I think the National Initiative for Service Excellence (NISE) makes good sense. Sir, it is from this perspective and on this platform that Government seeks today, to have this additional funding voted towards this programme.

4.20 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Rev. J.J.S. ATHERLEY: There have been criticisms from both locals and visitors alike with respect to the level of quality and service, which is afforded in the various context in the Barbadian community, industry and enterprise and we have to take careful note of those

criticisms to see where they are justified and if there is some justification, make the appropriate response. In that context, NISE makes good sense because we are helping to create a situation where there is less likelihood that there would be any sustained circumstance within which criticism is the order of the day and Barbados develops a reputation for offering poor service across the board or even with specific reference to important and critical entities within the economy. Therefore, advantages are to be derived by providing service but associating excellence with the provision of those services.

Mr. Chairman, the NISE initiative was conceived and introduced in 2004 and brings together an arrangement within which the social partnership of Barbados, both private sector and labour together with the State, seek to call into being a culture within which providing service of a very high quality, providing service with which we can associate the element of excellence, would become second nature at the level of the individual but also second nature at the level of the enterprise, wherever respectively those individuals are to be found and whatsoever the nature of the enterprises of which we speak.

Mr. Chairman, all of the above factors created a need for a mechanism, which would help us to do some very important things, one of which is research into the levels of service and the quality associated with those levels of service that we have been rendering traditionally across the Barbadians economy, a mechanism which would help us to promote standards. I have intimated earlier that these are in keeping with what is regionally competitive and what is internationally or globally competitive to help us to pursue strategies which would help the whole notion of benchmarking in an effort to raise our standards and to enhance our competitive base and competitive capacity, to develop strategies and models for quantitative and measurable improvements in the quality of service, which we seek to provide in the industrial context of Barbados. Sir, NISE is born out of all these circumstances.

Mr. Chairman, we are seeking to create a culture - and service must be about a culture, something which you do as second nature to yourself - to provide good service. Sir, the view has been offered that when we speak of this type of service, we are careful not to imply that we want to create a culture of servitude because that stems from different ideological and philosophical perspectives altogether. We want to create a culture, which is marked by distinction in service and, certainly, that is part of the way that we are going to be able to make our way in the world by creating a sort of culture to which distinction is an integral dynamic in the whole mix of things.

Mr. Chairman, we can talk about competitiveness until we are blue in the face but that can only result if, in fact, we address the matter of a culture of service, which is

enhanced, which is improved, which is functional and workable. Therefore, the NISE programme is intended to help to foster that kind of culture and that would redound to our total economic benefit as country. I believe it would redound to the benefit of employees themselves and also redound to the benefit of employers and, this is absolutely critical and important.

Mr. Chairman, under the NISE programme they conducted in the initial stages, a survey on service quality in Barbados. It was quite extensive with respect to the various sectors of the Barbadian economy. This national survey on service quality was done in the tourism and hospitality sector, targeting hotels, guest houses, taxis restaurants, water sports operators and the like; people who are on the front line of providing service within this sector. It also targeted specific areas of the public sector where customer interaction, customer contact and customer service was part and parcel of the everyday offering and life of those organisations and institutions. We are talking about places like our health institutions, public transportation, customs, immigration and public utility.

Mr. Chairman, professional services were not left out as a target and, therefore, those who are engaged in medical practice, the legal practice, engineers, consultants, quantity surveyors, et cetera, professionals of all types, who provide vital importance services as part of our economic day-to-day activity.

Mr. Chairman, the retail sector was an important part of that and many of the complaints often heard in the past related to what obtained in the retail sector, supermarkets, service station et cetera, Sir, the high and the low and other high-end services, more sophisticated perhaps services and one might one to suggest, financial service and banking services. Sir, right across the sector in Barbados this National Survey on Service Quality would have been conducted in the early stages.

Mr. Chairman, the private sector was not left out and some of the private sector utilities were targeted whether you talk of Barbados Light & Power or Barbados Telephone Company, these were also included.

Mr. Chairman, the findings coming out of that survey, are quite interesting and perhaps provide a better picture of what obtains and what we thought may have been the case. Those surveyed for this purpose provided a very workable sample. In fact, the numbers used would have exceeded those numbers, which are normally used to take a sample of political opinion and are almost twice as many. The findings coming out of the National Survey on Service Quality, provided across Barbados are to be noted as being interested.

Sir, 20 per cent of customers rate the service in Barbados as excellent and perhaps some would have thought that was not the reality. Sir, 30 per cent rated service in Barbados as good and we are talking about a survey that is done across many of the key sectors of the Barbados productive environment. Sir, 40 per cent rated service as fair and 10 per cent only rated service as poor. There were 200 visitors targeted and there were 2 000 nationals targeted for this purpose, which is a good sample. This is a result statistically arrived at and properly done. This is a proper and scientific survey, which was done.

Mr. Chairman, the main concerns in terms of those who cited problems with service, reflected on the staff with whom they would have interacted and in some instances, reflected on the systems employed to provide service or the processes associated with that service. Some people would always acknowledge that they had poor experiences with respect to service provided in the public sector and, equally so, there were comments with respect to bad service experiences provided through private sector utilities.

H121/16:30

Sequence 34

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Rev.J.J.S. ATHERLEY: Sir, what is to be noted further, is some of the attitudes of Barbadians reported, to be the case with reference, to how they perceive the usefulness of a programme such as NISE, because a survey suggested that there was some scepticism, that as a national community, we could move in the terms suggested towards the achievement of the goals identified, and, therefore, provide that high level service, within the context of the time-frame associated with the programme. Therefore, we are talking about scepticism around the business of realising fully, the objectives of the programme in the time associated with the programme.

Sir, obviously, there is the dynamic of the resistance to change, that is a very human thing. If you are talking about creating a culture of fostering a culture and bringing about a change in culture, then you will find those people who are resistant to change and the way things are done. Sir, experience, perhaps tells us that especially in the public sector, which is a bureaucratic beast, there is likely always to be found those persons, who have served for a couple decades in the public sector and who may have become accustomed to doing things, one way because of the bureaucratic dictates, they would find some difficulty in accommodating change. The bureaucracy itself within the context where most of the Government public service is rendered is a creature itself, which is highly resistant to change.

I believe the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East is very familiar with a view such as that. I believe that the Honourable Member for St. Michael East would embrace such a view, that the creature we call bureaucracy, is highly resistant to change. Therefore, those who are functionaries within a bureaucratic culture, especially those who have done so for many years, would not find it necessarily easy to change.

Sir, the environment in which we live moves on apace, and change is constant, dramatic and fast paced. Therefore, we must respond. We can try various mechanisms to help us to make the desirable response, but we are simply saying as a Government, that part of the mechanism to help us to make the changes necessary, would have to relate to what is offered under the aegis of this National Initiative for Service Excellence.

Sir, we want to fully bring this matter here today for support, because Government believes in the importance of such a programme. The programme, of course, is under the aegis of the social partnership. As I said, Barbados is very strongly supported by the labour entities, the private sector, and also in financial terms, and certainly supported by the Government.

Sir, the notions of productivity must be addressed. We cannot only talk about service, because even if the quality is good, then the level of output also becomes an issue, so notions of productivity are brought here. I think that as a developing country, we believe it to be in our interest to increase the level of productivity, as it relates to the everyday outflow from our labours in the interest of developing our economy.

Sir, the notion of value for money is also very important. Sir, each of us would have had somewhere along the line, the experience of feeling that we, perhaps, did not quite get value for money, and part of that value for money relates not only to whatever product or service we seek to pay for, but, perhaps, the means and ways in which we have to go about acquiring that service and the attitudes which are attendant upon the delivery of that service, so the notion for the value of money is very important.

Sir, as I said, Barbados is still regarded as a high-cost economy in several respects, by some people. Therefore, people need to feel that if they have to pay the price, then they are deserving of having the service and the service provided in a very qualitative way.

Sir, the notion of a wholesome work ethic is another notion which is attached to this programme. We have to ensure that which drives our enterprise is a healthy work ethic. Therefore, this is a notion not to be likely noted, but to be seriously taken on board. We have to address that matter.

Sir, there is also the management for the purpose of engineering quality. Sometimes we think in terms of quality service and we see only the lowly placed employee, who interacts with John Public, but a notion very critical to this programme, in terms of its strategies, is the fact that service quality also attaches to the role and responsibilities of those who are at the management end of things. Therefore, much of the programming activities strategies associated with the National Initiative for Service Excellence, target leaders and managers, and focus on their involvement in this matter.

Sir, when the programme was initially conceptualised, it was felt, and strongly so, that in order to bring about a change in the culture, it would take us a while, and a period of fifteen years was identified, as, perhaps, appropriate for the pursuit of this objective. We are just a few years into the programme, and I believe that already there are those who have been involved in the programme, who could speak of change taking place at the level of their own performance or at the level of the organisation of the institution of which they are part.

Sir, it is not only the current workforce which is being targeted, and you should not be misled by anything I say into thinking that, but, in fact, those who are prospective and potential members of the workforce for tomorrow, in other words, there is a component of the National Initiative for Service Excellence programme which targets the school leaving population, and in multiple numbers.

The attempt is being made now to target school leavers coming out of the secondary school and tertiary level system, to ensure that they are motivated by notions of excellence, a sense of individual responsibility, the desire to perform to the best of their ability, not only to acquire personal advancement, but in the interest of contributing to the health of our national economy. Sir, we are therefore thinking in terms of those who are currently in the workforce, and who might need to experience a change in attitude to improve their service. We are talking also of those who would come inevitably to the workforce on leaving academic or other training, who would want to be motivated, similarly.

Sir, World Cup would probably provide for us, an opportunity to assess the degree to which we have improved our standards, and the quality of service over the past few years. As the world will descend upon this country, many will come from near and distance lands, and they all will be seeking service at our hands. Therefore, this is a tremendous opportunity as fate would have it, that we must make an assessment of where we are in the eyes of the world, in the situation such that there are multiple demands made upon us for service in multiple spheres of

economic activity in this country between March and April 2007.

Sir, we normally do well in responding to those who visit us for investment purposes, and those who come for tourist related activities, but they will come in increased multiple numbers, and this, therefore, provides for us a proper juncture at which to assess some of the successes, perhaps, of this programme and of the effort towards improving service quality in Barbados.

Sir, I want to move that Head 13 stand part.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

16.40 p.m.

Sequence 35

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

House 121, Sequence 36, 4.40 p.m.

HEAD 18 - AUDIT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$7 000.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Chairman, this matter is very simple. This sum is required to meet the cost of payment for VAT allowances for officers, acting in the post of Deputy Auditor General, as well as one other post of Stenographer/Typist.

I beg to move, Sir, that Head 18 stand part.

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

HEAD 23 - MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN THE AMOUNT

OF \$33 742 885

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Hon. Dr. J.X. WALCOTT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Sir, under this Head, there are various amounts being requested to assist the Ministry in implementing many of

its programmes. I will speak to a few of these in the time allotted to me this evening.

Under the Direction and Policy Formulation Services, there is an amount of \$138 348, being requested to pay stipends for first year student nurses, who are currently at the Barbados Community College, and who would have started their programme in September last year. I will give a background to this.

Sir, for several years, it has been a custom to pay stipends to various nursing students, those who are not employed in Government, and who are not on training leave and would be receiving a salary. I believe it was in 1989 that a decision was made for this amount be paid from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's budget. Sir, over the years, the hospital has been paying these stipends.

Sir, you would also be aware that there is a shortage of nurses globally, and since 2004, we have increased the numbers of persons who are being admitted to train as nurses, on a yearly basis. Previously, there were 30 students per year, and in 2004 we increased that number to 90 students. In 2005, 90 students were admitted to the programme, and this was increased last September to 120 students.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been paying these stipends successfully over the years and to the credit of that institution. Sir, you would understand that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is now under the management of a Board, and it has to manage its finances carefully and efficiently.

Therefore, a decision has been made that the Ministry of Health would take over the payment of these stipends for these first year students from September last year. Sir, from the first of April next year, the Ministry of Health will take over the payment of all stipends, that is, to the second and third year students as well.

Sir, I said from September last year, which means that the supplementary is to cover seven months of stipends. The first year students receive \$324 per month, the second year students get \$432 per month and the third year student get \$540 per month.

Sir, we are increasing the numbers of nurses who are being trained, with the understanding that there is a global shortage of nurses. Sir, we should be in a position to provide enough nurses to use in our facilities and to allow for the natural movement of individuals, who seek greener pastures from time to time.

Sir, under the Sanitation Service Authority, the amount of \$4 148 324 are being requested. A large amount of this, approximately 60 per cent, is to deal with certain

personal emoluments. Members of the Chamber would be aware that the Sanitation Service Authority has been working assiduously to improve garbage collection, and to make it more efficient in this country.

Sir, to allow them to do this, we have to pay for overtime. Many officers have been working on weekends and long periods of times, especially after certain social events and cultural activities, in an effort to maintain Barbados in a pristine condition, as far as possible. Therefore, out of this amount, some \$730 000 is being requested for overtime.

Sir, because of the sort of work that the Sanitation Service Authority is involved in, there are large numbers of persons who, from time to time, are on sick leave for various reasons, such as injuries, and being exposed to the elements. This is a worrying trend for the Sanitation Service Authority. An amount of well-over \$700 000 is required to pay for substitute staff to cover those who go on sick leave. This is a matter that the Authority is looking at carefully, in terms of who has been on sick leave for some extended periods of time, and who continue to be on sick leave.

Sir, you would also be aware that in the Sanitation Service Authority during the past year, they introduced an Inconvenience Allowance and Laundry Allowance for persons who work on the trucks. The truck drivers and loaders have taken the initiative to start working at 3.00 a.m. and 4.00 a.m., so as not to be on the streets during the busy traffic times.

The Ministry of Civil Service agreed that these persons should be compensated for this, and they have been given the Inconvenience Allowance, which started last year. In addition, they were also granted a Laundry Allowance. Sir, the Hazard Allowance was extended to the clerical staff and supervisory staff who work at the Cemeteries. Therefore, a large portion of this \$4 million is for personal emoluments and for the various allowances, which have been agreed to.

Sir, more than \$1 million have been allocated, in terms spare parts. The Sanitation Service Authority, having received 25 new trucks in 2005, and has been working to maintain a fleet of 35 to 40 trucks on the road daily. Therefore, a large number of trucks have been repaired, which has been quite expensive in some cases. The Sanitation Service Authority has to ensure that there are enough trucks on the roads to provide for daily collections. Sir, in some cases, twice weekly collections and three time a week collections, where necessary, especially in Bridgetown and the suburbs.

In addition, in terms of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, some \$20 million is being requested, which is to

cover various activities within that institution. Sir, you would be aware that a lot has been said from time to time in the press, regarding the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I daresay that a lot of this has been unfair criticism. Sir, some has been justified and some not justified at time. This is what you would expect from hospitals, in terms of the functioning.

Sir, of this \$20 million, approximately \$8.3 million was carried forward from the last financial year, in terms of debt. In addition, there are various departments at that institution, which need additional funds.

Meanwhile, the consultancy on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital redevelopment has been completed. The draft report has been submitted. It speaks to the expansion of that facility and the construction of a new high tech wing, with new operating theatres, and new intensive care facilities. I will be informing this Honourable Chamber more on the details during the course of the next few months.

In terms of the Supplementary which is requested, there is a need for an additional \$1.9 million, in terms of utilities for that institution. The electricity costs have increased. We now have boilers functioning, which have not functioned for a few years. In addition, contrary to popular belief, the incinerator has been functional for some substantial periods of time during the last financial year, compared to previous years, which resulted in increased cost in electricity and other utilities.

Sir, as you know, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has thousands of pieces of equipment, and from time to time they breakdown and malfunction. There is a need to have recurrent and repeated maintenance on various pieces of equipment. For example, in September, we had the issues of the autoclaves that needed to be repaired. We also had problems with the kitchen, the stoves, medical equipment, engineering equipment and other equipment in that institution.

House 121, Sequence 36, 16:50:14

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Dr. the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Therefore, an amount of \$1.2 million is being requested to provide equipment, spares and parts to allow that institution to continue this programme of refurbishing and fixing various pieces of equipment.

Under the Stewards Department, an additional \$500 000 is being requested to provide for food supplies. There has been quite a substantial increase in the number admissions, I do not have the exact figure, for the year 2006. Over the past week or two they have been averaging

about 20 to 30 admissions from the Accident and Emergency Department alone. This speaks to greater utilisation and greater need for food supplies.

In terms of the laboratories and with new equipment, we are offering additional tests that were not available in times past. The reagents are more expensive as we offer these new tests. An amount of \$1.2 million is being requested to replace pieces of equipment and to provide for the reagents for use in the laboratories in that institution.

In the Procurement Department, \$2.1 million is being requested to provide various sundry supplies, for example, sterile dressing, various tapes, gloves, syringes and needles, throughout the hospital, which would be needed on the various wards and the various departments of that institution.

In terms of pharmaceuticals - this is still a concern for us and you would see what I mean later as I come to the Barbados Drug Service - \$2.5 million is required to pay for certain drugs supplies within that institution. Sir, the hospital is using more sophisticated and more expensive medication especially chemotherapeutic agents and agents in oncology which are quite expensive. These are being provided to persons who are being treated at that institution from time to time.

In terms of chronic diseases, the expenses in terms of medication which are being provided for various categories of patients, continue to increase and an amount of \$2.5 million is requested in that area.

Mr. Chairman, as you would know the cost of living adjustment was implemented in this financial year and an additional \$1.5 million is requested in that regard to provide for that. This comes to roughly \$20 million as I said.

Mr. Chairman, I am certain that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central would be delighted to hear that this amount of money is being provided for that institution, which he has claimed from time to time has been underfunded and has wondered, in terms of the new equipment which is being installed, how it would be paid for. I wish to assure him that there was not a bluff but in truth and in fact a 64 slice CT Scan is being installed and it would be commissioned before the end of March, it is presently on site. I wish to tell him that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital would be the first in the English-speaking Caribbean outside of Puerto Rico to have a 64 slice CT Scan. He is always busy within that institution. He has his sources.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, I am being corrected. The Honourable Member is saying that they do not speak English in Puerto Rico.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: As far as I know the official language is still English, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central frequents there more often. He is very familiar with old San Juan and its surroundings.

Suffice it to say that this would be the first country in the English-speaking eastern Caribbean which would have a 64 slice CT Scan available. He would also know - because he goes through the hospital from time to time apparently checking on certain things - that there are now four new ultrasound machines at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital providing ultrasonography services for Barbadians, many of whom are his constituents, whom I know are delighted to have this service.

In addition, it would be useful for him to know that there are currently installing two fluoroscopic machines within the same Radiology Department so that all persons can have access to mammography and be able to get things like Barium meals and Barium enemas done which we have had some difficulty in providing over the past year.

In addition, in the Accident and Emergency Department there is a new x-ray unit which is now functioning. This means that persons who are being seen in the Accident and Emergency Department and who need x-rays would no longer have those long waiting periods having to go up to the main X-ray Department to have those various investigations carried out on them.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, I am being told that I am using language that is too technical for the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. Sir, I remember he used similar language in some questions that he laid in this Honourable Chamber last year although some of them were misspelt and mispronounced and misunderstood.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, these are some of the changes that are taking place. I would also want the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central to be aware that the intensive care beds have been ordered for the expanded Surgical Intensive Care Unit, that the new monitors are in Barbados and that they would be embarking on an expansion of the Surgical Intensive Care

Unit. As I speak the work has begun, so I would like him to be aware of that.

Mr. Chairman, he should also be aware that work would start shortly on the new Angiographic Suite and that a large amount of the equipment has been ordered for that. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central certainly keeps abreast of what is happening at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He has his sources and he would know that there has been an agreement signed with the Ministry of Health in terms of utilising the European Development Fund for the fixing and outfitting of a new cardiac unit.

Mr. Chairman, these are some of the things that I thought I should mention for information purposes for this Honourable Chamber and for the edification of the enlightened Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central whom I know is very pleased this evening to support me in this Resolution for \$20 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, in terms of care of the elderly, an amount of \$250 000 is being requested in terms of maintenance which is required for the Geriatric and the St. Philip District Hospitals. Sir, I said care of the elderly, I am not saying polyclinic services. I see the Honourable Member for St. John looking at me but he should be aware, he has been through the budget document, that in this current financial year an amount is allocated for the St. John Polyclinic in terms of a consultancy to see how we would utilise the structure which he caused to be abandoned when he was Minister of Finance in 1994, and which in his Party's Development Plan there was no plan for any work to be done on it for five consecutive years, but that is another debate for another time.

Mr. Chairman, he can rest assured that the funds are available to look at the consultancy as to how we would progress in terms of the St. John Polyclinic. The point is taken. I have made the point in here over and over again that the facility at Gall Hill is not suitable at this point in time for the number of persons who have to be dealt with there. We are looking at how we can utilise that structure for which there seemed not to be a coherent plan as to how it would have been utilised, whether it would have been a polyclinic, a living centre, a drop-in centre or indeed a cinema. No one seems to be clear as to what was the purpose of that structure on which construction was started.

In terms of the Barbados Drug Service, an amount of \$8.4 million is being requested to continue to allow that service to function and to provide medication for the various categories of Barbadians who benefit from the service.

Mr. Chairman, I read recently that there are persons who indulged in frivolous and undiluted froth at meetings

in St. Philip North and all over the place speaking about poor Barbadians having to pay for health care. Sir, I do not know where that sort of undiluted froth could come from; perhaps a sick mind.

House 121 Sequence 37

5.00 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, \$8.5 million is being requested to allow the Barbados Drug Service to continue providing that valuable service to Barbadians, while bearing in mind that upon its establishment, it was opposed by the Party to which the Honourable Members on the other side belong. Sir, they continue to oppose the functioning of that service for more than 26 years, and are continuing even to this point in time.

Asides.

Hon. J. X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, I hear the Honourable Member for St. John saying that they are a diabolical force, and I agree with him wholeheartedly. Sir, suffice it to say, the Barbados Drug Service continues to provide medication for all persons over 65 years and under 16 years, and for those special cases of persons suffering from asthma, epilepsy, various types of cancers, diabetes and hypertension. The Barbados Drug Service will continue providing these services.

However, I want to say that we have looked at how we can improve the service and efficiency of that department. We have continued the computerisation of the Barbados Drug Service, looking to attain greater efficiency. Sir, when you look at a situation where, in 1994/1995, the number of prescriptions in the Special Benefit Service which went to the private sector, was over 500 000, at a cost of \$8 million, while the volume of prescriptions to the private sector is \$1.3 million, at a cost of \$30 540 000.

Sir, in terms of expenditure, we see that the Drug Service continues to gallop - I do not want to say out of control - but it is something that we have been monitoring. Therefore, we will need to do certain reforms and are now looking at the recategorisation of the Drug Formulary and at a number of things such as increasing efficiency in terms of computerisation, being able to monitor stock and do audits at both private and public pharmacies.

Mr. Chairman, this \$8.4 million is to allow us to continue the service and to pay the private participating pharmacies until the end of this financial year, so that we will have no disruption in the service, as has occurred last year. Sir, we are proud to say that situation had not occurred for some three years.

Mr. Chairman, the amount of \$596 000 is being requested, in terms of HIV/AIDS, for the provision of anti-retroviral medication. We are currently seeing well- over 1 000 persons at the Leadymeade Reference Unit, where more than 680 persons are currently on anti-retroviral drugs. Therefore, we have increasing numbers of persons who are being placed on anti-retroviral drugs. Unfortunately in our system, a number of patients tend to present late with quite advanced stages of full-blown AIDS, who then have to go on medication. This has an increase in cost.

Mr. Chairman, I would say for the benefit of this Honourable Chamber that we are exploring ways of utilising, and have certainly signed an agreement with the Clinton Foundation, to see how we could be able to provide medication at much lower cost. Sir, in the interim, we need an additional \$596 000, to allow us to continue the very good work which this programme has started and which has been commented on by even UN/AIDS, in terms of our success initially, in terms of the mortality rates and the survival of persons, who are living with HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Head 23 stand part.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I rise to speak on this Head and to raise a few concerns, which I believe the country has, with respect to the delivery of healthcare in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciated that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was at great pains to determine what would redound to my joy, or what I would be happy to hear, but I think there are a lot of people in Barbados, for example, mothers who have loss twins or people who have loss brothers and sisters, who would want to hear from the Honourable Member for Christ Church South.

Mr. Chairman, it is not about what I would want to hear but about those persons out there, who are suffering. The Honourable Member said I would be happy to hear about the ultrasound equipment but I would think that the Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department, Dr. McIntyre, who went public last year, saying there needed to have ultrasound equipment which functions because there had been three deaths that potentially could have been avoided, had that equipment existed.

Mr. Chairman, I would think that Dr. McIntyre would have been happy. It is he whom the Honourable Member should be trying to please, and not the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central. I would think that those nurses...

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, only last week I had to see a constituent, a cancer patient, who was denied drugs at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because those drugs were not available there. This patient was told that he would have had to seek the drugs privately from Lasco Pharmaceuticals Ltd., at a cost of thousands of dollars.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, this is the reality of healthcare in Barbados, but the Honourable Member is worried about what I do with my spare time. If I go and visit the hospital and decided to walk around a number of wards, so what? I pay taxes in Barbados. I am not humbugging anybody, I am not getting in anyone's way. I look around the hospital, it is a public place.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: I do not walk around the one in Sunset Crest, I cannot afford to go there. I go to visit persons on the "A" wards or "C" wards, and I may take a look around. Sir, very often I am invited to look around.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member started out with the issue of student nurses and this issue, of course, has been a problematic one. The Honourable Member mentioned that they have increased the number of nurses who are being trained, which I think is appropriate because the Honourable Member and the Honourable Member sitting next to him, would know that when this Government came to power, in 1994, the number of nurses who were being trained, was actually cut.

Sir, part of the reason we are in this position today, where we are scrambling around looking for nurses, is that of shortsightedness on the part of this Government, when it first came to power.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: On a point of order. Mr. Chairman, it is untrue to say that the number of nurses being trained was cut. In fact, the number being trained was increased. We opened the category of Health Aids, along with a number of other categories, to give support to the nursing services. What, in fact, happened as well was that the fail rate for nurses was very high, and that affected the number of persons coming into the programme. That is the reality but it is not true to say that the number being trained was cut by the Government.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The fail rate for nurses was 60 per cent.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: What about the fail rate for the Minister of Health, at the time? The Honourable Member for Christ Church South could tell you about that. He was the President of BAMP. Why are we in this state today, where we have nurses employed at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, who could barely speak English?

Mr. Chairman, I remember a former Minister of Health was criticised for recruiting Barbadian nurses in England. As we speak, a member of the Board of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the Director of Nursing Services and the Director of...

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: They are meeting in a hotel room in Nigeria. Mr. Chairman, tens of thousands of dollars now have to be spent to send a delegation to Nigeria, to recruit nurses. This is being done by this Party, who criticised the Democratic Labour Party for recruiting Barbadians.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, this is the state in which we are in today. We are now hearing that the hospital needs close to \$20 million, but what I do not understand is that the Minister of Health is saying that debt was carried forward from last year. Therefore, that means that this Government voted \$110 million for the hospital, while being well-aware that money would have to cover debt that was carried over from the previous year.

Mr. Chairman, let us remember that in Government the accounts are done on a cash basis, we do not accrue accounts as of yet. Therefore, they were well-aware at the time, that they were shooting the hospital in its foot, and that it would be in this position where they cannot afford to pay suppliers, where they cannot afford to maintain equipment, and where they cannot afford to pay even for basic things.

H:No.121 (38)5:10 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Sir, this is gross mismanagement, so when the public gets upset hearing that persons working in the laundry, kitchen or on the ward, have to be washing gloves to reuse them because they cannot get enough gloves because suppliers are refusing to extend any more

credit to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because they are not paying their bills, we must understand that the source of the problem is mismanagement.

Mr. Chairman, how can you tell me that nearly \$8 million of \$9 million was carried forward from the previous year into this year and you had capped the hospital budget. If you remember the Minister of Finance made heavy weather of capping the money at the hospital and said they would have to raise their monies otherwise.

Asides.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: I want to speak about that too because they have a PR consultant working for the hospital now.

Asides.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: He is not free but if you donate a tin of sardines to the hospital now, it is in the newspapers and they are all over the place now with a begging bowl, \$10 million for this and \$15 million for that.

Mr. Chairman, I remember when the Lions Club was willing to build an eye centre. Sir, they did so and the Government criticise it and shut it down. *Asides.*

Mr. R.L. SEALY: It was never given opportunity to come to fruition so you cannot go back to the Lions for anything. Mr. Chairman, I genuinely hope that all of these efforts do not end up like the Lions Eye Care Centre. Again, this is a glaring example of shortsightedness because we were hearing in November last year about diabetes being the No. 1 illness. We have a high incidence of glaucoma, diabetes, cataracts and now Barbadians have to take flight and go to Cuba to get corrective eye surgery, when it could have been done here had this Government just been a little more willing.

Hon. J.X. WALCOTT: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, with his statement about Barbadians having to go to Cuba to have cataract surgery. I do not know that any Barbadian has been sent to Cuba by the Government of Barbados to have cataract surgery. Certainly, it is available, the Cubans have made this facility available to Barbadians who want to go but Barbadians can have cataract surgery in Barbados if they desire to do so and they would be able to have it done in Cuba if that is their desire. Sir, nobody has to take flight to Cuba to have cataract surgery done. Sir, that is not true, cataract surgery is being done at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital four days a week and it continues routinely.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the point is that the Eye Care Centre was intended to be a Caribbean facility. It was never given the opportunity to come to fruition and we

are now feeling the effects of it a decade and some later, that cannot be denied. In fact, it was intended to be a teaching facility as well, with a research component. The Minister is well-aware of all of this because he was at the front line of these efforts as a practitioner at the same Queen Elizabeth Hospital back then. I do not need to delve further into that. It is a fine example of where shortsightedness had led us today.

Mr. Chairman, the Minister snickers when he talks about the St. John Polyclinic. A 12-year-old Government is now having a consultant to decide what to do about a partially finished health facility. Is that a caring Government? Why is it? Because the people of St. John do not support the Party that is in power. Is that the reason? It is 12 years into your Government and now you are going to have a consultant to determine whether you should be curing people or curing movies. Sir, it is ridiculous.

Mr. Chairman, health should not normally be a partisan issue but I say this much if I wanted to make a partisan point. I heard about marriage earlier and when you are getting married there are normally three little words that you say before you get married. If the people of Barbados wanted to divorce themselves from the Barbados Labour Party, there are just three little letters that would tell the whole story, Q.E.H. They have tried different types of Ministers and different styles of Ministers, they have fired the entire management, they had a Commission of Inquiry under Dr. Haynes, they have established a board, they have tried local CEOs, they have tried CEOs from overseas but it just continues and continues and yet the saga of the hospital gets worse and worse.

The Minister of Health, the Honourable Member Christ Church South, is quick to say how much money is going to be spent here or there. Sir, you know, it is not about the money, it is about the people issue, the people who work there and the patients that get care there and that is where I think his focus needs to be. Mr. Chairman, despite structural adjustment, despite a much more modest budget, under the Democratic Labour Party the public's confidence in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was much higher than it is today.

Sir, it is my certain knowledge that there are business initiatives right now, one that has already started and one that is about to start. Within the context of the business plan for these medical facilities, is the fact that there are literally banking on lost confidence in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It is a fact that in the business plan for a medical facility, it is said that the confidence is lost and that it will continue to be lost. Sir, the investors are counting dollar bills in their pockets as our public health care system, led by the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, gets worse and worse. The Minister must focus on the health professionals. Sir, let us not fool ourselves, when that

facility up Highway 2A is set up, all of the quality health professionals are going to leave the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and go down there and work. What would become of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital? Will it not go from bad to worse? These are the issue that the Minister must take serious note of.

Mr. Chairman, the Democratic Labour Party did not call for the board to resign, the worker's organisation did. They have had enough and they are fed up. There are qualified nurses at home watering plants with their foot up, watching Dr. Phil and being paid in full, while nurses on the wards can barely communicate with the patients in the hospital. What sort of management system is going on there?

Mr. Chairman, as far as I know, we have a system of collective responsibility. There are no shortages of former ex-ministers of Health in the Cabinet and there are some very opinionated ones as well.

Mr. Chairman, the Government can continue to fool themselves but the rate at which confidence has been lost in that institution and the seeming unwillingness to deal with some of the fundamental issues, the wait in the Outpatient Department and the Accident and Emergency Department, just to mention two of them and we will not even talk about people waiting to get surgery.

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Mr. R.L. SEALY: Sir, issues and trying to shorten those wait times, and the fundamental issues of patient care and the workers of the hospital, those are the concerns they must really deal with.

Sir, I must say that what I heard in here today about the mismanagement at the financial level, bringing debt forward and carrying forward debt to the following year, there is nothing wrong with that, I supposed if it is done openly, but do not hide it, because you are going to make the place impossible to manage properly. Sir, the reason for the shortages at the hospital is mismanagement. Those are the issues that this Government must begin to look at seriously.

I thank you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Sir, I am not opposing the Supplementary. It certainly would not be the first time that

the Government has come to this Chamber for more money for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, or for other related activities, including a request for funds to analyse the potential use of the new St. John Polyclinic. I want to start there, Sir, because the Honourable Minister, in a fit of disingenuity, decided to talk about the polyclinic, and people get confuse. There is the existing polyclinic, which, in and of itself, until the new one is constructed, if the Government is still constructing it, needs to be repaired and upgraded. That is point number one.

Sir, the Government could opt not to do that. It can let it run into the ground, as it has done so far, but the existing polyclinic is what I am currently concerned about. That polyclinic was providing health services to Barbadians, it is now closed as a result of some issue relating to some fungus or whatever. I am only interested, not in what the Honourable Minister said to me in here, but what he said, not in a smart alec way, not in a way so as to be full of himself, but he needs to speak to the people who are not currently able to enjoy those facilities that were once being provided from that side.

Sir, whether this Government builds or completes the polyclinic at St. John is the Government's business. At sometime in the future it will be completed by the Democratic Labour Party. I am not interested in the grandstanding on that side. Sir, for twelve years you have done nothing about it, and if you think the people who use it are waiting on you to complete the polyclinic, you would have to be crazy and they would be crazy to expect that of this Government. Sir, nothing has been done with it.

Sir, letters have been written to me, in response to requests by Ministers of Health, for alternative uses for various floors. We talked about the potential use of a day care centre. We talked about a public hall for educational purposes, adult education, all kinds of things. This current Minister and I have spoken about it. Sir, now twelve years later, he is going to take more taxpayers money up, to find out what the alternative uses could be for a building that is not even completed. The building that is completed and there, he has not even been able to say when it is to be reopened, if it is going to be reopened, and when the temporary arrangements for shuttling people down to St. George and St. Philip are going to come to an end, and they will be able to enjoy the services which they previously had. That is all that is being asked.

Sir, grandstanding and saying what the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central eats for dinner and what he is going to say next and that kind of foolishness in here, as if we are here to talk to each other, we are in here to do the people's business, and the Minister of Health needs to be reminded of that, not scoring points over the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central and

trying to score points over his own colleagues and trying to score points over me.

Sir, the people who are currently waiting in the Accident and Emergency Department, who are waiting for operations, who cannot get drugs, who cannot get appointments, who cannot get medical reports, and pensioners, and I can go through the long list, who are facing challenges ... yes, these challenges exist all over the world, but a Government tells you year after year, minister after minister - because we have not had a single demonstration at the hospital...

Sir, it was not me who fired the Honourable Member for St. James South. I have never commented on her performance as Minister of Health. We never brought a no-confidence motion against the Honourable Member, we never took any action that should have precipitated her dismissal, and I do not think that we even commented on it after it occurred. It was the Prime Minister who said the reasons for her dismissal, after saying he never tells you why he appoints people to particular ministries, but on that occasion he told us why he dismissed the Minister for being too cantankerous.

Sir, I do not know how that affected the administration of the hospital, but maybe it did. The Prime Minister then said he was going to appoint somebody with business skills, because the hospital did not need the kind of skills that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South had, it needed business skills, so, he took one of the moguls in the Barbadian business community, of whom I spoke in an earlier debate in another connection, and invested him with the powers, while he was still breaching the Road Traffic Regulations - of being Minister of Health in Barbados.

Sir, we were told business skills, and the Honourable House was told in the Estimates and Budget that the wickedness of the Democratic Labour Party has come to an end, and that a new era was being ushered in, in public health policy in Barbados, and that in one year \$26 million in additional funds was being provided for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital; yet the problems persisted. They got worse, they deepened. Sir, then this Minister came, after the other one was knocked off like a hoe handle, and he now brought professional medical skills, having worked in the hospital, knew everybody's business and could therefore solve their problems, and he was President of BAMP.

Sir, the Honourable Minister now came into the job, invested and imbued with these new skills, coming on top of the skills of the business man, with more money in his hands, than previous ministers. We were told that with all of those things happening, the Minister had come up with a new administrative arrangement for the hospital. Therefore,

the problem was not money. The problem was not cantankerous behaviour. There was no need at that point for business skills; that had been solved, what was needed was a new administrative structure. Once again, we did not stand in the way of that. There were no demonstrations. We did not oppose nor vote against any money, any administrative arrangements that the Honourable Minister proposed in here. We raised concerns, but we did not vote against it, and the Honourable Minister had a free hand.

Sir, here we are in the year 2007, in a situation in which public perceptions of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, do not mind that the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown said it is the best in the Caribbean; that is her belief, and she is entitled to it.

17.30 p.m.

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House 121, Sequence 41, 5.30 p.m.

Hon. Dame B.A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. I have not spoken in the debate, but I agree. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) is the best teaching hospital in the University of the West Indies, and the best hospital in the Caribbean.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I am saying not to mind the Minister. I am not going to tell her whether I agree or disagree with her. Sir, what can impact on the ability of a public institution, can be perceptions of that public institution's performance and confidence in relation to that public institution's performance, and morale in that public institution.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: We may have the best police force in Barbados too. We have the best of everything, according to you.

I went into the New Orleans Sunday night and I met some people, who do not think they have the best representative. They showed me some other things that they are concerned about, which I never saw anywhere in the world. You are entitled to say that they are living in the best of everything.

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: They have the best of everything, including the ones that are sleeping on the street, that the Minister said will remain on the street. We have the best of everything.

Sir, The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a good hospital, but it is threatened by the incompetence of the current Minister of Health, to deliver on the pledges that the Minister of Finance and successive Ministers of Health have made, and in the environment that is currently operating in the hospital. He needs to get a handle on the situation, before those public perceptions contribute even more to a loss of confidence, in the ability of our hospital to deliver the service that it is supposed to deliver.

As I say, the Honourable Member for the City can say what she wants. I am certain that if she took a trip down the streets in Bridgetown...

Asides.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I am not talking about the fancy projects. We can do them on another occasion. Leave here and go into Dunlow Lane, the New Orleans, and go in the places where people need to use public health facilities live. Therefore, when people say the Honourable Member never went into a hospital, or you do not use the polyclinic or comments like that, that in and of itself, does not answer anything. We are interested in the people who have to use those facilities, not what we have to use.

The Honourable Member for the City can afford to travel overseas, if she wishes. She can afford to pay health insurance, and that is where everybody in this country is being pushed.

Asides.

Hon. Dame B.A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is all over the place and he is having a field day but he must not misrepresent what is my situation. Sir, any treatment at all, medical or otherwise, it is always Barbados.

Mr. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I said that the Honourable Member for the City can - and I want to make my position abundantly clear - afford to get the highest level of health care anywhere in the world. In any event, I am not representing you in this Chamber, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael Central is not in here to represent you. We are here to represent the people who cannot afford FMH, who cannot afford to go to Sunset Crest, who cannot afford to go to Jackson Memorial, who cannot afford to travel overseas, who do not have health insurance but have to rely on the provision of public health care in this country.

There are people operating within the provision of that public health care, who would like to give even better service but they find it difficult by the way public health care is being managed, and the kinds of decisions that are being made, including the one the Member speaks about.

Sir, how could the most senior manager in QEH convince somebody to extend credit to the QEH, when they have not had the resources to pay bills for the past few years. Therefore, arrears would have accumulated, putting the position of the QEH at risk.

This is not their fault as managers. It is the fault of this Parliament, the mismanagement by the Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance and their misplaced priorities, that those funds have not been made available. Therefore, the QEH management and board would have to be scrambling around now for funds in the private sector and throughout the world, to try and solve problems that the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party said were part of its pledge to the people in 1994, reiterated in 1999, reiterated in 2003, reinforced by three Ministers and by a Parliament that have supported all the initiatives to solve the problems of the QEH.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for Christ Church East.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise to support this Resolution before the House. The Honourable Member for St. John, in a wide-ranging - some may even say wild ranging - contribution said one thing with which I agree totally. He said we are here to do the people's business, and the people's business is represented by this Supplementary before us.

Sir, the people's business, the business for which this Government was elected, includes among other things, provision of health care for our population. If there is one thing you can say about the tenure of this administration is that we have spared no effort in ensuring that resources are provided for the QEH and, indeed, for the health care service generally. Sir, we can look at the numbers. I am not going to detain the house with the numbers this evening.

However, Sir, we could look at the range of expansion that has occurred across the health care system. There are increased areas of special medicine, which are provided at the QEH today, compared to a decade ago. There is a range for options for health care, which are available through the polyclinics today, compared to ten years ago. There are expanded hours of polyclinic service provided today, as compared to a decade ago. Sir, 20 years ago under a previous administration, we had expanded hours, and they were reduced.

Sir, the bottom line is that when we look at what is provided in Barbados today, our QEH is unique among hospitals in the world. First of all, to be offering the range of services on a population base of only 270 000, is unique. In the United States of America, Europe and countries with

greater resources than Barbados, you would need to have a population of millions, in order to have available to you, a hospital that offers these ranges of services.

Sir, I have a sister-in-law who lives in Port Hope, Ontario, which in 1985 when I first visited there had a population of 10 000. Covert was the nearest town to it and that had a population of about 20 000. Sir, one of the things that they have done, by way of health reform. Port Hope had a small hospital and Covert had a small hospital. There has been a little expansion in both towns and they have closed the two hospitals, in order to have one hospital. You would think that with a larger population, they would have more hospital services and that has been the story across the North American continent.

Indeed, Sir, across the United States of America, the concerns have been about the impact that the policies of the United States of America Government have been having on working class people. In the United States of America as compared to Barbados, working people are required to live in hope that they never get sick because, if you do not have money, you cannot afford to get sick.

House 121, Sequence 41, 17:40:14

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Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Sir, in Barbados, any citizen can access any of the specialised services offered by the health system in Barbados, from open-heart surgery right through the line. Yes, we would have situations in which there would be bad reports coming out of our hospital.

Sir, if you follow the international press and follow what happens in medicine, bad news coming out of hospitals is not an unusual thing, unfortunately so. What is also true is that those persons, whether here or elsewhere, who receive excellent service are often not the ones who would come out and say so.

Sir, we can all cite examples in our constituencies of poor people, both young and old, who have major illnesses, from kidney problems to heart problems, badly broken limbs, bad burns, motor vehicle induced injuries, and from acts of violence either in a crime situation or domestic disputes, who have been able, without pulling a single cent from their pocket, to receive all of the best medical care. They have left this Queen Elizabeth Hospital, for which we are voting an additional \$20 million today, full of praises for the care they received in the emergency rooms, on the wards, in surgery and in the outpatient clinics.

Sir, I believe in continuous improvements, and we could always do better. There will never be a situation in terms of service delivery which I would ever consider perfect. If we are doing it in a day, let us try to do it in a

half day and if we are doing it in a half day, let us try to do it in an hour. Mr. Chairman, we cannot characterise the quality of our public health delivery at our Queen Elizabeth Hospital by those several bad experiences which we would have from time to time.

Mr. Chairman, if there is perhaps one criticism of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital that I would agree with, and one which was equally true for BWIA now called Caribbean Airlines, is that there is perhaps a lack of information. The one thing with BWIA, as compared with other airlines, is that if they have a delay, they always take long to tell you anything and when they do tell you anything it is in very general terms.

Sir, the reality is that in hospitals across the world, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital included, to every patient going through the door his emergency is the worst and must be attended to right away. Sir, the medical staff will make an assessment based on their global picture of all the persons who come through the door, so they would know when they have the stroke victim who needs critical care in an hour, the heart attack victim and the gunshot victim.

Sir, they do not announce over the PA system that they have delays because they have two fellows in there with stab wounds and ask patients to hold on. Sir, there must be some mechanism by which there can be a better process of communication, so that persons whose injury or condition is not life-threatening would not feel as if they are being ignored. Those are some of the obvious management and service delivery issues with which I can agree and which I will trust that the Board and the management would undertake to address as we seek to deliver the services.

Sir, in my judgement the matters which are before us are the proper subject of the supplementary. Sir, I do not take the suggestion that the fact that we are coming with a supplementary for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital represents any form of malpractice or mismanagement.

Sir, when I study some of the contributors to the supplementary, there are in many cases of an inescapable nature. Of course, I have not yet come across anyone who would be able to predict with accuracy the number of people who would get sick, what they would be sick with, how long they would stay in the hospital and what would be required to treat them. Therefore, to me by definition, one could expect that at a hospital, unlike other institutions, one would need to either have a contingency vote sitting around or would have to come for supplementary expenditure.

Sir, during the course of this financial year an increase in the cost of utilities, occasioned by an increase in the cost of electricity as result of high oil prices, has caused

the utilities vote to have to be supplemented by \$1.975 million. Sir, there is no mismanagement in there and there is no crisis in the health system as a result of that. What there is, is a determination that the health treatment of the public of Barbados, whether they are from New Orleans or New Castle, would not be compromised by Government wanting to be consistent rather than correct.

We could stand and say we voted over \$110 million and we are not coming back because the Opposition would criticise us for having a supplementary. Sir, criticise as they like, we would do the correct thing, which is to provide funding so that the people of Barbados would be able to come for health care in a way that a country of only 40 years of independence can boast of providing free health care to its citizens. Sir, the world powers have made the determination that their people can eat cake and suck salt, they would not be indulging in that kind of advanced social development practice.

Sir, we also have the maintenance of property, which requires an additional \$1.2 million. Sir, we cannot predict at the beginning of the year what would break down and what would require fixing. In fact, the Opposition has from time to time, where there have been equipment that have broken down, has been critical of that. Sir, we are here to do the people's business, that is why I am here supporting this supplementary for this \$20 million.

Sir, we have a situation in which another \$500 000 is required for food supply and things of that nature. This is money well-spent. Sir, if there is a time when people need a balanced and nutritious diet it is when they are ill.

Sir, we were not prepared to compromise people's health. We do not know what illnesses people would come in with. For the laboratories, additional supplies are required to the tune of \$1.1 million in order to make sure that all of our people's medical business could be taken care of, whether it be those in Parish Land or Silver Sands or those in Society and Bath because they are all Barbadians and they would all be taken care of.

Sir, we also have the situation, a proper subject again for a supplementary, of the provision of general consumable items. Sir, anybody running a business would know that they would have their consumable items and the rate of consumption would vary. Sir, \$2.15 million is required to provide for a range of consumable items. Again, a matter outside of the control of the hospital and the Government of Barbados, is the cost of your drugs and the variation of prices on the international market. You cannot tell the doctors not to prescribe drugs because you are trying to save money and you cannot tell the doctors to prescribe a particular drug because it is cheaper. Sir, it is our responsibility in doing the people's business to make sure that the additional \$2.5 million which is required in

order to provide pharmaceuticals for the treatment of our people, is properly provided.

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5.50 p.m.

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MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Hon. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. Chairman, just to give another example, the increase in salaries, the cost of living allowance, which was not budgeted for, there is a vote of \$1.5 million, to cover the cost of living allowance.

Mr. Chairman, an essential point is that this Government has discharged its responsibility, through this Parliament, by way of the provision of adequate financial resources in support of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, has done an excellent job in providing leadership, through the Ministry of Health, for all aspects of health. It is his calling and his profession. He is helping the people of Barbados, not one patient at a time but one nation at a time, and we can have every confidence in him, as we move forward.

Mr. Chairman, we heard of all the work going on at present, and we are not forgetting the \$25 million refurbishment project, which the Honourable Member would have administered during the last financial year. In looking at the hospital recently, one can see that the hospital place. Last week, I was there visiting some persons and apart from my own personal observations, one can see from its physical appearance, the nature and character of the equipment on the wards and the operations that were going on there, that the hospital is a better place today under my colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, than it has under the Democratic Labour Party.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I would have sincerely hoped that the kind of extensive debate as to the ills, wants and needs of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, would have disappeared under the leadership of the current Minister of Health. Sir, let us be fair, the Honourable Member brings some knowledge of that institution to the table, not only as a practitioner working there but also working within the collective agency as President of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners (BAMP), where he would have listened to the ideas and to the need for new policies, when he was there. Therefore, having

elevated him to a position of leadership and management of that institution, the majority of the wants and cares should have disappeared. But alas, we are caught up in the frailties of man, genetically speaking and therefore I believe that, with the best of intentions, the Honourable Member has been unable to take the true mark and advanced somewhere toward the finish line.

Mr. Chairman, I believe the Honourable Member has prepared, and that he has prepared himself well, not to take the blows of the Opposition Democratic Labour Party but to take the blows from the people of Barbados. Sir, in taking those blows, even now, one would hope that he would respond and would continue to respond, until his time is nigh, either as an elective representative for the people of Christ Church South or as Minister of Health. These things are all part of the travails of life.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I am reminded that we should never really become too deeply attached to certain things, as I reflect on Alan Paton's Book: "Cry, the Beloved Country". It basically speaks about not becoming too attached; not to personalise these things because they can really cause us substantial harm.

Mr. Chairman, I remember the Honourable Member for Christ Church South and the Minister responding, with some venomous alacrity, to criticisms placed on him by his senior member in the parish of Christ Church. But I believe there has been a patching of the ways and love is now expressed between the two but at the time there was great fervent and almost anger emanating from my representative for Christ Church South, but one would expect these things.

Mr. Chairman, there are people in this country, one of whom I have met just about a year ago, whom I had not seen for a while. He was burying his wife at Westbury Cemetery. Sir, this person had somewhat personified the Q.E.H. as a being. He said to me: "The Q.E.H. killed my wife", and as I listened...

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, when persons are going through trauma, they tend sometimes to make these kinds of analyses, but he has not been the only one. There are several persons in this country, because they have lost a loved one in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, who ascribe that death to the handling of those persons, by whomever, in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Asides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, please allow the Honourable Member to continue his debate uninterrupted. Please continue Honourable Member.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I will not be diverted by the irrational rantings of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. I will continue on my path.

Asides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, I said no Member can rant.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, I have not spoken in this debate and therefore the Honourable Member cannot bring my name it.

Asides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Honourable Member, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central has not mentioned any Honourable Member by name, when he spoke about ranting.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, these are not stories, these are facts.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, I have never been able to embellish my contributions in this House and I never will, I have no need to do so. Sir, the point is that this Opposition wants, in fact, to parade across the length and breadth of Barbados, across the length and breadth of North America, Asia and Europe, and say that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is, in fact, the best hospital in the world. That is what we want to do and, therefore, any criticisms that we might make, would be for Government to look at in a constructive manner for improvement.

We said here we that will not oppose the voting of the more than \$20 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. In fact, if it were \$50 million, we would not oppose it. As a responsible and knowledgeable Opposition, we cannot, because we will not oppose anything which is for the health and safety of the citizens of Barbados. Therefore, I am sincerely offended by the scarce, monkey mouthings of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. Mr. Chairman, the point I am making is that there are expressions of fear within this society. What do we do? What we must do is to eliminate that fear by placing or putting structures in place, where persons might feel comfortable.

Mr. Chairman, I will give another example, a few weeks ago, a lady fell on the wet surface at the airport and hit her head.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: This lady is an in-law. Mr. Chairman, I must compliment the people at the airport. They took extremely good care and management and facilitated her movement to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, just about 3.30 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, that individual, who one would assume was in a comatose state, did not get into a ward until almost 12 hours after.

6.00 p.m.

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(EDITED)

Mr. R.D. JONES: We do not want to get up here and repeat these realities. We would want to see seamless movement through the system but there are challenges that we both must put our heads to and other knowledgeable persons in the wider society on the Board in management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to bring about an annulment of the kinds of fear, which persons express. Some fear might be irrational and unreasonable but some of it is real. If a lot of it is real, rather than get up and 'pompasset' and accuse persons who are telling the truth because they are on the front line, they should change their tone and language.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes we use these phrases as some catch-all, like "the people's business". We have this way of developing these phrases to mean something to people. It is important if we are talking about the people's business to do the business of the people. It is unfortunate, a shame, a disgrace that after 12 years of the leadership of the Barbados Labour Party, I am not talking about the existing polyclinic structure at St. John - I am not beating my chest for the Honourable Member for St. John, the Honourable Member for St. John can beat up on his chest relative to that - but I am looking at it holistically that after 12 years, a structure that has the steel and block work in place, is still left unattended. When I first came to this House in 2003, and went to the Other Place, the Right Excellent Governor-General in his Throne Speech stated emphatically, it is in the record, that it would be attended to as a matter of urgency, that is what was said. Sir, after 1994, we came nine years to 2003 and now we are into 2007. At least, if it was spoken to so emphatically, four years surely cannot be a matter of urgency. It is a matter of neglect, a matter of not caring, one can call it a 'don't-carish' attitude. The existing structure is affected by fungus but you cannot tell the citizens of St. John when something is going to happen there.

Mr. Chairman, I have been discerning that they are blaming the civil servants and saying that they cannot find the file. They are not taking any action on it, that is what I am discerning. Therefore, one has to get emphatic statements on these matters. One has to hear the Minister with some clarity speak to these matters.

Mr. Chairman, I am not concerned about that. This might not have been in the Development Plan but the House would have put this as a capital project and, therefore, I would want the Minister to put some alacrity in his movements and consideration of these matters so that he could wend his way to St. John and see the suffering of the people of St. John or wherever that kind of behaviour exists relative to the fulfillment of these particular matters that he can live the real life with them. Sometimes you need to walk the walk and talk the talk with the people who suffer rather than stand outside of it and look on. You are an observant participant rather than a real participant in the kind of issues and problems that affect flesh and blood people, so when we get up in here and talk about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, this polyclinic or that polyclinic, we are talking about people that if you bite them, they will bleed and if you cut them, they will bleed. Therefore, at the end of the day, that is why this Opposition has never opposed the granting of resources to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because people go there.

Mr. Chairman, it is true that I usually pray that if I get a mild illness, that I can go to a private doctor and get a little injection or some vaccine and keep me out of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because I have the same fear that I might not make it back out of the door. Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has one minute more.

Asides.

Mr. R.D. JONES: There are persons who speak that in the country, that is the point we are dealing with and until we come to the realisation that more has to be done, if it needs greater management or if it needs a new Minister to help guide the process. It is not a slap on his hands if you shift him to Minister without portfolio, his skills would still be used. The point is, let the Minister assist the people of the board and the people of Barbados in getting the process successfully forward.

Mr. Chairman, if the majority of the complaints that we hear every day from the ordinary citizens of this country would gradually disappear, all of us could say with some confidence, thank God, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is in fact the best hospital in the Caribbean, the best hospital in the world, and all of our citizens can go there.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for the City will now make her contribution.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I want to give my wholehearted support to the matter before the House. Honourable Members on the other side have been using this debate as an opportunity to beat up on the Minister but there is nothing new in that because I have been a Minister of Health in my time and I used to get beat up on too. Sir, it concerns me that disparaging remarks would come from Honourable Members on the other side about the status of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and we need to put this debate in its proper context.

The first point is this. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a teaching hospital of the University of the West Indies. There are other teaching hospitals in Trinidad and in Jamaica but the Barbados Queen Elizabeth Hospital is the first hospital of choice for medical students when they have to do their internship and, nobody can deny that.

Mr. Chairman, the second point is this. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a public hospital. You can find private hospitals all over the world, state-of-the-art condition. The Honourable Member for St. John talked about Jackson Memorial, I never went there, maybe he knows about it. I get my health care in Barbados. You can have state-of-the-art where you can eat off the floor but those are private hospitals. Sir, even in a place like the United States of America, when you go to a public hospital, a county hospital, there is no comparison to be made to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, I have nothing but praise for the work done by all of those people who work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from the people who clean, even from the fellows in the car park who wash cars when you go there as a visitor, right up to the top.

The Honourable Member for St. John said one true thing. He did say that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a good hospital and so it is. Over time, administration after Administration, we have built that hospital up.

Mr. Chairman, I can remember visiting the Barbados General Hospital as a child. My mother was a nurse and sometimes she would go back there to visit her friends and as a tiny child I can remember the Barbados General Hospital, which was a good hospital in its time and over all those years.

H121/18:10

Sequence 44

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Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: Sir, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is now a hospital to which people come. Sir, we are busy in here, on the other side, crying it down,

and people are coming from the Eastern Caribbean States to this hospital and some of them are coming from more developed countries in this region, to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for care on a daily basis. I know whereof I speak.

Sir, when I was a Minister of Health, thirty years ago, special rates had to be put in place for CARICOM patients, and that is still the case today. If it were all this rundown and the worst hospital in the world, that we are hearing from the other side, I do not think people would be coming to this hospital. I do not think that the hospital would be full, because Barbadians would be going to hospitals in the Caribbean and further abroad.

Sir, a third point that has to be made about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is this. It is the only hospital in this Caribbean region I go even beyond CARICOM - where health care is free at point of delivery, at the primary, secondary and tertiary level. That is health care in Barbados. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a tertiary institution. Some people try to treat it like a secondary institution.

Sir, we hear about “granny dumping”, those are people who want to treat it like a secondary institution. I was recently at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital trying to get somebody admitted. I went to the Accident and Emergency Department, like everybody else, parked my car, went to the admitting nurse with the person whom I was accompanying and explained the situation. The place was full but it was clean. There were snack machines there. I had to have recourse to one a little later in the night. I arrived at 7.30 p.m., waited my turn, like everybody else, with the person whom I was accompanying. It was explained to us that it was very busy. There had been a stabbing incident. I saw a senior police officer who told me that one of his men had been knocked down on the highway. We waited like everybody else. Sir, there was one woman in there carrying on that she had been there for twelve hours. It turned out that she was a granny who had been dumped.

Sir, at 1.00 a.m. when we got into Accident and Emergency Department, you could have eaten off the floor. There was a woman there cleaning from one end to the other. All the cubicles were filled with people, Barbadians of all walks of life, all social strata and all colours. I saw some tourists there as well. I saw all the asthma cases. They knew what to do by helping themselves. There was one case sitting on the corridor and my patient and I were put to sit in chairs next to the corridor.

Sir, it pleased me to see that the Accident and Emergency Department Unit now has its own X-ray Unit within it. My patient was X-rayed. The doctors were all busy, clearly knowing what they were doing. I was proud, and at 2.00 a.m. I accompanied my patient to Ward A3. Sir,

the Ward was clean and quiet. The nurses were just sitting there doing their reports, whatever writing up they were doing. I walked with my patient to the bed, and it was clean. Sir, one or two people were awake in that Ward. It was cool. There were fans overhead and the windows were open. There was no pillow. It was no big thing. You could wait until tomorrow morning. You are not going to die because you do not have a pillow.

Sir, on another occasion, I went to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and visited the Intensive Care Unit to see a constituent. Again, I was impressed with the high quality of care. That is what the hospital is there to deliver. You are always going to have problems. I do not know a hospital without one.

Sir, the most popular television programmes are about hospitals. There is Grey’s Anatomy, and I cannot even remember all the others.

Asides.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: There all have their problems, but the quality of care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital cannot be questioned. It does not behove people in the highest committee in the land to get in here over an important Supplementary, and people are just talking. They are not looking to see where the money is being spent, look at where the big heavy items are. It is a lot of money but if you are giving, as no where else in the world, perhaps other than Canada gives you, free health care at point of delivery. Sir, you have to pay. The taxpayers have to pay for it. Sir, people get it free at point of delivery, but nothing is free. At the end of the day we the taxpayers pay for it. That is our function in here today.

Sir, look and see where the big items are, drugs \$2.5 billion required to supplement orders for pharmaceutical supplies for the remainder of the financial year, which goes down to the March 31, 2007. Sir, increasing incidents of cancer and diabetes have however resulted in larger than usual budget allocations of chemotherapeutic, radiological and diabetic drugs. These are the killer diseases in Barbados. That is why twenty-five years ago we put in place a pharmaceutical drug service, with a special benefits within it. If you have cancer, diabetes or hypertension, asthma and any of those chronic diseases in Barbados, no matter what your age, you are entitled, once the drug is on the national drug formulary, to free drugs. Sir, it costs money. Sir, in the hospital setting, what else do hospitals dispense other than drugs, together with the other services.

Sir, are people in here quarreling because the hospital needs \$2.5 million to supplement expected orders for pharmaceutical supplies to take the hospital down to the end of the financial year? Sir, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East spoke exceedingly well today and made

the point about legislated salaries. There are increases in salary and you have to account for that; increases in utilities, you have to account for that. Sir, what about the quarter million dollars being required for the repair of District Hospitals, and the St. Philip District Hospital in particular? Why do people not look carefully to see what it is we are, in here, being asked to do?

Sir, if we would only indulge in a little more self-care, then we would be doing something about the incidents of diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancers in this community. Look at what is being asked for HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Orihject, over half a million dollars. Are Honourable Members taking any note of the fact? Look at the Addendum. This is the job that you are in here to do. You are paid to be in here to do this. Stop grandstanding.

Sir, a thousand patients are registered and approximately 65 of them are participating in the anti-retroviral therapy treatment. It cost money. It is very expensive, but in Barbados, unlike any other country in the world, that I know of, any Barbadian presenting with HIV/AIDS is entitled to the anti-retroviral therapy free of cost at delivery. We pay for it. The taxpayers pay for that. Sir, because of that, people living with AIDS are living longer. It concerns us all and it should concern us on all sides in this Honourable House that there are still too many new cases of HIV/AIDS, and young people between 15 and 44, in that age cohort, and particularly women among, presenting now with HIV/AIDS. These are the things that we need to be talking about in here, looking for money to see what we can do to upgrade and improve the education programme, because that is where it has to start, and it has to start at the primary school level.

Sir, educate yourself about these things. It is easy to get in here and give off. The Honourable Member for St. John should be ashamed, as the Representative for St. John for all those years AND as a Minister of Finance, did not see fit to vote money for the St. John Polyclinic. He left it in bush. He should be ashamed to get up in here to talk about what is needed at the St. John Polyclinic. It is going to be done, but these are urgent matters.

18.20 p.m.

Sequence 45

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

House 121, Sequence 46, 6.30 p.m.

Hon. Dame B.A. MILLER: The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a general hospital. It is the one hospital that services our population. It does a good job but everybody is going to have a story.

I am not surprised to hear that people go down to the cemetery and say that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital killed their relative or whatever. People say these things but sometimes you have to ask a question. What did the relative not do, that the doctors and the nurses said they should do? It happens everywhere in the world. It is not peculiar to Barbados. Sir, we must be looking to build up our institutions because they are the envy of the world, not only of the Caribbean.

There are strangers, visitors who come here and they go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. The Prime Minister of Britain came here and his son was taken ill, and he went to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He did not go to any private place, and they have nothing but praise for the quality of care that he got there.

I want to say this too, Mr. Chairman, that night, just a few weeks ago, when I was in the A&E, very few people knew who I was, and it did not make any difference. I waited my turn like everybody else, and I did not see any discrimination in there.

The triage nurse has to determine what is most urgent and what is less urgent. There were signs in the A&E. It is only by happenstance that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is in the City of Bridgetown, but I do not take any specific credit for that. My late father, perhaps, could take more credit for that than me.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member has two minutes more.

Hon. Dame B.A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, the point I am making here is that Honourable Members will use occasions like this - and it will soon come up in March when we are debating the annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure - to make all kinds of parish-pump points. We all do it but sometimes we have to know where to draw the line. The people who listen to these debates - and we must not underestimate the numbers of persons who listen to debates - do not have the addendum in their hands. It would be a good thing if perhaps sometimes, we would pay more attention to what is in the addendum, so that people understand what all of this money is going towards. There are some large sums here and they are going to provide services that are of the most urgent and utmost importance to the quality of health care, which we offer in this country.

We have a network of polyclinics, which I am very pleased to hear from the Minister of Health, will soon be again offering services, well into the evenings. It used to be the case. It will not be a new thing. One of the things that I am never going to be able to forgive the Democratic Labour Party for, is that when they came into Government in 1986, they stopped that service.

People forget that a certain gentleman was the Minister of Health, thank God, only for a very short period of time, but enough time that he took that evening and night service out of the polyclinics, Sir, and it needs to go back there. The people used to be able to go home, look after their children, feed them, make sure they do homework, and then if they had to have a trip to the clinic in their communities for whatever reason, they knew that 8.00 p.m. or 9.00 p.m. at night, the clinic would be open, and a doctor would be there. Sir, this took part of the load off the A&E.

I could still see, in the Accident and Emergency Unit the other night, people who really and truly could have been treated in a polyclinic setting, but no one complained. People waited their turn, and they got quality care.

Mr. Chairman, this will not be the last time that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will be the subject of a Supplementary, and it will continue to be the subject of criticism, some of it carping and unreasonable, and some of it useful and constructive. It cannot be in anybody's interest to tear it down. It is one of the most highly regarded of the social institutions that you will find, not only in this Barbados but right across this region. It has my unstinting support.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, much thanks for the opportunity to contribute and to support this Supplementary before us.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Sir, before you continue, I will hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, then I will hear the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, and then ask as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South to wind up. Please continue.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, I want to commend the Minister of Health for the outstanding job that is being done to change the fortunes of Barbadians, as it relates to the access of health care in our society.

I suspect that like the Member for Christ Church East Central, I could just shut up and sit down and contribute nothing. Sir, in his usual vein, his metaphorical and steroid-like rage, he made a gossip contribution that really added nothing to the debate.

Sir, he is from a Party and a side that has no moral authority whatsoever to speak on the direction of health care services in this country, a pathetic lot who contributed absolutely nothing to the development of the health care

services in Barbados, but took us on a health care frolic of St. Joseph Hospital. This is the legacy of the Democratic Labour Party, when it comes to the provision of health care in Barbados.

Mr. Chairman, let me first of all divorce myself from the sly and ugly reasoning that the Democratic Labour Party side would have presented, relative to where we go. There is not one enlightened contribution that would have come from that side of the aisle, relative to where we should go with health care in Barbados. Sir, there was a lot of clichés, gossip talk, and story telling about how we should proceed with health care in Barbados.

I speak, Mr. Chairman, from a side that has, year after year for the past 12 years increased the budget, the amount available to Barbadians for health care in society. That is the legacy of this side of the aisle, relative to health care. Sir, no administration in the history of Barbados has done as much in providing increases and upgrading health care, as this Barbados Labour Party administration. I am putting this on record.

Mr. Chairman, the range of health care services provided per capita, the number existing in our population have never been as it has been. Sir, when the Democratic Labour Party was in office, people in Barbados lived in the hope that they did not get sick.

Asides.

Hon. N.A. LYNCH: Bring your own sheet, bring your own bandages, bring your own towels, bring your own bed pans. That is the legacy that the Dems left us, in Barbados.

House 121, Sequence 46, 18:30:14

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Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, let me be parochial now. Poor people in the Bay Land are testimony to the efficiency of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. Chairman, I know there are going to be naysayers, but when you are managing an institution of this type there are always going to be people who will slip through the cracks.

Sir, I know for a fact that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is unparalleled in its delivery of health care services to any hospital anywhere in any jurisdiction by far. Sir, one could add it up, cut it and dice it however one wants, the fact remains that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is the best hospital of its kind anywhere on the face of the earth given the resources that are provided to it.

Mr. Chairman, personal references were made to tourism and to visitors in Barbados. Mr. Chairman, let me

give you a little anecdote. There is a man, Tommy Hilfiger, who is well-known all over Barbados and all over the world. Tommy Hilfiger comes here every year in his private jet and brings his management team with him. He spends his time at Sandy Lane Hotel. Sir, on one occasion one of the members of his team had a child who got caught on one of the conveyor belts that was delivering the luggage and was taken to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Mr. Chairman, Tommy Hilfiger wrote in a letter that I have that he has never received the kind of treatment he received at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital anywhere else in the world. Sir, in that letter he wrote about the efficiency of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Asides.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South were ordered expunged from the records by Mr. Chairman.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, I will give you another anecdote before I go forward to my next point because I do not need much time to deal with the Honourable Members on the other side of the aisle.

Mr. Chairman, I just returned from a trip to Aruba on which I was accompanied by the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Tourism. Mr. Chairman, he had an operation on his finger and he had to have the bandages changed. Sir, he was taken to a hospital in Aruba and he told me that it was the worst experience he has ever had. Sir, he had to spend 24 hours to get a bandage changed on a finger. Sir, none of this could have happened at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados. Sir, this is what we are subjected to and then you would hear people talking about the quality of health care delivery at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, I see the Leader of the Opposition limping around the place. Maybe, if he had gone to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he would not be limping after all this time. After almost two years he is still hobbling around the place because he went to some private hospital. Sir, almost two years after the Old Brigand pushed him off a truck, he is still hobbling around the Parliament of Barbados when he should have long been healed.

Sir, in 1993 the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central had an ailment and he too did not go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, he went somewhere else, but now he sings the praises of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and is now saying that he should have gone there.

Asides.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, all of them that are talking who has never had a progressive idea in their heads and

who cannot give you any sense of direction about how we need to treat health care in Barbados, whenever they are hurt, they run to some other institution rather than running to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, I want the people of Barbados to know this. They are over there pretending that they would run the Queen Elizabeth Hospital better, and they would do this and the next, but they do not have an idea as to what it takes to run a hospital. They are bankrupt of money, bankrupt of ideas and bankrupt of the will to govern this country. Sir, that is the legacy of the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. Chairman, the real matter before us is the supplementary. Mr. Chairman, we cannot determine in a budget the number of persons who are going to get sick, the cost of utilities or the overtime payment.

Mr. Chairman, the contribution that was made by the Honourable Member for Christ Church East was really a proper presentation because he set the thing in context. Mr. Chairman, in an institution like this, which I understand does not get the level of resources that it really needs, how are you going to determine at the beginning of the year...

Mr. Chairman, I know a former director of the hospital who has constantly said that the real challenge to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is not the concept of the level of governance but the concept of the resources provided to the institution. Sir, that is where it starts and ends. Therefore, if an administration has to come and ask for more money to run an institution that we understand should be provided for... Mr. Chairman, we are a small developing society with limited resources. We do not have access to the resources that we really need. Sir, all Ministers of Health would attest to the point that the real challenge with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital has to do with the level of initial resources provided.

Mr. Chairman, what Government has done is to change the management concept and approach of dealing with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but the health care treatment of Barbadians is not being compromised.

Sir, when one looks at the \$1.2 million which is required for the maintenance of property; the \$2.5 million for drugs for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital; the \$2.15 million for the provision of general items, the consumables; and then one looks at the matter of overtime and the increase of salaries in terms of the cost of living allowance, how could any sensible person who understands the concept of management and has done Accounting 101, start to think that this Administration is not being the most efficient that it can be in the provision of services to that institution?

Mr. Chairman, I give my full support to the Minister and the Ministry of Health. I am mostly interested in the

new direction under this Minister, under this Administration. Sir, clearly more needs to be done, however, I want to go on record as praising the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and its personnel for the outstanding work that they do relative to the provision of health care services in Barbados and what they do for the people of Barbados.

House 121 Sequence 47

6.40 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is an excellent hospital. That is a fact of life and I challenge anyone to say otherwise.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South were ordered to be expunged from the records by Mr. Chairman.

Asides.

Mr. R. D. JONES: Mr. Chairman, the Honourable Member cannot say that. That is unparliamentary language and therefore should be withdrawn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South has one minute more.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, there are men fond of paradoxes, who appear to understand what surpasses the understanding of ordinary folk. These are the kind of men with whom we are faced across the aisle. Sir, I say that scepticism has never been considered to be the building tools of anything, what we need is clarity of thought and purpose about how we will proceed.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is run in this day and age with sympathy and imagination, for the first time in its history. Therefore, I dismiss all the frivolous arguments I heard relative to how it should be run. I say gross sophistry has scarcely ever had any influence upon the opinions of mankind, except in matter of philosophy and speculation. Therefore, what is necessary is complete clarity of thought. Therefore, I need to hear from the Opposition how they would deal with...

Mr. R. D. JONES: On a point of order. The use of the word sophistry is also unparliamentary.

Asides.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please continue the Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Hon. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Chairman, gross sophistry has scarcely ever had any influence upon the opinions of mankind, except in matters of philosophy and speculation. I am saying what we need is clarity of thought, vision and direction, about how we run the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Chairman, I am saying that this Barbados Labour Party administration has run the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, for the benefit of all Barbadian, with sympathy and imagination. I am committed to the path on which we are and I will stand here an Honourable Member, who is committed to the direction in which the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is going, for the benefit of all Barbadians.

Mr. Chairman, I am obliged to you.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I suppose when one is listening to the contributions from the Honourable Member for St. Michael South, where he starts off talking about moral authority, we know how much of an expert he is on that. The Honourable Member shouts hard. I remember when he shouted hard about LIAT having to remain within the hands of the Governments of the Caribbean. He is now back from a trip, where we was begging somebody from Texas to bail out LIAT. Sir, we know to take what he says with a pinch of salt, when he is at the top of his voice.

Mr. Chairman, at any rate, apparently the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is now like the sacred cow of Calcutta. You are not supposed to say anything about it because all is well and all is perfect. In fact, apparently now because we are saying things and are only reflecting upon what is being said out there, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown is proud of the fact that she was in her own constituency and nobody had recognised her. She said it, she said she was at the hospital, and the hospital is in the City of Bridgetown.

Hon. Dame BILLIE MILLER: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is really bankrupted of anything to say in this debate. Mr. Chairman, what is the relevance of it?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central please continue.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, the fact of the matter is that whether or not the Government wishes to hear it from the Democratic Labour Party, the doctors have had a lot to say about the hospital and about its administration. There are surgeons who are sitting around, in broken-down operating theatres, waiting on autoclaves. Are you going to curse them too?

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: The Labour Movement had a lot to say about it. In fact, the Honourable Member for Christ Church East had a lot to say about it, but what about his senior colleague, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central? He, in a fit of honesty, also had a lot to say about the hospital. Therefore, I will leave Government to delude themselves into believing that all is well.

Mr. Chairman, certainly Tony Blair and Tommy Hilfiger have a lot to say but I can tell you that there are constituents in St. Michael West Central and all over Barbados, who are not satisfied. It is clear that the management at the institution is lacking, which is why the Government has had to go through so many changes and so many permutations, and yet there has been no improvement.

Sir, we can speak as well about a general problem in Ministry of Health. I heard that one cannot predict how much bandages would cost and that the cost of items is difficult to predict. But we now find ourselves with a very large Supplementary for the Sanitation Service Authority, over \$4 million, and they too had a record vote of about \$28 million, I believe.

Mr. Chairman, I would have thought that the Sanitation Service Authority would have been somewhat more efficient in the way it is operating. The last financial year a lot of money was spent in providing new vehicles, so that with regards to the issue of preventative maintenance, the cost associated with a younger fleet should surely go down. Therefore, to be here asking for more money, almost one-quarter of the entire vote, to facilitate the operations of the Sanitation Service Authority, again speaks to this problem of mismanagement, which seems to replicate itself through Ministry of Health. Sir, maybe we could hear something about that.

Mr. Chairman, I know the vehicles work hard. I have said in other debates that there is probably no other vehicle that works as hard as a refuse collection truck. This is so because of its constant stopping and starting and the moisture and the causticity of refuse that go into the back. They do work hard but if you have a preventative maintenance programme and a young fleet, surely the cost at the Sanitation Service Authority should at least be under control, if not going down slightly.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, apparently it was said you cannot predict the cost to the hospital but you cannot predict the cost to the Barbados Drug Service either, which has incurred just over \$8 million in extra costs. Sir, I want to understand this because again we are spending more money than we have ever spent on pharmaceuticals.

The Honourable Member has indicated they are looking at strategies to contain the cost. Are we to understand that eventually we would be looking at co-payment? Sir, if that is indeed in store for the people of Barbados, I think the Minister could come out and say it.

Asides.

Mr. R. L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, I am suggesting that what we are talking about, with respect to the mismanagement at the hospital, can be found throughout the health sector.

The Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown, I believe made heavy weather about the \$250 000 for the District Hospitals. I believe there are four District Hospitals. That \$250 000 could easily be spent on one of those hospitals. The Honourable Member for St. Philip North would tell you that the St. Philip District Hospital is in a deplorable condition. Sir, there was a crisis at the Geriatric Hospital recently.

6.50 p.m.

Tuesday, January 16, 2006

(EDITED)

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Clearly, Mr. Chairman, it is not only a case of bad management at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but we can see that throughout the health care sector there is evidence of clear mismanagement and the fact that cost just seems to be spiralling out of control even in cases where it should be under control.

Mr. Chairman, we have to look at this issue in its totality. The Government says that it is doing everything at the hospital and that all is well there but we are hearing a different story. There is the issue of public confidence. You can delude yourself into believing that you might be better than some of the rest but lost of public confidence is the issue and the Government does not seem to want to address it. All the contributions we have heard from over there were about how much money is being spent but, what is being done about the human resource issues and the deplorable morale that exist in quarters at the hospital. Sir, those are some of the important issues. What are you doing about people who truly feel as if they have been wronged or mistreated at the hospital? Sir, they are people too, they are Barbadians. It is not to say that you are hearing these stories occasionally, you are hearing them too often and, Mr. Chairman, that is the point that needs to be made. We can talk about all the money that we are spending but it is those simple issues that need to be addressed by this Government and need to be addressed urgently.

Sir, I am obliged to you.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Honourable Member Christ Church South.

Hon. J.X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, thank you. First of all, I want to thank all Honourable Members on this side, who have made a contribution to this debate but in my short time, I must address some comments, which have been made unfortunately, by Honourable Members on the other side. I must begin with the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, who was wading all over the place as he spoke as he struggled to make a worthwhile and useful contribution in this debate. The one that was most striking for me was that I heard him attempting to quote the Governor-General from his Throne Speech and I realised that he had a tendency, perhaps, to stretch the truth from time to time but I never thought for one moment, when I heard him said that "my Government was moved immediately to start work on the St. John polyclinic," and I had to send for a copy of the Throne Speech. Sir, I will quote from it at page 29:

"...in recognition of the importance of the polyclinics in our system of health care, their opening hours will be extended and a new one will be constructed at Gall Hill, St. John."

Sir, there is nothing about immediately or there is nothing urgency and I believe that the Honourable Member needs to apologise to the Governor-General. Sir, if he could misquote the Governor-General and get the Governor-General wrong, then we know what we can do with the rest of his contribution. If he would go as high as that, we know what we can do with the rest of his contribution.

Mr. Chairman, when I hear the Honourable Member for St. John speaking about the polyclinic, he spoke about it in glowing terms. He spoke about the plans for the St. John polyclinic and how it is in this terrible state. Sir, incidentally, it will be reopened at the beginning of February. He spoke about this new clinic, what they planned to do with it and how many discussions he had with various Ministers of Health about this new polyclinic. Sir, then there is something call the Bridgetown Development Plan 1993-2000 and a certain Honourable Member for St. John was the Minister of Finance when this plan was laid in Parliament and I spoke to the need to develop polyclinics. Mr. Chairman, on page 92 of that plan for 1993-200, I spoke of the need to have a new Gall Hill clinic in St. John and, incidentally, they were going to construct one at Belleplaine in St. Andrew. Sir, on page 265 of that document, it speaks of the proposed expenditure on these polyclinics. In 1993/1994, they proposed to spend \$700 000 on the Gall Hill polyclinic and perhaps the Belleplaine polyclinic.

Mr. Chairman, for the financial year 1994 to 1995, there were plans to spend not a single cent; 1995 to 1996

there were plans to spend not a single cent; 1996 to 1997, there were plans to spend not a single cent on this polyclinic; 1997 to 1998, there were plans not to spend a single cent and hence the importance that the Honourable Member for St. John attaches to this St. John polyclinic that was part of this miraculous development plan for St. John, but, Sir, we will discuss these issues, I am sure, at a later date.

Mr. Chairman, I want, however, to focus on some of the comments made by the Honourable Member from St. Michael South Central, who spoke of the recruitment of nurses, who was trying to compare a former Minister of Health, going to London at a cost of over £400 per night for 10 days to interview persons to come to Barbados to work against a group consisting of members from the human resource department of the hospital, a board representative and a person from the Department of Nursing to try to recruit nurses to come to Barbados, so I do not know where is the comparison. Sir, he speaks about these nurses, who are home watering gardens but, Sir, which nurses? He should name 18 nurses now that have not been placed, since we went to a board, other than the ones who opted not to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He should tell me where the nurses are because anyone who hears him speak about these nurses would believe that there are 20, 40 or 100 nurses out there being paid for doing nothing. Mr. Chairman, tell him to name 18 nurses since he knows so much and since he has so much information.

Mr. Chairman, in any case, if they opted not to work at the hospital, we cannot force them to work there unless he, perhaps, is in a police state. Sir, there is nothing we can do about that. Sir, he then went on to speak about the Sanitation Services Authority and about its inability to forecast what it needs in terms of finances after I explained that during the course of the year, there was an agreement with the Ministry of Civil Service and National Union of Public Workers regarding the Sanitation Services Authority and the introduction of an inconvenience allowance that did not exist before and with the introduction of a laundry allowance that did not exist before.

Mr. Chairman, I spoke of the extension of the hazard allowance to categories of workers that did not exist before. I spoke of the need to have increased overtime to provide for the cleaning of Barbados and collection of garbage because the Honourable Member would call me over and over again, and not about the constituency of St. Michael South Central but about the garbage collection in a certain parts of St. Michael where the Honourable Member formerly lived. Sir, he has called about a single household or a single street in St. Michael South. Sir, the Honourable Member has never called about garbage collection in Marl Hole Road or in Carrington Village but had the temerity to call me to tell me that garbage had not been collected in Highgate Gardens for two days.

Mr. R.L. SEALY: Mr. Chairman, on a point of order. Sir, the record is clear. I have never called the Honourable Member Christ Church South on the issue of garbage collection. I did call him on the issue of nurses from Carrington Village, who needed to be trained and who were not getting paid. I call him on that issue and it is unresolved but I never called him about any garbage collection issue. I know he is under a bit of stress and that his mind might be a little blurred but I never called him about any garbage collection.

H121/19:00

Sequence 49

Tuesday, January 16, 2007

Dr. J.X. WALCOTT: Mr. Chairman, in closing I would like to again praise the dedicated staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, who has been working very hard over the past year and a half, since the transition to the Board. Many of them have gone beyond the call of duty, ensuring that thousands of lives are saved and preserved yearly.

Sir, as I said, on the Floor of this Honourable House already, we have to be careful when we tear down our institutions that we have something to replace them with. I spoke to this Honourable Chamber then, and I repeat again, that we in Barbados, in terms of health care, have much that we should be proud of. We are the envy of the Caribbean in terms of provision of health care. We are indeed the envy of a number of countries in Latin and South American in terms of providing health care free at the point of delivery. This is unheard of in several of our Caribbean countries, and, indeed, in this region. We continue to criticise. I am not saying that everything is well in the health system. I have never said that. Sir, by the nature of hospitals throughout the world, they have recurring problems. We never speak of the good that has been done at that institution. We never praise the hardworking staff. We are always prone to criticise, denigrate, and pull down, and that is dangerous.

Sir, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central say that he is scared to go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital because he might not come out alive. Sir, it drove like a stake through me when I heard him say that. What message is he sending, what example is he setting to the citizens of this country? An Honourable Member of our Parliament, in 2007, is that the sort of message he is trying to send? All I would say is that we have to be careful of how we tear down our institutions and have nothing with which to replace them.

Sir, the Board has been working assiduously to improve conditions at that institution. They are mindful of the HR issues, and the Honourable Member for St, Michael

South Central would know that these do not disappear overnight. He has had to deal with them even in his own organisation, which he manages. He has had HR issues from time to time. Indeed, the hospital has cashflow problems and persons have had cashflow problems and private businesses from time to time, even with the best intentions and the management skills, this can happen.

Sir, I am saying again today, that I want to remind Honourable Members to be wary of tearing down our institutions and having nothing with which to replace them. We hear all the criticism, but we are yet to hear one positive suggestion, one positive idea as to what could be done differently at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. All we hear is that this is not working. Tell us what we should do now in the Accident and Emergency Department, that we are not doing to shorten the waiting time since you have so much information.

Sir, I am obliged to you, and ask that this Head 23 do now stand part.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I beg to move that Head 37 stand part.

Hon. Dame Billie MILLER: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Hon. A.P. WOOD: I beg to move that Head 43 stand part.

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Mr. C.A. MASCOLL: Sir, I beg that Head 47 stand part.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

On the motion of Hon. R.R. FARLEY, seconded by... Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER the passing of one Money Resolution in Committee of Supply and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Hon. R.R. FARLEY, seconded by Hon. G.A. CLARKE, the Resolution was read a first and second time and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R.R. FARLEY: Mr. Speaker, this brings us to the end of Government Business for today's Sitting. I think we have had a full and productive day. Sir, just to remind Honourable Members of one housekeeping matter that dinner is served downstairs at the conclusion of the Sitting.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, January 23, 2007 at 10 O'clock in the morning.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, January 23, 2007 was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

H121: 19: 08 p.m

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EDITORIAL NOTES — NOT PART OF THE REPORT

Prepared with the transcript; for checking against the recording and the Minutes.

EDITORIAL QUERIES

Points noted while preparing this report from the edited transcript. The text has not been altered except where stated.

Q1. Masthead. The session is not stated in the source, so no session line is printed.

Q2. Order No. 13, after the Minister's reply (take-slips Sequence 31 to 33, about 3.50-4.20 p.m.). The record passes from Hon. G. A. Clarke's reply on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2007 straight to Head 13 in Committee of Supply. The remaining stages of the Bill, the motion on the Supplementary Resolution and take-slip Sequence 32 are not in the source. Please confirm.

Q3. Minutes. Hon. Dame Billie Miller's seconding line continues 'MR. SPEAKER: If there are no corrections or observations, then let these Minutes stand confirmed.', so the Speaker's words appear under her label. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Report from Select Committees. Hon. R. R. Farley's second speech is only '. . .', and the question on the adoption of the Report is recorded as put before Hon. Dame Billie Miller seconds the motion. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Take-slips, throughout. Many take-slips read 'Tuesday, January 16, 2006'; the sitting was in 2007. One slip reads 'H21: 15.00 p.m.' for House 121, and the 2.40 p.m. slip is numbered '(22)', the same as the 2.30 p.m. slip. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Order No. 13, end of Hon. G. A. Clarke's reply. The take-slip 'House 121, Sequence 31, 16:00:14' is typed at the end of the Minister's last paragraph and is printed as part of it.

Q7. Order No. 13, Dr. W. F. Duguid. The speech labels spell the name 'DR. W.F. DUGID' and 'Dr. W.F. Duguid'. Printed as in the source.

Q8. Reporters' markers. Reporters' markers '(EDITED)' appear as separate heading lines at several take-slips. Printed as in the source.

Q9. Committee of Supply, Heads 37, 43 and 47. Heads 37, 43 and 47 are moved and agreed without any title or amount given in the source, and the procedural sentence reads 'On the motion of Hon. R.R. FARLEY, seconded by....'. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. on Tuesday, 16th January, 2007, with Mr. Speaker in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood, and the Minutes of December 12, 2006 were confirmed. The Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. O. S. Arthur, laid the Immigration (ICC Cricket World Cup West Indies, 2007 Act) (CARICOM Special Visa) Regulations, 2006 and the Special Development Areas (St. Peter's Bay SRL) Notice, 2006, and Hon. N. A. Lynch laid the financial statements of Caribbean International Airways Limited and the Annual Report of the Barbados Port Inc. for 2005.

Hon. R. R. Farley reported that the Joint Select Committee on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2006, to which the Bill had been referred on August 11, 2006, had met eleven times. The House adopted the Report and agreed that the Committee's Bill become the Bill before it, and the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2007 was read a first time. Standing Orders were suspended and Order No. 7 was withdrawn.

Under Order No. 13 Hon. G. A. Clarke moved the second reading of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill, 2007. He explained that the Committee had not made it compulsory to carry a driver's licence, the penalty in the withdrawn Bill having been \$2 500 or two years' imprisonment; instead the time for producing a licence would be reduced to twenty-four hours, with a fixed penalty procedure and a new plastic licence. The Bill also provided for wheelchairs and perambulators on sidewalks, the registration of makers of number plates, 'hire vehicle' in place of 'hackney carriage', fixed penalties under sections 121A to 121G, and controls on articulated vehicles.

Mr. D. St.E. Kellman said the amended Bill vindicated the Opposition and questioned the treatment of tour coaches and road signage, amid points of order from Mr. R. D. Marshall and Hon. G. A. Clarke. Mr. R. D. Marshall called the amendment long overdue. Hon. K. D. Symmonds described how the old arrangement for producing documents at police stations had been abused, in exchanges with Mr. Kellman and Mr. D. J. H. Thompson; the Speaker asked whether he had called a Member a liar, and he said he had not. After a suspension until 1.45 p.m., Dr. W. F. Duguid, Mr. R. D. Jones, Mr. R. L. Sealy, who was not won over by the demerit point system, Mr. M. A. Lashley, on driving without insurance, Mr. D. J. H. Thompson, on the lack of consultation with the Opposition,

Hon. D. D. Marshall and Mr. C. A. Mascoll spoke. The Minister replied, citing Psalm 1.

In Committee of Supply, Hon. Rev. J. J. S. Atherley moved \$500 000 under Head 13, Prime Minister's Office, for the National Initiative for Service Excellence, a programme begun in 2004 whose cost had grown from \$1 million to \$2 million a year; he cited a survey in which 20 per cent rated service excellent and 10 per cent poor. Mr. R. D. Jones drew attention to the lack of a quorum. Head 18, Audit, of \$7 000 was agreed on Hon. R. R. Farley's motion.

On Head 23, Ministry of Health, of \$33 742 885, Hon. Dr. J. X. Walcott set out sums for student nurses'

stipends, the number of trainees having risen from 30 a year to 120, \$4 148 324 for the Sanitation Service Authority, some \$20 million for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and \$8.5 million for the Barbados Drug Service. Mr. R. L. Sealy and Mr. D. J. H. Thompson criticised the management of the Hospital, and Hon. Miss H. E. Thompson stated on a point of order that the nurses' fail rate had been 60 per cent. Hon. R. R. Farley, Mr. R. D. Jones, Hon. Dame Billie Miller and Hon. N. A. Lynch also spoke, and certain remarks of Hon. N. A. Lynch were ordered expunged. After the Minister's reply Heads 23, 37, 43 and 47 were agreed, the Resolution was reported and agreed to, and the House adjourned until Tuesday, January 23, 2007.