
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, April 29, 2008

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.20 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour M. A. CARRINGTON, B.A., LL.B.,
(Speaker)

His Honour K. St.C. BEST, LL.B.(Hons), L.E.C.
(Deputy Speaker)

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Prime
Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Affairs, Labour,
Civil Service and Energy)

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., LL.M (Leic.) LL.B
(Hons.)(Lond.),B.A. (Hons.) Dip. Ed.,

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, J.P., B.Sc., Dip. Ed.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN Hon. Miss M. A.
MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B., (Leader of the Opposition)

Miss C. Y. FORDE, J.P., L.C.P.

Hon. R. D. JONES, J.P., M.A. Ed., B.A., (Hons.),
(Minister of Education and Human Resource
Development), (Leader of the House)

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, M.B.,B.S. B.Sc.
(Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social
Security)

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL, Q.C., LL.B. (Hons.),
L.E.C.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of
Housing and Lands)

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

Hon. R. L. SEALY, B.Sc., M.B.A. (Minister of
Tourism)

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE, M.Sc. (C. Eng.) (Minister of
Transport, Works and International Transport)

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, FCCA, CA, (Minister of
Trade Industry and Commerce)

Hon. S. D. BLACKETT, (Minister of Community
Development and Culture)

Mr. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE, M.Ed., B.A., Ed.D. Dip.
Theology, (Minister of Social Care, Constituency
Empowerment and Urban Development)

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE, LL.B(Hons.)

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B.(Hons.),
(Chairman of Committees)

Hon. P. M. T. TODD, B.Sc. (Minister of State,
Ministry of Social Care, Constituency and Urban
Development)

Hon. C.P. Sinckler, M.Sc., B.A.,(Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business).

*Prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan
Harewood.*

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, April 22,
2008. Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to move that the Minutes
for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting
of Tuesday, April 22, 2008, which Minutes have been
circulated, be taken as read.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that,
Sir.

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

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: I beg to move that the
following bill be read a first time:

1. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

Notice of this Bill was given on February 25, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Standing Orders No. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Dr. the Hon. D.C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

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

ORDER NO. 1 – NURSES BILL, 2008

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce this Bill to this Honourable Chamber today. This Bill would repeal and replace the Nurses and Midwife Registration Act, Cap 372 to make new provision for the registration, regulations and discipline of the nursing profession and for related purposes.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative and regulatory amendments in this Bill provide the platform for organisational and systematic reform of the General Nursing Council of Barbados. It is essential that the Council repositions itself to meet the needs of nursing in Barbados within the 21st Century, and to prepare itself with a new administrative framework and structure to carry nursing to keep pace with international requirements. These changes will allow for a more flexible and proactive Council with the capacity to respond to the continuing changes in nursing services within and beyond these shores.

Mr. Speaker, what is of importance is that there were a number of fundamental limitations within the old General Nursing Council with respect to its function as a regulatory body for nursing, and also with respect to its general administrative functions. Sir, after much consultation within the nursing profession, a decision was taken to look at the entire set of provision with respect to the General

Nursing Council and to introduce a broad set of new directives.

Mr. Speaker, one aspect is that the older provisions did not create any opportunities for there to be a full-time secretariat. Sir, not having a full time secretariat to carry out the normal day-to-day functioning of the General Nursing Council has had fundamental limitations on the capacity of that Council to function effectively as an administrative entity and execute its regulatory role.

Sir, not having a full secretariat, many of the coordinating functions with respect to examinations had to be undertaken by retired nurses, and we also had to co-opt assistance from the Ministry of Health for part-time secretarial support. Sir, while we had that sort of fragile and uncoordinated type of structure, the Council still had to regulate over 1 600 nurses and allied nursing professionals as well as other nurses within the public sector and within the private sector, within that grouping.

Mr. Speaker, one of the important elements is that the Council, under the new legislation, would have its management headed by a registrar, who would be responsible for coordinating its work particularly in relation to nursing education and the registration of nurses.

Mr. Speaker, the Nurses Bill, rules and regulations, therefore, seek not only to address those types of administrative deficiencies, but also to look at the general functioning of the Council, and to have the Council move away from its general advisory role, as the role that has been essentially identified primarily within the older legislation to include a broader set of functions. Sir, these functions would include, for example, dealing with examinations of the elderly and speaking to changing the categorisation of nurses but, Sir, under the old Council, much emphasis was placed on the concept of a general nurse.

Mr. Speaker, why this becomes important is that while it speaks specifically to a category of nursing, it really does not speak to many of the broad aspects of the functioning under the Nursing Council. For example, we are talking about nursing sub-specialities, and we are now speaking specifically about nursing specialities and the Council is supposed to have regulatory functions. Sir, by amending the functions of the Council, this would give the Council not only a broader set of administrative and regulatory capabilities, but would also allow the Council to come in line with other Councils globally.

Mr. Speaker, what the Bill also looked at, in addition, was the separate functions with respect to the Council.

10.30 a.m.

Sir, Part 1, Section 4 of the old Act, does not provide enough information about the role the Council now performs in Barbados. Sir, emphasis has been placed on its roles only, as I said earlier, as an advisory body to the Minister. Sir, though the latter is important, there are a number of other functions that had to be brought under broader regulation.

Sir, under the old Council we had a number of sub Committees, that would function in assisting the general administration of the General Nursing Council. These Committees involve the Assessment Committee, the Complaints Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, and the Education Committee. We are proposing under the new provisions of the new Council to the creation of additional Committees to help the Council to function on a day-to-day basis. These new Committees would include the Standards, Ethics and Audit Committee, the Finance and Business Committee, as well as the Professional Development Committee, which would merge with the Education Committee. We also want to highlight and broaden some of the specific functions of the established committees that would have existed under the old Bill.

For example, when we speak of the Assessment Committee, it will now have a new set of functions. Essentially, we are looking at assessing applications for registration and enrollment, and to recommend approval, or refusal of these applications; to recommend requirements where applicable, which will enable approval of registration and enrollment; to recommendations for the issuing of the practicing certificate for nursing in Barbados.

We also would have taken the entire aspect of the Examination Committee, and those would have been revised, to allow the Examination Committee a broader set of capabilities. For example, it would have the responsibility for maintaining the required standard in licencing examinations for licencing and enrollment; to ensure the proper conduct in the licencing examination for registration and enrollment; to nominate the examiners, moderators and external examiners for the approval of the Council, to keep under review the existing examination process, and to make recommendations to the Council for the improvement, where necessary.

Sir, we also reviewed the old functions of the Education and Professional Development Committee, and moved to expand those particular functions, and to give those functions more definition.

For example, to make policy recommendations in respect of nursing education; to liaise with Examination Committees; to make recommendations on the assessment methods for examinations; to assess and evaluate nursing programmes proposed by education institutions for the Council's consideration; to make recommendations on

curriculum guidelines and implement requirements in line with international trends and standards; to coordinate/regulate visits to all nursing education institutions, and to ensure that the standard of nursing education and training facilities comply with requirements specified by the Council. Also, to identify categories of specialist nurses, training and experience required to become a specialist nurse within Barbados.

In addition, to consider the need for the establishment of a Nurse Special Register and Registration Examination; to develop a code of professional conduct for nurses, in accordance with international standards; to develop an implementation plan on mandatory continuing nursing education; to develop an accreditation system for continuing nursing education, and to develop the promotion strategies for continuing nursing education.

Sir, these are fundamental changes that need to be put in place in the context of nursing falling in line with regional and international standards. Health professionals in general, not only nurses, but the medical profession, dental profession and paramedical profession are all going in the direction, where we have to execute new registration. We have to look at continuing education strategies. We have to look at re-registration and all of these new techniques, to ensure that we have a nurse who would be practicing current and modern nursing techniques, for practices are very far-reaching and, indeed, bring nursing in Barbados in line with other types of nursing practices internationally.

Sir, as I said earlier, the medical profession is also going in that direction, as well as the paramedical profession. I am sure that the dental profession is also working quite hard on developing these particular type of inputs to advance their particular discipline.

Mr. Speaker, the other aspect is the development of the new Finance and Business Committee. The importance of this Committee relates to the fact that the Nursing Council, since 1973, when one looks at the Schedule of Fees, there have been very little movement in terms of fees being charged. Also, not only would the Nursing Council have to deal with a broader set of nursing specialties, but, in fact, the schedule of examinations are now more frequent, and at times they get involved in providing examination relations for persons applying from extra-regional sources, as well as regional sources.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, we thought that a Finance and Business Committee, would become essential to developing financial strategies for the efficient management of the Nursing Council in Barbados; to establish a Business Planning Cycle framework to sustain that particular process, and develop an Informational Technology Strategy for the Nursing Council of Barbados.

Sir, included in the new Council parameters, is to establish a Standards Complaints Committee, for nurses to essentially establish fundamental codes of conduct and standards and to monitor those codes of conducts and standards, and be able to execute some type of internal regulatory process. Sir, it would also allow for the investigation of allegations of other misconduct in general, on fitness to practice, or criminal conviction against any registrants under the Council. That would also, by necessity, require the establishment of a Disciplinary Committee to consider allegations referred to it by the Complaints Committee.

Sir, what has become an important aspect of the new Council would be the establishment of the Standards, Ethics and Audits Sub-Committee. It becomes essentially important if we are to move nursing into the arena of specialists nurses, nurses that would become nurse practitioners in Barbados, nurses that would need to move beyond graduate training, simply in the area of midwifery and that of being a Psychiatric Nurse. We have to create a framework that allows not only these nurses to go after that type of training, but just as that would exist within the medical profession, one would need well established and prescribed structures to deal with standards and ethics with respect to codes of practice within those new paradigms.

Mr. Speaker, this Committee would monitor all facilities, to ensure that the standard of nursing complies with the requirements prescribed by the Nursing Council of Barbados. We want to develop also within that context, a Risk Management Strategy, essentially to strengthen the governance structure of the Council.

Sir, in principle, we are looking to change fundamentally, the name of the Council from the General Nursing Council to the Nursing Council of Barbados, and to establish under that framework a set of sub-Committees, which will be broadened with respect to their functional and administrative capacities, giving those Committees not only the capacity for internal regulation, to become self managing and self-financing.

10.40 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, at the present stage, the Government of Barbados provides a subvention, I think to the tune of \$125 000 annually, which is a pittance, with respect to what the General Nursing Council has to do. The fact that we said earlier that we would have now to establish a proper secretariat, it would mean that we would have to be able to create and manage our own finances, Sir, so as to more effectively deal with those particular paradigms.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other fundamental changes that we want to look at, would be to effect amendments to the age of entry into nursing. Therefore, under the new Act

where we would effect amendments to the Nurses and Midwives Rules 1973, under the existing framework, the age of entry into nursing is 18 years.

Mr. Speaker, we are proposing to reduce that age to 16 years. Sir, we found that the age of 18 would deny some young females who are 16 years old and 17 years old and are qualified, to enter into the training aspect of nursing from doing so. Sir, by the time we get them at age 18, many of those persons would have now chosen different paths to pursue. Sir, we thought that if we would reduce this to the age of 16 within the revised legislation, it would give us an enhanced capability of getting some of those young females, who would consider nursing as a profession.

One of the things that I said earlier, that I would like to delve into a little more, is that one of the things in the new Nursing Council of Barbados we would be looking at, as I said in bringing it in line with what is happening within medicine, dentistry and para-medicine, would establish a capacity for continuing nursing education programmes for re-registration.

The Council will recommend to ensure the integrity and quality of the nursing profession, nurses should be required by Law to show evidence of continuing nursing education each year. The Council is of the view that there is an adequate number of courses available locally, regionally and internationally through various educational and professional institutions, to facilitate a continuing nursing examination process.

Sir, under the new Nursing Council of Barbados, we would also look at regulations in general, of the Nursing Auxiliary Group. I think it would be important for me to define what is meant by a nursing auxiliary. Sir, by the Council, this is a person who performs tasks in the health care setting, under the direct, or indirect supervision of a registered nurse. This broad definition that will be evident under the new legislation and to be used by the Nursing Council of Barbados, will allow for the inclusion of health aids, or any such related categories of persons who are now included under the Act.

Sir, it is important to note here that there is presently some debate under the old legislation, with respect to the General Nursing Council's right under the Law to be able to regulate health aids that now work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and at the Geriatric Hospital.

Sir, when one evaluates the job description of more than 108 Health Aids in Barbados, they do perform some nurse functions. We believe that it would be wise, and legally so, to have them incorporated under the regulations of the Nurse Auxiliary grouping, so as to be able to give them some guidance and broad regulatory framework.

Sir, I would want to make a comment here with respect to this whole notion of the Health Aids. I believe that a guiding principle in medicine that should be upheld, is one where no qualified person should do a job that a lesser qualified person can do. At present, there are many such services that can be executed by persons categorised as nursing auxiliaries, or those of health aids, that need to be executed within polyclinics, and within all aspects of nursing care to allow our registered nurses to perform at the level that they need to perform at, and to be able to pursue greater and more defined areas of specialists nursing care. Sir, I mean now also with respect to moving towards the development of areas of nursing practitioners in Barbados.

Sir, I would want to see within my tenure as the Minister of Health, that we create the legislative framework in Barbados, where nurses move to that level of autonomy, so that they can execute some level of nurse practitioner functions in this country. Sir, they already do it in Belleville with respect to midwives. They are many nurses who are trained to a level and, I think, all that is required is to have the medical cover for them. This would take significant pressure off the systems that the doctors now have to manage and regulate themselves, if nurses could be trained and given that capacity to function with the necessary cover from the doctors. Sir, I am going to try to see how I can execute that, as a matter of urgency within and under my stewardship.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other areas that we want to look at, would be changes with respect to the structure of the Council, so that the new Nursing Council of Barbados would have a more defined structure in keeping with its function, administrative as well as regulatory. Sir, let us look at the changes in the composition of the Council.

The Schedule of the Act, makes provision for a 13-Member Council, as follows:

1. The Chief Nursing Officer, Ex Officio. 2. Six persons appointed by the Minister of Health. 3. Four Members of a Registered Nursing Association. 4. One Member of an Association of Medical Practitioners. 5. One Senior Technical Officer from the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we essentially believe that the regulatory body for the nursing profession in Barbados, even though it is of paramount importance, needs to be self-regulating and it needs to be self-financing. As a result, we believe that there are enough qualified nurses at the level of Senior Nurse Management and managers to be able to effectively execute their internal regulatory functions themselves.

Sir, one of the things that I am, therefore, going to propose, is that I do not believe there is a need, by extension, for a medical doctor to sit on the Nurses

Council. I believe that it is a right move to have that office on the Council replaced by a more senior nurse manager type personnel.

Sir, the fact that the Nursing Council and nurses in general, perform services that directly affect communities, we believe that it would be necessary to have community persons, persons who are affected by the service delivered by nurses, to be on this particular Council. Therefore, one of the fundamental changes in this would be to make sure that we have persons from the community sit on this particular Council. We will call them as either consumers or clients, so that they would have a voice at the highest level of decision-making within nursing. Sir, accordingly, the new legislation would have been amended to allow for that arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other significant areas that needs to be addressed that was not addressed under the old Nursing Council, and the 1973 General Nursing Council Amendment, had to look at the scheduling of fees. I mentioned earlier cursorily in passing, I will now define it out in a little more specificity.

Sir, under the new fee structure, we will be looking to generally increase all of the fees required for examinations. As I said, the fees previously were very nominal. When one looks at part I, final examinations in general nursing, psychiatry, nursing, or midwifery, first entrance fee is \$20, subsequent sitting is \$15.

10.50 a.m.

In respect of nursing assistants, the present structure is that the first entrance is \$10 and subsequent sitting is \$7.50. Sir, we believe that those fees would not suffice. What we are proposing to do is to give the Council the capacity to be able to increase all those fees across the board to a nominal fee of \$25 for exams. Mr. Speaker, this structure has not changed since 1973.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons this becomes important is because the General Nursing Council conducts examinations for general nursing, psychiatric nursing, midwifery and nursing assistants. These examinations are held in the months of January, February, March, April, June, August, September and October.

Sir, we looked at the regional examination for the registration of nurses for CARICOM countries, which was implemented in 1993. A new programme for the training of psychiatric nurses was also instituted in 2000. Sir, the number of papers in these examinations have increased from three to four, and the method of marking has also changed, so it becomes more time-consuming and involves significant expertise.

Mr. Speaker, the older General Nursing Council provisions allow for participation in the regional examination. The nurses involved in taking that exam would be required to take a specific type of examination. Those examinations have now been changed. As a result, the General Nursing Council would have greater capability to provide resources to cover those situations.

Mr. Speaker, the fees paid by the General Nursing Council for practical examinations are normally \$10 per hour as compared with that of the Barbados Community College which is \$33 per hour. Sir, we believe that a revision in these fees becomes absolutely necessary if we are not only to attract a good pool of examiners, but also to maintain proper viability of the General Nursing Council's operations.

Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental areas that we looked at that would explain why we need to execute these various changes is Section 9, which looks at the establishment of a register for the registration of all nurses in Barbados. This Register of Nurses is to be divided, or classified in a manner that would be established by the General Nursing Council, which would respect nurses qualified to practise general nursing, community health nursing, public health nursing, midwifery, psychiatric nursing, or other such branches of nursing as the Council determines.

Mr. Speaker, what is also important with respect to Section 10 of the Act, would be the enrollment of what is known as a graduate nurse. I think this needs to be explained because I have had some evidence suggesting that there is some confusion, and I am happy that it was dealt with within this particular Act. Sir, you may have a nurse in training who would have been trained at the Barbados Community College for three years and would have graduated. Once that nurse graduates, they therefore, would be considered as a graduate nurse. However, Sir, that nurse is not a Registered Nurse because that nurse would not have taken the regional examination so as to be registered and certified as a Registered Nurse. Sir, that distinction needs to be understood. As a result, the General Nursing Council would have the capacity to execute enrollment of that type of nurse until they take the appropriate examination.

Mr. Speaker, these set of amendments to the General Nursing Council, or the Mid-Nurses or Midwives Registration Act, Cap. 372, which established the parameters with respect to the General Nursing Council, encompass a change in the name of the Council from the General Nursing Council to the Nursing Council of Barbados.

Sir, it also establishes a broad set of administrative and regulatory frameworks that would allow the Council to

function in a more modern manner to be able to effect self-regulation and its financial regulations, to be able to manage its own financial affairs and to become financially self-sufficient. It also gives the Council the powers to register auxiliary nurses and to establish and register various nurse specialties and nurse sub-specialties.

Mr. Speaker, it also gives the Council the new powers to execute a number of modern paradigms with respect to the provision of nursing services in Barbados. For example, it would give them the capacity to establish the parameters for registration and re-registration, and for continuing education.

Mr. Speaker, it would also establish a set of parameters within the new Nursing Council of Barbados that would allow the nurses, through a set of sub-committees, to be able to establish, not only a complaints system, but to be able to establish a discipline and a punitive set of measures as they see fit.

Mr. Speaker, it also allows, through the new Council's structure, a new set of fee structures to allow them to be able to manage their own financial affairs. Sir, even though the pittance that we give them from the Ministry of Health is \$125 000, it cannot suffice. The attempt here to modulate the fees in accordance with regional standards would allow the Council some capacity to function in a much more financially viable manner.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at international standards and regional standards, this reorganisation of the General Nursing Council to the Nursing Council of Barbados, gives the Council all of the infrastructural requirements to allow that Council to be able to function at an international level with respect to its operations, both administrative and regulatory.

Mr. Speaker, the only other aspect of the amendments that I really think I need to look at cursorily has to do with the fact that if we are to allow the nursing profession to grow - my own experience as a physician having to deal with nurses when I worked at Randall Phillip Polyclinic, the Black Rock Polyclinic, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Geriatric Hospital - it becomes necessary that we seriously look at the training and retraining of nurses, Sir, as this piece of legislation allows for, the act of retraining toward re-registration becomes a fundamental component.

Mr. Speaker, given that this is a provision that doctors and nurses would shortly have to go through internationally, I believe that the day would come in Barbados when the base entry requirement for nursing should move to the Bachelor of Nursing level, when nurses should be able, not only to go to the Masters level, but go to the PhD. level in Barbados. I believe that all of those

capabilities would move our nursing profession into the modern arena.

Sir, I would want to see the day, which I believe dialogue may very well be occurring, where as we move our medical school in Barbados to fruition, that within the context of that medical school, that there should be provision made for a Nursing School to be established within that structure, so that the training and integration of nurses at the level of what we would call pre-clinical training, as is now done in Canada and in the United States of America, would necessarily occur.

11.00 a.m.

What that would do would be to provide for a significant amount or harmonisation. It would also allow for more competencies and considerations to occur.

Mr. Speaker, I already mentioned that proposed category of nurses called graduate nurse, but I want to be specific here and say that the graduate nurse will be required to work in clinical areas of general nursing such as at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, as a psychiatric nurse at the Psychiatric Hospital, until successfully completing the registration examination prescribed by the Nursing Council of Barbados, until they have exhausted their chances to write a second examination.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I went back to that particular situation is that within that category of nurses, who would have just passed out from the Barbados Community College, the Nursing Council believes there is still much need for those persons to be meshed into the general network of nursing services within Barbados. I believe that if, as is required by the Act, those nurses would have exhausted all of their chances to take that regional examination and pass it, then it would allow for a secondary registration at the level of nursing assistant to occur. I think that is important to restate, so that nurses who would have gone through that type of challenge, and would not have passed the examination to become a registered nurse, would have a secondary recourse in Barbados to be registered as a nursing assistant, and that would be the extent of their capability.

Mr. Speaker, my conclusions, therefore, are as follows:

(a) the legislative and regulatory amendments provide the platform for organisational and systematic reform of the General Nursing Council in Barbados, and its renaming as the Nursing Council of Barbados.

(b) It is essential that the Council repositions itself to meet the needs of nurses in Barbados in a more globalised environment.

(c) The changes will allow for a more flexible and proactive Council, with the capacity to respond to the continuing changes in nursing services within the Region and outside the Region.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Mr. Speaker, I want to give my contribution to this debate on this particular Bill. Sir, Honourable Members would want to note that this Bill was first passed by a former Cabinet and I believe it was laid in the former Parliament of November last year.

Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, obviously there would not be any significant difference from the acceptance of the Bill, as it is now being put forward here today in this Parliament. I have seen one or two issues that I wanted to bring up with the Minister and I will bring those up later, but I must commend the Honourable Member, for he has answered most of the issues I had hoped to bring up in my discourse.

Mr. Speaker, before getting to the meat of the matter, we will have to recognise the significant contribution that the nursing profession has made to the health services in this country. I have worked with both trainee and trained nurses, not only in Barbados, but at the University of Wales. For those of you who would not know, the University of Wales is a training institution for nurses, as well as for doctors and dentists. Therefore, I would have worked with trained nurses and trainee nurses in Wales, as well as in England, Ireland and here in Barbados.

I have never had the opportunity to work with nurses at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but I have certainly worked with nurses at Bayview Hospital, as well as private nursing coming to my own practice, to give assistance where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I have always found the nurses with whom I have worked to be extremely professional, extremely efficient and always ready, willing and able to give assistance, to be able to provide the best treatment available for that patient. Sir, at the end of the day, that is what the profession is about, without the nurses, there is no way that the medical profession could do its job. It is just a simple fact.

Sir, the doctor comes, sees the patient, prescribes the medication and goes. The nurse has to deal with that patient, hour after hour, day after day, month after month. They are the people who form the long-lasting bonds and relationships with those patients. They are the people who then have to deal with the patients in times of difficulty, as well as in times of joy. They are the people who, more so than the doctors, relate to the family members who come to

inquire about the health of the patient, who inquire about the likelihood of survival, or when the patient would be discharged. They are the ones who provide the human touch to the provision of medical services. Sir, that is an invaluable service that is provided by this profession. Therefore, I think we could not have a debate of this magnitude without recognising that service.

Mr. Speaker, the ability for a group to regulate itself is what, in essence, makes it a profession. If the group is not self-regulatory, then it would not be a profession, instead it would be a skill or a trade. Sir, that is why the lawyers, as you would be aware, have the Bar Association, because that is the regulatory body for the profession of Law. The regulatory body for medicine is the Medical Association and the Medical Council. Therefore, the past General Nursing Council, now renamed the Nursing Council of Barbados, will be a regulatory body which, in essence, makes nursing a profession of the country. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to have that kind of regulatory body in place.

Mr. Speaker, in the early days, the Council was essentially a registering body. This meant that nurses would come, make an application, provide their qualifications, and without much screening, the Council would register that person. The same system would happen in almost all the professions, but as time progressed and as people become more specialised, as the performance and delivery of medicine became more specialised, then we recognise obviously that a simple registration Council would not suffice and that it would need much more. It would need to be able to recognise all of the various specialties, for example, midwifery and psychiatric nursing. There are also other specialties such as ophthalmology and ophthalmic nursing, radiography and radiology.

Sir, from that, we recognised that not only we would have to have people registered as general nurses, or that the Council acts as registering body, but the Council would also have to regulate how those people acted and performed in their specific jobs. Of course, the Council as it now is, would also have to deal with ethic issues, which is if, for instance, a particular member had overstepped the crease and has done something unethical, because every profession has boundary to work within. Therefore, to work outside those boundaries would mean that they would have transgressed the legislation and would have done things they were not supposed to have done.

11.10 a.m.

Dr. W. F. DUGUID: Sir, the profession itself has an opportunity to regulate and deal with those people. Sir, what is also good in this legislation, which I do not see in the previous legislation is that they have given an

opportunity for appeals through judge in Chamber, so that it is not only the decision of the Council, but a person must have right to appeal and a reasonable appeal.

Mr. Speaker, this gives the opportunity, as a friend of mine use to say in this Chamber, that not only must justice be done, but justice must seem to be done. Sir, I support this legislation which was brought by the previous Administration. I do not think there is too much from a political point of view that we would want to disagree with.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go further with respect to how the legislation deals with the nursing shortage in this country. Sir, let us be realistic. For years, we have been suffering a brain drain in this country and the brain drain has been focused to some extent on the nurses. Sir, year after year, we hear of nurses who have gone to the United Kingdom and to the United States of America, to not only further their studies, but also to broaden their opportunities in nursing. Therefore, you would recall that we have increased the number of nurses being trained at the Community College and we have also explored and brought nurses from other jurisdictions to help to reduce the nursing shortage in this country but, Sir, it continues, and every day we hear of people who are moving to other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, do you know that in the immigration legislation of the United States of America, that the only category of professional that can apply and get approval for registration as a HB1 Visa to the United States of America almost immediately is a nurse? Sir, not a doctor, not a dentist, not a lawyer, not an engineer, not an architect but, Sir, a nurse can apply to United States of America Immigration Department and within six months to nine months, once they have sent all the necessary documentation, could get their status in the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, that shows what a great need there is for well-trained nurses, not only the United States of America and the United Kingdom, but all over the world.

Mr. Speaker, this is partly due to two things, increased specialisation, which means that you do not have more general nurses, as people move into specialities, they are lost to general nursing and the aging population. Sir, the aging population has meant that there is more institutional care being provided. More care has to be provided for the elderly, more care having to be provided for people with disabilities; more care has to be provided for people who are institutional and, Sir, with those two pressures being placed on the nursing profession every day, there is great need for nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we in Barbados have to face up to the shortage of nurses, and if we have to train more than we

were training before, let us do so. Sir, this is the first point I wanted to bring up with the Minister, because I listened very carefully to all he had to say and it had to do with the graduate nurse, but he did answer it in the end. Sir, I was very concerned in the Bill where it said that a graduate nurse would only be able to get registered for 18 months.

Sir, in Part 3 of Part 10 of the Bill says:

“A graduate nurse must work under the supervision of a registered nurse and may not hold that post for a period exceeding 18 months.”

Sir, this I was concerned about. I was concerned about it because one would ask the question in terms of this legislation, then what other opportunity would be available to that person? Sir, that person would have gone through three years of training at Barbados Community College at some expense of time, energy and cost to them, their families and to the country and for that person only to get an opportunity for 18 months to pass the regional examination, and if you are unable to pass the regional examination in 18 months, then you would no longer be able to work. Sir that is how I read it and that it how it appears in the legislation as it now stands.

Sir, I am thankful that the Minister made it clear that those persons would then have an opportunity to be registered under the second tier, which would be the nursing assistance. Sir, that is a reasonable compromise, but I want to ask the Minister this. Should the 18 months have passed and then for whatsoever reason they are then able to pass the regional examination, would that person then be allowed and able to reapply for registration as a registered nurse as opposed to a nursing assistant? Because it is not clear. I would hope that person would be then able to reapply.

Mr. Speaker, let us face facts, things happen, people get ill, they may have family and friends who are ill after graduation, they may not have had the opportunity to sit the exam, or may have difficulties while sitting the exam and for them only to have an 18-month window to be able to get that examination and then no other recourse, I think it would be very harsh on those graduate nurses. I would like to think there would be some measure where they could reapply after passing the exam.

Mr. Speaker, this brings me to another point. Sir, this is truly modern legislation. I say that because it encompasses the concept of continuing education, which I think is paramount. Sir, these days, any legislation regulating any profession, not only nursing, medicine, dentistry, Law, any profession, Sir, must have an aspect of continuing education bound up into that registration process. It is seen in all the Western countries that continuing education has become absolutely essential to get

further registration. I do not expect that there be draconian measures for continuing education, because most times continuing education credits is attendance at a lecture, or a conference. Sir, once you go to the lecture, you come at the beginning, the person lecturing gives you three numbers to a code like 246. Sir, I do it because I give continuing education for lectures that I would have given not only in England, but in the United States of America, and I am required to give continuing education credits.

Sir, at the beginning of the lecture, I give a three digit number like 246 or whatever digit the particular conference would have given you and to make sure that the person stays to the end of the lecture, at the end of the lecture, you give the last three digits to the credit. If the person who has attended that lecture does not present to their continuing education board that six-digit credit, that would be an indication that they did not attend the whole substance of the lecture.

Mr. Speaker, I think that is something good. I think we will see more and more of a requirement to have continuing education in the registration of the professions and it is there to protect the public. It is not there to make life difficult for nurses to be registered; it is not there to say that you have to do this, or that because we have the power as a Council, it is there to show the public that you are interested in providing the best care to them. Sir, part of providing the best care to them is being in possession of the most up-to-date knowledge. Sir, that is what continuing education is about and I will support it always because I have been a part of it for years and I think it is always a good idea.

11.20 a.m.

This brings me to another point, which I also found quite interesting and also quite forward thinking, that is, the addition of lay members to the Council. They put in a term as members of the general public in the legislation. Sir, we refer to it in the Dental Council of Great Britain as lay members.

Sir, Part 1 (C) of the Schedule says: “one member of the general public.” I think the Minister referred to more than one. In the Schedule it says One member of the general public. We call them lay members.

In the Dental Council of Great Britain there are three lay members, but of course, there are 25 000 dentists in Great Britain. They are involved in a lot more legal matters.

Sir, lay members is a fantastic idea, because that member of a Council brings the point of view of the person to whom the services are directed. It is one of the most

fundamental and progressive pieces of this legislation that I have seen, bringing lay members on the Council.

Sir, I do not know if they are any lay members in the Bar Association, the Medical Council, the Dental Council, or the Engineering Council, but I am happy to see lay members on the new Nursing Council. Sir, it says that the nursing profession is pointing the way forward for all the other professions, taking them through their paces and showing them that they are organised professionals. I agree with the Minister that they have shown that they are so organised to bring this legislation, and be forward thinking. I think they have done it by looking at other Councils, and I understand that. I do not understand the need for a medical practitioner.

I think that the nursing profession has shown that they are well equipped, capable, and able to manage their affairs very efficiently and effectively. Maybe it might be doing them a disservice to put a medical practitioner on the Council, rather than a service. I do not know if the Medical Council is so well run. I know the Dental Council has its difficulties. I would certainly support the need for a medical practitioner on the Council. It may have been so in the old days, but I cannot see the reason for it now.

Sir, I am also happy to hear of the setting up of these Committees. Normally, this type of legislation comes with Statutory Instruments which set out the guidelines. I would have preferred to see that, and would have hoped that the Statutory Instruments had been included with the Bill, certainly laid for information, because it would have set out the Committees and the Ethics.

This document speaks to a prescribed age, but I cannot find the matter of age anywhere in the legislation where it has the age, so, I would assume that is in the Statutory Instrument. This is a problem for me with the Bill. Why is it that in the Bill, there is a prescribed age spoken to, several times, but nowhere in the Bill does it actually set out where that age is, or what that age would be. I would imagine that it would come later and be laid as a Statutory Instrument. At least I would have liked to see what Statutory Instruments are being contemplated, and where those Statutory Instruments would be.

Sir, a starting age of 16, obviously designed to get more people into nursing from a very young age, obviously designed to attract the best people it can, at the earliest possible time, obviously designed, and I would imagine, to expand the number of people that we train as nurses.

Sir, this itself could be an industry. Sir, if the Western World is seeing itself in need of nurses, we know that our human resource is our greatest resource, so we could train more nurses to export to the rest of the world, and that could be another source. I have two uncles who

trained as nurses before they went abroad many years ago. They started out as nurses, but one went into the Foreign Services in Canada and ended up being a Diplomat for Canada, and the other went into the Government service of Canada, in the Northern Territories, two men who left Barbados trained as nurses. The nursing profession has a lot to offer, has served Barbados well, and will continue to serve Barbados well.

I have no reservation in supporting the Bill, which was essentially first agreed by a former Cabinet, and laid in this Parliament previously.

Sir, with those few words, I now hope to join with the Honourable Member and hope that this Bill is passed.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, there are some observations and queries I wish to make during this brief contribution. As everyone in here knows, there are some private old people's homes in Barbados which should be very carefully watched, and which should be very carefully monitored. A lot of these private old people's homes are set up as profit centres. They therefore try to keep operating cost down to the barest minimum.

I want to ask the Honourable Minister whether he has yet got the chance to investigate the extent to which those who supervise care in these private old people's homes are trained. I want to know if in a private old person's home, staff supervising the old people are trained, even as nursing assistants, or nursing auxiliaries? I also want to know what is the status of a course that is done at the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, which in my judgement is not a very long course. I suspect it last a few weeks. Also the extent to which those who go to the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic, are really competent to go on to sell nursing services. I would like to know that.

Sir, there was within the last 24 months something of a problem, when it came to the training of nurses. There was a time when the Psychiatric Hospital, did training for a one-year programme, and the Barbados Community College was simultaneously giving training for a one year programme, and within the last 24 months, some hiccup occurred, where young females in particular, were assured of places on a one-year programme, then to be told that the programme was cancelled. I would want clarification from the Honourable Minister, on this particular matter.

I do not propose to do anything other than to support the Bill and to identify my remarks with those of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, but in the

context of St. Vincent, next door, bragging that they have a surplus of nurses, I want to know, as a Barbadian interested in my people, if we have yet explored those push factors that push our nurses out of Barbados to go elsewhere. Are the factors, which point to overall conditions of service, or are there specific occurrences within the experience of these nurses, that entice them away outside of any pull factors?

Sir, you will get an amalgam of push and the pull factors Sir, it takes no Einstein to know, that if a place like Saudia Arabia, or even the United States of America, is offering nurses a lot of nurses, those would be pull factors. In circumstances where people love to contribute to their own countries' development, love to be patriotic and would normally in an ideal situation wish to make their contribution locally, we have to identify those forces in the nursing profession that push our people out of Barbados, and woe them to seek their fortune outside.

11.30 a.m.

I want these particular areas that have not yet been featured in the debate, to be treated and dealt with. Otherwise, Mr. Speaker, I am satisfied that attempts are being made to modernise the whole approach to nursing and midwifery. Honourable Members might want to focus on midwifery. A lot of us in here would not have been delivered at any hospital, but would have been delivered by village midwives. There was a culture of the village midwife, who is not only respected, but who would seem to function often in emergencies. All of us know that midwifery has always been controlled by Statute. Sir, we have always had midwifery incorporate in Statue and in the Law, so that nobody can think that the midwife was some type of secret practitioner, who move around without legislative and parliamentary authority.

Mr. Speaker, in a situation where we have to re-look the nursing assistants role, and the role of the auxiliary, I would wish to find out how the new Nursing Council, as it is to be comprised, is going to treat to issues, similar to this and other issues that I have raised.

Mr. Speaker, I am particularly worried about those private nursing homes set up as profit centres, employing people to offer care to old people, in circumstances where the charges, the amount of money to keep a person in a private old persons' home is enormous. Sir, it is normally calculated on a monthly basis and some people pay as much as \$1 100 per month for care for their relatives. Some people pay more.

Mr. Speaker, there is one with which I am familiar that charges \$960 a month, and this is one of the cheaper ones. The Honourable Members, especially the Minister of Health, should investigate some more. I am unaware of the

fact that in the last 10 to 15 years, there had been some attempts to ensure registration of these private nursing homes.

Sir, only recently, within the last nine months, there was a controversy surrounding the operations of a particular old persons' home, where conditions were bad and where the people who were the entrepreneurs operating it, were not cooperating with the Government. They were not even obeying the Law. All of these undesirable practices which go towards compromising our standards, have to be routed out. Otherwise, I applaud the attempt of the more than 1 600 nurses. I wish that this legislation could pave the way for nurses to feel better about themselves, and to make their national contribution, in a more efficient and professional manner. Sir, I would want that this legislation becomes the centrepiece legislation for the regulation and control of a modern nursing profession.

Mr. Speaker, with these remarks, I thank you.

Asides.

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

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill also and to say from the outset, that it was very good to hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church West speaking this morning on this particular Bill. Sir, for the simple reason, if the comments were made by the Honourable Member when the nurses were having their problems with the Government, clearly, the nursing profession would not be in the position that it is in today.

Sir, I want to agree with him that nurses play a very important role in the delivery of health care and that the profession is very diversified. Sir, one has to recognise that once you are dealing with any profession, they should be treated in a professional way, and respectability should be given to that profession at all times.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the nursing profession in Barbados has been treated very badly. Sir, I welcome the remarks by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West in acknowledging that. I hope that the new Minister would have listened to the Honourable Member for Christ Church West about what occurred to the nurses, and how he welcome this new Bill, and what good intentions it has for the nurses of Barbados. Sir, there is only one regrettable thing. After the nurses have been treated so badly, that this Bill is now coming.

Sir, I am saying that I remember well when we debated the Hospital Board in this House, and I would have welcome the support of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West when I pointed out the shortcomings of what

was about to occur, had the Honourable Member only made that statement in the House at that point in time, that he made today, we would not have seen the problems with the nurses of Barbados, because the Government would have had to stop and think about what it was doing.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, it is all right to say one thing in Government, and then when you are in Opposition, all of a sudden, you know how good people are, and how you want to praise them, and what you want to do for them.

Sir, I am going to be consistent, because I have always said in this House that the capping of nursing was a very bad thing. Sir, if we had not cap nurses in this country, we would not be now in this House speaking the way we are speaking, because we would have had enough nurses, and some of them would have been able to go on to Canada and other countries and pick up professions like other people.

Sir, for some reason in this country, we believe that we have to limit certain people in upward mobility. I am saying that it has to stop. We have to learn to appreciate every profession in this country.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Sir, the talk by some politicians about why you want so many nurses, and that you want labourers and maids to work in the hotel profession. I hope I would not hear this from This Side, because they would have to look back. I heard it. Sir, I am saying that we have to understand that there is nothing wrong in having a trained society, and there is nothing wrong if a nurse cannot find work in Barbados, if that professional decides that he/she wants to go and do something else. Sir, there is nothing wrong with training people.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say today that the biggest problem facing the nursing profession in this country, is the ability to have good teachers. Sir, I know the Minister is quite aware of this and he will speak to the Minister of Education or whomever, to ensure that there are the right number of tutors, to ensure that we can train our nurses.

Sir, I was proud to hear that a nurse is not only somebody that you could see in a doctor's office, but how diversified they are, but that if that is true, then we must see the necessary educational institutions in positions to ensure that we can train the nurses in those aspects of nursing.

Mr. Speaker, it does not make sense that we recognise how diversified they are and then we have to go

overseas and bring in people to put them in positions, even though the profession is diversified, because we are only training them in a particular way. Sir, I am saying to this Government that we have heard what has been said. We have seen the new legislation. All we have to do is correct the wrongs that have been left for us.

Sir, if we do not correct the wrongs, or if we do not speak about the wrongs, then we will continue to be blamed for the wrongs that have been left for us, and I am saying we cannot do that, Sir. This is why I am proud that the Honourable Member said this legislation is not new, and that it has been there waiting to come. Sir, it did not come. It is here now.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I ask one question. How come it took so long to come and the new Minister could bring it in less than three months?

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, have I misled the House?

11.40 a.m.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is grossly misleading the House in that he is conveying the impression that the Bill was not brought by This Side when in fact, it was. Except for the fact that Parliament was prorogued in December, this identical Bill was laid in this Chamber on the 18th of December 2007, by the former Minister of Health.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, one would have expected the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, a person who has been in this Parliament for a long time, to know when to get up on a point of elucidation or, on a point of order, because I have not misled this House. Mr. Speaker, I have not misled this House, therefore, I think that the Honourable Member, being the Deputy Leader of the Political Party, should really apologise to the House for misleading the new Members on His Side who I cannot see.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, if this matter was so important, the House should have not been prorogued. It should have been dealt with. The Honourable Member is forgetting that I am on my feet. Sir, the Honourable Member would have remembered that a person who served in the same position that he previously served in, would have warned That Side not to interfere with the

Honourable Member for St. Lucy when he is on his feet, because he can be a loose cannon and you do not know when the blow is coming. That Honourable Member is now the Chief Justice of Barbados. It shows that the Honourable Member has not learnt anything from coming into this House, or he has no respect for the former Attorney-General who sat on His Side.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: There is nothing wrong with being a loose cannon in dealing with you all, because if you have loose words coming, you got to be like a loose cannon to catch them.

Mr. Speaker, the nurses need not worry about anything, because we will ensure that something is done to recognise the ones who were cast aside. Sir, those persons whom we have trained, using our educational system, will not be dumped by the wayside. We will ensure that those persons who have a relationship with the Barbadian public, and who understand the Barbadian public will not be replaced with persons who would now have to learn about the Barbadian public.

Mr. Speaker, the medical profession is not something to play around with, it is a very serious profession. Sir, I was very happy to hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church West telling his comrades how important the duty of a nurse is, and how you cannot just bring people and throw them on the public of Barbados, that you have to have people who understand the people of Barbados and who go through the normal living like the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member spoke well, but the timing was wrong, because he should have said that within his company, so that he would have educated them, because he educated me. I know that if he could, he would have done a better job on His Side.

Sir, we have to understand that nurses must be treated as professionals. Sir, I would ensure that they are treated as professionals, not as outside children. That term is well-known in this House.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Nobody can treat me like an outside child. You might have been treated as an outside child, but not me.

Asides.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: You know well what is an outside child because you are well-qualified to speak on it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, are you still addressing the Chair?

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: I cannot hear you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am just wondering whether you are still addressing the Chair.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, you have never in your whole life of following politics, ever heard or seen me disrespecting the Chair before, and I will certainly not do it now.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am glad for that reassurance.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: You need not worry about me, Sir.

I was speaking to the Honourable Member for St. Thomas. If you wanted me to put that in the record, that is different.

Mr. Speaker, we have to respect the nursing profession as well as all professions. Sir, sometimes it is good to listen. The Honourable Member congratulated the Minister for putting lay persons... It shows that the Minister has not lost the common touch, and I am happy to see that he has brought it back.

Sir, if only the Honourable Member had spoken those words a couple months ago, we might not have been worrying about whether or not people were treated badly, but there is nothing wrong for these things to come after the fact. What I would tell you, is that if the Honourable Member continues to perform the way he is performing, then the Honourable Member would not have to worry about the person who does not know a point of order from a point of elucidation. I thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this debate to support this legislation, which in my view will be one of the many measures which you would see coming from this Government, aimed at rescuing the nursing profession in Barbados after the kind of pain that has been previously inflicted on that profession under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party Government.

Mr. Speaker, in a previous debate, I recall saying that as we continue in the life of this Parliament that the Other Side would continue to talk about things that were within their contemplation that they never put into effect. I believe that this Bill, which would replace the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act, has to be seen within the context of one of several measures which we are now

forced to put in place to rescue the nursing profession in Barbados. I certainly want to compliment the Honourable Minister for moving swiftly in bringing this Bill before this Honourable House and not tarry as the Other Side did in relation to this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I want not only to highlight a number of the measures of the Bill that I want to compliment, I also want to make some remarks in relation to the general nursing profession in Barbados, and certainly to advise the Minister of a number of areas that we need to focus on in terms of further improvements of the nursing profession. Mr. Speaker, we have to see this Bill within its true context, because one of the main ingredients that we have to put right in this country if we are to improve health care in Barbados, has to be the nursing profession. We have to ensure that the nurses, whether they function at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, at other institutions in Barbados, or are private care practitioners, have the support of the Government of Barbados in ensuring that they can function as professionals.

Mr. Speaker, this has been one of the problems affecting nurses, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, that has impacted on the level of service, which we have seen coming out of that institution.

11.50 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that we have moved to bring today to this Honourable House legislation that, in my view, will cause the nurses at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to look very seriously at the whole profession in which they practice. I believe that coming out of this, we would see improvement in the provision of health care, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, I am happy that we have moved to lower the age of entry for nursing in Barbados.

Sir, each time I speak in this Honourable Chamber, I will continue to address the question of unemployment in this country. Sir, I believe there are a number of young persons in Barbados, who for years have wanted to enter the nursing profession at the ages between 16 or 17, but because of the regulations preventing their entry, they would have gone onto other areas of endeavour and, therefore, we would have lost those persons from the nursing profession in Barbados.

Mr. D. St.E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House in giving the House the impression that the former Government lowered the age to 16, so that they could ensure the unemployment statistics would look good.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I think my honourable friend was elucidating a point for the Members

of the Barbados Labour Party, and he has done that. Sir, I want to make the point that I am happy that this particular measure will see the encouragement of those young persons who wish to enter the nursing profession at an early age, and that we would see them again entering the noble profession of nursing.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to compliment the initiative to focus on ensuring that we can again get back to the question of further specialisation within the nursing profession, and in particular, the encouragement of community-based nursing professionals. I believe the point has been made of the number of persons, particularly aged persons in our communities, who continue to have the need for nursing care, but who are not getting the kind of specialised nursing they should have.

Mr. Speaker, the other point I want to support is the move by the Honourable Minister of ensuring that we could have a system of continuing education among the nursing profession in Barbados. I believe that the context in which that provision in particular, has been cast within this Bill, suggests clearly the intention of this Government to ensure that we would have a nursing profession that is supported by high standards.

I believe that unless the question of nursing standards is addressed in a proactive way, by ensuring that we could have a recognised system of continuing education, we would not have a dent in terms of the standard of nursing care in Barbados. I believe these measures, some of which the Other Side have claimed were theirs, but which we have had the courage to bring quickly before this Honourable Chamber, must be looked at in a holistic way.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to support the initiative within the Bill, of ensuring that we could look at the question of risk management techniques, that we could plan in relation to the provision of nursing care, and that we could attach those systems of risk management which have been used in other professions in Barbados, whether in the insurance industry, or the legal profession.

Sir, I hope that this would only be in the beginning, especially in relation to the kind of problems that we could have at institutions like the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where we have problems in terms of rendering care to persons, and the avoidance, or the limiting of potential areas of legal liability in relation to persons who, for whatever reason might have suffered injury, or might not have received the kind of care they ought to have received in our institution. I again want to applaud the Minister for bringing that measure within this Bill, at this point in time.

Mr. Speaker, most of our jurisdictions, not only in terms of Europe, but in North America, have sought to use

electronic means, to ensure that we could speed up the registration of professionals.

Sir, it is important to underscore the fact that in this Bill we are seeing the avenue of using the electronic processing of applications, to ensure that we could speed up the application process.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: Sir, I think that is also captured in the Bill.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: If it is not captured in the Bill, it is the intention of Government.

Asides.

Mr. S. A. LASHLEY: One thing on This Side is that we discuss matters, and it is within the intention of Government to use electronic means in relation to the processing of applications. I believe that is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to raise a question because one of the things I believe we need to look at carefully - and this is not a doing of this Government, this is something that has happened under the previous Administration - is the untenable situation, particularly at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, where we have some very senior nurses, many of whom would have studied overseas, but who have been encouraged to come to Barbados. Sir, these nurses would have been acting in various positions for an inordinate length of time and now, where there have been moves to regularize their status in relation to appointments, have, in some respects, created some anxiety for some of them.

Sir, I want to urge the Honourable Minister to look into this matter, in relation to those persons who have been, or who may have been appointed, in terms of their positions, but in circumstances where their salaries have been reduced.

Mr. Speaker, I have had some complaints in that respect, where persons who would have enjoyed a certain level of salary, particularly those persons who are trained mature nurses, but now that the relevant authorities have answered the call to have them appointed, they are now earning at a lesser pay than they ought to be earning. I believe this matter is one that needs to be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to belabour the point. I certainly support the energy that we have seen coming from the Honourable Minister and I support the measures

which have been laid out in this Bill. Sir, I believe these measures are important in relation to the overall growth of the nursing profession, particularly in an age of globalisation, and particularly in an age when we are basically seeking to ensure that we could have a cadre of trained nurses remaining at home in Barbados, providing nursing care to persons in our country.

I believe this move to support the further professionalisation of nursing in Barbados would be one of the pillars by which nurses would believe, that they would want to remain in Barbados and practice their profession in an environment where their professionalism is being recognised by statute, and in which they have embodied in legislation, the kind of protective mechanisms to ensure they are seen as true professionals in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I am obliged to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before us, and to say that the nursing profession is very dear to me because I have an aunt who was a former Matron at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, along with several aunts and cousins, who have been nurses at various levels in places such as England, the United States of America and Barbados. They have all helped me to reach the level where I am today.

12:00. noon.

Sir, in supporting this Bill, I support the Honourable Minister of Health when he sees as his vision for the nursing profession in Barbados the establishment of a nursing school, as it were, in Barbados. Sir, when you look at the fact that presently, as I understand it, public health nurses have to be trained abroad, in Jamaica primarily, and when you hear the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central making the correct point that there is a need for greater community nursing, and you see that within the polyclinic situation, because you have to send Barbadians overseas to be trained in public health nursing, those who wear the special blue uniforms, then you can see that you get this shortage and, therefore, you compromise the ability of the public health nursing body, as it were, to fully service the community within their various catchment areas, within the polyclinics.

Within the Ministry of Social Care, Constituency Empowerment and Urban Development, we have the Disabilities Units and we are familiar with the plight of persons with disabilities who may be wheelchair bound, amputees, people who may be blind, crippled with arthritis and are unable to venture to the polyclinics, the hospital, or private doctors to get the necessary follow-up treatment,

medicine and so on, and the community nurse is a vital link in terms of providing this hands-on care and follow-up care to these persons within our community.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the establishment of a fully-fledged nursing school as exists in Jamaica where persons can get degrees in nursing, training in public health and training up the PhD level. Sir, I also see the establishment of such a nursing school as a product that would enhance tourism within our country. When you look at the fact that for many years we have had the Regional Police Training School located in Barbados that this nursing school could be a regional training school for nurses, definitely in the southern Caribbean. You would be providing jobs for the persons who have staffed this school, including the tutors, and you would also be injecting foreign exchange into the country as these students would spend money in Barbados.

When you hear, for example, the principal of University of the West Indies recently when he accepted land to boost their accommodation for students, he lamented the fact that there are thousands of persons from around the world seeking to send students to the University of the West Indies, but they have limited accommodation. In this day and age, when there is globalisation, we can attract students from all over the world to train at our regional nursing training school, earning foreign exchange for our country.

Mr. Speaker, we all hear about the brain drain and this is a reality. It is quite realistic, in my view, for us to train an excess of nurses in Barbados, so that they can go over to the developed countries and earn significant income and transfer, via remittances, to their relatives in Barbados and invest in Barbados, be it in housing, or business to improve the foreign earnings of our country. I think we must be visionary in our outlook and, therefore, I look forward to working with the Minister of Health as part of the Government to ensure that this dream comes to a fruition sooner rather than later.

Mr. Speaker, this is very much unlike the attitude of the last Government if you recall that prior to the 1986 General Elections, the former Honourable Member for the City used to mention that there was a hiatus of training of nurses under the Barbados Labour Party Government where they stopped the training of nurses, and as the Honourable Member mentioned earlier, has given rise to this chronic shortage of nurses in Barbados as it exists today.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of recruiting nurses from abroad, the last Government recruited nurses from the African continent and other places but, Mr. Speaker, I ask you and ask them, as part of their recruitment drive, did they establish the HIV status of those nurses coming from

countries with high incidences of HIV/AIDS? Sir, I am not saying that we should discriminate. I am saying that we should be aware of what we are doing so that we do not have people with full blown HIV/AIDS working in a sensitive institution like a hospital. I am saying that we must be frank about these issues and that in the recruitment of nurses, we must examine such realities.

Mr. Speaker, talking about hospitals, in relation to nursing, I notice that we have another flare-up presently at the Psychiatric Hospital in terms of a rash, which has resulted in that hospital severely restricting the visits of relatives and friends of patients there. This is not a new problem, this has been going on for years and I am urging the Minister and the Ministry of Health, to conduct a comprehensive examination. We have the university professionals who would have done work in the Louis Lynch scenario and given that this is a serious problem with several wards being affected, that relatives and friends may not be able to visit, but that those nurses who have to man the Psychiatric Hospital, that they have families and we owe it to them to get to the bottom of this problem.

I was at the launching of the University of the West Indies Consultants, a company that the University of the West Indies has formed, and there are members of the biological faculty, so we have the technical ability to test the air quality and to examine the source of any microbial contamination, any pathogens, bacterial, or viruses that could result in these rashes being so pervasive.

Mr. Speaker, while we are looking at this, it is a reality that the plant at the Psychiatric Hospital is very old, that the methods used where patients are locked up in rooms with only 'topsies' as we call them in Barbados, you ask yourself if this is acceptable in this new millennium.

Mr. Speaker, I am calling upon the Government to be comprehensive, and to look at the conditions under which nurses and other medical staff have to exist, where some patients have to be hosed down because they might be aggressive and that may be the only way they can be bathed but, Sir, this clearly is not adequate and I think we must be comprehensive in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is only a few months old, so we cannot be blamed for the current state of affairs, but if we need to look at a comprehensive rehaul of that plant at the Psychiatric Hospital, so shall it be.

Sir, at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital when you look at the fact that within any hospital setting, you would have a certain level of bacteria within that framework because you are dealing with sick patients, I am calling upon the Minister and the Ministry, to ensure that we are on top of this situation in terms of testing the air and ensuring that the level of hygiene within the hospital is at internationally-

acceptable standards, because when persons visit the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and we see the red garbage bags with medical waste in the corridors, we ask ourselves how hygienic is this. I know a lot of these issues have to do with management and cost, but I am saying that the money is well spent to ensure that the health of patients within the hospital setting, and of persons who work and visit, is paramount.

Sir, with those few words, I support the Bill and in terms of the recruitment of nurses, I support the fact that the entry point has been reduced to age 16. I am also calling upon the Minister of Health to engage in a more aggressive, robust, recruitment drive.

12.10 p.m.

The police did that in terms of the colourful television advertisement. There is nothing wrong in encouraging young persons, both male and female. There is a need for male nurses. We should not be in anywhere bias in terms of gender. Certainly in a psychiatric situation, you need male nurses to handle the aggressive patients, and within the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, nursing for males can be a viable option to reduce the number of males who are unable to find traditional employment, in terms of what males look forward to.

Sir, proper promotion and education demonstrate that persons may become a male nurse in the first instance, and go on to be a doctor or pharmacist, or what have you, with that firm foundation. Sir, even within the school system, we can have career showcases within the schools, visits to church groups and various gatherings of young persons to help them to see what is attractive in pursuing a career in nursing.

I thank you very much, and support this Bill 100 per cent.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

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

Mr. J.D. PAUL: Sir, I rise to give support to the legislation to replace the Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Act. I am sure that the country in general, will see the benefits from such a positive move, in relation to what we are trying to achieve within the context of the legislation.

Sir, we all know that one of the sad things about the nursing profession at this point in time, is the fact we seem to be losing many of our young nurses overseas. I believe that the changes we see within the Act will help to address some of these issues.

Mr. Speaker, however, I want to focus on some of the real difficulties the profession has experienced in the past. I would hope, as we have reviewed the conditions under which nurses functioned in Barbados, we would see, in relation to the nurses, an attempt to ensure that we retain a lot more of our nurses to work in Barbados and to address many of the difficult problems, we ordinary people face, in terms of receiving adequate health care in this country.

Sir, as it stands, we have difficulties within the country where ordinary people are complaining of the quality of medical care. I am sure that when we look at the intent of the legislation, we are trying to ensure that the ordinary Barbadian receives a better standard of care within the health service. In that regard, we need to compliment the Minister of Health in moving in a very proactive manner to address some of the serious issues which Barbadians are experiencing.

Sir, I too want to focus on the role of - some of the homes which look after persons who, may be, or cannot be accommodated within the Government health care sector - the private nursing homes. Sir, there have been recent instances where the level of care to persons in these private nursing homes have not reached the standard that it should be on all occasions. The fact that we always had a transparent process for ensuring the entry of as many people as possible into the nursing profession, we also hope to see private nursing homes benefit from a better quality employee being provided for them. Sir, the complaints have been serious, and more recently in some cases, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital had to address some of the difficulties created in these private nursing homes, and then, of course, that situation lead to a breakdown in health care.

Sir, I would hope that we have a situation existing where, even in terms of those private nursing homes, the Government exercises a closer monitoring role. We should not have a situation existing in the country, where private nursing homes are not being properly regulated. Also, we should not have a situation existing where the staff, which is part of those private nursing homes, do not meet certain standards. I am hoping that this new piece of legislation will ensure that we have private nursing homes, which would at least benefit from a profession which is better regulated, and they would seek to utilise the benefits provided.

Sir, I also want to speak to the issue, which we have seen in the recent past, where we have been forced in this country, to look abroad to fill places within our medical profession. It is unacceptable that Barbados in this day and age cannot fill its need for nurses. Sir, at a time when we brag that we had a surplus of nurses to export to other countries, it is unacceptable that, today, we have a situation

where we continue to have difficulty in terms of keeping the nurses we have trained, at home.

Sir, I heard earlier an Honourable Member asked the question why. The reason could be that in many cases in the past we were not able to, at least, train enough nurses in the system. Again, this Act is seeking to address that particular issue. I would hope that as we go forward in the future, we would see more nurses being trained, in order to shore up the need for nurses in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things we, as a country, will also have to look at and to ask ourselves is, how it is that other countries abroad appreciate the skills of our nurses, we have produced, more than we do? Sometimes we hear Honourable Members on the Other Side talk about the fact that they appreciate that we have a skilled work force. We also have to look at whether in the past, we have actually shown those persons in a very tangible manner that we appreciate the efforts they are making, in terms of trying to ensure that we maintain the proper standard of health care, in this country. Mr. Speaker, if you look at their experience in the past, of the previous Government, we have not shown those persons within the nursing profession that we appreciate them for the contribution they have made.

Sir, again, if you look at the Act, this represents an attempt to bring even greater pride to the nursing profession. That is what we are doing. As a result of bringing this Act, at least, Both Sides of the House agreed on its need and timeliness, shows that we are serious in our attempt to, at least, ensure that the nursing profession is now regarded more in this country than in the past.

Sir, on the matter of our ability to retain these nurses and the fact that we have, in the past, sought to bring foreign nurses, I really think that when you look at the level of unemployment in this country, and the fact that we have a lot of young people in this country who today are unemployed, who find it very difficult to find jobs, I think that this Act will help, in terms of ensuring, that a lot more of our young Barbadians are able to find gainful employment in this country.

12.20 p.m.

Sir, when you look at the fact that the nursing profession today contains four nurses, I think that we have to do something about this. If there is one thing that I think we should do as a matter of course, is to ensure that as we get more nurses, at least graduating within the profession, we would be able to ensure that more of our Barbadians would be actually able to provide, at least, a meaningful service to this country. Therefore, I am hoping that as a result, where we saw in the past you had to bring in a lot of foreigners to serve the loopholes that we had in the

profession, we would not see that recurring again, and the only consequence of that is to demoralize persons within this country who are actually seeking gainful employment. Sir, we should also recognise this.

I believe it is important that in the same way that we have in the past been able to pay four nurses and personnel excellent remuneration, that also in the context of our local nurses, we should also treat them in the same manner. As a result of that, we would not have a situation where they are going overseas in order to seek employment, when at the same time, we can keep them here and that is very important. Sir, maybe that explains the reason we have a situation where we have that kind of exodus from our nursing profession.

Sir, the other thing that we should also look at, I think that we ought to look at the kind of stress that has been placed on nurses within the nursing profession. Again, I am hoping that the new body responsible for regulating the nursing profession, would also try to ensure that they look at these kinds of things, when they are discussing the whole question of the regulation of nursing. Maybe, what we can also contribute to, Sir, is to ensure that the kinds of working conditions that nurses have to work under, are not to the point to provide discouragement to those persons who are in the profession, so that you have better conditions existing overall. Of course, I would like to see that aspect of it addressed, within the context of the Act.

Sir, if you look at it again, you can see that what it is trying to do, is to uplift the general terms and conditions of the nursing profession. Sir, in that regard, I would want to give support to the legislation, and I would like to compliment the Minister of Health in having the foresight to move speedily forward to address these issues that the nursing profession has been experiencing over the years.

I thank you, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House be suspended until 1.30 p.m. today.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the House be now suspended until 1.30 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the House accordingly.

12.23 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short intervention in support of this Bill. Sir, there are a couple of areas of the Bill that I would like to comment on and then I will make a wider contribution.

Sir, like other Honourable Members who spoke before me, I believe that the Bill must be looked at holistically, not within the confines of the regulation of nurses, but within the confines of ensuring that we attract nurses to the profession and are able to maintain them in the profession. Therefore, it is not just a question of providing a Bill for their regulation, but we as a Government must ensure that we have all the trappings that enable them to stay within our shores and render service to Barbadians and visitors alike.

Sir, at Clause 8 of the Bill, I note that there is a temporary registration for nurses for a period not exceeding three months. I was just wondering whether, or not that needs to be relooked at because I could think of various reasons why you might need to have nurses in Barbados, and why you might need to register them for a period of three months. For example, if there is an outbreak, we might need to bring nurses in from neighbouring territories on short notice.

Mr. Speaker, although I am advised that it is possible that you could address the extension of that period beyond three months in the regulations, which is my concern, the Act itself is limited to three months, so I just want to be clear that there can be extensions beyond that three-month period.

1.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I note in Clause 10(3) which was addressed by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West with respect to what happens to graduate nurses after the 18-month period, like him I was concerned that, in fact, the Bill had not provided what could happen to nurses who fall after the 18-month period. Sir, the Minister aptly elucidated that point to which I was happy to hear.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, my concern is, that we as a Government, have to provide not just for the registration of nurses, but to ensure that we can maintain them. Sir, one of the most important components would be the physical plant.

Sir, I visited the District Hospital in St. Philip North and I know that plant is in dire need of repair. I know, for example, there are issues of security at night, and I have no doubt that the Minister is aware of these issues there. Sir, I am sure, like what has happened at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital with respect to security, that we have to address that, as well as issues of security at the Geriatric Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we know that our human capital is our best resources and that unless we provide them with plants that make our human capital feel that is where they should be going, then, of course, we would not be able to maintain them. Therefore, I would urge the Minister with haste, to ensure that whatever needs to be done, to improve the physical plant at those two institutions in particular.

Mr. Speaker, implied in our nurses employment is the fact that we will ensure they are given adequate security and security is one of the issues we need to address. We need to ensure that nurses are provided with safe environments in which they can work, not only during day time, but at night time. Sir, this was brought to my attention in St. Philip District Hospital and I am sure the Honourable Minister is aware of it and is moving with haste to address it. We do not want our men and women going to work and finding that they are being attacked, as can happen if we do not have adequate security. Therefore, I look forward to having that addressed.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about why many of our nurses are leaving Barbados. Sir, of course, they are leaving Barbados because, as we know, places like Bermuda and the United States of America offer better remuneration, therefore, we need to find creative ways to ensure that our nurses, like many of our professionals, for example, our police officers and teachers, are kept at home.

Sir, of course, one of the bug-bearers in our society is the issue of housing. Sir, no doubt we will move with dispatch to ensure that affordable housing is made available to these professionals.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that saddens me if I use Lowthers in St. Philip West, for example, we have a situation where land is being sold at \$25 per square foot. Sir, I know why it is being sold at \$25 per cent square foot. It is not being sold at \$25 per square foot because of the developers, but because of either an act or an omission by the previous Administration, which ensured that ...

Asides.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, the relevance, of course, is that we should be providing affordable housing to our nurses, and it is the responsibility of any Government to ensure that this happens. Sir, I am saying that the previous Administration failed in that regard and that is one of the reasons why nurses found it so easy to leave this rock.

Sir, both you and I know that if you have a place to lay your head at night to call your own, then it is more difficult for you to get on British Airways, or on American Airlines and leave these shores. I believe we have a responsibility of ensuring that our nurses remain in

Barbados and that we, therefore, have to exercise that mandate to ensure that more of these professionals are able to own a piece of this rock.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to nursing aids, I am sure the Honourable Member is aware of the fact that we have a situation where many nursing aids have been employed for many years. They have not only been employed on a temporary basis, but are now being asked to go back to school, to have "O" Levels, or to take a further examination, when many of them would have been acting for years and there is no doubt these persons can do their job.

Mr. Speaker, before we have the Council established, maybe we could look to see if we could find some mechanism to bring them in, so that they would not be left out in the cold. Sir, as we know, it is harder for someone at 50, to be asked to take an "O" Level or CXC examination, to do a job which they would have been doing for a number of years, for which you and I know they can do.

Sir, these people would have been doing this job for years, and furthermore, when checking with their superiors, people would see that there is no reason why they should not be allowed to continue doing the job, except for the fact, we are being told that there is some other criteria, which is now brought after the fact that they have been in the profession for many years. Mr. Speaker, that is something maybe we could look at. My colleague, the Honourable Member for St. Lucy says that maybe we could have a grandfather clause. I am sure at his age, he knows a lot about being a grandfather, but nevertheless, we should look at that. Sir, I am sure there are nursing aids, not just in St. Philip, but throughout Barbados, who we need to ensure do not fall through the cracks. Mr. Speaker, I am referring to clause 13, but I just thought I would raise it, because it was raised with me.

Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of ensuring our nurses are well supported is that we need to ensure, like we are trying to do, that there are an adequate number of nurses per ward. This is something that is now lacking. Sir, I hope that having lowered the age to admit nurses, that we would, in fact, go on a drive to ensure that more of our young people are brought into the profession.

Sir, it gives me no pleasure that we could be attracting nurses, for example, from St. Vincent, because it means that our brothers and sisters across the island, 35 minutes away, would then have the same issues which we are having. I think I would like to see us move with dispatch, not only to have the facilities, but that we could go into schools and see if we could encourage more of our young people to take up the profession.

Mr. Speaker, you and I know there is a shortage of male nurses in particular, and that many of our young men do not see nursing as a profession to which they should aspire. Indeed, I am advised that many of our young men are now being attracted to the profession because they see it as a way of going on to medical school, as opposed to doing nursing. Sir, I am sure that the Minister and his department would ensure that we go into the schools with dispatch and that we go to our young people and let them know that it is a worthy profession.

Sir, as I said at the inception, there is an implied responsibility that if we go to these young people and say that we want them to become nurses, where, more or less, they would be civil servants, we have the responsibility to ensure that they are as comfortable as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that a lot of young people, while at school, would have sat down and decided what they wanted to do. Sir, I decided that history was my love. I thought if I did a degree in history, what would I do afterwards. I thought that in terms of remuneration, et cetera, that I could teach. Sir, I am saying we need to ensure that when our young people go through that thought process, that they can see, at the end of the day, if they choose to be a nurse, that it does not prohibit them from having a home, a motor vehicle, or from being able to travel.

1.50 p.m.

As a Government, we need to place the machinery in place for our young people. Sir, even the professionals, with pride, not only to do their jobs, but at the end of month, when they are paid, they can say with some satisfaction, that they received a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

Sir, with those few words, I want to commend the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for bringing this Bill to Parliament. Sir, in closing, I will make one final comment. If you listen to the Other Side you would believe there was nothing to it, that in fact all that needs to happen is that anyone could have brought this Bill at this time, but if you listen, as I do, to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, you do without doubt that he has the nursing profession and the Ministry of Health at heart, and this part of his mandate and drive to ensure we cover all our bases because, at the end of the day, we want to make sure that everyone involved in the health care sector of this country are satisfied professionals.

Sir, with those few words, I thank you.

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

Hon. D.D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, it would be a rare thing in the life of any Parliament that a former Government has the opportunity to listen to Members of a current Government speak with unfailing support on a measure that was introduced by the other Government. It is quite a delicious irony, therefore, when we on the Opposition sit and hear the Members of the Government now speak with total support on a Bill that they have now laid, but which, Mr. Speaker, is identical in terms to a Bill that we laid on December 18, 2008. Sir, not one jot or title has the Government changed in this Bill. Therefore, Sir, looking on the positive side, and there is a positive side, I believe it speaks to the level of professionalism and commitment to be found in the public service, because I have said before, that Ministers of Government take the advice of the officials in the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, in 2003, the Barbados Labour Party Administration developed a strategic plan for nursing services in Barbados. Sir, that strategic plan was approved by a Cabinet in 2006, and it is the work of that group of persons who prepared the strategic plan, and it is the outcome of that strategic plan that has informed and found its way into this Bill. I am happy that the members of this Democratic Labour Party Administration are able to sign on without reservation to this great work.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it causes them some dismay and they are not able to come out and say that they want to thank, or they want to compliment the policy direction that was given to this Bill by the Barbados Labour Party. It is noteworthy that it is the major piece of legislation that has come to this new Parliament, a piece of legislation that has the imprimatur of a former Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, we do not ask the members of the Democratic Labour Party to give us any credit, but we want them to realise that when they speak about this Bill taking the pain out of the nursing profession, that when they speak of this Bill being the watershed for the nursing profession; when they speak in glowing terms of a new policy direction, we want them to accept and to own up to the fact that what is in this Bill does not have its genesis in anything that they met in Cabinet and determined after January 15, 2008. They would do well, Mr. Speaker, to remember that Government and governance is not something that springs up overnight, and that in matters related to the highway; in matters in relation to health, in matters in relation to all kinds of things, we are happy that we would have contributed significantly to the foundation that they have found.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has talked about increasing the number of nurses. I want to tell the Minister of Health that the Barbados Labour Party made a decision that in 2004, we would move from 30 individuals being

admitted to the Barbados Community College programme to study nursing to 90 individuals, and that we would have increased that number to 120 admissions by 2007. I want to report to this Honourable Chamber that hallmark was met and so in 2007, 120 young men and women entered the Barbados Community College to study nursing in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we moved from 30 to 120, but the nursing profession is still waiting to hear three months later, about the duty-free cars that were promised them. They are still waiting to hear, as are we, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South has now put on the table that the nursing profession should now get a piece of land.

Mr. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this Chamber because I never said that. I said that the nursing profession like all other professions that the Government owes a responsibility to ensure that we remunerate them in such a way that they are able to afford a piece of the rock.

Hon. D. D. MARSHALL: I am not sure what the Speaker's ruling was, but I believe it is that the House has not been misled. Sir, we all believe that not just professionals, but every Barbadian should be entitled to own a piece of the rock, but it would certainly appear that the Honourable Member for St. Philip South wants to take, or to impugn his own ideas on the Minister of Finance but, Sir, I leave that for them to work out. The point is that this Barbados Labour Party Administration, while we sat where you now sit we took great pains to consult at every step of the way with the General Nursing Council. We took great pains over a period of three or four years, to ensure that the provisions in this Bill, not only met the public policy demand, but also met the requirements that were put on the table by the nursing profession.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of public policy demand, I think it is obvious that in today's environment, not only should we insist that nurses engage in continuing education, but the fact is that all professionals who are registered under Law in Barbados, whether they are lawyers, doctors, teachers, whomever, there should be an obligation to have continuing education. I do not believe that there would be any divide on this point. It should not just be for nurses.

2.00 p.m.

Sir, as a member of the legal profession, Sir, I am keenly aware that, from time to time, there are lapses that will occur, simply because individuals have not stayed current with the changing trends and learning in Law.

Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that the medical profession would find the same thing, or the surveying profession. I honestly believe that Teachers' Professional Day has its genesis in trying to ensure that teachers stay current with current trends in the teaching profession. Mr. Speaker, that we are now in a position, where we codify this laudable idea and establish it for the nursing profession, it means that we are now at the point where we can catapult that principle across the entire width of professional practitioners in Barbados. Sir, I am happy to say that the nurses are not afraid of this. The nurses are very supportive because they understand the importance of staying tooled, and retooling from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of the reducing of the age, I think we all support this but it must be seen in its broader context. We now have people who are leaving secondary schools at the age 16, with seven or eight "O" Levels. We know that many of those young men and women want to enter the nursing profession. We tell them that they can learn to drive, but they cannot learn to be a nurse, and so you put them in a holding pattern, you put them on pause for two years until they turn 18, as if there is some magical transformation that will occur over that two-year period, when we all know it is not the case.

I firmly believe, Sir, the University of the West Indies will accept a bright student at the age of 16. All across the world, people are accepting early achievers in universities, but we have had this archaic and inexplicable policy of saying to these young men and women, you are as bright as you can be, you have seven and eight O'Levels, or CXC's, you have surpassed the entry requirement, but you have to hang around for two years.

Sir, there is no good reason for it and I was pleased to be part of a Cabinet that in 2006, took the decision that among the many things that we were going to approve for nursing, this would be one and the records of Cabinet in this country made it clear that this was our policy position.

Mr. Speaker, we have not only increased the number of people admitted to the nursing profession, also the health auxiliaries, the nursing aids. I understand that we were able to reach the grand number of 120 of those in the last year as well.

Mr. Speaker, we support this Bill, without reservation. We do not need to give this Bill critical support, because it was our Bill. The Government of today has the great honour of laying it again, unchanged, and asking this Parliament for its approval.

Mr. Speaker, this Opposition will resile from a principal stance that we took, when we sought to lay it in November. Sir, our support for the nurses of this country

and our support for this legislation, is without reservation and we can be proud to say so.

I am happy, Mr. Speaker, that the Government who was in Opposition at the time, sees the way clear to supporting what is a Barbados Labour Party's position. I am happy that the Minister of Health was able on taking office, and upon examining this Bill, that he exercised his sound and prudent judgment in not changing a single punctuation mark.

Asides.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health recognises good Law when he sees it. And so, we on This Side support this Bill. We want the Honourable Members on That Side to be men enough to say that they are happy for it too. Their only criticism, the former Attorney-General also had the great honour of certifying it, and this current Attorney-General certified it too, without changing the other punctuation mark.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the Honourable Members on That Side, the only thing they could say is that they compliment the Minister of Health for bringing it so quickly. Sir, we compliment him for bringing it so quickly too, and among all the other pieces of legislation that we have left, I believe that they will find equal merit in those, as they have found in this Bill.

I am happy for your indulgence, Sir.

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

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I would not normally get into this debate, but I must perhaps say that the virtue of being in Opposition, is that you are free to select the things that you want to take credit for, and pretend not to remember those things that you do not want to take credit for.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I would be eternally grateful to the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter, because it was he that pointed out to this Government that there was a debt of \$60 million, in relation to the energy sector, as a result of subsidies. I do not want to go into that now, Sir, but I am only giving this as an example of things that Oppositions take credit for and things they do not.

The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter was very frank in saying that he deferred it, because Elections were due.

Asides.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Right Honourable Member for St. Peter on the occasion of the presentation of Estimates said that the matter pertaining to the details of the information, came in after the dissolution of Parliament and to that extent, it was impossible for us to determine how we were going to resolve the issue, particularly since as a Government, our view was that we would raise the money by way of a bond to clear the debt, rather than passing it on to the consumers to pay it, as has been done by the current Government. Therefore, we would have raised the \$80 million that the Prime Minister now says it is, and the Government instead has chosen to put four cents a litre on gas and four cents a litre on diesel for the consumers to repay the debt.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, I do not want to get into this, but I think that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East does a great disservice to the former leader of her Party by saying to this House that he said he only became aware of a \$60 million debt after Elections were called, and he was, therefore, going to deal with it.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Prime Minister is choosing his language in a way that does not reflect what I said. I said that the Prime Minister said the full details of the debt came in after the dissolution of Parliament. This is not to say that he was not aware there was a debt, because we were aware that there was a debt.

Sir, the full details, such that the Ministry of Finance could settle and determine how we were going to do it, so that we do not impose it on the backs of the average consumer buying gas and diesel in this country, we felt that we would raise a bond to cover it, because it would constitute less than 1 per cent of GDP, in addition to the current debt.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, this is a laughable scenario. I am only using it as an example of the argumentation used by the immediate former Attorney-General.

2.10 p.m.

Sir, he is taking credit for the Nurses Bill. He does not even credit his predecessor, not a word about the work done by his predecessor. This matter did not start in 2005, when he became the Honourable Attorney General. The file was open a long time before that, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East made a greater contribution to the drafting of that Bill than the Honourable Member for St. Joseph.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Sir, based on what is on the file, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East evinced a greater interest, a greater technical knowledge, a greater legal skill and know how, than the Honourable Member for St. Joseph, but the Honourable Member said, "I certified it. I drafted this Bill, and we are so happy to support it." Sir, the Honourable Member is now the drafter of this Bill. I do not take any credit for having anything to do with it, except this. I am going to say this one thing in this debate.

Sir, I was asked, along with eight other consultants, I believe it was in 1998, to conduct a CARICOM study. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, who is not a political novice in these things, we were asked to carry out a study in the Caribbean. It ended up being four consultants, because some of the others could not complete their tasks.

It was clearly pointed out to the Government of Barbados, I was not the consultant who dealt with Barbados, but I read the Barbados report, and this area of registration was identified by the consultants, not by any legal brains in the Barbados Labour Party, but by a foreign consultant as part of the requirements to facilitate the free movement of services within CARICOM. That is the genesis of it. It is not some germ of brilliance in the brain of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North East has not got up to claim credit for it, because this is going to be part of a suite of legislation, not only in Barbados, but throughout the entire CARICOM region that facilitates, not only the registration, the facilitation of CARICOM nationals, their accreditation, standards and ability to establish within CARICOM territory. That is all this is about.

Sir, therefore, it does not fall easily from the mouth of anybody. I never heard the Minister say it. I would be very disappointed. I would not get up to contradict him, but if he has said it I would have. That is not in his nature, because we see it on This Side as a necessary development, both in terms of ensuring that the nursing profession in this country is regulated in a manner that is conducive to regional and international standards. Also, in a manner that is acceptable to the profession in itself.

Sir, this should not be a controversial Bill. I presume there will be other Bills that will come here, that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East had a hand in, and that sat on the desk of the immediate past Honourable Attorney General, for the period of time for which he was Honourable Attorney General. His excuse is that the drafters had problems with the building they were in, there were all kinds of other issues and he had to certify a lot of legislation himself. I heard all of this already, but

the first piece of legislation we brought here, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph suffers from political amnesia.

Sir, I think that we need a better level of debate, because if Honourable Members in here, do not know that the public of Barbados understands clearly those kinds of political gymnastics, where you select those things, you forget you left a debt in relation to fuel prices, or that you deferred it, but you remember that you were doing nurses legislation. You forget that for the better part of the 70 years that the Barbados Labour Party claims that it was in existence, well there is some historical debate about that, and I am not going to deal with that now, but for the better part of 70 years, in almost every Manifesto, they promised new labour legislation, but they hold defeat of this Government to the fire, for not doing something within a hundred days. More than 3000 days have past, more than 6000 days have past, more than 9000 days have past since they first promised protection for employees and new labour legislation in this country. I can identify the exact Manifesto in which it was promised, and 9000 days later, after they were in office for three distinct occasions and could have done it, it was not done.

Sir, we have had Road Traffic legislation, drafted by the most brilliant Honourable Attorney General this country has ever had. It ended up in Committee. Sometimes you have to say these things, because a certain level of balance has to be brought to public discourse, and for every allegation there is - as a previous leader of the Democratic Labour Party said - a counterpunch, but I am not in that, but I am not going to allow anybody Over There, to take any advantage of any Minister on This Side, in relation to any dereliction of duty on the part of the Honourable Members on That Side, when they were in office. I am not going to allow them to pick and choose either. If you want credit for this, then you have to take the criticisms for the things that you failed to do, that have contributed to the current state of the Barbados economy, the current state of the Barbados society, the current state of our health system, the current state of our education system, the need for integrity legislation, the current state of the road network, the over spending of money and the long list of infelicities, on which the public of this country pronounced on January 15, 2008.

Sir, that is why I am saying to you that Honourable Members are entitled to be selective, but you will be selective at your own peril, because if you choose to be selective, then it will fall upon the Honourable Members on This Side to remind the people of this country why they made that choice on January 15, 2008.

Sir, there is no way that new Nurses Registration should take this long. There is no reason why. I am going to say the opposite. It is a credit to the Minister that he did

not throw it one side and say that the previous Government was dealing with this, so let me look for something new to do. He had the sagacity and wisdom to say, well this is needed for Barbados. It does not matter who drafted it. This is critical to our development at this time. So, I am going to bring it...

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: So he went about his business to do what was in the best interest of the country.

I am saying to Honourable Members on This Side do not be in anyway intimidated by that criticism, that because a previous Government was doing something, that you simply need to throw it through the window and say it is useless. There were a few good things they were doing. I am yet to find out what they all are, but I am sure I will.

2.20 p.m.

Some are not visible to the naked eye. Mr. Speaker, where they were doing good things, rest assured that under the basic tenets of good governance, we will continue them without any apology in that regard.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Do not let that intimidate you because criticisms like that would tend to have the impact of making Ministers of Government and Members on the Government Side feel that they should pull back less that criticism be levelled. It is a nonsensical criticism. It is not a valid criticism in the Westminster model as we know of it and practice it in Barbados, therefore, it makes a nonsense of this attitude that because I had certified a Bill - The Mutual Funds Bill, the amendments to the International Trust Bill, the establishment of the Youth Service, the Youth in Business Thrust and the revival of the Youth Orchestra - are all things that I could get up in here and say I started too.

Mr. Speaker, as I say, things that are good should be continued.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Joseph is, therefore, not walking on a straight line when he adopts that particular attitude. I hope that this piece of legislation would have the desired effect in placing the nursing profession at a level commensurate with their aspirations. Yes, we have promised to give the nurses at certain levels in this country additional benefits. We have made pledges regarding first-time homeowners. Apparently, it is a criticism of the Government now to say that, because the economy is bad that we should not have

made those pledges. When in the midst of the Election campaign in this country, the price of oil was not at US\$120 a barrel, the price of flour had not gone to the level that it is at now, the price of all food commodities...

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: If it was trending that way, why did you not tell the public that? You said that everything was going to be good. Now we are hearing that it was trending that way. They always knew the economy would have been in difficulty.

Asides.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I want you to find any speech made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East between December 19, 2007 and January 16, 2008 in which she said that the economy in Barbados was trending to difficulties. We were hearing that you needed to have this so experienced group in charge, that they were the only ones who knew how to do things in Barbados. We, a bunch of greenhorns, flopped some and jet some - I do not mean anybody in here because that would not be allowed under the rules - were going to take Barbados and convolute all of the economic and political processes that had taken place in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we made promises to the nurses, and we are going to deliver on our promises. We want people who are trained in Barbados and in the Caribbean to stay home and contribute to the development of our societies. We think it is unacceptable that we should produce people in our educational system, telling them every day that if they study and get qualified, they would find a job and have a good standard of living in this country, and as soon as they qualify, they find it difficult to make ends meet, and therefore, have to look to greener pastures.

Mr. Speaker, that is what Errol Barrow's mirror image speech was all about. He said to the people of this country that if they want to have a positive mirror image of themselves, then they have to do everything in their power to make sure that our people are contributing to our development, not lining up at the US Embassy to get visas to leave Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, our commitment is that if there is a drain in relation to police officers and the nurses, we would do everything in our power to improve their conditions of service.

Mr. Speaker, there are some Honourable Members on That Side who see that as... Every time you talk in here about the last Election, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North does this. His perception of the very people who voted for him in that Constituency in three Elections,

is that people do not vote on their children's future, or on all of those seminal issues that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East spoke about, but that they vote on that. That is a very low opinion of the people of this country.

Mr. R. St.C. TOPPIN: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am not referring to how the people in my Constituency voted. They withstood that, they have voted against that.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, based on previous statistics, the Honourable Member barely scraped in here in the last Election. Barbados is almost like one Constituency now except for certain differences. Sir, every one of those persons who did not support him in the last Election, their change was based on this - I am going to put it that way - it was not based on their perception of the future of this country, or on any perception about whether we needed a change or about what was good for democracy in Barbados.

Sir, I am frankly alarmed by it. I have never had that experience before. We have had intelligent people in this House before, but none so intelligent as to reduce how people vote to money, or to say it publicly in the way the Honourable Member for St. Michael North has been saying it. I think it is an abomination to our political process for anybody to be of that view. There may be some people who are influenced in that way, but I think the vast majority of educated Barbadians, including the nurses in this country who did not have a Nurses' Registration Bill before them, but who expected that any Government that was interested in their concerns, would have given this priority.

Sir, apparently, they did not vote on that basis, they voted on the basis of this, according to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North.

Sir, I am frankly alarmed if that represents the Barbados Labour Party's position, philosophy and outlook in relation to the people of this country. It does not surprise me why other things were given priority, and why things that would enhance people's self-respect, the status of their profession and their ability to contribute to their own development, were pushed so far into the background. As long as you were peddling a few handouts, you felt that would guarantee you remaining in office forever.

Sir, I compliment the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for giving this matter focus. I have seen other pieces of legislation, which he is going to bring before this House. The Cabinet of Barbados and Members of the Backbench have had the opportunity to hear his views in relation to health. I believe that he has brought a new focus and determination to solving challenges in one of the most critical areas of our national development at this time,

therefore, the Honourable Member has my full support. I would not be daunted in any way, nor should he or any Member of our Cabinet, in bringing things to this House that are right and that are good and in the interest of the people of this country.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2.30 p.m.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lend my full support to this piece of legislation introduced by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Honourable Minister of Health, and to join with Honourable Members on This Side to indicate how focused and determined the Honourable Minister of Health has been, in seeking to give redress to many of the issues confronting our health sector.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the profession of nursing is, indeed, a very honourable one which has made significant contribution to the development of this country, and to the provision of health care services in Barbados. Sir, the profession has been plagued with a number of challenges, and I am pleased to note that the Minister of Health has now introduced the necessary changes that must take place, in order to lift the profession to the place where it belongs.

Mr. Speaker, among these challenges, one would have to note that for a long time in Barbados the nursing profession has suffered from a lack of institutional, or Governmental support that would have allowed it to continue to produce the level of professionals and the number of professionals needed to perpetuate the kind of pride and the kind of services provided through our nurses.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying it is our view, on This Side, that nurses in Barbados must be given their full due because in our view, they are at the heart of the provision of progressive health care services in this country. We would have to note that unless the Government takes it upon itself to introduce what is being introduced now....

Sir, there is a difference between something that is being introduced now and something that was promised. Sir, the Other Side talks, and I reflect on the statements made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip West when he lamented over the fact that nurses in this country have been treated poorly for a long time. We all agree with the Honourable Member, but the Democratic Labour Party Government is here to bring an end to that struggle and to create an enabling environment where nurses across this country, regardless of their post, or regardless of where

they deliver their services, are given the level of regard and the level of support that is so necessary and so critical to the continuation of this very valued profession.

Mr. Speaker, when I speak about a lack of institutional support, I reflect on the conditions of work that so many of our nurses have had to endure for so many years. We heard of those complaints that reflected on a need to support our nurses, not only in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but nurses across Barbados, and no one heeded that cry. I am glad to say that the Honourable Minister of Health today has joined with the nursing profession and has decided to ensure that this struggle is being brought to an end by introducing this Bill that seeks to bring registration, regulation and discipline to the profession.

Sir, every profession stands on a set of guiding principles and standards, every profession finds its personality in those standards, and I am happy to see that this Bill is seeking to introduce a provision for registration, regulation and discipline of the profession.

I believe that the terms of compensation for nurses has been at the heart of their discontent over the years, and I am sure that the Honourable Prime Minister and his Government, of which I am a proud Member, intends to ensure that everything that is necessary and that can be done, would be brought to the fore, in terms of creating better conditions for our nurses.

Sir, when we talk about challenges, the Bill also addresses the issue of a lack of continuous learning, that enables professionals to be able to be at the top of their professions, one that allows professionals in nursing to be able to benefit from the learning opportunities that bring them into persistent contact with the advances in the nursing profession, the advances in health care and health care administration, and the advances in medicine, of course.

Mr. Speaker, there is a lack of the protection of our nurses at all levels. I know of many nurses today who have suffered at the hands of the previous Administration, when it sought to introduce the Board at the Hospital. Sir, there are still a number of nurses out there, who would love to be in the profession, but they became casualties of a callous approach used by the previous Administration in the introduction of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying it is important, if we really want to support our professionals, that we create the kind of conditions where our professionals are able to practice their profession and to get the highest level of job satisfaction out of what they do.

Mr. Speaker, there has been the minimisation in the role of nursing, in terms of how they are seen with respect

to the culture of health care institution. Sir, I would want to make the point that nurses are at the heart of what happens in a health care institution, they are not only the gatekeepers, they are the persons who bridge the gap between medical technologies, they are the ones who bridge the gap between those who practice medicine and the theory of medicine, and the actual delivery of health care. Nurses must always be seen as those who engineer the kind of culture in an institution, once the health care institution is driven by a vision, and by practices that allow our nurses to do the job they are so capable of doing.

Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I wanted to make a contribution to this debate is, that we recognise the invaluable contribution of the nursing profession to the provision of health care for our citizens. We recognise that in order for us to be able to continue at the leading edge of creating a health care system, that is responsive to both the changes and the challenges in the society, we must arm our nursing professionals with the kinds of assistance they would need, so that they could perform their duties in an environment where they are best able to do so.

Mr. Speaker, we have to go back and ask ourselves, why are there many of the nursing professionals out there, who are not deployed in the profession and who are so greatly needed? Why should we have to go to the Philippines and other places and bring nurses into this country, when we have nurses who were trained in the system, where we have nurses who are qualified to practice? Sir, as someone once said, those nurses are out there watering crotons and basically awaiting for an opportunity to avail itself, where they could be redeployed in the system.

Mr. Speaker, only this morning I had a conversation with an individual, who is a retired nurse, who has returned to Barbados, and who is ready and able to provide any assistance, so as to ensure that we lift the integrity of the health care system in this country to a place where it could deliver and deliver every time. Sir, I reminded that individual that the problems, for example, at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, are not there because nurses have lost their love for their work, those problems are not there because our nursing professionals have all suddenly decided that they are no longer prepared to do what they know they must do, in order to deliver health care services that are of superb quality.

Sir, many of the problems are there because the system has failed, and the Government of the last administration had failed to connect with the realities of the struggle of that institution and those professionals and nothing had been done, perhaps except with the drafting of a Bill, to correct many of those issues that are there in the system.

2.40 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say today that the Honourable Minister of Health has seen it fit to observe the value and the worth in this piece of legislation and has moved three months after the Government has been elected to introduce it in this Parliament and I am sure to get the full support, not only of the Members on This Side, but of the members on the Other Side, who have claimed to parent this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that I am part of a Government that understands a matter of urgency. I am glad that I am part of a Government that understands the importance of responding to those issues that impact on the quality of life of our citizens, and health and nursing is one of those issues that is at the heart of how the Government must respond to ensure that these things are corrected and that they are corrected once and for all.

Mr. Speaker, we do not have to worry about those who would seek to distract us from our objectives and from our vision. We intend to continue to do the things that are necessary, and we will bring the nursing profession back to a position in this country where every single nurse and those who would wish to become nurses are proud to be associated with the profession.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that the Honourable Minister of Health, in collaboration with the many men and women in the public service in this profession, will continue to do everything that is necessary to ensure that young people out there, who are now going through high school, who would love to become a nurse, that they would continue to be infused with that enthusiasm, because when they look on the nursing profession of today, they would see a commitment from the Government, they would see the rejuvenation of the energies of those involved, and they would see the emergence of a health care institution that puts the nursing profession where it needs to be in the heart and in the real action of providing health care in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill captures and seeks to strengthen the profession. It seeks to address the issue of registration and, Mr. Speaker, Sir, at the heart of any strong profession, these are the building blocks that must be in place and secured.

Sir, a profession must be regulated and that regulation is not to control the profession, it is to enable the profession to set the right standards and to protect the integrity of the profession and, therefore, the Bill seeks to do that. It talks about the introduction of Committees that would address matters of ethics, financial issues, audits and the like. Sir, all these things are important in the grand

scheme of enabling the nursing profession to be able to achieve the things that it needs to achieve.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely delighted to be able to add a few words to this debate, because I believe that all nurses across this country must understand that the Democratic Labour Party is going to do what is necessary, to ensure that the profession is able to pursue its objectives and that those young men and women out there, who are interested in entering the profession, will have a clear passage based on the setting and structuring of the regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to see that the age of admission has been reduced to 16 years, because we know a lot of young people have been trying to get into the profession, but they have had a waiting period and, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, very often that waiting period may mean that people lose their interest, it may mean that people pursue another professional course and we would want to ensure that the bright young Barbadians, who are interested in the nursing profession, have a more immediate entrance into the profession in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, and I congratulate the Honourable Minister of Health for bringing this piece of legislation so speedily to this Chamber and I am sure, as is the case with my other colleagues, that all of us embrace, support and congratulate all nurses in this country, who continue to do a fabulous job in seeking to bring good health care to our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I thank you.

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

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to enter this debate. First, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for moving so swiftly in bringing this Bill to Parliament to assist the nursing profession.

Mr. Speaker, I sat and listened to some of the contributions of the Other Side, and I have heard mouthing from the Other Side which stated that the Bill was in train and that they were thinking about the Bill but, Mr. Speaker, if you examine the promises made by the Barbados Labour Party Government you only have to look and examine their Manifesto. Sir, throughout their Manifesto they made promises in relation to health and, Sir, more particularly in relation to the nursing profession.

Mr. Speaker, they like to take credit for some things, and if they want to take credit for some things they must also take the criticism for some things they refused to do.

Sir, the problem with the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is, he knows he was in the Cabinet, he knew he was part and parcel of the so-called Dream Team that failed to deliver in relation to health care in this country.

Mr. Speaker, they made so many promises. They promised since 1999, that they would introduce health aides throughout the entire health care system. I ask, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and the Minister of Health, if he recognises these health aides throughout the system but, Sir, he cannot find any even though this was a promise made since 1999, yet they can speak about promises we made. They try to criticise us on a 100-days programme, but since 1999, they made these promises.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the only promise. Again, they said that they will introduce and establish a full time registrar for the General Nursing Council. It is only because of the swift action of the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that he has now put measures in place and, in fact, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West says he has not recalled seeing a full time registrar for the General Nursing Council.

Mr. Speaker, their Manifesto in 1999, said on its first page:

The inclusion of all; the exclusion of none.”

Mr. Speaker, yet they excluded the nurses and put them out of work. Sir, they made all these promises like “No one will be left behind,” but they knew what they were doing.

2.50 p.m.

The establishment of a rehabilitation centre, in 1999, and I challenge any one of them on the Other Side, to get up and state in this Honourable Chamber, whether a rehabilitation centre was set up, just a bunch of empty promises made by the Barbados Labour Party Administration. They cannot talk now. They only have two Over There now sitting in their seats.

Sir, they need to get up and say to this Parliament that they have delivered in health, under their Manifesto. Then the case would be put to rest. I am throwing down the gauntlet this evening. I challenge them to get up. I can take my seat.

Aside

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Mr. Speaker, they promised that they would establish a desk for the health Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is now working on it, for 14

years that was a promise. It has not been done. Not a 100 days. They had 14 years, and the Honourable Member has done it just over a 100 days. Sir, they have made all of these promises. Sir, I can go through them one by one.

Sir, they said that with immediate effect they will extend opening hours of polyclinics, guaranteeing that at least one polyclinic is opened on a 24-hour basis for urgent care service, they promised it in 1999, and again in 2003. In 1991, they promised it, and for 14 years did not deliver on it. Very consistent in not delivering.

Asides.

Hon. M. A. LASHLEY: Get up and talk about the cost of living.

Mr. D. D. MARSHALL: On a point of order. We have been listening to his eloquent meandering, but he should really come back to the Bill, which is Nurses legislation. He is ranging far and wide.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member is relevant. Honourable Member for St. Philip North please continue.

Hon. M.A. LASHLEY: Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Joseph is trying his best to defend. When he got up the Honourable Member for Christ Church West held down his head. In fact, he turned his head the other way. He is sandwiched between two attorneys and there is no help for him.

Sir, I will go on to more of the promises. Sir, the Honourable Member for St. Philip South mentioned today that we need to provide housing for the nurses. I support the Honourable Member for St. Philip South in making that recommendation, because that profession has made an outstanding contribution to this country, they were neglected by the former Administration, but they would not be neglected by this Administration.

Finally, I want to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. Philip West for bringing this legislation, and moving in an extremely swift manner in regularising the nursing profession in this country.

I thank you, Sir.

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join this debate this evening, and to add my congratulations to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister responsible for Health and National Insurance, as he piloted this Nurses and Midwives

(Registration) Bill through this Chamber today. Even as we speak, these professionals are being tested by the event at the Greame Hall site of the Ministry of Agriculture where there is a fire burning, and we have had to evacuate persons within a one mile radius. I am sure that these professionals, whom we are seeking to regularise, today, to improve their status, are hard at work ensuring that the health of our nation is not in any way compromised beyond the extent of the discomfort of the evacuation and inhalation.

I want to applaud the emergency forces in this island as they carry out that function. On behalf of the Government, we wish that this situation be brought under control very urgently, and that relief can be permanent.

Sir, the nature of the Bill we are putting in place today is, we will have a cadre of persons properly qualified, and effectively placed to respond to these events. To respond in our hospitals, which will be the center of the focus, I am sure, of the Honourable Minister, as he seeks to improve the health of all Barbadians and the health offerings.

We know that the nursing profession has been battered. I have not heard anyone yet use that term, but I want to add it to this debate, battered by the former Minister of Health in this Chamber. I am happy that the people of Christ Church South had the wisdom and the consideration to assist me in removing that kind of management from the pages of this island.

Sir, we on This Side have nothing to be ashamed of, and we will continue our programme that pleases the people. Our programme is not so much about monuments built to the memory of persons who do not have the overall interest of developing a strong and vibrant society, but have small isolated interest, and not an overall focus about what is right and what is wrong. We talked about promises, promises in the health sector. The Honourable Member who just spoke, spoke to the fact that these promises were made since 1999.

3.00 p.m.

Sir, I want to make it clear that the Barbados Labour Party had the gall to come back and promise it over in 2003. They talk about punctuation. I just went through the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party for 1999, and the one for 2003. Sir, that is where there is no punctuation change in the promises for nurses.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: None were delivered.

There is no daycare centre at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for nurses, as promised by the Barbados Labour

Party. Sir, do you think they are sweet? Sir, they promised that they would use the St. Joseph Hospital as a centre for specialists services, such as geriatric services, physical rehabilitation, convalesce, renal dialysis, accident and emergency cases.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, you want to adjourn this session and let us go down and see what is going on at the St. Joseph Hospital? I pass there regularly because I am from Mile and a Quarter, so I visit Mile and a quarter often and I pass the St. Joseph Hospital and there are no specialists services. There is no geriatric services, there is no physical rehabilitation programme going on, there is no convalescence or renal dialysis.

There is no accident and emergency centre at the St. Joseph Hospital. It is a rubbish heap like the one that we have now discovered at Graeme Hall that is causing the problem now. Sir, that is the true form of the Barbados Labour Party. Therefore, we are not phased by their programmes. Yes, we shall continue any programme that make sense, but what we will not do, is to take up the rubbish programmes and the neglect that they have foisted on this country and carry on. We have changed courses. The people of Barbados have asked for change and we are providing that change.

Mr. Speaker, look at the faces of Barbadians as we deliver on our house programme. I read a letter which the Minister of Housing showed me of a resident speaking to the question of the promises of the Democratic Labour Party, and the delivery, and we are delivering today to the nurses in the first instance, a very basic thing, but in truth and in fact, it is critical to the development of a professional programme.

I am a member of the Barbados Association of Professional Engineers and I know what it feels like, to be able to meet as a body and a Council and try to influence decision-making.

It is true that under the Barbados Labour Party you were essentially ignored. We will speak to that another time.

Sir, under the Democratic Labour Party we are bringing all of the stakeholders together for these programmes. Sir, the Minister of Health has made it clear that he has already had lively discussions with the stakeholders in nursing. He did not come in here with the Bill and dropped it on the Table of Honourable Members and ask them to speak to the Bill. He offered an introduction, with demonstrated contemplation. It demonstrated communication. It demonstrated dialogue. It was not a kick in the butt, like we got accustomed to on the

Other Side, when they manhandled the hospital from day one.

The Prime Minister of the day, the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter went on television and decapitated the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Then, the Minister of Health at that time, went about what he termed the transformation of the Hospital, but we know the result. Pure confusion. Horrors. Sir, just like the energy situation.

We are faced with righting the wrongs. We will do it. We will deliver on health care solutions in Barbados. We will list the morale of the staff, the doctors, the nurses and all the health providers. The Honourable Member for St. James North is not in his seat, but he offered me a book this morning called, "Yard Fowls", which I have just begun to read. We are not about putting yard fowls in position. We are about placing competent Barbadians in defective positions, making sure that competent good Barbadian nurses can benefit from this Bill being passed today. They can ensure that they are operating in an environment that is organised, and that they can deliver, and that they can have pride in their institution.

Sir, we can utilise our trained nurses, not only indirectly in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but we can utilise them on a wider Home Help Programme, which we recognise as being dear and near to Barbadians. We are an aging society. Barbadians are living longer now than we did say, 20 years ago.

There is a higher percentage of old people in Barbados in need of health care. The Honourable Member for St. James North made the point about institutions for the aged, and the need to have professionals, and the need to regulate them, and have an effective delivery of service. Sir, not about yard fowls. Not about the Barbados Labour Party. Not about empty promises that never come to any realisation. This is about delivery on the promises of the Democratic Labour Party. The delivery of an effective management programme, in this instance, of our hospital, a critical institution in the development and the continued social delivery in this country, an institution, which regrettably, you on That Side ignored and busted apart, and we are going to put it together. We are going to bring the block of the hospital back together and we are going to put mortar between them.

Asides.

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Sir, where necessary, we are going to put brick force to make sure they do not crack again. Sir, we will build an institution, for which we can be proud. We will build an institution in which the workers will be proud to operate. Sir, most of all, we will create an environment to ensure that the institution that we support and create is sustainable for years to come.

Sir, we will not, like the Barbados Labour Party, engage in destroying those things which are most critical to the development of our society.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to the reduction of the age of joining the service of nursing to 16 years. This is important. They on That Side criticised the Democratic Labour Party in the lead up to the Election in 2008, when we spoke about ensuring that our young people had an opportunity to go back to school.

3.10 p.m.

Sir, That Side vehemently criticised the Democratic Labour Party in the lead up to the 2008 Elections, when we spoke about ensuring that our young people had an opportunity to go back to school, even as they went beyond the ordained period of today as exists.

Sir, the Democratic Labour Party has an affinity with education. We provided free secondary education. We provided school meals when the Members on That Side said they would punch holes in the pots and take them to sea. Sir, we are committed to programmes which would see a healthy and an educated nation. Sir, when our people are educated and are properly trained, we want to see them, like the nurses here, moving to organisations where their contribution can be put together and so presented as to help to influence positive growth in the areas of their choosing, in this case in nursing, a very critical area.

Mr. Speaker, I fully support the Bill. I want to applaud the Honourable Minister for the alacrity with which he has brought this Bill here. I am confident that the other programmes the Democratic Labour Party has promised this nation will be delivered. Again, Sir, I commend the Honourable Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security.

I thank you.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Honourable Members who contributed to this debate. Some of the contributions were worthwhile, others were not, and there are some I would not respond to at all. It would be a waste of my time.

Sir, a few issues were raised in all seriousness that I think I need to address. One of those issues was raised by the Honourable Member for St. James North. This Honourable Member wanted clarification with respect to the training of those persons who sometimes find employment at nursing homes and senior citizens facilities in Barbados. He also questioned the type of regulation that is presently in place with respect to regulating senior citizens facilities and nursing homes.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to put the Honourable Member for St. James North concerns at rest by saying to him that I am fully satisfied that the team at the Ministry of Health would have placed all of the necessary checks and balances to ensure that our nursing homes and our senior citizens facilities in Barbados are effectively staffed and monitored.

We have under legislation, a Health Services, Private Hospital, Nursing Homes, Senior Citizens Homes and Maternity Homes Regulations, 2005 that sets out clearly the dynamics with respect to how these nursing facilities are established, how they are managed and the type of personnel that are involved with respect to these particular facilities.

Mr. Speaker, the regulations and the determination as to whether a facility meets the required standards to function in Barbados as a nursing home, or as a senior citizens home, falls under, or is regulated to a large extent by an Advisory and Inspection Committee that carries out a particular function to ensure that the nursing home has all of the infrastructural and administrative requirements to carry out the type of services that we are accustomed to and at the level and standard that we are accustomed to.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Committee comprises a Public Health Inspector, a Public Health Nurse, a Nutrition Officer, a Drug Inspector and a Senior Environmental Engineer. This Committee has the option to co-op other persons who may be required from time to time, for example, fire officers and so on. Mr. Speaker, I feel quite confident that based on the way these various homes are regulated, and the requirements in respect of the private hospitals and nursing homes, that those types of requirements do justice to the delivery of nursing home services in Barbados.

Sir, that is not to say that from time to time that you are not going to have certain challenges, but that does not in any way undermine the fact that those broad regulations are indeed very well-researched regulations and have served us very well over the years.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to nursing homes in Barbados, a Registered Nurse must be, by regulation, one of the persons responsible for the establishment of a nursing home in Barbados. Sir, apart from having a Registered Nurse there, the requirement also allows for a medical practitioner to be there on an on-call basis if so required and also to have the consultations of dieticians.

There is also a specific requirement with respect to the number of patients to nurses as established, and then there are several other infrastructural establishments that are put in place in terms of things like the number of rails and ramps that you need, the other specific constructions

with respect to the type of set up for your bathrooms and the number of bathrooms and so on per patients. Sir, the structure is well-established and it has worked very well in Barbados. Therefore, I would want to allay the fears of the Honourable Member for St. James North that the nursing homes in Barbados are indeed well-regulated and that there is a proper system in place for their management.

The Honourable Member for St. James North also raised a concern with respect to how well qualified some of those persons who would function at these nursing homes are.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to say to the Honourable Member that there is a programme at the Barbados Community College that looks at the care of the elderly in Barbados. This is essentially a six-month programme that provides certain basic levels of training. We are looking to add a second tier to that particular programme so as to give persons who are doing that particular level of care some additional inputs.

Mr. Speaker, that is not to say that the programme does not provide persons with some basic skills, that if they are deployed appropriately where there is enough cover - and by cover I mean that from other more senior nurses on duty - that these persons cannot function very effectively and efficiently within their particular area of services.

Mr. Speaker, I would also want to deal with this whole notion that there has been this significant exodus of nurses from Barbados. However, before I get there, I would want to remind Honourable Members on That Side that it was the Barbados Labour Party Administration that took a decision to establish a three-year training programme at the Barbados Community College for Nursing Assistants, but after that one session, they terminated it.

3.20 p.m.

Mr. Chairman, I am now hearing talk about those persons who are being trained at a level below that of a registered nurse, those who could function under supervision at the various nursing homes and senior citizens facilities. Sir, there are persons who are now questioning how well they are being trained, when it was that Administration, who would have stopped the particular training of those persons, who would have functioned at the level of nursing assistants, who could function quite effectively within that type of situation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the point that the exodus of nurses in Barbados occurred largely as a result of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board bungling by the former Administration. The decision to carry the Queen Elizabeth Hospital from a department of the Ministry of Health and to execute the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as a statutory

entity, resulted in a significant movement of nurses from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. What has happened is that between 1999 and 2003, we have had 18 nurses resigning in 2003, 33 resigning in 2004, 27 resigning in 2005, 17 resigning in 2006 and 20 resigning in 2007. Sir, this does not demonstrate any massive exodus of nurses leaving the hospital. Furthermore, some of those nurses, who would have left the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, are now redeployed within the polyclinic setting and in other private sector settings in Barbados. Sir, we have only had one massive exodus of nurses from Barbados and that would have occurred essentially during the 1950s, when there was a massive general migration pattern.

Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that point, so that we are clear that is not exactly what we are having. What we have to do is to look at what we would call the staff mix, with respect to our institutions. That is something the nursing staff is looking at. We are looking very closely at the number of nurses we have in training, and we are going to be able to deal with this problem in a matter of about two to three years, where we would get a firm hand on those nurses we need to carry our institutions respectively. Sir, in the meantime, if we have to look for additional nursing staff within the Region, that is what we are going to do, until we could get our numbers up in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, it was those particular questions raised that I have an interest in responding to. Sir, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second that, Sir.

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

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, the House resolved itself into Committee. Mr. S. A. LASHLEY, Chairman of Committees, in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 41, inclusive, were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to His Honour the SPEAKER, the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, seconded by Hon. R. D. JONES, the Bill was read a third time, passed and cited as the Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Act, 2008.

ADJOURNMENT OF SITTING

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House be now adjourned until Tuesday, May 06, 2008, at 10.00 a.m.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the Sitting be now adjourned until Tuesday, May 06, 2008, at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative, without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

3.30 p.m.

CONTENTS

MINUTES

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK.....1

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK.....1

1. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2008.

Hon. R. D. Jones, 2.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. R. D. JONES.....2

Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 2.

ORDER NO. 1 – NURSES BILL, 2008.....2

Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 2; Dr. W. F. Duguid, 7, 8; Mr. R. C. Eastmond, 10; Mr. D. St.E. Kellman, 11, 12, 13, 14; Hon. D. D. Marshall, 12; Mr. S. A. Lashley, 13, 14, 15; Hon. P. M. T. Todd, 15; Mr. J.D. Paul, 17.

RESUMPTION

ORDER NO. 1 (resumed)

Mr. A. D. Brathwaite, 19, 21; Hon. D. D. Marshall, 21, 22, 29; Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, 22, 23, 24, 25; Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley, 23; Mr. R. St.C. Toppin, 25; Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, 26; Hon. M. A. Lashley, 28, 29; Hon. J. D. E. Boyce, 29, 30; Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 31; Hon. R. D. Jones, 32.

SUSPENSION.....18

ADJOURNMENT OF SITTING.....33

Hon. R. D. Jones, 33; Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, 33.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BOYCE, Hon. J. D. E. (Christ Church South)

BRATHWAITE, Mr. A. D. (St. Philip South)

DUGUID, Dr. W. F. (Christ Church West)

EASTMOND, Mr. R. C. (St. James North)

ESTWICK, Dr. the Hon. D. C. (St. Philip West)

JONES, Hon. R. D. (Christ Church East Central)

KELLMAN, Mr. D. St.E. (St. Lucy)

LASHLEY, Hon. M. A. (St. Philip North)

LASHLEY, Mr. S. A. (Christ Church West Central)

LOWE, Dr. the Hon. D. S. (Christ Church East)

MARSHALL, Hon. D. D. (St. Joseph)

MOTTLEY, Hon. Miss M. A. (St. Michael North East)

PAUL, Mr. J.D. (St. Michael West Central)

STUART, Hon. F. J. (St. Michael South)

THOMPSON, Hon. D. J. H. (St. John)

TODD, Hon. P. M. T. (City of Bridgetown)

TOPPIN, Mr. R. St.C. (St. Michael North)

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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. Heading, Order No. 1. The source heads the Order ‘NURSES BILL, 2008’, while the Bill was passed and cited as the ‘Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Act, 2008’ and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce calls it the ‘Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Bill’. The heading is printed as in the source.

Q2. Order No. 1, speeches of Mr. S. A. Lashley and Hon. M. A. Lashley. The source carries question marks in the text (‘I do not intend to??? belabor the point’ and ‘a health desk??? for Non-Governmental Organisations’), apparently marking uncertain wording. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Order No. 1, earlier laying of the Bill. Dr. W. F. Duguid says the Bill was laid in the former Parliament ‘of November last year’, and Mr. D. D. Marshall says that ‘this identical Bill was laid in this Chamber on the 18th of December 2007’ but also refers to ‘when we sought to lay it in November’. Printed as in the source. Please confirm.

Q4. Order No. 1, reply of the Minister. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick’s closing speech, made before the House went into Committee, contains one paragraph beginning ‘Mr. Chairman’. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Order No. 1, time stamps. Two time stamps (‘11.30 a.m.’ and ‘12:00. noon.’) appear in the source as ordinary lines of text rather than as take-slips. Printed as in the source.

Q6. Adjournment. The closing procedural note records that the question that the Sitting be adjourned was resolved and ‘Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly’. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 29th April, 2008 at 10.20 a.m., with His Honour M. A. Carrington, Speaker, in the Chair; prayers were taken by Reverend Canon Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, 22nd April, 2008 were confirmed on the motion of Hon. R. D. Jones. The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2008 was read a first time on the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, and Standing Orders

Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 were suspended for the remainder of the Sitting.

The only Order of the day was the Nurses Bill, 2008. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, Minister of Health, said it would repeal and replace the Nurses and Midwives Registration Act, Cap. 372, and rename the General Nursing Council as the Nursing Council of Barbados, with a registrar, a full-time secretariat and new committees, so that the Council, which regulated over 1 600 nurses on a subvention of \$125 000 a year, could become self-regulating and self-financing. The Bill lowered the age of entry into nursing from 18 to 16, provided for continuing education towards re-registration, brought health aides under a nursing auxiliary grouping, replaced the medical practitioner on the Council with lay members, and allowed examination fees unchanged since 1973 to be raised to \$25.

Dr. W. F. Duguid supported the Bill, noting that it had been approved by the former Cabinet and laid in the previous Parliament, but questioned the 18-month limit on a graduate nurse passing the regional examination and regretted that the Statutory Instruments had not been laid with it. Mr. R. C. Eastmond asked about the training of staff at private homes for the elderly, which he said could charge \$960 to \$1 100 a month. Mr. D. St.E. Kellman attacked the former Government’s treatment of nurses, drawing a point of order from Mr. D. D. Marshall that the identical Bill had been laid on 18th December, 2007 before Parliament was prorogued.

Mr. S. A. Lashley, Hon. P. M. T. Todd and Mr. J. D. Paul supported the Bill, Mr. Lashley welcoming the lower entry age as a help against unemployment, Mr. Todd calling for a nursing school and the recruitment of male nurses, and Mr. Paul urging closer monitoring of private nursing homes. After the suspension, Mr. A. D. Brathwaite questioned the three-month limit on temporary registration in Clause 8 and argued for security and affordable housing for nurses.

Mr. D. D. Marshall, for the Opposition, said the Bill flowed from a strategic plan for nursing approved by Cabinet in 2006, that nursing admissions at the Community College had risen from 30 to 120, and that the Bill had been laid again unchanged. The Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, replied that the Opposition was selective in what it took credit for, citing a \$60 million debt in the energy sector; points of order were raised by Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley and Mr. R. St.C. Toppin. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe, Hon. M. A. Lashley and Hon. J. D. E. Boyce also supported the Bill, the last two listing health promises in the Barbados Labour Party Manifestos of 1999 and 2003 that they said were not kept.

In reply, Dr. Estwick described the 2005 regulations governing nursing homes and the Advisory and Inspection Committee that inspects them, and attributed the exodus of nurses to the handling of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board by the former Administration. The Bill was read a

second time without division, Clauses 1 to 41 and the Schedule were passed in Committee, and the Bill was read a third time and passed as the Nurses and Midwives (Registration) Act, 2008. The House was adjourned until Tuesday, 6th May, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.