
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(UNOFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 2008 – 2013

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, May 13, 2008

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.14 a.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2008.

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)

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.)

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

Hon. G. W. PAYNE, Q.C.

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

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

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY

Hon. R. ST.C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Hons.)

Hon. D. ST.E. KELLMAN

Hon. M. A. MOTTLEY, Q.C., LL.B., (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. 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, B.Sc., M.B.B.S., (Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security)

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

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

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

Hon. F. J. STUART, LL.M., B.A., (Attorney-General and Minister of Home Affairs)

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

Hon. E. G. HUTSON, F.C.C.A., C.A., (Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce)

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

Hon. J. D. PAUL, B.Sc.

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

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

Hon. S. A. LASHLEY, B.Sc., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C., (Chairman of Committees)

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

Hon. D. O'N. INNISS, M.B.A., B.Sc., Dip., (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and International Business)

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

Dr. the Hon. E. R. BYER-SUCKOO, M.B.B.S., (Minister of Family, Youth Affairs, Sports and the Environment)

Prayers were led by Cannon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, May 06, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes so cited be confirmed, subject to any omissions, observations and/or corrections.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

FIRST READING OF BILLS

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of the following Bill:

The Banks (Tax on Assets) (Repeal) Bill, 2008.

Hon. F. J. STUART: 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 the suspension of Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Hon. F. J. STUART: 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.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 2 – THE QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2008 (RESUMED)

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

Hon. J. D. E. BOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to add to the debate on this Bill which seeks to amend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act to make provision for the change in the composition of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board and other related matters.

Sir, we have heard a slew of criticism from the Other Side based really on conjecture mainly on their part, as to how this Administration is moving forward with its plans and policies. I see this Bill as an attempt by the Minister to make sure that we put our money where our mouths are. We have spoken at length as an Opposition and again now as Government about the conditions we have encountered at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We have heard Barbadians speak time and again about the need for drastic improvements in the way that health services are delivered in this island.

Sir, if there is one testimony about the administration of the Barbados Labour Party since 1994 in health services, it is a testimony of failure, it is the testimony of the inability to come to grips with the essential health needs of this country.

The Minister, therefore has got a choice. He could leave everything as it is, and continue to have a situation of malaise, poor and inadequate service, or he can attempt to make a change. I am confident, Sir, that in this Bill and indeed with the other proposals which the Ministry of Health is grappling with that there will be a significant improvement in the way health services are delivered.

The proposed composition does not in any way fly in the face of any equitable representation of interest groups. It speaks clearly to the skills and the expertise which the Minister wants to see participate in the decision-making of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board. Therefore, it does not preclude any of the participants who have been referred to specifically by way of criticism by the Members of the Opposition. It gives an opportunity for the Minister to appoint persons with accounting skills. This is very important in almost every organisation. Indeed, the Ministry of Health requires that the Hospital's financial management be severely checked and that funds are allocated effectively and distributed evenly and fairly in the different areas of health service.

Sir, it talks about engineering skills. Again, the Barbados Labour Party should be silent in respect to these matters. For all my life as a professional energy auditor, I have seen, participated in, and submitted plans to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital about retrofitting the airconditioning and the lighting systems at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to save as much as 30 per cent in energy costs in that institution.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that none of those plans have been put in place by the former Barbados Labour Party Administration. Sir, they have no record on which to stand so they cannot speak to these kinds of things. Sir, we have committed, by way of our Manifesto and by way of our pronouncements as Ministers and Members of this Democratic Labour Party Government, that we are going forward with an active renewable energy project in Barbados. Sir, on Friday, we were busy in discussions with stakeholders about this kind of eventuality.

Mr. Speaker, if the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board would pay some attention, and if the engineering input that the Minister is proposing pays special attention to questions like these, then we are in for effective management of the institution.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill speaks to human resource management. Sir, there could be no more important area of

concern. It speaks to expertise in the area of industrial relations. Sir, within that framework one could easily assume that the Minister would have an opportunity to select someone from among the experts in the different industrial relations professional practices in Barbados; information technology, law, management operations, medicine, nursing and paramedical services who could make a significant and meaningful input. Mr. Speaker, if ever Barbados needed urgent attention, it must be in the area of paramedical services. As we continue to develop at the pace that we are going at, there are a number of challenges which the society faces, that are often related to stressful environments and the kind of societies that we are building where there is an increasing absence of neighbourliness. Mr. Speaker, we believe that paramedical services would be even more urgently needed.

Sir, I believe that the Minister is on good ground in proposing the change in the composition of his Board. As the Minister, he has a right to put his mark on the work that the Hospital does. Sir, if we on This Side could offer any advice, it is clear to me that we need, along with the work directly of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to pay urgent attention to the area of mental health as it tries to capture the urgent medical needs of this country.

Mr. Speaker, more and more of our young people are coming face to face with some very stressful situations. They need guidance. They need care. Most of all, they need medical attention. We sometimes, to our detriment, neglect the need for medical interventions in stress-related cases or what we call mental illness. Sir, we need as a nation and as a hospital to start paying urgent attention to this area of medical care.

Sir, I am confident that the Minister would have an opportunity to spread the area of influence and to bring his own specialised expertise along with that of his Board members into the decision-making process.

The spokesman for health on the Other Side decided to make a broadside on this Administration in what I termed merely a grandstanding occasion. There was no merit in what he said. No one over here ever said that the unions would not be represented. We did not say that Members of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners would not be represented. We did not say any of the sort. However, in order to form an adversarial position, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West has gone down the road of pontificating all hell and craziness. Sir, nothing of the sort is contemplated and nothing of the sort would be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, the important message the Democratic Labour Party wants to send to the country is that we have assumed office at a time when our hospital service has been in total chaos. There is not adequate room. There is not

adequate attention to emergencies. People sit and lie in the hospital's waiting room for hours, up to 36 hours in some cases. Sir, this is the kind of chaos and the kind of unsatisfactory conditions which the Democratic Labour Party Government has inherited. Sir, our Minister of Health, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, is committed to making a change.

Mr. Speaker, that is what That Side cannot understand. That is what they would never appreciate. Mr. Speaker, they had an opportunity in times of plenty... We have to keep emphasising that in the Chamber. They said that money was no problem. They collected more money in VAT than ever has been levied on the people of Barbados. What have they done with it? What is the condition of our social services? They must ask themselves that.

That Side needs to examine their consciences. Now that they have 15 to 20 years to contemplate, they need to examine their consciences to the extent that they have fallen short in the delivery of basic social services to the people of Barbados. They cannot criticise anything that we on this side do in this regard because they did nothing in times of plenty.

Mr. Speaker, in times of plenty, when oil was US\$20 a barrel, oil is now approaching US\$140 a barrel, those gentlemen and ladies on That Side did nothing for the hospital. As a matter of fact, they went as far as to close the alternative institution we had. They refused to carry on with any of the health solutions contemplated by the Democratic Labour Party. They refused to touch the St. John Polyclinic. They refused to do anything about the Oistins Polyclinic. Sir, I have spoken in here already about the functional dilapidation of the Oistins Polyclinic.

Mr. Speaker, we have started to repair some of these ills. We are going to fix these situations wherever we can and improve the immediate service. We cannot be solely concerned with large buildings.

In other words, while we contemplate a new, a renovated, or an expanded Hospital, there are immediate needs which have to be met. Sir, as a government we understand this fully, and that is our aim.

Mr. Speaker, I have sent a message to my Ministry that we must repair our buildings. We must put them in good working condition. The neglect of the Barbados Labour Party with respect to our tried and tested infrastructure must be reversed. Sir, while we are contemplating change at the Hospital with a new Board, with an expanded service, we need also to assure Barbadians that in the outlying districts, a service will be implemented that will see them getting medical care urgently.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that as a result of these changes, the Minister would be in a position to put in place programmes which better meet these needs. I am also confident that with the support of this Cabinet and this Honourable House, all the changes that may be required, from time to time, could effectively be put in place.

Sir, the message for the Barbados Labour Party again, is that they have no basis on which to criticise anything we contemplate, in terms of change in health service delivery because they have no record on which to stand. They sat and watched the queues increase. They watched persons suffer and they felt and mouthed that occasionally persons must die, or that persons must get sick, or that persons may not be attended to. Sir, we do not accept this principle. Every soul in Barbados deserves an opportunity for education and for health service when needed. Sir, that will be the hallmark of the approach of this Democratic Labour Party in terms of reaching effective health solutions.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that in the life of this Parliament we would be able to come and address more of these health issues. I trust we would be able to come and contribute to a changing of the way in which health service is done in Barbados, a change to bring about a more effective and meaningful delivery of service. Therefore, this start by the Minister is fundamental, important, and must be supported, so that the Honourable Member could go about his business with this team at the Ministry of Health, to ensure a better health service for this country. Sir, this is something of which the Barbados Labour Party should be absolutely ashamed and should not open their mouths to speak on the subject.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that as we continue with our changed mandate, and as we continue to implement new effective Democratic Labour Party solutions in this little island Barbados, the people of Barbados would continue to place their confidence in an administration that cares, in an administration that looks after their basic and important needs.

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Hon. Member for the City.

Hon. P. M. T. TODD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill before this Honourable House and to say at the outset that as Honourable Members in this Honourable Chamber, even on the Other Side, sort of admitted the last time we met that this issue is a question of philosophy and ideology and how we see the role of Government. Sir, even if you listened to the Leader of the Opposition in her presentation, the Honourable Member had no problem with the Honourable Minister of Health increasing the number of persons whom he will be able to nominate on the Board

of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, the Honourable Member was more concerned about the number of persons the Minister of Health could put on the Board. Sir, I think that is a frank admission that the present constitution of the Board is not politically sound.

Mr. Speaker, even the Honourable Member for St. James North admitted in his brief presentation that this is a concern, in a number of instances, where Ministers could see when a Board is constituted, that the number of persons which they could nominate to the Board is a very large minority. Therefore, it effectively weakens the influence of Government through the Minister, in terms of the policy direction of a Board and the entity that Board manages. Sir, this is not what good governance would dictate.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the transition from the direct control of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by Ministry of Health to a Board, in the public domain there were different views. There are some people, to this day, who maintain that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is such a vital institution within our country that Government should not accede control of it to a Board.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party Government, even when we were in Opposition, accepted that a Board was necessary. Now we are the Government, we are fulfilling the mandate of the electorate to put our stamp, in terms of the direction which this Government would like to take health care and in particular the management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Therefore, I am totally behind the Minister of Health in his current proposal effectively to give the Government greater control over the charting of the destiny of health care at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, we were elected to govern.

Mr. Speaker, I remember the former Member for the City of Bridgetown, on many occasions, publicly would always say a government is elected to govern and therefore the Democratic Labour Party will govern responsibly on behalf of the people of Barbados who have elected us.

Mr. Speaker, while talking about the views of the Democratic Labour Party in relation to the trade unions, I was shocked when I heard Honourable Members from the Other Side suggesting that the Democratic Labour Party is seeking to marginalise unions. Sir, I am old enough to remember in the 1981 General Election, when the Democratic Labour Party candidates, who were trade union leaders, were defeated.

I remember the late Tom Adams was publicly rejoicing saying once and for all that the people of Barbados rejected trade union leaders being in Parliament. Sir, that is the attitude of the Barbados Labour Party to trade unions in our country, therefore, the public should not be fooled by any suggestion that the Democratic Labour Party does not respect the role of trade unions.

Mr. Speaker, we are saying the argument of the Opposition is very premature because we have not presented a Board here, we are talking about the general direction in which the Board should be constituted. Sir, as Honourable Members on this side have said, this Bill does not prevent the Democratic Labour Party, through the Minister of Health and Cabinet, from asking trade union leaders and other interest groups, for example, university representatives, to sit on this newly-constituted Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board. Sir, I would invite the Opposition to wait and see what the composition of the new Board would take before they could draw any unnecessary conclusions and try to confuse the public of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said, this is not a political issue; this is an issue about governance. The Budget for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is well over \$130 million of taxpayers' money that has to be spent to run this vital institution. You are talking about health and the question of life and death for citizens in this country so it is nothing to be tinkered with.

The Democratic Labour Party is justified in seeking new approaches to the management of this hospital. Sir, as the last Honourable Member mentioned, when you look at the poor track record of the Barbados Labour Party's management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, even after it constituted a Board, you know it left a lot to be desired.

Mr. Speaker, I remember when we were in Opposition we had to wait for months before the Opposition was given a tour of the hospital. The former member for St. Michael North West would know very well because he was the Leader of the Opposition at the time and he complained publicly about how the Barbados Labour Party Government treated the Oppositions' legitimate request to tour the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, when we toured that hospital, we were in shock. We had situations in which outpatients and other persons using the hospital had to wait for months before they could get vital blood tests because the reagents necessary to execute those tests were not available, all under a new Barbados Labour Party Board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, you and I would remember that the whole transition of the Board was poorly executed. You had nurses and other members of staff being confused and feeling pressurized because they were not sure what the

future would be not to sign up to the new Board. Nurses aides and others had to wait for months before they were finally reassigned. Some people had to work in the private sector because their future in the health care system in Government under the Barbados Labour Party was not clear.

Mr. Speaker, The Lions Club pumped substantial sums into establishing the Lions Eye Care Unit and the Barbados Labour Party just abandoned it. The Government did not utilise it in the way it was proposed so that people needing vital operations, be it cornea transplants or cataract and glaucoma treatment had to fly to Cuba and all other parts of the world when we had a spanking new facility built by the Lions Club lying idle under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, it is a crying shame.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the security situation at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, you had metal detectors lying idle, not properly utilised and persons running amok, assailants pursuing patients in the hospital and the Barbados Labour Party not even being able to have those metal detectors properly utilised.

Mr. Speaker, there was poor management of public conveniences. Sir, the stairs many of us who visit persons could fall and sue the Government on those stairs with broken concrete work. It was a total state of disrepair at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party, under their new Board.

Mr. Speaker, the incinerators remained poorly managed where you had a lot of dark smoke coming from the chimneys, which are too low, giving rise to serious pollution in the area of the City. Sir, I am talking about Nelson Street, Vine Street, King William Street and Beckwith Street. Sir, when you go to the homes of people, you will see a deposit of black soot on their houses, clothing and on their appliances, compromising the health and safety of the dear people of the City. They are Barbadians, who paid taxes like everyone else under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, this is why I am saying that the management of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a very serious affair and it is not to be in any way trivialised.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the fact that under the present Board structure you have a representative from the University of the West Indies but the Government cannot say who the University should send. It does not state that the person should have a direct interest in medicine, so the university could send someone in arts, therefore, what this Bill is seeking to do is to ensure that we have persons with the requisite qualifications in nursing, medicine and paramedical services there to ensure that the serious decisions to be taken in terms of the proper delivery of health care in our country are made from an informed

perspective and not just because somebody from the University decides that so and so must go, and Government must take that. Sir, this is giving greater control and direction to the composition of the Board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital so that in the final analysis the job is done to the best of the ability of the Government at a given time.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on. Sir, for example, under the watch of the Barbados Labour Party, you had situations in which there were conflicting signals being sent to the public from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the Government, by extension, where they were not sure if health care would be privatised. They were not sure whether you would have to pay for medication or care within the Queen Elizabeth Hospital if you are a patient on the ward.

Sir, all these were conflicting signals. You had situations from the Board level, public accusations of staff being accused of pilferage and unions having to protest. Sir, a Board has to be properly constituted and the Minister must have control to be able to remove persons from the Board if they prove to be an embarrassment or if they stand in the way of the proper functioning of the Board, the management of the Hospital and the delivery of health care within our country.

Mr. Speaker, you remember on the eve of the last General Election you had this great revelation from the Barbados Labour Party that they were, all of a sudden, going to build a new hospital and locate it at Enmore. When you research, you find that to put a new hospital at the Enmore site because of the small, cramped space available you would have had to go up several storeys. If you, the Barbados Labour Party could not maintain the elevators at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital plant, God help us if we had re-elected the Barbados Labour Party and had a hospital nine storeys up at Enmore under the Barbados Labour Party's board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I always say, "praise the Lord on High". The people of Barbados understood that their future was at stake and they removed the Barbados Labour Party from office.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and on but just let me conclude. I remember if you look at the current situation of the redevelopment of the Constitution River, and there was a lot of pomp and ceremony about this. I am saying that you have this Constitution River located right next to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes have been found in the hospital because the canal is not properly maintained. Sir, under the Barbados Labour Party Government, the Constitution River was dredged and the project ended just opposite the Nassco area. The Barbados Labour Party Government proposed to stop the dredging there with just a simple peripheral landscaping leading towards the Constitution River, but between the Starcom

area and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital gate you have the canal filled with a lot of bush and mosquito breeding swamp water.

The Barbados Labour Party Government wanted to expand the hospital but still left that area of the Constitution River not properly dredged and not properly redeveloped to the detriment of sick people who would be at risk of contracting dengue and dying while at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, it is clear that the Democratic Labour Party Government is here to rescue healthcare in our country. Therefore, this Board gives us the leverage to ensure that we can stamp the authority of the Government, or direct healthcare at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to the betterment of the citizens of our country.

I thank you very much.

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

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes on this important Bill. I want to say from the outset that I understand the purpose of the change, and I must say that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West is on record, in fact, he spoke of it, when the Bill for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board was introduced in 2005. He was on record saying that he believed the Minister should have more power in the appointment of the Board. So there is nothing new. So the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown who is now grandstanding, talking about rats, toilet paper and all sorts of foolishness in the City, makes no sense to me.

I am saying that the Democratic Labour Party, true to form, said from the outset, that the Minister should have appointed more persons to the Board. It started then. I am saying that the Barbados Labour Party is fundamentally opposed to that principle but it is the policy of the Democratic Labour Party, so, there is no big thing about this. They have said this from the outset. Therefore, whether the Minister appoints three persons or the Minister appoints 11 or 12 persons, the work at the hospital has to go on.

Sir, when the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown says that for the University of the West Indies, a member must be nominated, because the Minister has to do all the appointments, that is the first thing. The Minister appoints all members of the Board, whether it comes from the University of the West Indies or the Nursing Association, all appointments must be made by the Minister, and all policy direction must be given by the Minister.

Sir, if it is the will of the Democratic Labour Party that the Minister appoints 10 members of the Board, so be it. Sir, to say to this House that the health service of this country has deteriorated over the last 10 years, is nothing but false. There is no truth. The Minister of Health went on record praising the health service in this country.

Early in February the Minister of Health went on record praising the health service in this country. In fact he said that the health service is the best in the Caribbean, and one of the best in the developing world. The Minister of Health said this. Therefore, when the Government publicly pulls down the health service of this country it is doing itself a disservice.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that the Government should not insinuate, whether it is done deliberately or not, or say that the health service in this country is poor. What signal is the Government sending to the rest of the world, when we know that the health service in Barbados is not only the best in the developing world, but is the best in the Caribbean. That has nothing to do with the appointment of a Board, because the policies of the Government will still have to be carried out. Sir, the Democratic Labour Party is of the view that they must have their members on the Board. That is what it is about, that you must have a Democratic Labour Party ticket in order to sit on this Board. That is all it is, Mr. Speaker.

Sir, we are saying that all Boards across the island must brace themselves for changes. All Boards, whether they are schools, whether it is the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, whether it is the Samuel Jackman Prescod Polytechnic or National Conservation Commission, they must brace themselves of the fact that the unions will not now be placed on those Boards. Sir, from 1994, it was the Barbados Labour Party's policy to put a member of the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados and a member of the union on all of our Boards. Sir, if you check any school Board you will see a representative of the union.

Sir, I am saying that if the policy of the new Government is to get rid of the union from the Boards, so be it. The union is not making any noise. In fact, I have heard members of the Democratic Labour Party say that as far as they are concerned, the union is best represented when they are not on the union, that they bring fresh ideas. If that is their policy, so be it. I am not quarreling with that.

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

Hon. J.D.E. BOYCE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the Chamber. He indicated that anyone on This Side, or a member of the Democratic Labour Party, is advocating the policy of non

union. He must, therefore, withdraw that statement, because it does not reflect the policy of this Government.

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order found. That is an interpretation.

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

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me and all right thinking Members, that the new policy of the Democratic Labour Party, requires a membership card of the Democratic Labour Party, in order to sit on a Board. Therefore, this is just the beginning of what will happen. It is the policy of the Barbados Labour Party, and it has always been, when we regain power we will do the same thing again. We will change all Boards to ensure that unions are represented. So you have five years to do what you want to do, just do it. That is all we are saying.

Sir, the Honourable Member for the the City of Bridgetown, said, that the University has to nominate a member. The University can send a maid. The University will send someone from the garden to sit on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Board.

Asides.

Hon. P.M.T. TODD: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I never said that the University can send a maid or gardener for this Board.

Asides.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown said that the University will send anybody to sit on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Board. He was trivialising the representative from the University of the West Indies. He was trivialising the representation from the Barbados Association of Retired Persons (BARP), now that BARP does not have membership on this Board. I am saying that these types of things are wrong, because the Minister in the final analysis, must have the policy, once the policy is set.

Sir, I am of the view that the Democratic Labour Party went along with the establishment of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Board. They went along with it, but they went along with it half-heartedly. There was no full enthusiastic support from the Democratic Labour Party.

Therefore, I am of the view that the Democratic Labour Party will try their best to ensure that things return to a situation before the Board. This is what it all amounts.

Mr. Speaker, to say that the health services in this country have deteriorated is wrong. I am saying that the only period when the health service in this country was challenged was during the period 1991 to 1994. The records are there to show that the period 1991 to 1994 the Democratic Labour Party sent home more than 400 persons from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, maids; people from the engineering and laundry services. Sir, some nurses who were trained were laid off as well.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: I am talking about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and the health service. Mr. Speaker, we found a situation in 1994 when less than \$15 million was spent at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Sir, between 1994 and 2008, more than \$100 million is now being spent on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and we have upgraded the service of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the facts, they are not borne out by what the Government is trying to say. The Government must not send a signal that things are so bad and we did nothing.

Mr. Speaker, recently, I was speaking to a group of nurses out of Nigeria and they said to me that Barbadians are fortunate to have free health service between zero and 16 years old and in no other part of the world this exists.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Sir, the Government is saying it is bad.

Mr. Speaker, we have a free health service for persons above the age of 65 as well. Therefore, we have a free health service for children, as well as senior citizens in this country, and the Government is saying that things are so bad. When the Minister wraps up, I want him to tell me where else in the Caribbean or the world, persons under 16 and above 65 years old can get free health service? Are you saying this is bad? Sir, I am saying to you that anybody who takes sick in Barbados can go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and get free health service within 48 hours. They cannot do it in the United State of America.

Mr. Speaker, we have a good health service in this country whether it is being administered by the Democratic Labour Party or by This Side. I am on record saying this before. I have said in this House previously, that Both Sides have contributed significantly to the upgrade of education and health. Therefore, the Government need not come in here and tell a story to the world that the health service is very bad. The Honourable Member for the City is saying that you have a situation where the smoke and all sorts of environmental problems now exist at the QEH.

What am I hearing? The Government is sending a bad signal.

Mr. Speaker, it is not true. We still have the best health service, whether or not it is administered by this Government. I do not know of any situation where the Government has laid off staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I am saying that it is still good.

This particular Bill is only changing one or two clauses within the Act. It is no big thing. The Government decides that they must have full autonomy on the Board. This is the only change I have seen.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, the Minister of Transport, Works and International Transport saying that the basic social services of this country have been neglected, but he has not been specific. I want the Honourable Member to specify these things.

Sir, it is all right for the Honourable Member to come in here and speak in a general way but, I have heard on a previous occasion that the Speaker of the House asked the Member to specify. Do not come in here and generalise that the social services have been pulled down. How could social services have been pulled down when we have spent so much money on the social services?

Mr. Speaker, they are going to find out that as a Government, despite whatever they say, they are administering the Government at this time. Of course, they know that is what the instrument says. Their instrument says that they are here only temporarily. Sir, we were here only temporarily. Mr. Speaker, do not tell me that things have improved dramatically since January 15, and they cannot recognise what happened before. Nothing has happened.

Sir, if you go in the A & E Department, there are still people waiting for 24 to 48 hours and it has nothing to do with the Minister. It is a system that you have to wait. I have attended hospitals in other parts of the world, Canada and the USA, and I had to wait in the Accident and Emergency Department as well. Persons who go to the hospital must be prepared to wait. They are certain sicknesses that require immediate attention, but you will soon find out that people go to the Accident and Emergency Department for all types of ailments. Sometimes these ailments do not need immediate attention, but this is the nature of people. Therefore, you will find that people will continue to go to that Department for the basic treatment. Sir, we have a service in this country that has not been neglected.

Mr. Speaker, our Administration carried out a study about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and it was recognised

then that there was a need for a new hospital. The QEH is more than 50 years old, as I speak. The QEH started around 1958. Therefore, there is a need to refurbish the Electrical Department and the Engineering Department of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, if you go through the hospital, you would still find tiles scaling up, and other problems existing. Therefore, you have to renovate the hospital often. You renovate one ward today, and next month, you renovate another ward. You take out one lift this year, and next year you renovate another lift. Sir, you keep renovating all the time.

I am saying that there is a need for a new plant and we found this in 1958. The General Hospital was pulled down and a new hospital was erected and we are at that stage again.

The Government has to make a decision. Are you going to spend a lot of money on the existing plant or are you going to build a new hospital? You have to make a decision. You have to decide if you are going to have a new hospital, or you are going to renovate the existing hospital, but whatever you do, you have to spend a lot of money, because a hospital is not two cents. A hospital costs a lot of money. A new plant is going to cost almost BDS\$1 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has to be prepared to do this new plant. The location is important. Where do you put the plant? Sir, you have to look at the transportation; you have to look at where people live and you have to look at the access to the hospital. These are things that the Government must commission a study.

Mr. Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party cannot do it alone. Sir, by putting all of your Members on a Board, you are only looking internally. I would advise the Minister that even when this Bill is passed - because you have the Members to do it - that you do not only look at a Democratic Labour Party card to do it, but you have to get different ideas. You do not want people to say, yes, Mr. Minister to everything.

If Mr. Minister says that I must bring in nurses from St. Vincent only, you do not want to say yes, Mr. Minister. If Mr. Minister says that you must bring in nurses from other Caribbean islands only, you do not want to say yes, Mr. Minister. Sir, you want a variety of opinions. Sir, that is no disrespect because I was fortunate to have advice from a cross section of the public.

Sir, the Government has to make decisions as far as the hospital is concerned. Sir, I do not want to hear that things are so bad at the hospital that they cannot govern. Sir, we trained over 120 nurses annually, but when we

assumed office we found a situation in which less than 30 nurses were being trained in this country, now they are saying to me that things have deteriorated.

Mr. Speaker, we have a brand new ambulance service. The opening hours of polyclinics have moved from 4 o'clock to 7 o'clock in certain cases. Sir, there have been general improvements of the health service in this country between 1994 and 2008, therefore, the record that the Government is trying to paint is really unfortunate.

Mr. Speaker, I am of the view that these changes are only cosmetic, but we are prepared for it because the Government said that is their policy. Sir, wherever you go in the world, the provision of health services is expensive. Sir, the Minister is the first to say this because he said it before. Sir, he would soon realise that the health service is also competing for other funds from the Ministry of Finance, be it education, social services or family care and the infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has to prioritise because in the final analysis, we do not have all the money that the Government would want the country to believe that they could use to do all the things. They have to prioritise. The hospital may need more than the \$150 million which the Government is spending this year. Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that the hospital spends between \$10 and \$12 million per month on salaries alone. Could you imagine that, Sir? Therefore, the Minister would need more than the \$150 million in order to improve the health service in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the Government can only spend what it collects annually. The Minister of Health would soon find by December of this year that he would not get the \$150 million because that is dependent on the revenue the Ministry of Finance collects. Sir, despite all of this "palarming" that the Government is going to do this and do that, the reality is that they would soon find that they cannot spend what they do not have.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying categorically that we have a good health service. The Government must do more because we are all Barbadians and we have to live here. The Government must continue the process of providing a better health service. They were elected to provide a better health service. Sir, they must look to see how they could make it better at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, the polyclinics, the Barbados Drug Service and across the health service of this country.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have a lot to offer as far as health is concerned. A lot has to be done on the wellness programme that we started. Mr. Speaker, these are the Democratic Labour Party times. I want them to get on with the job. If it is their will that the Minister appoints

these people, so be it, but they need to stop looking backward and get on with the job. They need to go forward and do the things they want to do.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want them to take us back to the 1994 period, but the writing is on the wall that they are taking us back there. I want us to go forward with their programme. They have a very impressive Manifesto. The people voted for it. They need to implement their programme and stop pulling down everything that has been built up. I do not want the Government to pull down what has been built up. That is what I am hearing from the Other Side. They are pulling down what we have achieved in this country over the last 14 years.

Mr. Speaker, I heard people from across the Caribbean saying they are coming to Barbados for an operation because of the health service. Mr. Speaker, there are people in this country who are not Barbadians who are enjoying for the very first time a proper health service in this country. The Government's only job is to improve on the record of the Barbados Labour Party and we would hold them to it.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped that I would have followed the speech or the presentation of another Honourable Member from the Other Side because when I listened to the Honourable Member who has just taken his seat, I was confronted with a host of contradictions in the way he sought to present his case. There was only one point of some relevance that emerged and it was not invited by This Side. We know who we are. We know what we can and cannot do. We are not caught up in leading the people of Barbados astray in any fashion. Mr. Speaker, we thank him nevertheless for commending us on our Manifesto.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member, as he sought to address this Bill, which would amend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act, Cap. 54 to make provision for the change in the composition of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board and other related matters, came over as the prophet of doom. In other words, if it were possible, I would refer to the Honourable Member for St. George North as Dr. Doom. Sir, we are familiar with the presence and prevalence of the behaviour of Dr. Doom. I hope the people of Barbados would borrow that sobriquet relative to the gentleman.

Mr. Speaker, I know that it is not easy for some individuals to connect their thoughts with what they speak. The Honourable Member seemed to have been in that

particular mode. That is why one got the kind of disjointed presentation that one got from the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. Speaker, rote learning is an important aspect of education as well. Rote learning is more important for younger children. However, the Honourable Member seemed to have been caught up, even at this stage of exposure in this House for some 14 or 15 years in rote learning.

Mr. Speaker, what the Honourable Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security explained to this Honourable House is what the Democratic Labour Party Government wants to achieve. No one says that it is a panacea for changing the situation which occurred or is at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but one must not stand strait-jacketed and do nothing.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West must be complimented for looking at a particular matter and being bold and assertive enough to say this is what I would present to the Cabinet of Barbados. This is what I would present to this Honourable House. This is what I would present to the people of Barbados as I seek to look at the whole issue of policy, which as Honourable Members would know would start with the Minister, and the Government, and then the Board.

Mr. Speaker, the leadership of that Board would then have to kick in as well, based on general policy issues. Sir, the management and general administration of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital would all have to be part of that whole process. Sir, the body cannot be against itself, therefore, the leadership of the hospital in the form of the Chief Executive Officer, CAO, FAO or whatever they are called, cannot be in opposition to the Board or to the Minister. If they stand in opposition, then it cannot work.

Sir, there must be a seamless cohesion and coordination as the first step in the correction of many of the ills at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which is the premier health care institution in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, this Bill represents part of the search for a solution for solutions. It is a small but important step in seeking to remedy the situation relative to health care in Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West and Minister of Health has many important policy directives and policy issues to bring before the people of Barbados. The Honourable Member is not a nincompoop, a novice nor a fool. This is an Honourable Member who has been practising his profession for some time. Sir, not only has the Honourable Member been practising, he has also been theorising relative to changing the face of health care in Barbados. Sir, I know on This Side we look forward to the work of the Honourable Member, his Ministry and all

the other persons connected with health care, would do in this country.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a condemnation of the work of the others, but in an institution such as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, you have to have the kind of skills set that are important to help guide the process. We are here dealing with skills set, so we must identify the skills set first and then link those persons to the skills set identified.

Mr. Speaker, when we were on the Other Side, we criticised, very vehemently, the composition of this Board, therefore, there is still a consistency of action on that matter. Sir, if we were critical of it while we were on the Other Side...

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member said that I presented a disjointed speech on rote learning. Sir, the Honourable Member is behaving like a Class Four primary school teacher. The Honourable Member is disjointed because he has not shown how the increase in numbers on the Board would help to enlighten policies. Sir, the Honourable Member is supposed to be an educator.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I find no point of order.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to join the Honourable Member in making a mockery of this Honourable House. The Honourable Member has never taught at Class Four level and will never teach at Class Four level at any school. In fact, when the Honourable Member left the Grantley Adams Secondary School to run in politics, there was a sigh of relief and a bravado in Blackmans, St. Joseph, because the students there said that somebody of some consequence would now come to take his place.

Sir, I did not want to bring that here, but the Honourable Member would know that the teachers clapped. I was told that at the end of the term there was a celebration, not for Christmas but because he had left the Grantley Adams Secondary School. Therefore, the Honourable Member is not in any position to speak to how one merges the skills set we are speaking about.

Mr. Speaker, when we were in Opposition, we opposed the way the Board was structured. Therefore, we are still now exhibiting a consistency in our argumentation and delivery. Sir, it would have been spitting in our own faces, if we had not sought to correct that and anything else that we would have criticised. Sir, from our vantage point we knew that nothing would have been done.

Sir, having been elected by the people, the Minister has to be in a position to guide the process in this country, otherwise there would not have been sleepless nights across the various election cycles in Barbados, where Ministers have been knocking on people's doors and asking for their support because those Ministers want to make things better.

Sir, no one should stand in the way, either through the kind of malicious intent that is being orchestrated by persons in this country, which is being led by persons who should know better. Sir, these persons are praying that in five years' time, there would be a collapse of this Government so that they could get fodder again, but the people of Barbados are not going to keep feeding them. They are already bloated.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: They must know who they are. They are already fat with the cat and the chickens in this country, and the people of Barbados will not be led astray through that kind of foolishness.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the Minister must have certain responsibilities. Sir, the citizens of Barbados do not really care about Boards, but we have to care because it carries forward the agenda and policy.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, the people of Barbados care that when they go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, there are kind and considerate persons to deal with them. They care that there are people at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital who can understand their communication. They care that persons can get the right kind of medication or the right kind of remedy. They care that they could get to their hospital room in time, and they care that they would not be left exposed to all elements, in an open space for 48 or 72 hours. Sir, that is what the people care about and that is what the Minister of Health has to deliver otherwise what would be our purpose.

We are a people who have been placed in a democracy to make a difference, and that difference must be positive. Therefore, when the people of Barbados said - and that is what is sticking in the throats of most Opposition Members - that they want the Democratic Labour Party on this occasion to make a difference, they gave us that opportunity. The people of Barbados wanted us to stop the wicked sabotage that was taking place right across Barbados. That sabotage was taking place in every Ministry and in every Department, which was being aided and abetted by many and they know who they are.

Sir, they think that we will not speak out on it, but the hands will descend upon those of you who stand in the face of the people. You must let us get on with the work of the people and because you take the foundations out, because you rip the belly out, you think that people are then going to come and embrace you, but the people know wickedness wherever it lies.

Asides.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Praise the Lord, many of those who stand against wickedness will be cursed.

Asides.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member has made the statement that there was sabotage across the Government. Sir, that is not true.

Asides. Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member should bring proof where there is sabotage across this Government rather than generalising.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, guilty conscience needs no accuser. They will stand in their seats and they will pontificate but I am not a hypocrite; I will speak when I have the facts and the truth. You can talk about this and that but I will lead because I have been placed to lead. I will not deal with foolishness and quiet meetings as if we do not know; sending messages, soliciting documents, taking stuff that do not belong to you, destroying materials, carrying them at the Port and burning them. Sir, they think we are novices and that we do not know.

Asides.

Hon.R.D. JONES: The Honourable Member spoke to the issues of these important skill sets. The Honourable Member has never said that they are not personnel in any of the previous agencies that cannot be utilised because of their experience, knowledge or knowhow in satisfying some of the demands of this Board. The Honourable Member never said that. The Honourable Member identified a set of skill sets and wherever those skill sets can be drawn from, they will be used.

Mr. Speaker, I did not correct the Honourable Member but I thought that the Honourable Member was misleading the House when he said that there are no trade unions represented on the Boards and would only use my example. Clearly, from the beginning, it was articulated that across our secondary schools, the trade unions must be

represented and they all fit in as members on the boards of the 22 secondary schools.

I have sat in places where trade unions were represented before and where they still sit as a result of policy written into the appropriate legislation as a policy of support by this Government for the whole notion of tripartism and social partnership. This is the kind of philosophy that was espoused by the Democratic Labour Party between the period 1991 and 1994. Sir, they want to pretend that they are inheritors but, Sir, you should only inherit when you create something and there has never been anything created by them but a mess of pottage. Therefore, we will not be diverted from the path which recognises the traditions of this great Party and of this great Government. Sir, a tradition of positivity, equity, social justice, fair play, people-centred delivery, that is what is important.

Mr. Speaker, as we seek to do this, we will correct; we will ameliorate the kind of disaster brought upon the people of Barbados by the Other Side. Sir, that is our mandate and we will not be changed from that path or from that course, regardless of the sabotage being attempted each and every day.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I am not cursing civil servants. I am cursing your henchmen and women. The way that a decent, organised body of professional workers has been so undermined by the transplantation of the Barbados Labour Party in the Civil Service of this country. They are decent civil servants who cry and who have reached out to us and tell us that they are thankful that we have returned to remould, refashion and reshape the Civil Service of Barbados so that there can be adequate delivery. Sir, that must also permeate the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and its Board and we will do everything by good means that are necessary. Sir, the hatchet job done on members over time: persons who were superseded, persons who were denied, persons who were not appointed. Sir, all of that went on in this country; persons acting for nine years and ten years and, Sir, you know why they are not appointed because, according to them, they carry a particular stripe. If that stripe was not marked BLP, then you should genuinely not make a good contribution to this country.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, we have not taken that approach. They called it inclusion, exclusion decimation, those are some of their words. Sir, this country must stop seeing political hypocrisy. It must remove it. Dismiss it. Discard it. Throw it into the swampland of the Careenage that is where it must go. Sir, all the pretense that they carry on and think that the people of Barbados do not

have any sense, must stop. Sir, in the highways and byways the message will be spread and more and more will be revealed.

Asides.

Hon. R.D. JONES: I cannot tell you because you will never understand. Listen to the skill sets that the Honourable Member is talking about and if you know the discipline you will understand, finance, human resource management, industrial relations, information technology, law, management operations, medicine and paramedical services. He is not into some pretense and show to suggest to the people of Barbados that you are earning money. The people of Barbados do not want that.

We support the Honourable Minister on This Side most wholeheartedly. We support the initiatives which are being made to reform, refashion, reshape and remould health delivery in Barbados. We will put the resources of the people of Barbados behind those efforts. We will make a change. We will make a difference and what we invite is the fullest participation by the Other Side not the divisiveness which they are seeking to place on the hearts and backs of the people of Barbados. We will not cower from our task. We will not cower from our work and, therefore, Mr. Speaker, This Side wholeheartedly supports the Amendment to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act, Cap. 54.

Sir, I thank you.

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

Hon. F.J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a very brief intervention in this debate on the amendment to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act, Cap. 54 of the Laws of Barbados, the object of which amendment is to make provision for the change in the composition of the Board and for other related matters. I think that I have to begin by saying that we on This Side of the House are committed to the development of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and to the improvement of its standards. It is our premier health care institution. It is the institution to which we all have to repair, if we take ill and, as a former President of the United States of America, Mr. Lyndon Johnson once said, we should not spit in soup which we all have to drink.

Mr. Speaker, I am not nearly as lucky as the Honourable Member for St. George North who can jump on a plane and go abroad if he is having just a headache. I have to get my medical attention from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Hon. G.A. CLARKE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. The

Honourable Member said, that if I had a headache I can get on a plane and go elsewhere for medical attention. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South can also say that he had medical attention elsewhere as well, and we are aware of it.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is no point of order.

Hon. F.J. STUART: The only place that I have ever had medical attention is in Barbados, because it is the only place I have ever been ill. I have never needed medical attention anywhere else.

Sir, we on This Side are committed to the development and improvement of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, I am taken aback by the hubris and the effrontery of Honourable Members on the Other Side, as they have participated in this debate, because on any objective evaluation of the history of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, it would have to be conceded that the most contemptuous phase in the hospital's history was over the last 14 years, and that coincided with the Government of the Barbados Labour Party. Huge challenges were manufactured for the hospital, and on the basis of manufactured challenges by the Barbados Labour Party's Government, decisions were taken that served to undermine the morale of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It falls to this Government to try to restore the fortunes of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to some state of respectability, and certainly to restore morale to some kind of calm.

Sir, sometime in 1996, I seemed to recall, a press conference was convened by the then Minister of Health, who left a trail of destruction at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I believe she now sits in the Other Place. An announcement was made that the four top executives of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital were going to be cashiered. In one fell swoop the entire hospital was decapitated and the victims of that harsh and thoughtless act, had to rush to court to protect their reputations, and, mercifully, the Court agreed with them, awarded them compensation, and, of course, saddled the Government, I am told, upwards of \$1 million in legal costs. Nobody in Barbados believed then, that having dismissed those four persons from the hospital, that the same Government having deemed that those four persons were responsible for the problems at the hospital, would in a matter of two or three years call back one of the same persons to head the hospital, and the absurdity and the bizarreness, if I may use that word, continued.

There was a change of that Minister since her tenure became unbearable, not only to people in the Ministry of Health, but to the people of Barbados. It was thought then that a Minister with a more business-oriented focus should be appointed to run the fortunes of the hospital, that

experiment came to grief because the main feature of that particular Minister, then Senator Philip Goddard, his main feature was his featurelessness. He made no impact at all on the health fortunes of Barbados and certainly none on the administration of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Then another ministerial change took place. It was thought then that somebody who knew the hospital well, who was familiar with its rhythm and its dynamics should be appointed as Minister. An appointment was made then of a budding Barbados Labour Party politician, who was critical of all the previous Ministers in his capacity of BAMP. When he was appointed Minister, disaster descended on the institution in greater degree. There was a cascade of disaster at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and he has now gone into political retirement, dogged with the infamy of being the worst Minister of Health Barbados has ever had.

Sir, it does not lie in the mouth of anybody on the Other Side, to speak with any moral authority on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, because that institution suffered more damage over the last 14 than any other time in its entire history. The catalog of abuses that I have just recited are unprecedented and unparalleled in the history of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They are not matched by any similar occurrences at any time in the hospital's history. We are committed to the upliftment of the hospital, because as I said, it is where we all have to go. It is still our premier institution.

Sir, the arguments that I have heard coming out of this debate are surprisingly strange. The hospital was a civil service institution from its inception until the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Act was proclaimed, I believe, sometime in October 2002. For as long as it was a civil service institution, trade unions did not have any say in its administration. The University did not have any direct say in its administration, although it was always a teaching institution. It was run along civil service lines by the Minister, the Ministry and under the overall superintendence of the Cabinet.

Sir, only since the passage of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Act of 2001, has a Board come into existence at the hospital, and only since the proclamation of that Act and the coming into effect of a Board, have trade unions and the University of the West Indies been involved in the direct administration of the hospital.

Sir, during the golden age of the hospital's history there was no involvement of trade unions in its administration. There was no involvement of the University of the West Indies in the administration and yet those were the hospital's best years. Sir, to come now and to suggest that some horrible deed is being done by removing the Trade Union Movement or the University of the West

Indies directly from the composition of the hospital's Board, is really to advance the most fallacious of arguments, because the argument contradicts all of the hospital's history.

The best days of the hospital, the best years of the hospital, the halcyon days of the hospital were experienced at a time when it was run by the Civil Service and when those other entities were not involved.

Therefore, I do not understand the argument and idea that the Democratic Labour Party by virtue of the amendments being done today, is against trade unions. This is really a monstrous diversion of commonsense, because that too, contradicts all of our history. Sir, we leave that debate for another time because the argument is being advanced by an organisation that every Manifesto since 1971 has promised Labour legislation in Barbados and to this very day has not kept one of those Manifesto promises.

Mr. Speaker, the only piece of Labour legislation introduced by the Barbados Labour Party between 1971 and the present had to do with an amendment done to the Shops Act while I was in here between 1994 and 1999 and that was not done at the instance of any workers or any trade unions. It was done at the instance of the employers. Sir, it was passed for the employers' benefit and not for the benefit of any workers.

Therefore, I do not know who has given the Barbados Labour Party the moral authority to come into this Chamber and talk about who are against workers or who are against trade unions. It does not sell with me. Sir, let me get back to the QEH, and the reconfiguration of the Board.

Mr. Speaker, let the history record that the introduction of a Board at the Hospital by the Barbados Labour Party in 2001 was not a novelty. Sometime in the early 1970s, the Democratic Labour Party in Government contemplated introducing a Board to run the hospital. It was very much an agenda item for the Democratic Labour Party in the early 1970s. In fact, a committee was set up to advise the Cabinet on the transition from the hospital as a Civil Service institution to the hospital as a Board. Now, as it turned out, that Committee reported and made some very interesting observations about the Board and the future management of the hospital, but the Board was never introduced. We never introduced the Board. In fact, the report of that Committee, a copy of which I have in my hand and I can make a document of the House at the appropriate time, was submitted to the Cabinet in November 1972.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister of Health, came to the Cabinet of Barbados a few weeks ago and indicated that he felt that

the Board of the QEH should be reconfigured, so that its effectiveness could be sharpened, given the objectives that the Government has set for the management of Health Care in Barbados.

Sir, he gave a clear indication to the Cabinet with very cogent arguments, of the kind of composition of the Board he favoured. The Cabinet agreed with him and that explains the amendments we have before the House today. Sir, we are satisfied that the Minister's views are right. The Cabinet has agreed on that and we are prepared to defend these amendments to the death, because we think that they are right.

The Minister is a doctor by training. He has worked in the health care system. He understands it, as the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central, the Leader of the House indicated. He has not only worked practically in health care, but he has committed himself theoretically to the development of health care. He has actually written on the subject. He knows what he is doing. Whatever else I have heard said about the present Minister of Health of Barbados, I have never heard anybody say that he is a fool, or he does not understand what he is doing. He is one of the most intelligent young men in Barbados today. Sir, we feel proud to have him as the Minister of Health of Barbados at this time.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, you would have thought that the skill sets for which the Minister is arguing were imported from some celestial sphere unknown to all of us lesser mortals. As long ago as 1972, when a Committee set up by the then Democratic Labour Party Government under the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow, as far back as when that Committee reported, that Committee at page 10 of its Report paragraph 7 said as follows and I quote:

"It is considered that the Members who are appointable by the Cabinet should be chosen from particular disciplines which should perhaps be specified in the legislation itself. These should include the medical profession, the legal profession, financial or accounting professions and business. It is important in a complex organisation like this hospital that a cross-section of management skills and expertise should be made available, if there is going to be any success in converting the Hospital into a Statutory Corporation."

Mr. Speaker, that was in 1972, some 36 years ago. Judgment, 36 years later, a Minister comes with these same ideas. He had never seen this Report. He saw it for the first time when I showed him just now, and how the protests can be heard from the Other Side that some great mischief is being committed against the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, like Mark Anthony might explain, "Oh judgment thou are fled to brutish beasts and men have lost their reason."

Mr. Speaker, that is not all. The Minister is now going to appoint the Board. This was also an issue in 1972 when the Committee that was set up by the then Cabinet looked at the constitution of the Board as well. Sir, that Committee made it very clear that the majority of the members of the Board - in fact, the overwhelming majority - should be appointed by the Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister has determined that whenever the crunch comes, whether membership of the Board is appointed by the Trade Union, the University of the West Indies, Barbados Association of Retired Persons or whoever else comes, the person that is going to be blamed for what happens at the hospital is the Government, headed by this Minister of Health. Sir, if that is going to be the case, he may as well make himself fully responsible for what goes on there and be prepared to take the flak when it comes, if there is ever occasion for flak to come.

Mr. Speaker, therefore we support him 100 per cent in assuming full responsibility for the appointment of the members of the Board. We are satisfied with the skills sets he is seeking. As I indicated earlier, Sir, those skill sets are sanctioned by our own history. A report going back to 1972 when a previous committee reported to the Democratic Labour Party when we were thinking of introducing a Board at the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, when this Board was introduced, I was in the Other Place. I made it clear in my speech there, that we did not think - and we still do not think - that the introduction of a Board is a panacea for all the ills at the hospital. Sir, it is a judgment call the Government made. We respect that judgment call. We inherited a Board and we have to work with that Board.

We have never thought that the introduction of a Board was going to be a solution to all of the problems at the hospital. What we do know though, is that this Government and this Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security, are committed to ensuring that the situation at the hospital improves, and that the public of Barbados can get better service from the Hospital than they have been getting in recent times.

Mr. Speaker, I still think that we have one of the best hospitals in the Western Hemisphere, and we are prepared to continue to build on its fortunes. In that connection, I can also read from the same Report of November 1972, which also dealt with the issue of medical care. Again, this speaks to the skill sets which the Minister has sought to import into the reconfigured Board.

Mr. Speaker, under the rubric of Medical Care, the Report says that medical care is the prime objective of the hospital and medical personnel and their functions are dependent upon other vital services which are equally as indispensable to the achievement of the hospital's objectives. It should never therefore be thought that the hospital is primarily a doctors' hospital and any suggestion that the doctors should have all or most of the authority under a Board would certainly ruin the prospects for improvements envisaged in the setting up of a Board and would be a disincentive to non-medical personnel to serve on the Board.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister is bang-on in what he is trying to do. The hospital has a range of skills at its disposal. This Minister's approach is inclusive. It is intended to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of respect and esteem in terms of the management of the hospital and in terms of the pursuit of the objective of improved health care for citizens.

Mr. Speaker, when all is said done, it is not what the Opposition says, or what the Government says about the hospital that is going to matter. What has mattered in relation to the hospital over the last 13 years is not what we said as an Opposition or what the Government was saying as a Government, it was what the people who had to use the services of the hospital were saying. Sir, the litmus test of whether the hospital is meeting the needs and satisfying the requirements of the public is what the public would be saying. That is where our ears are directed, to satisfying the public in ensuring that they get from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital what they think they deserve to get.

Mr. Speaker, sickness is one of those thousand natural shocks to which all human flesh is erred. None of us is immune from it. Sickness is not a form of wickedness. It is something that could befall you. No society that calls itself civilised should want to punish people for being sick. That is why we need a proper health care system in Barbados. That is why the Democratic Labour Party committed itself to this over a long number of years. That is why today we feel proud about our stewardship in the area of the provision of health for the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, we resume that stewardship now confident that we can take health care in Barbados to a level that would ensure that ordinary men and women could leave their homes and go to our premier health care institution, or to our polyclinics, and get the kind of treatment they deserve and that they need. I am not supposed to hear asides, Mr. Speaker, but the Honourable Member for St. Michael North wants to know whether I am not going to mention a previous Minister of Health of the Democratic Labour Party who is now the President of the Senate, one of the best Ministers of Health Barbados has ever had. If the Honourable Member for St. Michael North

wanted to hear that, I am glad to gladden his hearts and to tickle his ears.

Mr. Speaker, because he was so good, the Barbados Labour Party tried to daub him and to besmirch his reputation by the odious setting up of a Commission of Inquiry designed to stain his name. Mr. Speaker, the wicked flee when no man pursueth. It is the righteous who are as bold as a lion.

Mr. Speaker, when the Report came in to them and they discovered that it had nothing that could incriminate or besmirch his reputation, they hid the Report and to this very day, 10 years later, that Report has not seen the light of day. We did not commission any investigatory Commission of Inquiry into anything in Barbados. In fact, in post-independence Barbados, the Democratic Labour Party has not been responsible, as far as I can recall, for any investigatory Commissions of Inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, I have gone public and said that as far as I am concerned most of the reports that I have seen coming out of investigatory Commissions of Inquiry have been rubbish, and I still feel so.

Mr. Speaker, an advisory Commission of Inquiry is a different story all together, but an investigatory Commission of Inquiry has always been motivated by partisan political considerations. The reports have been rubbish in their content and in their recommendations, and I stand by that.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the St. Joseph Hospital Inquiry after 10 years of gestation, after dizzyingly large sums of legal fees were paid out to handpicked lawyers of the Barbados Labour Party. To date, we do not know what the Report says and we do not know where the Report is. Mr. Speaker, we called for it. The Government that set up the Commission and the Minister of Health said that Branford Taitt would have to tell Barbadians what became of this and what became of that. Sir, after all of that talk, 10 years later that Report is not to be seen anywhere. A hush has descended on it because its contents are now an embarrassment to the Barbados Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North wanted to hear that, he has heard it. Mr. Speaker, a Commission of Inquiry started hearings in November 1998, and ten years later, the Barbados Labour Party is not able to produce the Report of that Commission so that Barbadians could judge them on that issue.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is speaking as though there is a Report that is hidden by the Barbados Labour Party and they do not know where this Report is. They are free to

have the Report laid. The Honourable Member should know better than that. The Barbados Labour Party has not hidden any Report. There were no lawyers that were handpicked by the Barbados Labour Party, so the Honourable Member is grossly misleading this House. He has to understand that these debates are carried live and that he is conveying the wrong impression to members of the public.

Mr. SPEAKER: I see that as no point of order. The Honourable Member said that he has not seen the Report. Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will all Honourable Members please sit.

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: The Attorney-General has said that the Report cannot be found, but the Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security in that Democratic Labour Party Administration said that the Attorney-General has the Report, so who is lying?

Mr. SPEAKER: I find that as no point of order. Will all Honourable Members please sit. I find no point of order in the Honourable Member for St. Andrew submission. As far as I am aware, you are not allowed to make points of order on a point of order.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege. The Honourable Member specifically said that the Report was hidden. That the Barbados Labour Party hid the report. Sir, is that not a point of order?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have already ruled on that point of order.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, you did not rule on the point that the Report was hidden.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have already ruled on that point of order.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the remarks that the Report was hidden should be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please take your seat, I have already ruled on that point.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, how could you allow Honourable Members on the Other Side to say that a Report was hidden by the Barbados Labour Party. Sir, that did not happen. It did not happen.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, will you please take your seat?

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I am asking that those remarks be struck from the record.

Mr. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I do not know. The Honourable Member for St. Andrew always generates more heat than his body can contain.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North West, what is your point of order?

Hon. R. St.C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I was told that I could not make a point of order on a point of order, so I have to repeat what I said. I am saying that the Attorney-General has said that the Report was hidden or could not be found. Sir, I am saying that the Minister of Health said that the current Attorney-General has the Report. Therefore, I want to ask, who is lying? Who is misleading this Honourable House and this country?

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, the proper place for asking the question is not on a point of order. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I dealt with the points of order raised, and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South now has the Floor again. Honourable Member, unless the Honourable Member for St. Michael South has said something else on which a point of order could be raised.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading this Honourable House. The Honourable Member for St. Michael North intimated to this Honourable Chamber and said that I said the Honourable Member for St. Michael South has the St. Joseph Hospital Report. Sir, I have not spoken in the wrapping up on this debate, I have not spoken to such in my moving of the Bill and therefore the Honourable Member must stop telling untruths or misleading this Honourable House. Therefore, I must ask that those statements be withdrawn and struck from the record.

Asides.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I am unable to rule on that point of order because I have no basis on which to rule. You are saying he said. He is saying you said and, therefore, I have no basis on which to rule at this time.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I have had grave difficulties with reports from the Barbados Labour Party. I have spent a good bit of my time since becoming Attorney-General looking for the FBI report as well. Sir, I cannot find that either.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I cannot find the FBI Report, the Prison Report, the St. Joseph Hospital Report.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make is this. I heard the allegation made this morning by the Honourable Member for St. George North, the fact that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, the Minister of Health, is going to be appointing a Board, means that you have to have a party card of the Democratic Labour Party, in order to sit on that Board.

Mr. Speaker, that is not the policy of the Democratic Labour Party. It is a horrible untruth. It is not the Democratic Labour Party who said that if your initials are D.L.P. that you should starve. It is not any Democratic Labour Party Minister who said that. It was a Barbados Labour Party Minister, sitting on That Side of this House. Sir, I was in the Public Gallery when it was said, after the 1978 by-Election. I heard it said that if one's initials spell D.L.P., that you should starve in Barbados. Sir, the idea that this Government today would make having a party card a precondition to sitting on a Board does not arise.

Mr. Speaker, if I may close with this anecdote, I remember, in 1994, within three weeks of the Barbados Labour Party coming to office, the then Minister of Public Works and Housing, the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, had a letter sent to me at my Chambers at Lucas Street, Bridgetown, telling me that any work I was doing for the Barbados Water Authority, that the files should be sent to a company called George Payne and Company.

Asides.

Hon. F. J. STUART: I still have the letter.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, both of you cannot speak at the same time. I recognise the Honourable Member for St. Andrew.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I am asking that those remarks be struck from the record. Mr. Speaker, this is a serious debate. Sir, when I was Minister, I had a policy and the Honourable Member for St. Joseph could attest to

that, I have never, ever, allowed my Ministry to engage the services....

Mr. Speaker, I would have never expected this from the Attorney-General. I would never allow my Ministry to engage in any services in my office, while I was Minister of Public Works. Mr. Speaker, that is not true and I am asking that those remarks be withdrawn and be struck from the record because it is an attack on my integrity.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please.

Asides.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I need you to rule on those remarks. Sir, no letter ever existed because nobody in my office has never done any work for my Ministry.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, let me remind all Honourable Members that they must strive to have the correct decorum and deportment in this Honourable House as we engage in debates.

Honourable Member, your point of order, as I understand it, is that the remarks should be withdrawn because there was no letter. The Honourable Member is insisting there is a letter. Therefore, in those circumstances, I cannot, in my view, rule that they should be withdrawn.

Hon. F. J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I want to make clear...

Asides.

Hon. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. During the Estimates debate there were a number of objections that were raised and the Chair has to be consistent with respect of certain statements. I have even heard in this Chamber today, names of persons who are not in here being called which were allowed by the Chair. The Chair has to be consistent with respect to these rulings.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, it seems to me that you are bordering on calling the judgement and the ruling of the Chair into question and you are not permitted to do that.

Hon. G.W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of privilege. There were certain allegations which were made and the ruling from the Chair was that those remarks would be struck from the record until the letter is produced. I am not trying to impugn on the Speaker's rulings but that was

the decision taken from the Chair when the shoe was on the other foot so you cannot now come and say something completely different.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have made a ruling on that matter already, Honourable Member. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South, you ought to be concluding now because your time has expired.

Hon. F.J. STUART: Mr. Speaker, I want to conclude. The Democratic Labour Party is not to be associated with making appointments to Boards dependant on what kind of Party card you carry. I repeat that under the watch of the Honourable Member for St. Andrew as Minister of Public Works and Housing, I got a letter addressed to me in my capacity as an Attorney-at-Law at Harford Chambers, Lucas Street, Bridgetown, telling me that any files I have on behalf of the Barbados Water Authority should be sent over to George Payne and Company. I can prove that. I do not have to withdraw anything I say. It is true and you stand condemned for that.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SUSPENSION

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

Hon. J. STUART: I beg to second that.

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

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, I rise to make a few remarks on this Bill before us. At first glance, I thought that this Bill was a rather simple affair. Sir, last Tuesday we saw a bit of grandstanding, by the Shadow Minister responsible for the Ministry of Health and that behaviour has been continued by Members on the other side. Sir, we have been consistent in terms of our position, with respect to the composition of the Board of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

We believe, and I am sure that in their hearts the Other Side believes that the structure of the Board at present was incorrect. I believe that the Opposition when they have time to reflect, and based on the information I have received, it is proven that in fact our proposal to allow the Minister to have the responsibility for appointing the

Board makes more sense. It would be more practical, would allow the Board to carry out the mandate of the hospital and by extension the mandate of the Government.

Sir, I could not understand from the inception, how you could have a Board made up of members with different constituencies. The Opposition would have us believe that, in fact, you could have a Board where members represented different constituencies. When I say constituencies I mean, for example, you had the Barbados Christian Council, the Nurses' Association, et cetera, and that was their constituency, with their own perspectives, and still, at the same time, discharge their responsibility to the Board.

It is quite obvious to me that at some point in time there would be a conflict, and pray tell me, in which direction would they go. It seems to me that, in fact, quite often, you ended up with a frustrated Board. Sir, we are attempting to ensure a constituted Board that at all times, will work towards the betterment of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That is all we want to do. Mr. Speaker, all we want to do is to ensure we have an institution we can be proud of.

Sir, I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. George North is not in his seat. If the public of Barbados believed him, you would get the impression that this Government has been saying that the health care sector in Barbados is no good whatsoever. Sir, if you listened to the words of the Honourable Member for St. George North, you would believe that we on This Side have nothing at all good to say about the health care sector and about the hospital.

Sir, we have been consistent in our criticism of the hospital as an entity. We began by saying that the hospital was not allowed to function as it should, by the previous Administration. We recognised that there were issues that needed to be addressed. We recognised there are issues that still have to be addressed today. It gives us no pleasure when we hear that we have the best hospital in the Caribbean, when in fact there are still issues. That is like saying that the West Indies team is not a bad team, look at Bangladesh. The fact is, if it is poor, it is poor. There are areas that need to be improved. That is why we are clear that we need to address certain areas and that we need honesty.

Sir, all of us, and I am going to include the Honourable Member for St. George North, at some point in time will end up in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Therefore, it is in our interest, we have brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles, to ensure that the facility is given the equipment, staff, everything to make it the best hospital possible.

Sir, do not tell me that, as we will hear from the Other Side, that we are better than the hospital in St. Vincent or the one in Chaguaramus, Trinidad, when, in fact, there are still issues that need to be addressed. All we are trying to do, on This Side, is to address those issues. That is all we are trying to do.

Sir, I do not understand how, for example, that we can hear from the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, that in trying to constitute the Board, we have become anti union. I spend lots of my time at the National Union of Public Workers. I have many friends who are trade unionists, and one thing I am not is anti union. My background, my poor working-class background in itself, prohibits me from being anti worker or anti union.

Asides.

Hon. A.D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, my background prohibits me from being anti-union. I understand there was posturing, but I believe that we have a responsibility in this House when we speak, even if we are posturing for political purposes, we still have to be responsible. We still should not make statements that are untrue with respect to ourselves or each other in terms of Party. I will not say that the Barbados Labour Party is anti-union. I will always, however, say that during their tenure there were more labour issues, than at any other time in the history of Barbados. Sir, that does not mean that they are anti union. It means that they were poor managers, and they failed to address the issues of the workers. Sir, I do not say that they are anti-union.

Sir, there is nothing to suggest that in trying to constitute the Board our way, that we are anti-union. Of course, there is nothing to suggest that to qualify as a member of the Board you must have a passport of the Democratic Labour Party. There is nothing in this Bill to suggest that, Sir.

Sir, I do not understand how the Honourable Member for St. George could reach that conclusion. Again, we know that his reasoning is a bit different, maybe that is why he is able to read such a requirement into this Bill. We understand that if, in fact, this Bill was brought by the Other Side, that clearly that would be the intention.

Sir, if there are other Honourable Members who will be speaking this afternoon, they can best contribute to this debate as follows. They should ask all members and supporters of the Barbados Labour Party, who work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to give 100 per cent. To give a fair day's work for a fair day's pay for the next 15 years, while they are in Opposition. We on This Side will ask our supporters to do likewise. There should be no politics within our health care system. That is part of our problem. Sir, part of the problem, in my opinion, over the years, we

have had a situation where workers, either directly or indirectly, have been influenced into not giving a 100 per cent, when they do not support a certain Minister.

I am therefore asking all of the staff at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, to give the Minister of Health 100 per cent on a daily basis, because it could be their lives, their brothers and sisters, whose lives they are affecting. That is what their contribution should be.

Sir, if the Honourable Member for St. Thomas speaks later, if there is nothing else that the Honourable Member could say in terms of making a contribution to this debate, she should ask her constituents who work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to give an honest day's work because this is what we want. Sir, what we are trying to accomplish is to ensure that we transform the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, it gave us no pleasure when we were in Opposition to say that people were waiting for three days for a bed. It gave me no pleasure to learn that medication was not available. In fact, when you called certain distributors they were saying that they were not going to release any drugs because no money had been paid for months. Therefore, we on This Side take no pleasure in terms of pointing out the ills of the QEH.

Mr. Speaker, we want to say to the members of staff at the QEH that we recognise their contribution to the health care sector. That we, in constituting this Board, want to give them what is required to do their jobs even better than they had been in the past, because there were trying circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at what we are trying to do, you could understand why we are trying to address the ills. Sir, we have problems throughout the Government services at this point in time that we need to address. We can have workers who have been in place for several months who have not been paid.

Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that the accounting system at the QEH is a first-class system. Mr. Speaker, when we say that we want someone with accounting knowledge, it is because we want to identify all areas of the QEH, and we want to bring them to their optimum performance.

Asides.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, when you look at all areas, you would see that it makes sense why we are having individuals with that particular knowledge. Sir, Engineering, the hospital cannot function unless it has a first class Engineering Department. The whole plant depends on the Engineering Department, so it cannot work without having someone with that knowledge and it cannot

work without having an effective Engineering Department. Again, it makes sense.

Mr. Speaker, Information Technology. We have a situation where Information Technology in this day and age in 2008 should be used to ensure that from the time a patient walks through the hospital door until he leaves, everything is tracked. His medical history, his post care and everything are tracked. Sir, it makes sense to you and me, and it makes sense to our Party and we will ensure that it is done. It does not happen now, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, that is why I am saying that the composition of the Board has been well thought out by the Minister. He understands the areas that we need to address and he understands the areas presently identified by us as weak. We will deal with them and we will sort them out. Sir, I am clear and we are clear that on January 15, 2008 when Barbadians went out to vote, they voted for change, and one of the things that they wanted changed, were the conditions at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Asides.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: I am clear about that and I am satisfied. We have to deliver and we will deliver on that.

We all know one thing about the Honourable Member for St. Philip West that when he gets something between his teeth, you can say what you like, he does not let go. I know that he has gotten the Queen Elizabeth Hospital between his teeth and he will ensure that it is transformed. He will live and breathe and he will ensure that it is transformed. There are horses for courses and we are satisfied. We can say with confidence that this present Minister of Health will deliver.

Therefore, we will not make political decisions when it comes to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and our peoples' health. Sir, some of the information is that on the Other Side, they recognised that there were deficiencies. They recognised that changes had to come to ensure that the hospital was developed and to ensure that the ills were corrected.

Mr. Speaker, my information is that they said to wait until after January. So in the meantime it is all right if people were there for days suffering, because they had to ensure that they would be returned to office. Sir, they did not care about the suffering of the people in this country.

Mr. Speaker, we should not put politics before our people. That is why I was saddened that this Bill, which I consider to be a very simple Bill, took so long, and brought so much posturing and grandstanding when in fact, all

right-thinking Members should easily be able to say that they support this Bill and move on.

Mr. Speaker, my friend, the Honourable Member for St. George North did not say he supported it. He began by saying that we were consistent in terms of our opposition to the composition of the Board initially. He then ended by saying that he understands what we are trying to accomplish. Sir, in between there he found time to recognise that our Manifesto is the best Manifesto available. We want to deliver on the promises to our people. Sir, I thank him.

Mr. Speaker, we need to have an honest debate about health care in this country. Some of us are afraid to call a spade a spade. We have a situation where one member of the Board, I am not sure if he is still a member of the Board, I believe he was the Deputy Chairman. He took time out to suggest that members of staff were stealing, when in fact, if you listen to the general staff at the hospital, they believe that nothing that they did could compare to the guys at the top of the chain, who were part of the problem in terms of why our system was not delivering how it should be, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, it is easy for us in this country to criticise the small man. Their friends that they play with on the golf courses are the consultants. They are the ones with whom they socialise, so they would not criticise them. But it is easy to criticise the small man and accuse him of stealing toilet paper and all kinds of nonsense, when in fact, the issue was that they failed to deliver. They failed to give the QEH the finances to enable them.

Sir, I heard the Right Honourable Member for St. Peter say to the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, "you should ask for more money because you would not have enough money." Sir, that is after the Government has given the QEH more money than the Opposition ever did. Sir, from the inception of the Board, the Barbados Labour Party Government of the day did not give the QEH enough money to carry out its mandate, and, then compounded it by giving it a Board that was dysfunctional.

Therefore, to me this is a very simple Resolution. Sir, what we are trying to accomplish is to ensure that the Board speaks with the voice of the Government and that our policies are *ad idem*.

Sir, I have said to the Minister privately that in fact if he re-looks at the Bill, maybe there is one thing that we have to look at more closely. I do not see within the Bill, an apparatus to ensure that if perchance a member no longer felt that he agrees with the mandate given to him, and did not want to resign, that he could be removed. I have asked him to re-look at the Bill, because I believe that we need to ensure that Boards function without intervention, but

functions to its maximum capacity because as I said from the inception, health care is not something that we should be political about. The health care system of this country is about all of us.

Mr. Speaker, therefore, I am asking the Opposition to get on board. I am asking them to embrace change with us, where change is for the betterment of Barbados. In fact, once we bring measures to this House, I am confident that they are for the betterment of Barbados because that is what we are about.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we could hear references to our Manifesto, continuously from Both Sides, because, in fact, we have set out pathways to progress. Sir, we have set out how we want to change Barbados and this is but a small beginning, in terms of how we intend to change the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Hon. A. D. BRATHWAITE: Sir, in wrapping up, let me just reiterate that we have a responsibility to ensure that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is given the financial resources that are required. Sir, we need to ensure that the staff feel like if they are part of the process. That when they leave home on mornings they understand that they are going to an institution that needs them and to an institution in which they could make a difference. That is what we need to give them, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to the Minister, and I am encouraging Ministers throughout Barbados to ensure that they address their staffing issues on their various Boards, because if the staff, regardless of whether they are B, D, E, or C, does not believe that they are part of the process, they will not deliver. Sir, unless they deliver, then you and I may suffer when we go to the various institutions.

Sir, I thank you for your time.

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

Hon. Dr. D. S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate. I want to do so by first congratulating the Honourable Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security for having moved so swiftly to bring redress to this matter of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members on This Side have made very enlightening contributions to this debate to set the context for this debate not only as it relates to the operations of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but to put it in its broadest context by suggesting that health care is part and parcel of this Government's emphasis on creating a social development and social care path that would ensure all Barbadians of all walks of life that they would be given

the best possible opportunity to enjoy a quality of life in this country commensurate with their contributions to the development of Barbados.

Therefore, when we speak of health care in general, we do not speak simply of a set of rubrics that guide how health services are distributed in the country, we speak of a broader framework of care where this Government is insistent in its emphasis on ensuring that all Barbadians have the opportunity to receive viable health care services to their benefit and to their care.

Sir, we do understand that the population is aging. We do understand that because of that phenomenon it is important that we arm the country with the best possible health care delivery systems that would allow persons on the entire life cycle to be able to benefit day in and day out in terms of what kinds of services and the quality of those services that they are receiving.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill really speaks to the process of change that this Government came into office propagating. This Bill speaks of the courage of the Government, through the Honourable Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security, to address issues that this Government considers to be issues of urgency that would redound to the benefit of the people of Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, I heard an Honourable Member on the Other Side, in seeking to suggest that the health care services are better than other domiciles in the region, noting that we put more money into health care and it caused me to ask the question: how do we measure quality health care? Do we measure quality health care by the millions of dollars that we pour into the health care system, or do we measure quality health care by its impact on the citizens of the country to ensure that they are accorded with quality services at every point of health care delivery services in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to suggest to this Honourable Chamber that this Government is not simply about putting more money in health care. This Government is about seeking to understand fully what are the impediments of the health care system, and how can we work with the population in ensuring that those impediments are removed, and that Barbadian citizens and those who would access our health care systems would be able to be guaranteed a quality service every single time that service is required.

Mr. Speaker, what I see happening is a shift in thinking. The Honourable Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security has introduced a shift in thinking in terms of how we operationalise the work at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in terms of how we study the leadership of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in terms of

how we study the delivery capacity of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and certainly in terms of how we bring the Queen Elizabeth Hospital services to meet our patients and our population at their point of urgent need.

Indeed, many of our citizens do not have the wherewithal that they could travel to get health care services. Of course, if they are persons who could afford, that is fine with them. Our remit as the Government of the day is to ensure that whatever we do relative to health care in this country works to the benefit of every single citizen who would need to access the health care system at some point in time.

Mr. Speaker, we were brought into office because of a desire for change. This Government has a moral obligation to ensure that it instigates further that change process so that all of the systems that work to enrich the lives of our people are studied, reviewed, and restructured. Whatever the needs might be, that we do what is necessary to demonstrate that we are not changing for changing sake, but that we are changing to increase quality of service especially within the context of health care.

Mr. Speaker, as I contemplated my contribution, I asked myself why was the Board introduced in the first place. One Honourable Member on the Other Side suggested that this is really a debate about participatory Government and giving people a chance to participate. Mr. Speaker, that has never been in question on This Side. As a matter of fact, I should like to congratulate the Honourable Member for St. George North for finally admitting that the Democratic Labour Party's Manifesto is a fantastic document and that therein lies the policies of a Government which is not just on the leading edge but on the cutting edge of improving the quality of our country in general and in the quality of health care. Mr. Speaker, the Board was introduced, if I recall correctly, because of the dissatisfaction of the previous Government with the administration of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. As a matter of fact, the Board was preceeded by a declaration of war on the previous leadership of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital that resulted in the removal of the top leadership of the institution. Mr. Speaker, the Board was also introduced, as I understand it, because of the ailing state of employee morale at the hospital. It was also introduced because of chronic inefficiency at every level of the hospital's administration.

Mr. Speaker, I thought that the Board was introduced because of a rapid decline in public confidence. Mr. Speaker, when this Government states categorically that the conditions at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, in the last 13 years was worse than it had been in previous years, this Government speaks that voice not simply because of a feeling, but because of the gathering of public sentiments

where confidence in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital had all but vanished.

Mr. Speaker, that is not speculation. Some of us have family members who have been there. Some of us have friends who work there. Some of us visit patients there. Mr. Speaker, we know that there has been a persistent cry about the falling standards at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Dr. the Hon. D. S. LOWE: Sir, that has nothing to do with the fact that the physical infrastructure of the hospital has also fallen into great disrepair and has created much discomfort for those who access the institution, from time to time.

Sir, the point I wish to make at this juncture is that if the structure the previous Government had set in place had worked to deliver the objectives that were established, then I am quite sure the Honourable Minister of Health today would have to say: "Well, the Board worked as it was constituted." Mr. Speaker, the fact is that evidence suggests it simply did not work.

Mr. Speaker, what the Minister of Health is seeking to do is to re-engineer not just the composition, but the thinking that drives our understanding of how a Board should function, and what a Board should respond to, in the process of executing its business. Sir, the truth that this shifting in thinking is reflective of the philosophy of this Government, because this Government believes that the skills, competencies and attributes necessary have to be deployed to deliver to the people of Barbados at every point of delivery.

Mr. Speaker, we do not see this society simply as an economic good. We do not see it as seeking to fetch the highest value for properties and otherwise. We see this society as bounded up in the lives, experiences and journeys of its people. We see that the first priority of Government is to ensure that the people, who have vested their confidence in this Government, are always heard when they cry for help. One of the persistent cries in this country is what are we going to do about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, we are beginning the process and again we congratulate our Honourable Minister of Health for understanding that the Bill has to respond to a number of complexities which characterise the hospital administration. Sir, hospital administration is not about tossing a banker at the head of a Board to run a hospital. It is not simply looking for somebody who has a remarkable record in a specialised area and asking that person to lead a hospital. Sir, hospital administration is about collecting the necessary disciplines and expertise to allow for a seamless operation in the administration of health care in an institution.

Sir, I am quite sure when the Honourable Member wraps up this debate, he would speak to those issues, but I want to make the point that this Bill recognises the critical nature of a health care institution as part of a system that delivers Government's social mandate.

Sir, we tie these things together, we do not see our society as a group of entities but as a continuum. Therefore, as long as we are able in good faith and good conscience to respond to issues that the people of Barbados have suggested that are issues of concern, I am comfortable and confident this Government will do extremely well in its terms of office.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is not only about participation, it is about representation. Sir, most importantly, it is about building institutional capacity to allow the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to have a new lease on life. Sir, that institutional capacity begins with the capacity of the Board.

Mr. Speaker, if you would look at the composition of the previous Board and at the Minister's recommendations of the new Board, you would realise there is a shift of thinking, and not so much as a shift of the categories of people who will become members of the Board. The thinking is that if you are going to build capacity to respond to a set of prevailing and persistent needs, the first order of business is to try to do a comparative analysis of the needs to be met and of the competencies to meet those needs. If you are looking at competencies, you cannot find competencies wrapped up in institutions. Competencies are embodied in people who through learning, skills development and expertise, are able to deliver the kind of responses commensurate with the needs identified.

Mr. Speaker, we know what are the needs of the people, we know that the diversity of skill sets the Ministry of Health has talked about is important, in terms of being able to meet the needs of the hospital and to find the appropriate skills to respond to those needs.

Mr. Speaker, let me say that we have great health care workers in this country. This Democratic Labour Party Government, even in its previous administration, has always been very cognisant of the nature and contributions of health care workers in this country. Sir, we have done all that we have been able to do in our terms in office, to ensure that persons who were asked to deliver these services were top-quality health care providers. What the health care system needs now is a kind of ministerial flexibility or a kind of ministerial agility, where the Minister who leads the institution, where the Minister who is finally accountable for what happens at the institution, is able to put himself into the administration at the planning or policy level, and not just in the day-to-day operations.

Sir, institutions of the country are driven by policies, and policies find their homes within the bowels of Government's mandate. Therefore, the Minister who is assigned to a respective Ministry, has the remit to ensure those policies are delivered in such a way where the country gets bang-for-its-buck every time.

Mr. Speaker, what I find in this Bill is that the Minister is simply saying that because of the complexity of the nature of running a health care institution, we need a Board that reflects upon the needs of the people in the institution and the people to be served by the institution. The Minister needs to have that flexibility and that administrative agility, to be able to put those systems in place.

Sir, running a hospital and running it effectively is not just about building that kind of capacity in the Board. It is also about ensuring there is effective collective leadership where every individual, who is involved in some area of leadership and/or management in the institution, is able to provide that service.

Sir, in order to do that, the Board must be empowered to do interpretative analyses, where it looks at the institution. It should have the capacity to do interpretative analyses of the operations of the hospital, in every sphere of hospital operations. It should also be able, not only to look at these analyses, but it should be in a position, based on the collection of skills at its disposal, to make strong progressive recommendations of how those problems could be solved. Sir, one of the major impediments at our Queen Elizabeth Hospital has been this gap between being able to identify the problem and to fix the problem. That is the thing that continues to plague the institution.

Mr. Speaker, none of us is proud of what has happened to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, none of us in this room is proud of what is happening to the institution. What is important is that all of us must be able to collectively put our skills together and work on seeking to remediate these challenges. To cause these things to go away.

Sir, we must be able to do these things because while we are debating this Bill, there are people who are dying; while we are debating this Bill, there is an increase in law suits against the hospital. While we are debating this Bill, there are persons who are contemplating whether they should stay at home and die peacefully, or go to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and run the risk of dying faster. While we are debating this Bill, there are men and women whose taxpayers dollars are being spent and they do not have the confidence that they could go to the institution and find the kind of care they believe they deserve.

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE: Sir, this is why this Government has as part of its mandate to fix the hospital. We are going to start that process by ensuring that the Board, that the Minister believes can deliver will, be put in place to deliver what needs to be delivered. I do not mind those who say that you have to be a card-carrying member of the Democratic Labour Party to be on a Board. I am glad that the people of Barbados are intelligent.

I am glad that the people of Barbados can think for themselves. Far from a change of Government, they are some on the Other Side that can tell us in this Chamber that with a change of Ministry some of the members on the Other Side savage Boards to put their own Boards in place. They were all members of the Barbados Labour Party and that is why some then turned against them.

It is foolhardy to believe that a Government would come into office and establish Boards with members of their Party, who have no interest in the success of this Government. Why would we do that, Sir? Why should we do that? Why should we allow ourselves to be guided by the foolhardiness of those who would want to spout objections when, in truth and in fact, as the Honourable Minister of Education said, not in this House today, that there are persons out there who are seeking on every single corner to obstruct the progress of the Government; to carry out the dictates of a self-fulfilling prophesy that this Government cannot last. Sir, whether or not this Government lasts will be at the will of the people and not necessarily at the whims and fancies of those who seek to distract the Government. Sir, this Government came into office with a plan. A clearly articulated plan. This Government came into office with a set of policies, clearly articulated policies. This Government came into office with a collective agreement on what direction this country should take and we will work together on every single corner to ensure that mandate is carried out.

Mr. Speaker, we do not intend to allow those on the Other Side to distract us from what needs to be said. We will not allow them to distract us from what needs to be done. What we understand is that the Bill recognises that in order to fix the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we must first fix the leadership. Sir, in order to fix the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we must address personnel issues. In order to fix the Queen Elizabeth Hospital we must improve industrial relations at that institution. Fanciful enough, as was touted by someone on the Other Side, they embraced the unions. They embraced all the precepts of the unions and we are happy to hear that, but we do not have to say we do it. We practise it in this Party and in this Government, but what causes them to stand condemned is that with all the talk about embracing the unions, they were the ones, under whose watch, there were more industrial disputes in this country than ever in the history of Barbados and that the unions were fronted, from time to time.

As a matter of fact, the police in this country still feel the hurt of being told that they are not special. Sir, the Barbados Labour Party in Government ... now wants to come in here and try to condemn this Government on its path to progress and its commitment to delivering the services necessary. We were not in office for the last 14 years.

None of us in this Chamber were responsible for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. It was a member who ran in the last Election for the Barbados Labour Party that called the workers at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital thieves. It is amazing and the truth is that if you do not have anything to say, do not say anything, but now to come in here and try to condemn the Government on matters after treating the workers in this country, not only the hospital workers, but after treating the workers in this country with contempt.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. No one on This Side ever called any worker at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital a thief. The Honourable Member must not say that the leadership of the hospital needs to be changed because, as far as I know there is only one leader, the Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order. Honourable Member, please continue.

Dr. the Hon. D.S. LOWE: Mr. Speaker, again, I must say that I am happy that the people in this country are imbued with intelligence and the ability to understand. If we were telling our own story, perhaps people may doubt us but we are telling the story of a nation because people lived through it for 14 years under the Barbados Labour Party. I believe that if we take to heart those things that the people of this country told us when we were running in the last Elections and I know that the Honourable Prime Minister is committed to ensuring that this country is taken on a path; in partnership with the people, so that the people could experience the kind of relief they have been in search of for the last several years. I know that the Honourable Minister of Health understands that the hospital must be given an opportunity to have the best possible leadership. It must be given an opportunity to improve its industrial relationship.

It must be given an opportunity to benefit from interdisciplinary inputs and that is the reason why the Paramedical Professional Council is part of the pool from which skills will be drawn to be part of the Board. I believe that in order to fix the hospital we must also improve the psycho-socio services that are available to that institution.

Mr. Speaker, in all, let us say that what the Honourable Minister of Health is in search of is not just a new Board, but a Board that reflects the skills,

competencies and attributes that would give rise to the recovery of our Queen Elizabeth Hospital. This Government is committed to supporting and continuing to support the members of staff all across the institution. We are confident that we will be able to provide the kind of governmental leadership; the kind of Governmental support that would allow this institution to get on its feet again and run because, after all, what we do for this institution we are not only doing for ourselves but we are doing for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

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

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, let me begin by complimenting the Minister of Health and National Insurance for the very speedy introduction of this legislation to deal with an important aspect of the Government's policy. Sir, in the last Election, we placed the issue of health care as the No. 3 priority in our Manifesto and you will see, Sir, in that document reference to the rescue of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital plan. The plan is obviously going to require some major policy initiatives by this Government in relation to health care as a whole. It is going to require a plan for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital per se. It is going to require leadership and management. It is going to require finance and it is going to require accountability.

I believe that in all of the steps that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West has taken with regard to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital so far, he has given due regard both to the existing situation, what the pledges of the Government have been, what the needs of the people are, and how best he can manage that change process.

Sir, the Cabinet has come to some agreements regarding the future of the site at Martindales Road. We have come to some decisions about where we want to take the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. I believe that the Minister and I are ad idem on some creative ways for financing much of the new development of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, that will not be a charge on the public purse and the Consolidated Fund in this country, but will serve the interest of all Barbadians.

Sir, I am unaffected by what was said in the Honourable House last week because I was not here. I can only go by what little I read. I must say I have not read all of the newspapers, but the basic charge that has been leveled at the Democratic Labour Party relates to the structure of the Board.

Sir, when the original Board was established, we warned the then Minister of Health, who himself left this

Chamber a very frustrated man. I am surprised that people long banished, from the Barbados Labour Party's Cabinet, can be the loudest noisemakers in this Chamber today. People who walked away from office and went back to their private practice, and enriched themselves and drew pay without making any contribution to the trials and travails of the dying Barbados Labour Party are the noisiest now. Some who were chased away from the Cabinet and remained out for two terms, are now the noisiest in defending what clearly were infelicities.

The previous Minister of Health himself, both privately and in here, expressed frustration with what was happening at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. That is nothing new. The least his colleagues could do for him, if they have an interest in history being kind to him, would be to admit that he faced some frustration. Of course, they would have to admit that he did not have the courage to deal with them. Therefore, that might be the problem. There is nobody in Barbados on either side of the political divide, who has not admitted that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital presented major challenges.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West has analysed what those challenges are, has come up with what we consider to be an effective plan for dealing with them, and he has 100 per cent of the Honourable Members on This Side, in rescuing the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Sir, what does the structure of the Board has to do with it? People are not one dimensional. Even in the disciplines that the Honourable Member for St. Philip West identified. I am not a man really for that. I do not believe that every lawyer can focus on the law. He may have other skills. He may be a good parent or she may be a good parent. They may be a good violinist, musician. They may have a good bedside manner. There are some lawyers who cannot deal with people, and do not give a hoot about anybody. You need to pick the best people for the job, and in that regard, there is no architect that because he is an architect, is best suited to be on any Board, and there is no lawyer that just because he is a lawyer, is best suited to be on any Board. There is no accountant because he is an accountant is best suited to be on any Board. I would not pick the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, because of her legal skills to be on a Board. I think her natural talents lie elsewhere.

Aside

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: I would not accept an appointment to sit on a Board. I sat on the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation's Board for a very short time. I assumed that the late Right Excellent Errol Walton Barrow did not select me because I am a lawyer. I assumed that he selected me because I was involved in cultural activities. I was a young person under the age of 25. He wanted that

particular perspective to be brought into the Boardroom of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. It is true I was a card-carrying member of the Democratic Labour Party too. I would not deny that. That is something that I am proud of. That has coloured all of my actions, both good and those which Honourable Members on That Side might question. I do not have any apologies to make for that.

Sir, the point is, I do not think, even though in this formulation, it gives the Minister flexibility. I do not necessarily think that is formulation. The Minister should be entitled to select who he wants to select to go on this Board to deal with the challenges that he faces.

Sir, there is nothing that says that the unions' representative is the best person for the Board either, or that the representative of the Barbados Association of Medical Practitioners is the best person. We have had a long history of persons being designated for Boards, as a right, who made absolutely no contribution to the Boards on which they sat.

I am therefore saying to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East, because she was Minister of Education, and I am certain the Member knows full well that down through the years there had been representatives even of the Ministry, I know you are not going to nod, who have sat on Boards, who have made absolutely no contribution while sitting on those Boards. I am going to be totally frank about it.

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You could put a nurse on if you want. It does not have to be a representative of the union. You can put a general worker on the Board. The man who once painted the hospital free of cost, that they stopped, because he seemed to have had more concern about the hospital than the Government of Barbados. Do you remember the gentleman who was painting outside, they arrested him and carried away the paint and the paint brush?

Asides.

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: You did not know about that? You were out of the island again?

Aside

Hon. D.J.H. THOMPSON: There was a man painting free of cost, and he was stopped from doing that. Clearly he had an interest in the standards and the image of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and that interest may or may not have been greater than any representative of any organisation.

I believe that there are occasions when people should sit on Boards as a right, because they need to have that level of independence. So the idea that a Minister can put them there and remove them, there are circumstances and there are certain kinds of Boards, that you can say people should be there as of right, but where you are carrying out a policy intensive activity, in which you are taking an organisation and trying to turn it inside out to effect major structural, financial, policy changes, and professional changes across a wide gamut of services and relevance that the institution may have to the country, then, as I say, you have to allow for some flexibility.

It is a sterile argument to talk about the structure of the Board, and to say that it is better if you had six accountants, two doctors and four land surveyors. That does not say anything. We are a small society and the pool from which we draw people to do these things is small. Despite what people say, they want to give the impression only when they are not included that you did not reach far enough. There are only certain people, who are going to take on the responsibilities that the Minister of Health has identified as the challenge at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

I salute those who have accepted that responsibility. I thank them for agreeing to work with this Government and working with the Minister. I wish them all the very best, because I believe that at the end of the day, we want to have a better Queen Elizabeth Hospital in this country. All of us want to see a better QEH.

We know the standards that it once aspired to and even achieved. We also know the challenges throughout the Caribbean, in relation to health care. We know the demands of citizens. When people are sick nowadays, they can go on the Internet and type in headache, hip replacement, arthritis, whatever, and they can see the variety of treatments that are available to them, and most of them would like to have all of those treatments here in Barbados.

We cannot provide all, but I believe that the Minister of Health is trying to develop a Queen Elizabeth Hospital that can cater to the needs of Barbadians and even offer a quality of service that people who come to our shores, as well as residents of other Caribbean islands, can also enjoy.

Therefore, I only wanted to get into this debate, Mr. Speaker, to say that I am not convinced that arguing about the structure of a Board, or the fact that unions are not formally put on a Board means the death of the Trade Union Movement in Barbados. Or that because a certain interest group is not included, it means that the reform is doomed to fail is not an argument at all.

Sir, Members on the Other Side should know better than to be adducing those kinds of arguments. Instead of

that, they should be looking at the substance of the reforms that are proposed, and giving the Minister who has had the courage to take on this major rescue programme for the QEH, the support, encouragement, help and assistance that he needs in this exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you, Sir.

Asides.

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

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Members particularly on This Side for their presentations last week and this week. Sir, those presentations were excellent. They highlighted the reasons one would have to look at the performance of the QEH Board, with respect to its previous orientation and the inability of the institution to deliver the type of high quality and high standards of health care to Barbadians to which we have been accustomed.

Mr. Speaker, it does however bother me when I look at some of the interventions from the Other Side. Sir, in the language of the computing industry, they were all like a computer with a busted CPU. A CPU that had very little memory. A computer where the information being input to that computer was not only wrong information but it was input in the wrong order. Rubbish in, rubbish out. Sir, what is even more distressing is that the Honourable Members on That Side, attempted to carry this argument into the realm of philosophy, an area that they should not dabble in at all.

Mr. Speaker, not only did they confuse the principles of democracy with that of governance, which was a fundamental philosophical error, but they failed to understand that democracy is a form of governance and whether that governance is good or bad, depends on the principles of transparency and accountability thereof.

Sir, what is even more distressing is that they also confused the principles of individual participation, and that of institutional participation, which clearly demonstrated, Mr. Speaker, they are out to sea.

Mr. Speaker, the premise on which I started, was the premise of individual participation. I will show without a shadow of a doubt, that when one refers to the Law, Cap. 54 and in particular, I speak to section 5.3A, the members of the Board shall possess the expertise, business acumen, professional experience that will allow for the proper discharge of their functions.

I go on, Sir.

The individuals must demonstrate competence and outstanding achievement in their field of endeavour. Mr. Speaker, that is the reason I concentrated on the competencies and the skills of the individuals because I was giving effect to the Law, as it stands.

Sir, even more fundamental I had to address a discrepancy because I do not know how the Members on That Side can guarantee that when you would place an institution, or a special interest group on a Board how do they guarantee that the competencies and the skills of the individual are so advanced to the Board? A fallacious argument of the highest order. Sir, it does not make sense, but I would hear a lot of talk.

Mr. Speaker, I expected a serious debate on an important Bill but what I got from the Opposition was tantamount to a circus show; Ringling Brothers, Barnum, Bailey and Son. All they needed to do was to paint their noses red and get a red hat from the Honourable Member for St. Thomas.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I have already made reference to the fact that you should refrain from either saying that Members have been speaking nonsense, foolishness and that they are circus characters. This kind of language is quite unparliamentary and would wish that you refrain from that, Honourable Members.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I thank you for your intervention but I can perhaps empathise with the Honourable Member for St. Philip West, since his own comments are now the latest thing to laugh at on the Internet and the way in which he was behaving, approximates to what is going on the Internet from him.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I do not read the Internet. Sir, what is important here is that I want the argumentation. It is the issues here, Sir, we are dealing with the argument. The argument, Mr. Speaker, is what I am about.

Mr. Speaker, I will refer to a statement made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East. The Honourable Member said that to remove particularly the unions and the interest groups was a breach of good governance.

Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely distressing and faulty argument because, as I said, institutional representation, and the assumption that institutional representation is better representation than that of the individual citizen, is in itself faulty.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to carry the Honourable Member down to the fundamental philosophical precepts of

democracy that she spoke of and try to educate the Honourable Member with regard to what is known as the moral thermometer, the basis of the democratic principle, individual participation.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask the Honourable Member to go and read the theories of Jeremy Bentham as he spoke of the moral thermometer as to how individual participation defines democracy, not institutional participation. These are individuals who have a lot of talk but when it comes down to carrying one down to the abyss of knowledge, they have become wanting.

Mr. Speaker, I am not such. I am sounder than all of them. Mr. Speaker. It is unfortunate that I would have to carry this argument down here, but it becomes necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Board is to execute the health care policy of the Government. The Government policy is to be expressed through the Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security. As Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security, I have direct responsibility to the people of this country and for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

As a result of that, when things go right, I will take the accolades and when things go wrong, I will take the accolades, therefore I will determine the fundamental policy directives as set up through this Cabinet and I will stand firm on that responsibility to the people of Barbados. I am not going to shirk that responsibility, Sir, I do not need to hide behind any special interest group like the Barbados Christian Council, or the Barbados Association of Retired Persons. I will determine the policy positions as enunciated by my Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, under this new Administration, health care will no longer be a consumer of the Budget of this Administration only. As a new paradigm shift, the health care sector will be a sector of economic growth and development in this country. Under this new Administration, the health care sector will be an engine of economic growth and development in this country. It is not simply going to be a consumer of monies from the Government in terms of its Estimates line item. We are going to make sure that not only are we going to generate foreign exchange for this country but we are going to generate jobs, and we are going to give the health care sector a new focus with respect to this mandate.

Mr. Speaker, part of that mandate necessitates that one create the type of administrative profile of the insular most important element of the health care system, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, and make sure that it is structured to be able to once again deliver to the people of Barbados a quality of health care of the highest standards.

Mr. Speaker, I want to see the day when under my Ministry that part of the electricity usage of the hospital is executed by solar power or wind power. I want to see the day when polyclinics are run by solar power and other types of alternative energies. I want to see the day when we are pumping water in Barbados utilising solar, wind and other alternative capabilities. Mr. Speaker, we are not going to be a backward Government. We would attempt to carry Barbadians forward. The innovative ways that we would be approaching our health care structure in Barbados have the Members on the Other Side confused. These innovative ways are beyond them. They are too profound in their thinking. The thoughts are too profound.

Mr. Speaker, let me go back and explain to Barbadians why it has become necessary for me to make some adjustments to this Board. Mr. Speaker, it pains me to have to do this because I am a physician and as a result I have some responsibility to the people of this country. Mr. Speaker, before I explain to Barbadians the dysfunction that existed at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and its Board, it has become necessary for me to refer to the House of Assembly debate, the official report of the First Session, 1999-2004, where I want to quote from page 20. Mr. Speaker, I want Barbadians to listen to the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East.

“Sir, for the first time I am suggesting to you, that a Government is prepared to look behind these systems and see how these systems have handicapped the effective management and creation of cost efficiency within the context of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, rather than just simply believing that working within the old style of rules and the old systems of management can make a difference.”

Listen to this statement, Mr. Speaker. I believe there needs to be a more sensible approach to the issues, not just at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital but throughout all of the Government services and how we deploy persons after they have received specialist treatment. For example, a person receives specialist training in cardiac surgery and all that is required in that area then in order to be promoted, that person has now to abandon that specialised training in order to get a promotion. What nonsense am I hearing in Barbados? That is the style of management at the hospital where you have doctors who would go overseas, become trained in intervention radiology and become specialists in medical oncology, but they cannot come back in this country and contribute to the growth and development of those specialised areas in this country. That is the management that we are talking about at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital that I have to address.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. I think I have to save the Honourable Member from himself because I am not sure if there are any other physicians in

here who could help him as he is in the throes of getting a heart attack. Suffice it to say, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member, having quoted me from Hansard, then purports to suggest that I have said the opposite of what he just read. The reality is that the position that I took then, as I take now, is that I do not believe that when people receive specialist training in Government they should be transferred out, whether it is in the hospital or in the Attorney-General's Chambers where a number of people have received specialist training in legislative drafting... The current Attorney-General would know that we have not the benefit of those skills anymore. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member cannot quote, and then having quoted, disguise what he is saying behind his bravado and hollering such that nobody can understand what he is saying.

Mr. SPEAKER: I find that as no point of order. The Honourable Member quoted you and posited an interpretation. The Honourable Member for St. Philip West.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I will restate my statement. When in order to be promoted, that person now has to abandon that specialised training in order to get a promotion. I did not say it. The Honourable Members on That Side said it.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I am very cool, but I would not agree to a dishonest repetition of a part of a statement. Having read what he read before, it was clear that I took... He has not told us what debate he is quoting from by the way but that is a matter for...

Mr. SPEAKER: He did.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The point is that he is not in a position to suggest that I disagree with the whole policy of taking people and training them and then moving them, I disagree with it. Therefore, he cannot come now and make it seem as though I am in agreement with it. Mr. Speaker, if I start talking, we would get into all kinds of reasons in here and we would also find out why it is that certain people were responsible for...

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing any Honourable Member out there could say that could in anyway deter this Honourable Member from saying what he had to say. That sort of talk does not mean anything to me, I would get on with what I am saying.

Mr. Speaker, I will quote from Hansard, July 17, 2001, at page 20. Sir, with respect to the Haynes Commission of Inquiry, this is what the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East said:

"...You have an institution in the year 2000, and in 1999, when the Report was filed, where there is not a 24-hour a day, seven days a week cleaning service, in spite of the fact that in any one day you have over 2 000 people, not to mention patients inside that institution...."

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that?

"...Therefore, there must be a vulnerability in respect of the quality of cleanliness of the institution...."

Mr. Speaker, these are things I have to rectify because, as it now stands, I have to find boilers for the laundry. As it now stands, I have to find staff for the laundry. As it now stands, I have to find people to clean the hospital, and this was since 2000.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I am not finished, the Honourable Member went on to say:

"...You have an institution in this day and age servicing that number of people, where the laundry does not work seven days a week, and then we would wonder why is it that people cannot have access to clean linen on a ready basis...."

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that, Sir?

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East continues:

"...You have an institution where the rules relating to the procurement of goods, whether it is food or equipment, do not match the needs of the institution...."

Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Health, where I am now trying to make fundamental changes to these kinds of problems, I am being pilloried. Sir, I have not begun to talk to Barbadians about the woes at the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, according to the Report on the Master Plan for the rationalisation and development of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, prepared by Capita Norma and Durbon, Health and Master planners, listen to what was said:

"There was a chronic lack of equipment and backlog of maintenance estimated at approximately BDS\$19 million..."

Sir, while we were having that, on the Board at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, we had members from the Barbados Christian Council, BARP, CTUSAB, UWI and

BRNA, yet there was \$19 million in backlog with respect to upgrading the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

Mr. Speaker, over the last 14 years, there has not been any upgrade in the electrical system at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. They had 14 years in office to establish a hospital information system and to integrate that with respect to the polyclinics, but I now have to be putting those systems in place.

Mr. Speaker, do you understand that under the previous administration, if the families of patients did not feed them, those patients would have starved? Do you understand that under that administration, if your grandmother had gotten sick, you would have had to go there and feed her, otherwise she would have starved? Do you understand that under that previous administration you had to take knives, forks, linen, pots and pans to the hospital? Sir, this is the administration that is now condemning the Democratic Labour Party for trying to rectify those problems.

Mr. Speaker, there was a situation where under that administration, nurses at the hospital were being attacked or raped, and what has the former administration done? Now I have to try to rectify these problems, yet they have the audacity and temerity to try to attack this administration.

Mr. Speaker, there was a situation where, for the last three years, autoclaves at the hospital have not been working, yet we could have new autoclaves sitting idle in storage, yet that former administration has the audacity to open their mouths. There was a situation where elevators have been out of service for 15 years, with only two elevators working to transport visitors, food and the dead.

Asides.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that up to last week, if I had not taken urgent action, because of the problems with old broken down diaphermic equipment at the hospital, surgeries would have had to be cancelled? Sir, they spent 14 years in Government and I would have inherited a situation where we did not have proper equipment to carry out surgeries at the hospital.

Mr. Speaker, the entire buncoscope structure at the hospital to use within pulmonology, I now have to look for a new piece of equipment, because for the past 14 years the equipment has been breaking down every day, yet the matter has not been addressed by that former administration.

Mr. Speaker, we just had a situation where the X-rays in the hospital were dysfunctional and we would have

had a position where X-rays could not be taken. Sir, this is a problem that should have been rectified years ago, but I now have to move to a situation where we had to try desperately to find two X-ray processors, so that Barbadians could have X-rays in this country, yet they have the audacity to talk.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine there are air-condition units that are in storage at Warrens for the last five years, where Government has been paying storage fees? Sir, there are air-condition units in the Intensive Care Unit that have been dysfunctional for a number of years, where certain interests have been paid to repair these air-conditioning units, yet they are still down, even at this point.

Mr. Speaker, there is a situation where the hospital was without a cafeteria for 14 years, where doctors on call had to spend almost 36 hours at the hospital with nothing to eat, where they had to leave the institution to source food elsewhere. That is what they did to the hospital and to the morale of the staff at the hospital, because of the indifferent treatment to its workers.

Mr. Speaker, I saw the proposal for building the Lions Eye Care Centre, but could you imagine that since 1998, that centre which was supposed to be utilised to make sure that Barbados has a state-of-the-art angiographic suite, so that we could sell cardiac services to the other regional and extra-regional territories, nothing has happened since. What we have are operating theatres on the third or fourth floor of the Lions Eye Care Centre that are lying idle. I have a situation which I have inherited from the past administration, where persons in the Accident and Emergency Department had to wait sometimes 24 to 36 hours before being seen by doctors. I have to rectify that. Sir, let me say to Barbadians that problem will be solved within this year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to Barbadians that not only is the design for the see-and-treat facility and the general practice unit has to be completed, but once that design has been completed, I am going to ensure that we also establish a holding bay. Sir, that would solve several of the problems within the Accident and Emergency Department.

Mr. Speaker, in addition, I now have to solve a number of problems in relation to medicine, because it is the medically-typed patients who sometimes cause some of the backups in the Accident and Emergency Department. Sir, fortunately some time this month, I will have the pleasure of reopening a ward, which would be able to take several of those patients now housed in the Accident and Emergency Department. This would free up some space in the Accident and Emergency Department, therefore, Barbadians would see a most immediate response once that

new ward is opened. Sir, subsequent to that, when I execute the Holding Bay and ensure that we have diagnostic equipment in the Accident and Emergency Department, the long waits will be a thing of the past. Sir, I do not mind the mouthings on the Other Side.

Mr. Speaker, we have a situation where at one day, we have 25,30 or 35 elderly people in the hospital blocking beds. I want to make it quite clear today. I took a team down to Villa Marie at the St. Joseph Hospital and I have already got back the report and I have said that we are going to look seriously at that facility to help us transfer some of those senior citizens to that facility. Sir, this problem would not have become as acute if the Honourable Members on That Side did not close down the Christ Church District Hospital.

Sir, because the members on That Side closed down the Christ Church District Hospital they did not have a plan to integrate those numbers and they created a back up in Barbados with respect to senior citizens. Sir, all roads lead to the Other Side and they should hold their heads down in shame.

Furthermore, there are two wards at Geriatric Hospital in Beckles Roads that I am going to ensure they are refurbished and if there are any obstacles to be put there, I will deal with those obstacles when that time comes. I know what I am saying and I want to say to Barbadians now that at the Geriatric Hospital in Beckles Road, those two wards that would give the Elderly Care Programme at least 46 to 60 patient spaces. Those two wards will be renovated and those persons now blocking beds at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will be moved there. Sir, I will see that this happens.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that we have a backlog for cataract surgery of close to 600 patients? Can you imagine that we have a situation where the Ophthalmic Department sees over 20 000 patients annually and the percentage of those persons that would add to that already significant backlog of patients, this administration now has to find solutions? I want to say to the doctors at the hospital that I am in the process, and I have already identified the nurses who will come on to the second shift to ensure that you can do two surgical shifts per day. They have been identified and I make no apology in saying that I have identified them. I have responsibility for the Ministry and I will stand up and be identified, I have no problem with that. I will make sure that the nurses have the competencies and have the clinical capabilities to get the job done in consultation with my Chief Nursing Officer and the Chief Medical Officer. Sir, that is my job and I will not shirk from that responsibility. Sir, I will not 'hide bout' and 'pooch bout'.

Mr. Speaker, you know what is sad? It seems when I say 'pooch bout' that it bothers some on the Other Side and some of them, their eyes open up in glee as if one makes that statement that there is a negative or bad connotation. Sir, I do not understand that but I will go on.

Sir, it was the Honourable Member for St. George North and in one of his sessions, when he was not in some flight of fancy, he made a telling statement that all the Members on That Side could hold their heads down. He said that salaries and wages at the hospital were \$10 million a month. I want Barbadians to multiply that by 12 and tell me what they get. Is it \$120 million? If it is \$120 million, how could the Honourable Member for St. Peter and former Minister of Finance cap the hospital at \$110 million as its total allocation for the year? Sir, even the \$110 million could not pay salaries at the hospital. Therefore, what was the agenda of members of the Other Side if you would give the hospital an allocation that could not even pay salaries. Sir, I want them to answer that.

Mr. Speaker, what is even more fundamentally dangerous is this. I now have to look for monies to upgrade diagnostic radiological services at the hospital. When a hospital gets to the stage where you cannot carry out a barium enema; when a hospital gets to a stage where you order fluoroscopy machinery that has been sitting on the floors of the hospital for years because it cannot fit in the room; because somebody bought equipment that is too heavy for the room; when a hospital gets to that stage, something is fundamentally wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I now have a situation where I had to go and ask my ministerial staff to recruit nurses from St. Vincent. Sir, the first batch has arrived already, and we still have to bring more to Barbados. Sir, we had no choice but I wanted to make sure that I would have been part of a system to bring nurses who were so similarly trained within the General Nursing Council that administers within the Caribbean because they would be at the same standard as our Barbadian nurses and they would have similar cultural experiences and can fit more effectively. Sir, even more fundamental than that is that we honour a Commonwealth ethical principle, which was not honoured by the previous administration, that you only recruit nurses from an area where there is a surplus. Sir, Nigeria did not have a surplus when they went there, but that will be another issue and another debate.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to give specific information. I want to now speak so that Barbadians really understand what it is that we have to sort out. I now speak from my own notes; notes that I made from Corpus Sanchez International Consultants and they are international consultants that look at the health, human resource planning in Barbados, the Report of 2008. Sir, listen to the problem at the hospital. It says that there are

significant shortages of medical oncology doctors and radiation therapy doctors. There is a shortage of psychiatric doctors; general surgeons; psychiatrists and neurologists; cardiologists; anaesthesiologists and a shortage of othopods. In fact, they even said that Barbados would require an increase of six laboratory specialists even to get on par on with where we should be.

Mr. Speaker, I am not finishing there. I now refer to my notes again. There is a significant shortage of dieticians and the Barbados Labour Party was in power for 14 years.

We need 11 Pharmacists and 20 plus social workers in this country. They were in power for 14 years. We need a number of physiotherapists to develop a national rehab programme. We need medical radiation technologists and laboratory technologists. Sir, I had to go down this road, for Barbados to understand what the former administration did to the hospital by capping the hospital, and not allowing the hospital the monies to carry out its social development programme and its human resource development programme. It ran the hospital into the ground. That is what they did. Now they have the temerity to get in here and open their mouths - the Honourable Member for Christ Church West, being mislead. He should have asked me for some information.

Sir, I quoted my sources and they are internationally reputed sources. I was just forced to say to my Cabinet, that if we are to develop a national rehab programme in this country that the hospital to function in a first phase rehabilitation, and to develop community rehab capability, you will not only have to upgrade your physiotherapists, but all of those paramedical capacities in this country. What is even more important, is the area of prosthetics and orthoptics. These are posts that I have now to create, to make sure that these disciplines are so represented, to effectively develop these services in this country, that are now in the infantile stages. This is the challenge this administration has.

Sir, I am not going to carry any baggage that was left there before me. I am not going to carry any baggage. Therefore, every opportunity I get to speak to Barbados I am going to tell them exactly what it is I came and found.

Mr. Speaker, I have two others I want to speak to. They relate to the Accident and Emergency Department. As part of the redevelopment of the Accident and Emergency Department, we have a 24-hour hospital facility, yet our Accident and Emergency in terms of ancillary services are 8 a.m-4.00 p.m. In other words, we do not have a 24-hour pharmacy operating in the Accident and Emergency Department. If you get sick and you happen to need a particular medication, there is no pharmacy on a 24-hour basis to fill a prescription, after certain hours.

Sir, I have to make sure, that doctors and the technicians in the Accident and Emergency Department, do not have to run upstairs with blood; do not have to run upstairs for X-rays; do not have to run upstairs for this test and that test. I have to make sure that the Accident and Emergency Department is a self-contained entity in the interest of Barbadians.

Sir, I am sick and tired of going into my office every morning. Sir, every morning a different law suit. A different law suit for this and a different law suit for that, and all because of the dysfunction of that institution, that I have to put right. I said when I moved the Bill that the Board structure has to be taken in the context of several other managerial reorganisations.

The second component that functions, with respect to the execution of Board policy will be done through two entities, a Chief Executive Officer and a Chief Operating Officer. I have said that under the Chief Operating Officer, you would have your horizontal tier of Directors of Medical Services that will now manage clinical directorates. Sir, we are looking to create a management structure that will allow for the clinical directorates that execute the day to day management of the systems, by executing the Board's policy, making sure those directorates have managers above them, which will be the Chief Operating Officer reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, and those persons would obviously now relate to the Board.

Sir, by doing it that way, we have a chance of making sure that we do not run out of gloves, making sure we do not run out of bottles, and making sure we do not run out of bed pans. We now have an opportunity to make sure we do not run out of food. Sir, for the first time a department would now help to inform its budget. For the first time a department would say they need to have 500 gloves. I need to have 6 or 25 cups, 19 or 20 knives and forks. Sir, under the old structure somebody sat in some room and decided how much each department is supposed to get. Sir, I am being savaged in this administration, for trying to rectify a series of complex issues, human resource and economic issues.

Sir, I will close on this last statement, and I want Barbadians to ponder on what I am about to say. If the Honourable Member for St. James North is correct, that is, that the hospital spends \$10 million every month on salaries and wages, then it means that the minimum amount of money to cover salaries and wages on an annual basis, is about \$120 million.

I want to find out why the former administration, under the Honourable Member for St. Peter as Minister of Finance, capped the hospital at \$110 million, so that it cannot pay its salaries and wages. If it cannot pay its

salaries and wages, how is it going pay off its debts? How is it going to buy materials and supplies? Sir, I have a bill of \$26 million, as testimony that I had to pay off this financial year, because of last year.

Sir, I am saying that there was a deliberate act on That Side, an act that can be considered as deliberate, that is the only logical inference I can draw, if the Honourable Member can draw another inference that makes any sort of logical sense, well let the Honourable Member stand up and say so. I will go back to the statement again, because I want Barbados to understand what I am saying. Why was the hospital capped at \$110 million a year as an allocation from Government when that cannot pay the hospital's salaries and wages? Was there an ulterior motive? Was there another plan, Sir? Was there a plan of the Honourable Members on That Side to privatise health care in this country, that is why they wanted the hospital to be run down? Was that the reason? If that is the reason, they should have the audacity to say so, because I cannot find any other logic as to why such would happen.

Sir, I believe that our case has been made.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute.

Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: On a point of order. Sir, the Honourable Member by speculation and by innuendo, tries to cast an aspersion on the motives of the Barbados Labour Party, as it relates to the privatisation of the health care system. The record as it stands is that the Barbados Labour Party, committed to the construction of a new Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Four months later and the Minister of Health cannot tell us, other than having to rely on the Prime Minister's oblique reference in his speech just now.

Therefore, for him to seek, by innuendo, to cast aspersions on This Side is nothing more than to admit that he has nothing more to say in his speech and he is trying to find a gentle way to bring his voice back down.

Mr. SPEAKER: No point of order.

Hon. Miss M.A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. Mr. Speaker, you may have dismissed how I ended, but I am very serious that the Honourable Member is not in a position to speak on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party and its policy on health care. Therefore, to suggest that the Barbados Labour Party was seeking to privatise health care in this country, is to mislead this House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, I see no point of order. The Honourable Member is entitled to seek to draw inferences. I find no point of order.

The Honourable Member for St. Philip West, please continue.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Member has a problem with the word, deliberate, so be it, but I want to say that if there is a set of data presented, if the Honourable Member for St. Michael North East wants me to carry her back down into the realm of philosophy, I will carry her down in the realm of Berkelean philosophy, which treads on the premise of interpretation, based on the fact that all of our brains are wired differently.

Therefore, the Honourable Member wants me to draw an inference because that is her interpretation, then I will not do that. I have my brain and it works.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, I will again draw my inference. Based on the evidence presented before me, I can find no other reasonable explanation for the actions of the Members on the Other Side, unless it was designed to privatise health care in Barbados. This is not a High Court, and I will state it here and any other place I have to say it.

Mr. Speaker, that is how I see it and I would want to simply end by saying that with the composition of the Board, I have expressed much deliberation and consultation have gone into that, Sir, with my ministerial staff. We would have done a lot of deliberation as well, at other places with respect to my Party.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. A genuine mistake was made just now when the Honourable Member said that the Honourable Member for St. James North mentioned a figure of \$10 million per month in salaries. It was not the Honourable Member for St. James North that said so.

Mr. SPEAKER: I thought he said the Honourable Member for St. George North.

Mr. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. SPEAKER: Oh. Please correct it.

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: I am sorry if I said that but I really meant St. George North.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up by restating one fundamental factor. I think it is critical for Barbadians to understand that the new structure of the Board gives effect to the Law under Cap. 54, section 5.3A and 5.3B where it actually gives an obligation to ensure that the hospital Board has the requisite competencies and skills to be able to carry out the policies of the Government and to be able

to execute the levels of approvals, the levels of management and the levels of oversight that are necessary.

I think that is what this Bill seeks to do. I also want to suggest that the fact that we are bringing membership of the Board down to the level of the individual, as opposed to institution, we are in fact more democratic that way, because it is individual participation that drives democracy in its most fundamental premises.

Mr. Speaker, at the outset I want to thank the Members on This Side again for their sterling contributions. I am indeed quite disappointed with the Members on the Other Side for their level of political posturing.

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

Hon. F. J. STUART: 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. F. J. STUART, the House resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, Mr. S. A LASHLEY in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: This House is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 3 were called and passed.

On the motion of Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK, seconded by Hon. F. J. STUART, 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. F. J. STUART, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Act, 2008.

RECOMMITAL

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Dr. the Hon. D. C. ESTWICK: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

The Report on the Audit of the Accountants of the Unemployment Fund for the year ended, December 31, 2008.

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Honourable Member for St. George South, I am commanded to lay the Barbados National HIV Policy, A Framework for Action and the National Strategic Plan for HIV Prevention and Control 2008-2013.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. R. D. JONES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 10.00 a.m.

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

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, May 27, 2008 at 10.00 a.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

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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. Government Notices. The paper laid by Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick is described as ‘The Report on the Audit of the Accountants of the Unemployment Fund for the year ended, December 31, 2008’, although the sitting was held in May 2008; the year (and ‘Accountants’ for ‘Accounts’) may be in error. Printed as in the source.

Q2. Heading after Order No. 2. A heading ‘RECOMMITAL’ (so spelt) stands after the third reading of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill with no business under it before ‘GOVERNMENT NOTICES’. Printed as in the source.

Q3. Suspension. The seconder of the motion to suspend is labelled ‘Hon. J. STUART’; elsewhere in the report the member is Hon. F. J. STUART. Printed as in the source.

Q4. Order No. 2, speech of Hon. R. D. Jones. A point of order by Hon. G. A. Clarke (‘Asides. Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order...’) is run into a paragraph in the source rather than set as a separate speech. Printed as in the source.

Q5. Opening. Prayers are recorded as led by ‘Cannon Father Ivan Harewood’, presumably Canon. Printed as in the source.

DEBATE SUMMARY

(Editorial summary — not part of the record.)

The House of Assembly met on Tuesday, 13th May, 2008 at 10.14 a.m., with Mr. Speaker, His Honour M. A. Carrington, in the Chair; prayers were led by Father Ivan Harewood. The Minutes of 6th May were confirmed, the Prime Minister, Hon. D. J. H. Thompson, moved the first reading of the Banks (Tax on Assets) (Repeal) Bill, 2008, and Standing Orders were suspended for the remainder of the Sitting on the motion of the Leader of the House, Hon. R. D. Jones.

The House resumed the debate on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Bill, 2008, which amends the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Act, Cap. 54 to change the composition of the Hospital’s Board. Hon. J. D. E. Boyce argued that the Minister needed a Board with engineering, human resource and other skills. Hon. P. M. T. Todd said

the Hospital’s budget was well over \$130 million of taxpayers’ money. For the Opposition, Hon. G. A. Clarke accepted the purpose of the change but argued that the health service had not deteriorated; less than \$15 million had been spent at the Hospital in 1994 against more than \$100 million between 1994 and 2008, health care was free for those under 16 and over 65, and a new plant would cost almost BDS\$1 billion. He suggested that Board membership would now require a Democratic Labour Party card, which drew points of order from Hon. J. D. E. Boyce and Hon. P. M. T. Todd; neither was upheld.

Hon. R. D. Jones defended the Minister’s right to shape the Board. The Attorney-General, Hon. F. J. Stuart, recalled a 1972 committee report recommending Cabinet appointees from particular disciplines. His statement that the Barbados Labour Party had hidden the report of the St. Joseph Hospital Commission of Inquiry, led to repeated points of order and privilege from Hon. G. W. Payne and Hon. R. St.C. Toppin asking that the remarks be struck from the record; Mr. Speaker ruled that there was no point of order and called for decorum. The House was suspended until 1.30 p.m.

On resumption, Hon. A. D. Brathwaite said the old Board’s mix of members was bound to produce conflict and denied that the Government was anti-union. Dr. the Hon. D. S. Lowe also supported the Bill. The Prime Minister said Cabinet had reached agreements about the site at Martindales Road and that the arguments over the structure of the Board were sterile, since a nurse or general worker could be appointed without representing a union.

The Minister of Health, National Insurance and Social Security, Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick, replied, quoting the Hansard of 17th July, 2001 and the Master Plan report’s estimate of a BDS\$19 million maintenance backlog. He listed broken equipment and a cataract surgery backlog of close to 600 patients, and asked why the former administration had capped the Hospital’s allocation at \$110 million when salaries alone, at \$10 million a month, required about \$120 million. Hon. Miss M. A. Mottley rose on several points of order against his reading of her earlier statements and his suggestion of a deliberate plan to privatise health care; none was upheld. Hon. R. C. Eastmond corrected the attribution of the \$10 million figure.

The Bill was read a second time and, in Committee with Mr. S. A. Lashley in the Chair, clauses 1 to 3 were passed; it was then read a third time and passed as the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Amendment) Act, 2008. Dr. the Hon. D. C. Estwick laid a report on the audit of the Unemployment Fund, and Hon. R. D. Jones laid the

Barbados National HIV Policy and the National Strategic
Plan for HIV Prevention and Control 2008-2013. The

House was adjourned until Tuesday, 27th May, 2008 at
10.00 a.m.

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