
THE SENATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1986 – 91

SENATE

Wednesday, May 3, 1989.

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Public Buildings, on Wednesday, May 3, 1989 at 11.15 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator Sir Frank L. Walcott, K.A., O.B.E., LL.D., (President)

His Honour Senator M. deL. Jordan, (Deputy President)

Senator the Hon. L. V. H. Lewis, (Minister of State for the Civil Service); (Leader of the Senate)

Senator A. Morrison

Senator N. W. Boxill

Senator D. A. Comissiong

Senator Mrs. V. C. Fraser, B.S.S., J.P., M.C.F.A.

Senator Mrs. G. L. Eastmond

Senator A. J. N. Phillips

Senator T. A. Prescod

Senator J. C. W. Wickham, M.B.E.

Senator the Rev. Canon I. McK. Jones

Senator L. A. Ward, G.C.M.

Senator C. A. Blackman, Q.C.

Senator Mrs. P. Y. Forde

Senator J. S. Goddard

Senator Dr. L. L. Shorey

Senator the Hon. Dr. C. D. Clarke, (Minister of State for Finance)

Senator A. W. A. McClean

Senator Miss V. P. Brathwaite.

Prayers were led by Rev. Dr. Lionel Crawford.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senate is in session.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following documents:

- (1) The Annual Reports of the Community Legal Services Commission for the years 1984-1987,
- (2) Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the death of Michael Agard 1986.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

SENATOR C. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. President, I rise to request leave for the withdrawal of Question No. 8.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Honourable Senator is requesting leave for the withdrawal of Question No. 8 asked in his name. Are there any objections? Leave is therefore granted.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

MENTAL HEALTH (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1989

Order No. 1 was called – Bill to amend the Mental Health Act, Cap. 45.

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, the Mental Health Bill, Cap. 45 makes provision for Mental Health Officers to carry out certain functions under the Act. Section 2 of the Act provides for certain definitions relating to persons employed as such at the Mental Hospital to be defined as a Mental Health Officer. This Bill seeks to delete the provision and definitions of approved Mental Hospital and Mental Health Officer and to substitute different definitions. Substitutions of these different definitions tie in with the other Amendment to the

Act in which a new Section 33(a) is being provided to permit the Minister to designate institutions which may be used for the care of persons suffering from mental disorder and also to designate any person employed at a Mental Hospital as a Mental Health Officer. This measure, Mr. President, is a tidying up measure in order to facilitate the designation of various places under the Mental Health Act.

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

SENATOR C. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. President, I would like to say that this Bill is a commendable piece of legislation which paves the way for the operation and assistance of the Ministry of Health of what is known as a Halfway House for the rehabilitation of mental health patients.

Mr. President, the Richmond Fellowship of the Caribbean of which I have the honour to be Chairman has been working with the Ministry of Health in trying to establish a Halfway House to assist the Government in implementing its policies of rehabilitation and Mental Health Services. A large house in Dash Valley has just been obtained where within hopefully another three months or so accommodation will be provided for 18 residents and which will come under this as provided in this Bill before us. There is a very thin line between sanity and a mental state of depression and it is a fact that one will experience a breakdown in our society during their life. The reasons are multifarious — a reaction from family and financial problems, and in recent times, it can be from drugs.

The position in our community, Sir, is this. When people have attended the hospital in Black Rock, which as we know over the years has suffered unfortunate definitions, they are not always accepted back in the wider community or even by their relatives. If people stay in the hospital over a long period, they depend on that institution. The Halfway House offers a way forward for those persons in that it will be giving some therapeutic programmes in which the residents can gain self confidence and develop mutually supportive relationships.

11.25 a.m.

And I should like to take this occasion to say that the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health in particular have been very supportive of what the Richmond Fellowship in the Caribbean is to do. There is going to be training in the Caribbean as well. I commend the Minister for the timely response for the meetings we have had with him so that this Bill has become a reality, and the programme we have envisaged will be put in place in very short order.

SENATOR Miss V. P. BRATHWAITE: Mr. President, in rising to speak on this Bill before this Honourable Chamber this morning, I wish first of all to state that I too commend very highly the efforts of the

Minister and the Ministry in doing all it can in its power to facilitate the rehabilitation of those persons suffering from mental disorder or for whatever cause to be rehabilitated into this society.

Mr. President, my concerns are with the drafting of the amendment and I shall demonstrate an example where my concerns lie. Senator Lewis, in introducing the proposed amendment explained that the purpose of the amendment is to tidy up the existing legislation, Cap. 45 specifically. The proposed amendment deletes certain definitions appearing in Section 2 of the existing legislation and seeks to replace those sections by Section 33A, a new section to be inserted immediately after Section 33 in the existing legislation.

Let us look at the existing legislation for the definition of "approved home" appearing in Section 2. (1). "Approved home" there is defined as:

".... any institution or place designated by the Minister as an approved home for the care of persons suffering from any form of mental disorder;"

That, by virtue of the proposed amendment will be deleted and replaced with Section 3 (1) (a). An "approved home" there is defined as:

"any place used or to be used for the care of persons suffering from any form of mental disorder;"

Mr. President, I have looked at this definition long and hard and I am unable to see the reason for it because if the Minister in dealing with the Richmond Fellowship wants to designate any place an approved home, all that is required of the Minister by virtue of Section 2.(3) would have been notice published in the Official Gazette.

Similarly, Sir, the definition of "mental hospital" which appears in the existing legislation. In the same Section 2., "mental hospital" is defined there as:

"any institution or other place designated by the Minister to be a hospital for the care of persons suffering from mental disorder;"

The Bill before us proposes to delete that definition and to replace it with a definition appearing in subsection (b) in the Bill:

"any institution or place used or to be used as a hospital for the care of persons suffering from mental disorder;"

Again, Sir, the Minister wishing to designate a hospital as a mental hospital could quite properly have done so within the existing legislation. Again all that would have been required of the Minister would have been to publish a notice of the mental hospital in the Official Gazette.

The single point of departure, Sir, is with the definition, "mental health officer". The existing legislation did not provide for such a person to be designated by notice in the Official Gazette. The Bill before us provides that the Minister may designate such a person. Sir, those are the concerns.

What I question, Sir, is the purpose of this amendment to the Act because the Minister could properly have designated places as approved homes and mental hospitals within the existing legislation.

The next point which I wish to touch on, Sir, deals with the obligation or lack of it, on the part of the Minister. We notice, Sir, that on examination of the existing legislation for the Minister to be able to designate an institution as an approved home or a mental hospital the legislation is mandatory. Subsection 3 of Section 2 provides:

"Notice of every designation under subsection (1) of the mental hospital or an approved home must be published in the Official Gazette."

That is mandatory legislation, Sir, as opposed to the amendment before us, where by virtue of Section 33 subsection (1) which reads:

"For the purposes of this Act, the Minister may by notice designate"

So you see, Sir, my concerns with the purpose of bringing the amendment are these. Firstly, the existing legislation places an obligation on the shoulders of the Minister to designate by notice in the Official Gazette, institutions which are presently used or which he proposes to be used as approved homes or mental hospitals. The Minister now does not have that obligation placed upon his shoulders any more because the legislation is not mandatory.

However, Sir, subsection (2) of the proposed Section 33A provides that:

"Notice of every designation under subsection (1) shall be published"

This does not make the Minister's powers mandatory. What subsection (2) provides is if the Minister designates by notice, then that notice must be published in the Official Gazette. That is the mandatory aspect of this proposed legislation, Sir. It is not that the Minister shall designate by notice, the Minister may designate by notice. And then, if he does designate by notice, then that notice must be published in the Official Gazette.

Just some points, Sir, I felt that I should draw to the attention of this Honourable Chamber. I am sure that they will be taken in the spirit in which they have been offered.

Sir, I wish briefly to touch on the designation of the Minister of the mental health officer. In spite of the comments that I have made in this regard, I wonder, Sir, how does this relate to the Civil Service arrangements, as they presently obtain?

11.35 a.m.

Mental Health Officers, according to my understanding, may, and perhaps all of them will be Civil Servants. How does the designation then of the Minister as a Mental Health Officer relate to the appointment or non-appointment of that person within the Civil Service as it presently obtains? The proposed amendment gives the Minister the power, not obligatory, but it gives him power to designate a Mental Health Officer. I query, Sir, what about those persons who work as Mental Health Officers in acting arrangements? Does the legislation intend that the Minister shall only, or may only designate such persons as Mental Health Officers where they are appointed to the Civil Service? Or does it also give him the power to designate such persons as Mental Health Officers those persons who are not appointed but working in acting capacities?

Sir, having said all of that, as I have said earlier, I think that the Ministry's efforts in this regard for the purposes of taking care of the health of this nation should be commended. I wish also to state my concerns of the Ministry of Health not only in this area but in other areas as well.

There have been recent developments which point very clearly to an uneasiness on the part of persons in the public as far as the delivery of health care services in this country is concerned, and I wish not to add my voice to the sensational aspects of the publicity, but rather to remind the Minister first and foremost of his paramount obligation firstly to the health of this nation, of which I am sure by that proposed amendment he wishes to go the direction in which I am advising.

Sir, the recent developments in the Press and elsewhere point to the fact that the delivery of health care services in this Island should not be taken lightly. It is recognised that persons in the public domain being of the nature that they are will seek or may seek sometimes to as it were cash in on certain rumours, allegations and perhaps facts. My concern and my advice to the Minister, Sir, is that these statements must not be taken lightly. I recognise, and I am sure the Minister does too, that there will be instances where persons just look for cheap publicity, but at the same time, bearing in mind always his paramount obligation which comes before all other, to guarantee the health and welfare of the citizens of this country, he must not take

those allegations and rumours lightly, he must investigate and bring to the fore those allegations which are very serious, Sir, and he must at all times act to guarantee the health and welfare of this nation.

Thank you, Sir.

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, I can reply briefly to the points raised. The first of them is that it is proposed to designate as Mental Health Officers not only the doctors who are employed at the Mental Hospital at the present time, but also other members of staff, which would include Mental Health Workers or Psychiatric Social Workers, or indeed other nursing staff of not only the Mental Hospital, but it would even permit the Minister to designate persons who are serving at an approved institution.

The other point is about the comment on the designation of a person employed at a mental hospital as a Mental Health Officer. It was necessary to provide that in the amendment because it was not provided for in the original Act, and it seemed tidy, I believe, to the drafting people that when they make provision for the designation of a Mental Health Officer, to also provide for the other designations in the same amendment to bring them parallel with each other. Whereas what you said is true, that under the original Act it was possible to designate an institution, these other amendments have been done in order to fall in line with the designation of Mental Health Officer.

Let me also say that the point you raised about the amendment stating that the Minister may – and you would prefer giving it the force that he shall do so and so – the Minister himself raised that point and he was advised by the legal people that the correct presentation is that the Minister may by notice.

With those remarks, I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS, Mr. PRESIDENT left the Chair and the Senate went into Committee on the Bill, SENATOR M. deL. JORDAN in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive were called and passed.
11.45 a.m.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS, the Bill was reported as having passed the Committee without amendment, and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate motions of SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

RESOLUTION TO COMPULSORILY ACQUIRE LAND AT ELLERSLIE BLACK ROCK

Order No. 2 was called – To move the passing of a Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition by the Crown of two parcels of land at Ellerslie, St. Michael.

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, the Resolution before us seeks approval for Government to acquire 1639.9 square metres of land adjoining the Ellerslie Secondary School for the purpose of future expansion of the school.

The land is earmarked to improve the Ellerslie School through the expansion of library facilities, the provision of a computer room, a language laboratory, agricultural science facilities and accommodation for staff of the Board.

This acquisition relates really to two parcels of land because after Government's initial contact with the owner, he was able to obtain permission for a subdivision, and hence two parcels of land amounting to the same square metres are being acquired. Although this land is being acquired for the purposes which I have mentioned which are enhancing of the existing facilities of the school, it is not proposed from the outset since no provision has been made for construction of these facilities, that the land will be used for those purposes, but that it be used for agricultural science teaching in the first instance.

This school, it is my understanding, has had problems with persons who live within proximity of the school's boundaries, and this purchase will help to stem the possibility of problems with persons who live in the surroundings of the school. The Commissioner of Land Tax was asked to value one of the lots which has a house on it and the purchase therefore will take into account one lot that is not developed and a second lot which has a structure on it.

The Resolution seeks to acquire this land for the purpose of future expansion of the school, but in the immediate future it will be used for agricultural science demonstrations.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR A. W. A. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I hoping to see the plot before having to speak to have an idea as to where the land is located. I am somewhat familiar with the location, so that I crave your indulgence.

Asides.

SENATOR A. W. A. McCLEAN: Essentially it must be a different lot from the lot immediately to the south western side of the building towards the main entrance. It seems as though that is some other area either to the south

or south east or east of the building. It must be towards the north western section of the building. Anyway there is an open lot to the south western section of that building right by the entrance where there was a property which was destroyed some years ago, and about five years ago I indicated that Government should take action to acquire that lot which is immediately adjacent to the Ellerslie property for the provision of better and also an exit from the premises at Ellerslie.

Right now there is one entrance through which about 1 200 children and teachers and their parents and everybody must go on mornings and afternoon, and there can be a very high degree of congestion at the entrance to Ellerslie School on afternoons in particular. That particular parcel of land would facilitate another exit for children who are going towards Black Rock road to exit through and prevent the possibilities or reduce the possibilities of accidents occurring in the general area on afternoons.

Going beyond that I welcome the efforts to acquire land to improve the facilities at Ellerslie School which, in terms of the numbers of students there, is one of the largest secondary schools in Barbados. In terms of the facilities we know that the facilities are not yet at a level of some of the other secondary schools, and this has been a moot point with a number of persons who have the over-all interest of the educational system of students therein at heart, who do believe that we need to improve the facilities.

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: If the Honourable Member does not mind, we have some pictures. I believe the lot you are talking about is the precise lot that is being acquired by the Crown, but there are some pictures showing the school and part of the land to be acquired which would give you a better picture.

SENATOR A. W. A. McCLEAN: This is precisely the lot I suggested should have been acquired. When I made the suggestion they had not yet started to put a foundation on to it, but I am glad to see that it is now being acquired. That particular lot I think would go a long way towards enhancing the general property there and make it possible for the overall improvement in the facility. You mention, however, that it is planned to put buildings on it. It may be entirely appropriate to put some buildings on it, but at the same time I hope that in the overall planning some consideration will be given towards the matter of access to the school and exit from the property in the afternoons in particular by students.

Now as I was saying, there is an acknowledged need to try to upgrade facilities at Ellerslie and certain other schools in the Island to bring them up to the level that we have come to associate with some of the schools in Barbados. I think also that part of the question of upgrading the schools that are seen now as not being as well endowed

as the others may extend to the question of restricting the intake of the number of students in those schools.

It seems as though there is a pattern where the schools that are less well endowed with facilities are the ones that are asked to take in the largest numbers of students all the time. We should take a second look at the level of intake into particular schools. We have a practice in Barbados that what happened last year is what will happen this year and we go on down the line; we never seem to want to change such practices, so that if a particular school admitted 240 last year, next year it will admit 240 right on down the line without any re-examination as to whether that was appropriate or not.
11.55 a.m.

I would suggest that there is no good reason why those schools that are not so well endowed with support staff, with graduate teachers, with laboratories and so on should be required to take in more students than the schools that are better endowed so that the question of equalizing the intake, so to speak, into those schools should be something that should be looked at.

Also, there is, in relation to admission to secondary schools, the question of minimal levels of attainment. We have been hearing that secondary schools recently have been turning out illiterates and that should not be because illiterates should not be entering those schools so there should not really be any question of turning out illiterates. They should not be admitted in the first instance and it is necessary, therefore, for the Ministry of Education to re-examine the question of entry into secondary schools in Barbados and try and set some attainment level to the whole exercise of entering into secondary schools and if, perchance, it is quite evident you have large numbers of students who do not reach the minimal attainment levels, the Ministry must seek to provide adequate arrangements for remedial education for those people.

We know that we do have in place some arrangements for persons, who maybe not so much because of the mark they may get, but who may fall below the 4 500 person, or whatever the cut-off point, who at the same time happen to get little or no marks, those students are admitted into these so called senior schools but it is not entirely clear that those senior schools have any particular purpose in terms of what they want to achieve.

It seems as though the curriculum in those schools do not diverge particularly from the curriculum in the secondary schools. We need, therefore, to address the question of specialized arrangements of (1) for remedial education; and (2) secondary level education for those students who do not have the level of attainment of English, Arithmetic, and so on, that would equip them for the existing secondary schools.

I thank you.

SENATOR Dr. L. L. SHOREY: Mr. President, I would like to make a contribution in connection with the matter before this Honourable Chamber, namely, the acquisition of land for the expansion of the Ellerslie Secondary School.

I was very interested in the points which the Minister made in introducing the subject and I was particularly happy that the anticipated developments included provision of things like a library, laboratory, a computer room and some attention to Agricultural Science teaching and necessary practice in field work.

I would like to say a little bit about those subsequently, but let me take, first of all, another point that he mentioned, and I wish he had the time to say a little more about it, that is the importance of the interaction between a school community, the school as a sub-section of the total community, and the surrounding environment in which the school exists.

I was very happy that the Minister did note the importance of this but I would like, if I may, to emphasize this because the experience of the schools in our country over the more recent past has not always been a very fortunate one.

There have been known instances of vandalism which, by any reasonable definition implies deliberate destruction of property rather than accidental destruction and if one looks at that one is forced to conclude that the persons guilty of such behaviour appear not to perceive themselves as having any, shall I say, interest in, or responsibility for maintenance of the buildings and other property in a good state.

I think, therefore, that we probably have in this matter a problem that could be divided into two parts, one of which is somehow seeking to create and, perhaps, in some cases, the lesser problem of strengthening the perceptions of people that a Government school is, in fact, the people's school that the Government is not, in this sense, being an entity that exists somewhere in the distant part of the universe, but that it is, in fact, the body of the arrangement that we have come up with to manage on a day to day basis the nation's business and, therefore, our taxes are invested into these buildings.

I think that what I am talking about is the need for us, perhaps, to look a little more closely at the content of some of our teaching programmes whether or not this consciousness of the role of the school in the society, and of the individual in the society and his or her responsibility towards that society does, in fact, get the kind of attention which it appears to need as a specification of the school in the more recent times.

In this connection, Sir, I think that we have a particularly good, in another sense, unfortunate experience in a sense, in the case of the Hindsbury set of episodes because I think that what has taken place underlines the importance of a community surrounding a school perceiving the school in, perhaps, a different way, from that in which it is sometimes now perceived.

It also, I think, underlines the importance and indeed, the necessity for Government to bear a special mind in the siting of schools because, as years pass and the environment surrounding a school may, indeed, change, as appears to have happened in the Hindsbury situation and it may well mean that we, as a country, may need to review such situations and examine whether or not we need to do something about the transfer of pupils from a school with all the implications of providing accommodation before we reach the kind of incident which caused the emergency.
12.05 p.m.

Sir, there are other aspects of the educational system which are not too distant from this set of concerns and the previous speaker, Senator McClean touched I thought very usefully and very appropriately on some of them. I would certainly, unhesitatingly like to support the comments he made, particularly those relating to the need for us to ensure as far as possible that youngsters who do not perform well at a given point in time when we set our transfer examination are not allowed to fall by the wayside, but that instead we put into place provisions such as would be designed to help them catch up with their peers. I should like to emphasize this. If I remember correctly, I made the point in a previous speech in this Honourable Chamber that if we do not build in such provisions, then we run the risk of losing for our country, tremendous potential talent.

The fact is, Sir, that none of us really knows what a youngster of 10, 11 or 12 is capable of. All that we really know when we come down to it is that at a given point the youngster has not performed as well as his peers or as we would have expected of him. But none of us really can look into the future. And the available evidence by psychologists and measurement people called psychometricians suggest that it is in the best interest of people in education which includes people in education in Barbados to seek to ensure that potential talent does not go to waste.

I would therefore, once again, if I may say so suggest Senator McClean's strong recommendation that we seek to set up specific provisions to meet the needs of youngsters who are not as successful in our transfer exam at about 11, as is the case with many of their peers. I should like also to support his implied request that we reexamine the nature, functioning including provisions of the senior or composite schools as they are sometimes called because I remember when they were first introduced, it was envisaged that they would provide a curriculum somewhat different from the secondary schools and certainly different from the primary

schools. They were intended, if I remember correctly to serve precisely the function of helping youngsters who had not so far performed as well as one would have hoped to help them find their feet. I think that somehow over the years we have perhaps lost a little bit of the vision that prompted their establishment.

Sir, let me turn now to one or two other matters that concern me very greatly, and to one of these Senator McClean also made reference. This is the size of the school. But I should like to look at it, Sir, from a somewhat different point of view. Of our 21 Government schools, there are 11 of them with enrolments over 1 000. Ellerslie is about in the middle range with 1 208 according to the information given in the Ministry of Education's booklet in connection with the Common Entrance Exam.

I have an uncomfortable feeling, Sir, and I think that there is a little bit of research evidence which suggests that relatively large units of that sort are probably not in the best interest of the children. I am not suggesting that they cannot be managed "efficiently". We have industrial plants that are much larger, though perhaps not in this country. But I do not think that it is reasonable really to equate a school to an industrial plant. I think that when a school gets beyond a certain size, and I would hazard a guess that when you reach 850 you are round about that size, it becomes unwieldy in the sense that youngsters are unlikely to get the kind of care and attention which they need as learners. Please let me make the point, Sir, that my purpose in saying this is not to make an indictment on the present Government, because both Governments have been involved in the growth of schools. So this is not an indictment in that sense. But I think that we have had these large schools long enough for us to have experience of them. What I am suggesting is that perhaps the time has come for us to ask ourselves whether or not continued use of such large institutions is in the best interest of our youngsters.

Let me hasten to make the point that I recognize, if even it were agreed that it was desirable to provide smaller institutions there would immediately be a cost factor to be taken into account. So I would not wish to be perceived as being naive or starry eyed, but I do think that in terms of the intrinsic interest and fundamental interest of our youngsters that this matter deserves the Ministry's serious reconsideration.

It also has implications in terms of school provision for other schools within the system, say the private schools. I believe that one of my fellow Senator may wish to speak at greater length on this so I do not wish to make any particular comments at that point.

Sir, as I indicated earlier, the Minister in introducing this matter made the point that two of the things to be included were the provisions for a language lab and a

computer room. And if I may now turn a little bit to both of those, Sir, first and foremost to say that I wholeheartedly support that approach.

Let me go a little further. The language lab can be and where it is available, it is proving to be an extremely useful means of helping youngsters acquire an appropriate mastery of language. In this Honourable Chamber, from time to time, there have been repeated comments about the regrettably low and perhaps, one might even say diminishing level of language competence in our country. I do not think that anyone in this Honourable Chamber is comfortable about the existing situation.

What we clearly have to do is to come up with ways and means whereby we make inroads into this problem, so to speak, into solving this problem, some of which are already afoot like the experimentation with specialized teaching and so on which I have already had the opportunity to commend.

The language lab I think offers yet another route towards reaching this kind of goal. It can prove, I think, to be a tremendous contributor to the achievement of this objective. In 1989 we are undoubtedly in the computer age and I do not think that there is any way in which we can turn back. Certainly the world is not going to turn back. And we have, I think, no option but to go ahead with it because we certainly cannot isolate ourselves from the implications of this development.

I am therefore unhappy, Sir, that I can sense from the Ministry, certainly I am not aware of any clear enunciation of policy. Let me try and be very specific.
12.15 p.m.

Over many years going back at least since 1984 and possibly to 1983 there has been a committee in existence which was appointed to advise the Ministry on computer usage. I am not entirely certain what varieties of advice have been given over the years. What I think is certainly true is that the Ministry has not yet enunciated any clear policy with respect to some very fundamental things as to what kind of computers would the Ministry urge schools to seek to install. I put it that way because if the Ministry is not itself providing the computers and if organisations let us say come along and offer schools the computers, then unless there are some general guidelines schools are likely to accept whatever is offered without any further thought. Whereas, if there were guidelines, then at least schools would be in a position to say that we have been requested to get such and such types of computers, say IBM compatibles and that is a wide range. I am not talking about a particular brand or make but just the fact that they will be able to use the same kind of software.

The schools could say that this is what we have been advised to do. Could you, therefore, make your gift along

these lines? Either give us the money or provide that kind of equipment. If you ask, Sir, why this particular emphasis – it is I think a logical development of more effective use of our technology because computers do some things wonderfully. They do not think, but they are incredibly fast and unbelievably so. They are excellent instruments for retrieving data and it seems to me, if I may say this that it is rather ridiculous, Mr. President, that in 1989 we should be continuing to go through the process of having schools collect information, type it up, send it to the Ministry and have the Ministry then have to put this into files where it is very difficult to get access to it, or retype it and put it into the Ministry's computers – that is the computers in the central Ministry's office. It would seem to me much more logical and hence I am urging a Ministry policy statement on this matter.

Now where schools have computers and if these computers were compatible with the Ministry's, then an appropriate data collection instrument or programme could be provided by the Ministry for use in all schools. Each school would simply enter the data into its computer, save or record that information on diskette, send that diskette down to the Ministry and the clerk puts that diskette into the Ministry's computer and in less than half a minute that data is integrated with the store of data already there – a vast saving in time. Also, it frees people and this is perhaps the greatest thing about the computer. A computer frees people for creative work. Retyping a list of staff names and so on, I can only describe as drudgery. I cannot imagine any clerk in any office finding excitement and zest in doing this, but it has to be done. But let us do it once.

Mr. PRESIDENT: What I would like to draw to the Honourable Member's attention is that this is a Resolution to purchase land for the building of a school and the name of the school is Ellerslie. Let us avoid this long rambling talk that covers the whole ambit of Education. Do we agree or do not agree that the purchase of the land for the purpose of building the school or expanding the school at Ellerslie should be bought? That is what is before us. Do not let us have a whole tirade now on the policy of Education. Each time anything about Education comes here you hear the same dialogue. The Senate is not an institution of illiterates. It is an institution of intelligent persons and we must know when we are discussing matters of principle and matters of detail. It is a Resolution that is dealing with a matter that we can confine ourselves to the area we want. If not, we will discuss this for the whole year of every aspect of Education from the kindergarten back up to the old men who are coming out of school and the old ladies.

SENATOR Dr. L. L. SHOREY: Mr. President, Sir, I am speaking on a Resolution for the purpose of the expansion of the Ellerslie Secondary School. In introducing that Resolution, the Minister indicated some of the purposes for which the expansion was planned. One of the purposes stated was a computer room. I am, therefore, speaking to

the relevant matter introduced by the Minister himself as one of the purposes and I am speaking Sir, with respect to what might be required for effective use of a computer room within the framework of Ministry policy.

It means to me that there is a strong case to be made for the Ministry to enunciate, as I was suggesting very clearly, a policy which would make more effective use of the provisions which now exist in some schools and which are clearly envisaged for the Ellerslie School with respect to the projections indicated and implied in this provision for expansion. I would like, therefore, to commend the Ministry for what is envisaged here and to trust, in fact, that the resources so provided will contribute significantly to the growth and development of education in this country and it will serve to enhance the learning opportunities available to our youngsters.

SENATOR Mrs. V. C. FRASER: Mr. President, I rise to support the Resolution and there are just a few things I would like to look at and one is the teaching of agricultural science in schools. I think whenever we are reaching a stage where we are going to be making additions to school buildings that we should check to get enough land for the children to do the practical work. I am saying this because I have seen quite a number of schools who teach agricultural science but they have nowhere to really practice it properly. There is just a little plot of land almost like your little front garden. I think that if you are doing something in theory you have to do it in practice and let the children see exactly what the situation is.

I go one step further with that. I feel that it should be mandatory that rather than paying money for a plough, we have the skills training facilities and that children from these same senior schools could be sent to be trained in the operating of the plough and all the relevant technical equipment that goes with ploughing, so that they understand when they come back. I think you are training future farmers, you are not just training people to go and work on other people's land. You are training them to understand what they have to do.

12.25 p.m.

Also, we have to have some linkages in the community, and I feel that the schools should be producing enough food so that they could sell some of that food to the community, and also some of that food should be going into the domestic science rooms so that that bill does not go up because you have to go outside and purchase that. I hope that will be taken into consideration with all the new areas, that there must be sufficient land. Do not talk about agricultural science except you are talking about land, because you must have land to use properly.

One of the other things in the new buildings that I think has to be a must is the whole question of preparing rooms or places for the handicapped children. There are

some children who are not at the special schools for the handicapped. They might have a simple handicap. They might have had a foot hurt or something like that and I think we should look particularly to ramps, toilet facilities where there is at least one special toilet in a given area for these children, and maybe teachers too. You do not know how people are feeling. They might look quite well, but they might not be as well as they look. But we definitely have to cater for persons of this type in these types of buildings.

We give up sometimes on children and say that these children are not the types of children that will learn this or will learn that, but we must be able to motivate these children. I think we will have to have a linkage with the world of work, with the business community so that we teach the child a skill that the child will be prepared to move from this school into the world of work. The child goes in during the vacation and does the particular work and the child then understands everything about the world of work. When that child will have left school, he or she will be able to work for himself or herself, and therefore will not have to be out there running up and down the place looking for employment.

Mr. President, with these few remarks I should like to again support the Resolution.

Thank you.

SENATOR C. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. President, I will be brief. I have a question for the Minister as to why is the Land Acquisition Act procedure being utilised for purposes of the acquisition? Is it that there is a problem of title? Or have the negotiations broken down? Because as I understand the introduction there is no immediacy in terms of usage for the land, and that in fact you will use it for agricultural purposes until you get around to the actual expansion process.

My other concerns, Sir, which I shall state briefly, I should like to share the concerns expressed by Senators McClean and Shorey in terms of the creation of excessively large schools. I have made an observation on that point in this Chamber on a previous occasion and I will not enlarge on it, but a school of 1200 is too large a school for effective administration and for the good of those who attend that school.

Finally, Sir, while it is desirable that schools should be provided with all the facilities that are necessary in terms of the things before us – library facilities, computer rooms and language laboratories, and I think these are facilities that enhance the school, I should like to suggest that perhaps Government give some consideration to giving some greater assistance to the private sector schools in the community where there is existing plant which is of benefit to the general educational fabric of the country, and make

some assistance available to those schools to avoid their closure. If all the private schools were to close, the cost to Government in replacing them will be greater than perhaps the assistance you would be required to give to help to keep them viable and in a position to reduce the fees which they charge to those who attend.

I think this is something that needs to be addressed, and there should be some dialogue between the Ministry of Education and the private secondary schools in terms as to how there could be greater involvement between the Ministry and the Government so as to improve the delivery of education in those schools which form part of our system.

SENATOR THE REV. CANON I. McK. JONES: Mr. President, I would just like to reiterate two points that have been made which I consider very important, as I have been in education for most of my life. I would like to agree with all the Senators who have spoken before me as far as the size of the school, and the enrolment and the intake of pupils are concerned.

It is almost impossible for any Principal of any school with 1200 pupils to manage that school efficiently. In Great Britain they used to have schools with 2 000. They have reduced them down to 1300 and 1400 and they find even that is a bit too large. I am just appealing to Government to see to it that these schools do not run into these tremendous numbers of 1200, because all you are doing is really, as I said, to use a Trinidadian expression, you are spinning top in mud, because you are dealing with children. Children are not commercial products, they are human personalities and we need to have a school manageable in size where there can be an inter-relation between Principal, staff and pupils, and as you get over 1200 or 1500 we are ruining education, and that is why a lot of them come out of school ignorant and illiterate. That is the first point.

The second point, which I think is extremely important, the point which Senator Shorey and Senator McClean made on computers. I really do not know much about the computer age, but it would seem to me that the point he made about computers should be taken into consideration by Government. That is to say, that there should be a unified system in all the schools that are using computers so that they will know exactly what type of computer to get and therefore the knowledge fed from one to the other would be a unified experience, rather than having different types of computers which will make a real mish-mash of the whole computer system. I think that is something else that Government should take into consideration.

With those two things I have said, I would like to support this Resolution for the buying of the property and the expanding of the school so that, as Senator McClean

said, it makes a much better exit for the numbers of people who have to travel to and from that school.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, I should like to assure members on the other side that notice has been taken of their several concerns.

In relation to the Computer Committee that was established some time ago, as far as I am aware the original project is still proceeding and in collaboration with York University and the Community College, and as Senator Shorey might be pleased to hear, if a number of computers have not been provided yet, a substantial number of computers will shortly be provided by one of the firms operating in Barbados in order to facilitate the work that was started by that Committee.

In reply to the question about whether or not other efforts had been made, I should like to assure Senator Blackman that other efforts were made to purchase by private treaty the lands, but these proved impossible because there were restrictive covenants which affected that

process and it was certain that it would be delayed much longer than going the route of compulsory acquisition.
12.35 p.m.

I beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put to the Senate and agreed to.

THE ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. L. V. H. LEWIS: Mr. President, there are no matters of Private Members' Business that we are ready to proceed with today, but I have mentioned to one or two of the persons involved that we are working on them and expect to be able to respond soon.

I therefore beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn *sine die*.

The question that the Senate adjourn sine die was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.
12.37 p.m.

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LEWIS, Senator Hon. L. V. H.
MCCLEAN, Senator A. W. A.
SHOREY, Senator Dr. L. L.