
THE SENATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 – 99

THE SENATE

Friday, December 22, 1995

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Friday, December 22, 1995, at 11.20 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator F. W. GOLLOP, (President)

Senator the Honourable R. R. FARLEY, (Minister of Industry, Commerce and Business Development) (Leader of the Senate)

Senator the Honourable P. C. GODDARD (Minister of Foreign Trade and International Business)

Senator Miss C. Y. FORDE, (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture)

Senator T. E. BARKER (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs)

Senator Miss O. P. SYMMONDS, G.C.M.

Senator N. P. WELCH

Senator J. A. WORKMAN

Senator Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON

Senator S. P. BERNSTEIN

Senator C. LeR. TROTMAN

Senator C. K. LAURIE

Senator Mrs. V. J. Davis

Senator C. A. MASCOLL

Prayers were led by Senator J. A. WORKMAN.

Mr. PRESIDENT: The Senate is in session.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. President, I am commanded to lay the following document before the Honourable Senate:

The Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Barbados Tourism Authority for the year 1993/94.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. President, I beg to move that Standing Order No. 45(2) be suspended for the remainder of this sitting.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. President, I rise to move the first reading of a Bill to amend the Exempt Insurance Act, Cap. 308A.

The question that the Bill be read a first time was put to the Senate and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 1 – EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1995

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. President, at the start of the second reading of this Bill I will invite Senator Forde, Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education to take charge of this Bill.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, I wish to make comments regarding this Bill and to indicate clearly that it is the commitment of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, to continue the Common Entrance Examination as a measure of maintaining achievement in one instance as well

as a mechanism for transfer of students from primary to secondary schools. Some changes have been considered which will enhance the process of this transfer. These changes would be in the form, first, of flexible transfer and, secondly, partial zoning.

All of us in here are aware, Sir, that for many years we have had students who have been excelling in primary school and because we called that former examination the 11+, meaning the Common Entrance Secondary School Examination, students were unable to write that examination until they had reached their 11th birthday. By the beginning of September of that year of writing the examination, those students would have had to be 11 years old.

I have been in this system and witnessed hundreds of children who suffered as a result of having to await their turn to be 11 years old in order to write the examination. On the other hand, there were thousands of children who, because they had not reached the required standard, were still forced to write that examination. We in the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture have been very cognisant of the numerous problems and that is one of the reasons why we thought we would cater to the needs of all the children involved in the Common Entrance Examination.

I have seen children, Sir, who spent 2 years in Class 4 and because they were ready to move on, some teachers have been very creative and they have looked after the special needs of the children, finding new activities to get them involved but, at the same time, keeping them at that high level for the writing of the examination. On the other hand, there were a number of children who would not have grasped the basic skills and concepts coming through from Class 1 and some of those children, unfortunately, when they reached Class 4 could not add, multiply, subtract, read or express themselves. A number of problems occurred.

It is in our interest and in the interest of all Barbadians, particularly our children – if we are saying in the White Paper we want our children in schools in Barbados, and Barbadians in general, to develop high esteem, to have confidence in themselves, to be able to communicate with others effectively and all those various things. We are of the opinion that those children who are ready to move on should be given that opportunity to write that examination when he or she is ready, therefore, one of the changes in the flexible transfer.

Those children who would have reached their 8th birthday, starting September 1, this year, would be entitled to write the Common Entrance Examination in May 1996 provided the parents of the students are in agreement with the teachers who would have observed them and their performances in the classroom where they would have been

consistently scoring 90 per cent or more in the various papers they have been doing. They would then be able to write the examination because we are cognisant that by September 1, 1996, those children would have reached their 9th birthday.

Those students, Sir, who will be 11 years old by August 31, next year would, however, be given an opportunity, again through the guidance of the teachers, principals and parents be able to hold back for one year and be given opportunities in an enrichment programme, let us call it, where they would be able to get further assistance from teachers and parents to upgrade their numerous skills. There is no point sending our children into the secondary school being unable to read, call it illiterate in most instances, because the number of subjects they have to work with would really pose a problem.

You are aware, as others are, Sir, that reading is the basis for all knowledge, and if our students cannot read, then they cannot do their history, social studies, religious education and, in some instances, they cannot do mathematics. Therefore, it is our feeling that if these students are retained in the primary school for that extra year in that enrichment programme, if they, perhaps, are students who are scoring 30 per cent, if they are detained, then with that enrichment programme we would expect that by the following year those students might perhaps be able to score 45 per cent or 50 per cent. That says the reading skills would be upgraded, hence the children can go on to secondary school into another special programme where they can continue to work in areas that they can cope. Physical education, yes, art in the classroom, music, basic mathematics and English, some social studies, civics and things of that nature, but we would want to hold back on the physics and foreign languages if those children are from that category.

Mr. President, I am of the view that we in Barbados need to start looking at mixed ability, mixed age, multi-grade teaching. I am making the point to say that a child should not leave the infant stage of education, meaning the Infants B, to be transferred to Class 1 if it has not mastered the skills in Infants B. We are of the view that at the end of that third term in Class 1, and since some teachers are very cognizant of the needs of the children, they can therefore tap into them before they even reach the third term in Class 1, we are of the opinion that if at Class 1 stage those students are experiencing problems in reading and writing, numeracy, literacy and so on, it would be wiser for those children to repeat the Class 1 because the foundation of all those skills will need to be reinforced and therefore they will remain at Class 1 and repeat it there. Of course we talk about self-esteem and all of that but for a child at Class 1 age there is no great difference in size and language and so on if the child is backward.
11.30 a.m.

Likewise we would want that to happen if we recognise that at Class 2 level there is a problem. We would want that child to repeat Class 2 rather than force it ahead because of age and then when it reaches Class 4 everybody is rushing around to say it is this examination you are working towards therefore those who are ready will come with us and those who are not ready will probably drop out somewhere along the road. We really want to look after the interests of all.

You will agree with me, Sir, that there are a number of reasons why some children develop learning problems and this is one of the things that we will be paying attention to. It may be because of sudden death in families, because of poverty, which is something we will always have with us, because of child abuse, whether it be physical, sexual, emotional or otherwise; even some pregnancies that come into the family do affect children and their learning and sometimes those are some of the reasons why some children are backward.

I also agree, Sir, that there are instances where the techniques and teaching methods of some teachers are not up to standard and therefore the children lose out. But I will not go down any road to say that the teachers in the schools are failing. We have excellent teachers in both our primary and secondary schools and therefore I would want to commend them, for sometimes they have little or next to nothing to work with and still they are able to work wonderful miracles. Therefore I would want, having recognised these numerous things that would affect the children and their performance in the schools, to recommend to parents that it would be necessary to keep those children in the class at the level they are at and let them remain there, work in that enrichment programme, and then proceed to the following year when we know that they have been able to grasp the basics. As long as concepts are missing, as long as important skills are missing, they will keep mounting because they have not been corrected.

I also want to say, Sir, that we have in the plan of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture, where this reform is taking place, made a conscious decision to have all of the children in the primary schools examined for hearing, vision and speech impairments. It is interesting to note that there are hundreds of children out there who have hearing problems. If they cannot hear what the teacher is saying then they cannot perform the simple instructions that maybe given whether it be given by teacher or parent or any other individual.

We have Mr. Stabler and his team who have already covered six schools and they are moving into other schools in January to ensure that all of our children are tested. We are also following through with parents those who are put

up for referrals because there is no point in working at a programme unless there is involvement and consultation with parents and all the other agencies in the educational sector. The questions of speech, hearing and vision in particular are also being examined because those are some of the things that inhibit children from developing and picking up the various skills and concepts in the schools.

We have also made a plan with the technocrats in the examinations section to ensure that tests are prepared. It is not enough for us to say each individual school will do a test at the end of the third term in Class 1 to determine the ability and the aptitude and so on of the various children. We are of the view that an assessment at that stage for the 7 year old is important so we can have an idea as to how children at 7 years in Barbados, on the whole, are performing when we compare the results.

We are also looking at having standardised assessment tests again at age 9 so that we will know that this child who is at the end of Class 1 getting ready to go into Class 2 has certain deficiencies. Let us put the programmes in place that will cater to their needs. We must always work with the basic areas like mathematics and language art in order for the children to develop.

Sir, we are of the opinion that the flexible transfer we are examining, will continue to let our children who are high flyers climb on. So the ones who are not the best, we would be able to give that opportunity where their self-esteem would develop and they too can feel that they have been able to achieve, that I am somebody and I can continue to develop.

Mr. President, Sir, I have already identified the age. As from the 1st of September that child who writes the examination has to be 8 years old, so that by the following year when he writes the exam in May and enters school in September he is 9 years clear.

Now, I was in a particular primary school, Sir, where students remained, and I think it is basically because there were not enough spaces in the 1970s to accommodate the needs of all students, and while the boys were able to be transferred to another primary school to write the examination and then be pulled into the St. Leonard's Boys School and schools of that nature, hundreds of young females remained in that school environment and I saw a wonderful thing happen. That is why I have confidence in what we intend to do now in holding back the children for that extra year because I saw students who did not develop so well but appeared to be late developers who, having been given the opportunity and the exposure to an enrichment programme, were able to develop at Class 7, that is at 13 years old. This Principal was extremely creative in her thoughts and she had a very good rapport and would call up some of the secondary schools, like

Springer Memorial, St. Leonard's Girls and ask the Head Teacher, would you please take this young child, she is capable of doing whatever? There would have been progress reports on those children and it so happened that some students were given the opportunity to enter those secondary schools. I am happy to say that today I know of some of those young females who were successful when they reached Fifth Form. They entered at Second Form and sometimes Third Form, all depending on their ages, but because of the quality teaching that they received in those secondary schools, some of them were able to write 3 GCE examinations at one time and were successful. That is the reason why I am so interested and so keen on seeing those children who are not coping well remain behind. It is up now, Sir, to the various teachers and the parents of Barbados to give that necessary support to those children and help them over.

We are of the view that with the kind of communication which we will have with teachers and parents many of them will agree, yes my child is not ready. There is no point in a child going into secondary school with 15%. It says this child has deficiencies in areas and therefore when we meet with them we will be trying to get them to win our trust. The children will not be delayed.

We have to make certain amendments to the Education Act since at the present moment the age of compulsory education is 16 and if you are going to keep a child in the primary school for an extra year where when it enters the secondary school it would be 12 years clear going into 13 years then we would have to have some form of extension there. We are presently examining that aspect of the Education Act because a child would no longer be able to come out at 16. We are of the view that each child must be given at least five consecutive years of secondary education in order to become the wholesome Barbadians that we expect them to be as a result of this high quality educational system we have in Barbados.

Sir, I would also like to move on to the other aspect I mentioned earlier to do with partial zoning. At present, Sir, the system of allocation for students from primary to secondary school frequently results in a number of problems and all of us in here are aware of some of them. Sir, some of our students reach school very late in the mornings because they travel from one point of the country to another and they experience transportation problems. Nowadays some of them are being ignored because they are not paying the \$1.50 to go on a particular form of transportation and problems like that occur. Another thing, Sir, we are not keeping our community intact. A student coming from Welchman Hall, St. Thomas, should never have to go to Princess Margaret School in St. Philip, because the teachers in the environment don't know the children and the neighbours do not know the children. They

get involved in all kinds of deviant behaviour at times and a lot of them play truant in the area of Bridgetown and go into the arcades and such like. When some of them reach school, having left home at 6 in the morning or as early as 5.30 a.m. to get a bus, then to make the transfer from one point to the next, they are extremely tired. Partial zoning is really highlighting a number of problems that we feel need to be examined.

11.40 a.m.

Mr. President, we have prepared some guidelines for parents and guardians and, of course, teachers of the primary schools and the principals. I would like to make this one a document of the House. These documents were sent to all school principals and parents of students getting ready to write the examination as to whether they want to hold back their children for one year or send them in one year earlier. These parents as well as principals of the primary schools have been given a copy of this document.

We have encouraged the various principals of the schools to prepare the profiles on the schools so that parents can have an adequate opportunity to examine what these schools have to offer, what is the area of excellence in the schools and whether they would like their child to get involved in music, to play the steel pan or do woodwork or whatever. We are relying on parents to examine carefully the documents that will come which give profiles of the schools so that they will be able to make a choice. That would be a choice that when the child reaches that school it will cater to the needs of that particular student.

We have divided up the country into zones. There are 3 zones: zone 1, zone 2 and zone 3. This White Paper is already a document of this House, I looked for page 138 where I could find the map that shows how the country will be divided up into zones in an effort to accommodate students. We had to look at partial zoning because some parishes and the numbers of children coming from these parishes to write the examinations are so small that there is no point in saying that in St. Lucy all the students can go to school at St. Lucy Secondary because the numbers are small. Likewise there is no secondary school in St. Thomas. So some school will have to cater to the need of those children to write the examinations in St. Thomas. So we have divided the country into zones to accommodate the needs of these various children.

Zone 1 comprises areas of parishes such as St. Lucy, St. Peter, St. James, parts of St. Thomas, west of Highway 2A, that is, Arch Hall and Bagatelle Gardens and the following sections of St. Michael: residents living in the area between the St. James Boundary and Highway 2A to the Simpson Motors Roundabout going East around the

ABC Highway as far as the Warren's Roundabout, along Highway 2, westwards to Eagle Hall Corner, right along Highway 1, left at Bridge Gap, left along Goodland Road on to Westbury Road, at Princess Alice Highway to the Harbour Road and North along the coast back to the St. James border.

These schools comprising zone 1 are: St. Lucy Secondary, Coleridge and Parry, St. James Secondary, Alexandra, Queen's College, Alma Parris Memorial, Ellerslie Secondary School.

Zone 2, and those areas are outlined as well in the White Paper, comprises areas and parishes such as St. Andrew, St. Joseph, St. Thomas, St. George and the following sections of St. Michael. I would like to note here, Sir, that each school is assigned to only 1 zone instead of being in 2 zones as was done previously. The schools available to pupils in zone 2 comprise: Grantley Adams Memorial, St. George Secondary, Parkinson Memorial, St. Leonard's Girls, Combermere School, Harrison College, Louis Lynch Secondary.

In zone 3, the areas and parishes are: St. John, St. Philip and Christ Church. The schools available to these pupils in the zone are: Lodge School, Princess Margaret Secondary School, Christ Church Foundation, Deighton Griffith, Garrison Secondary, St. Michael School, Springer Memorial.

Mr. President, Sir, we felt the introduction of partial zoning at this time would be an asset to keep children closer to their communities where they live to give thousands of them opportunities to be able to participate in the extra-curricular activities. Students will say to you that they cannot stay back at school to play the steel pan on evenings because they live too far or they cannot participate in guides or scouts or the debating society or whatever activity. Parents also use that as an excuse to say they are living in St. Lucy and therefore they cannot go to the Lodge School to attend a PTA meeting. At times, those parents are the ones making such excuses.

I agree they may be very legitimate, but some of those parents are the ones who really want to keep away because they too feel that the distance is too far. It is too far for them once a month but it is not too far for their children everyday of the week, 5 days a week.

Mr. President, Sir, I trust this partial zoning will be accepted by the parents and the Barbadian community and that as a result of this implementation the students of Barbados will get an opportunity to become more actively involved in the various community activities in the areas where they live. Their being involved in schools in the communities where they live will give parents and other

adults in the society an opportunity to monitor them, because we have removed ourselves as Barbadians from being our brother's keeper. I am sure that an opportunity like this would give other individuals a chance to speak to children when they see them falling apart, because they would know that it would be Senator Welch's daughter or whoever the neighbour is and say, "Come back and do the right thing. I am very disappointed. You know what is expected." As well the teachers will be able to identify parents and say to them, "This is your child. You are living near the school. Come in and let us discuss." I am sure it will help to allay a number of the fears that we have about deviant children in our society and children being abused as a result of coming home through a gully at 7 o'clock in the night because they left school late and things of that nature.

Mr. President, Sir, if I could get back to give finally the number of schools and to say how we arrived at this idea. Having started to examine the partial zoning, we found that the next step would have been to visit the various secondary schools and to get information as to the intake: how many children can the St. Leonard's Boys take in at the beginning of September, how many children can Queen's College take in at the beginning of September. We went through that whole procedure. So we made direct contact with the various schools and we used the census of 1991 to determine an average as to how many children would write the examination in 1995. That information was processed in the Ministry and we came up with the number of students that are in a particular parish as well as the accommodation in the various zones that they are in.

If you would allow me, Sir, I would just like to mention briefly how many students will be in a particular zone, unless Honourable Senators would want me to break it down after.

Aside.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Zone 1, St. Peter, the number of students writing the examination there, and it looks as though that population is decreasing - 172 students. There are 380 places available in the parish of St. Peter which means that between Coleridge and Parry, Alexandra School and Alma Parris Memorial School there are 380 places altogether.

St. Lucy - 142 children are expected to write the Common Entrance Examination. There are 210 places available.

The parish of St. James - 327 children possibly writing the exam and 360 places.

St. Michael - that aspect of St. Michael in zone 1 - 383 students and 210 places, making that a total in

zone 1 of 1 024 possible students writing the examination and a total number of 1 060 places that would be available. 11.50 a.m.

In Zone 2, St. Andrew, possibly 98 students writing the examination, 160 places. St. Joseph, 103 and 210 places. St. Thomas, 218, and of course there is no school there, so we will have to be accommodated elsewhere. St. George, 292 students and 210 places. St. Michael, 1 024 and 930 places, meaning the total number of students in the Zone 2 area is 1 735 and 1 510 places.

Zone 3, St. John, 163 and 150 places. St. Philip, 394 and 210 places. Christ Church, 708 and 330 places. St. Michael – this does not show the total number of children taking the examination – there are 540 places, bringing the total in Zone 3 to 1 264 and the total places would be 1 230. That gives us a subtotal of possibly 4 023 students to write the examination this year and a total of 3 930 places.

Mr. President, at present we know that some parents opt for bursaries. In 1995 there were 469 bursaries awarded to pupils to attend private secondary schools, and we know there are always parents who would prefer to have their children at private schools and we will make that accommodation available to them.

Mr. President, if parents agree to allow their children to remain behind, then it says that the total number of places available would most likely be less, from the point of view that the students who may go ahead to write the examination at 8+, those who would be nine years old before they enter secondary school, would only be about 50 every year. On the other hand, in the 81 primary schools, and I think there are 24 private primary schools, we will have only a total of about 500 students who may remain behind, and if those students have to stay in their respective primary schools for that extra year, it might just be an average of eight to 10 students per school, which is not even a whole class. It is just a small population of children that may remain, so that if all those who are capable of going forward remain behind, then the numbers here should not pose a problem when it comes to entry into secondary school.

Mr. President, however we look at this particular proposal we will still find students who will be unable to write that examination because of mental disabilities, what we call the mentally retarded students and so on, and parents still have that opportunity to recommend whether they would want their children to write the examination or not. These would be students who would normally go to the Challenor School, to the various annexes, like the annex at Government Hill, the annex at Erdiston Primary, there is an annex now at the Ellerton Primary School, as well as one at the Eagle Hall Primary, and we will always have those students with us. I agree that we need to put

systems in place where Government can give further assistance to those students in those schools, but a parent still has that opportunity to make the request that their children not write the examination. I agree that those children who remain in those schools should be given quality care and education. They deserve just as good as or even better than the normal student.

I want to give my full support to this particular amendment and to ask Barbadians to be assured that there is no need to be afraid, because thousands of people can come and say: "My child spent two years in Class 4 and became frustrated," or: "my child is going all the way down to St. Lucy and is leaving St. Thomas and has to take two buses. Is there any way this child can get a transfer?" I would like them to examine the document I have just laid, with the outlines, and to make a conscious decision before making their choices for the schools as to what schools they think their children can benefit by, as to what they would want to have done if their children are a little backward in some areas but appear as though they can improve given an extra year or two, as well as for those parents whose children have been there waiting in Class 2 a year ahead, and then go to Class 3 a year ahead and have to spend two years in Class 4, that those children can be given the earlier opportunity. If we are looking at excellence, then we need to let those children who are the high flyers keep flying on. If we are looking after the interests of all and developing their self-confidence, their speech skills and so on, we need to give them that extra year to improve the various skills.

So, Mr. President, I would like to give my support to this Bill and ask Honourable Senators please to give it deep thought and give us the kind of guidance, make the queries they would necessarily want to make and give us the kind of support that we need in order for this particular amendment to go forward, because at the end of the day it is the Barbadian children that we see out there who are illiterate, who cannot express themselves, who cannot reason, who get involved in all this negative behaviour; those are the ones we care about and need to do something to help instead of paying a lot of lip service on the call-in programmes and in other areas. We really need to take the bull by the horns and say: "These are our children, let us do something good to give them a quality of life that they deserve and that our foreparents would have paved the way for them to get," instead of putting them through one end of the conduit and letting them pass through the other, because I don't really care, they don't really belong to me, it does not affect me, that kind of attitude.

Sir, I trust that as a result of implementing these particular aspects in this Bill, the flexible transfer and the partial zoning, Barbadians will benefit. We are bold men and women, and if we find over a three-year period this

situation does not work as effectively, we can make a decision as to what will be in the best interests of all Barbadian children, as well as their parents and other Barbadians as a whole, to make the necessary changes that will accommodate the needs of all. I thank you.

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

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, I find it difficult to separate the amendments before us from the proposed White Paper which is to be debated some time next year. I am therefore querying the timing of the amendments before us. I am just wondering if something of this significance, in terms of the partial zoning and the flexible transfer, could not have been delayed until next year to be part of the entire debate which will be forthcoming on the White Paper.

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: On a point of elucidation, Mr. President, if the Honourable Senator will give way.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Farley, I think you can probably only elucidate something in your own speech.

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: I thank you, Sir.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Somehow I think there is an underlying reason for the hurried approach to this amendment. I also suspect that it relates to some kind of financing which the Government intends or hopes to receive from the IDB.

I am very serious about the content of the amendments. When we speak of flexible transfer, I do not think anyone of us in principle can disagree with the need to find some mechanism to advance the cause of high quality students at the primary school level. Neither do I think the reasons advanced in terms of the partial zoning can be ignored as reasons for the introduction of it, but I have difficulty in terms of the structure of the educational system in providing the kind of quality education across the entire spectrum of the secondary schools. I think we are all well aware of substantial difficulties that some secondary schools now face in even providing the most basic education to the pupils.

12.00 noon

I am, therefore, asking, can we supply the quality education that is required, especially when we are thinking in terms of introducing a system of partial zoning? By that, are we going to be able to justify ensuring that 30 per cent of these students from each school are drawn from within the zone, students from within that specified zone? Are we satisfied that such a method is not going to undermine the

quality of education provided in the respective schools? If we are not, do we think we can justify that there would be highly equitable structures in place to ensure that some people do not have to cry foul? Do we think that the secondary schools are adequately provided for in terms of equipment, the level of staffing, the facilities which we have in order to give or provide the quality of education which we are hoping to provide? I would think that any attempt to introduce flexible transfers and partial zoning will be based on the need to uplift the standard and quality of education which we are providing. If not, it does not make sense to make the kinds of amendments which we have before us unless that is the primary objective.

I am querying the timing in terms of what has already been put to the public, and this is the second occasion on which it has happened. Only recently we debated the 3 individuals at the BTA in the Senate and at the time we were debating, in fact, those individuals were on the job. Likewise, we are now debating amendments to the Education Act and already guidelines have been circulated to parents, children, and the like. I am beginning to wonder what purpose does the Senate really serve. Do we really have any clout within the Senate to make any amendments or adjustments to anything that happens in the Lower House? To that extent, am I part of a process that is simply prepared to rubber stamp anything that comes from the Lower House? It is really disturbing. I do not see how we can continue to be part of this process where we are supposed to be an Honourable Chamber, a Chamber that must be respected, and has to be respected, but yet still we are having amendments brought to us...

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Mascoll, we are not supposed to be an Honourable Chamber, we are an Honourable Chamber and I would not wish you to reflect otherwise.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Well, we are. But I am wondering if others are treating us like that in light of what has been happening.

This is another occasion on which I have grave concerns to take note of the fact that guidelines have been made available to guardians, parents, principals and teachers when the amendments had not yet come to the Senate. It is gross disrespect for this Honourable Chamber. The question, therefore, is what would have been the difficulty if, indeed, we had delayed this amendment until January of next year when it is hoped that the wider considerations for the educational system will be debated? What could have been? What could have made the substantial difference between December 22, 1995 as opposed to January 22, 1996 in terms of the absolute importance that these amendments have and the impact they will have on the educational system? I am having

great difficulty. As I said earlier on, there has to be some other agenda. It cannot be the case that the pending legislation in terms of the White Paper, which is fundamental in terms of what it intends to do, can be disrespected.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, on a point of elucidation.

In connection with the query made by the Honourable Senator, the Government of Barbados was willing to debate the White Paper but the Opposition asked for extra time to be accommodated. We all appreciate the fact that there are thousands of children out there to write the 11+ examination and we have to give parents at least 6 months' notice to be able to get the paperwork and everything else done in order to accommodate them in May, and I think we are even behind time right now, Sir.

Thank you.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, this issue should not be politicised and I will not in anyway attempt to politicise this issue. This is too critical in terms of the future of Barbados. We are talking about the heart of human resource development into the 21st Century so I am not prepared to suggest that the Opposition asked for something to be delayed. What about the independents? They asked for it to be delayed? That is not an issue. What about the thousands of people that would be affected by the amendments in the White Paper? This has nothing to do with politics. This has to do with the advancement of Barbados into the 21st Century, and the issues which confronted us in the 1960s in terms of educational needs are now present again. They are only of a slightly different dimension but they are still present.

The most critical and fundamental issue confronting Barbados from now until evermore will be education. How do we advance the cause of human beings in Barbados? How do we encourage human resource development? This has nothing to do with whether or not an Opposition party asked for something to be delayed. That will not capture me. I will not be impressed by that.

The other point is, we have to ask a few questions as well. If a student comes through the educational system and is delayed for one year, what substantial difference would it make to that individual? Are we satisfied that it can make a substantial difference if we decide that an individual who has not shown any propensity to learn at age 11 is going to show that propensity at age 12? Should we not put systems in place over the course of that person's life at the primary school, since we are going to be doing an ongoing evaluation, to ensure that as soon as we spot critical points or difficulties among the students that we should be immediately addressing them in our

attention and putting systems in place to address whatever difficulties they have? To try to suggest that to delay the individual for one year is so profound a move that it will completely eliminate all the difficulties which that child would have shown over the course of the primary school is another matter. I am only throwing out issues at this point. As far as I gather I will also be entitled to more extensive debate next year.

The other point is, I heard from Senator Forde that since we are going towards a system where we can encourage students to be delayed by a year that that will mean that there will be less pressure on the availability of places. That would be a one-year effect. That would only be the first year effect. If you think about it logically, if you stop 500 individuals from sitting in the first year, and these individuals are capable of sitting the second year, then it does not affect the ball game. It only affects the ball game in the first year of the assessment because another 500 children in the second year will not be entitled; but then the one school which did not sit it in the first year would then be brought forward so there is a one-year effect. It is a one-year lag. It is something that is so clear that it ought not to have been debated.

Aside.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Think about it logically. You have a statistician next to you. You can ask him that. To even boast that you would put less pressure on the placements at secondary schools is a lack of recognition that it is only in the first year that it will happen, Senator Forde. Anyhow, that is a matter for you to decide. I do not intend today to make this debate a prolonged thing. I just wish to suggest that I have difficulty in terms of the timing and the speed with which it is being put to us. Again we have had all kinds of things being done on the outside of the Chamber which would suggest that we are not getting the kind of respect which we ought to be getting here. I want to know, to what extent would these measures affect the structure and the delivery of quality education and if so why can we not debate these issues in the new year? Anyhow I would be prepared in the New Year for more extensive debate but I query the timing of these amendments. Thank you, Sir.

12.10 p.m.

SENATOR Mrs. V. J. DAVIS: Mr. President, I wish to support the amendment to the Education Act, Cap. 41 and I think the whole idea of flexibility of transfers is a device to recognise the infinite variety in terms of people's intelligence and ability. I would like to say from the start that I think that all this is going to work in tandem with professional support in the educational system. When I say professional support I am talking about medical, psychological counselling, the experts on learning

disabilities, all the remedial programmes. All this has to work in tandem with the professional support staff and people who are skilled in testing and the different types of testing and so on.

The flexibility of course again has to do with the fact that we do not want to retard the progress of those people who have been endowed by nature with greater ability than others. On the other hand we also want to recognise that we have to cater to each child's potential because it is a fact that everyone can learn something. Some of us take longer to learn certain things so that the delay of a year or two would simply mean that a child would learn something that it probably could not learn earlier in a year or two. That is not something to worry about.

It also recognises the fact that for a child - and I am very pleased to see that the child who enters at the age of 12, that is in Section 41 will not be required to leave school before he or she has attained the age of 17 years - so there is apparent fairness here that we are not going to just throw our students out when they reach the age of 16 but given the obvious factor, the slow learner and the late developer, they would have some extra time at school.

The question of zoning and this is one that is very dear to my heart. I take Senator Mascoll's concern about the schools. What we have to do is try to achieve some sort of parity in schools in terms of the amount of money spent in schools on teachers and facilities. I can also say, because I know intimately about some of those schools that were considered newer and all sorts of words, that the quality of teaching there, and I must agree with Senator Forde, is very good. There are very dedicated members of staff who do teach as opposed to lecturing young people who are supposed to have better abilities in other schools. So that the problem of zoning has to be seen also in terms of making sure that there is parity among all the schools. The obvious thing, as Senator Forde said, is the stress on the child who has to travel long distances with an inadequate transportation system. The really interesting and almost irony of the thing is that the children who come those really long distances, who would really benefit from a lot of the extra-curricular activities, are the children who are deprived of them.

I know there are teachers who put a lot of effort into those things like the Chess Club and the Dramatic Society and the Guides and the Cadets and so on, and those are the things which for our students are probably going to be a lot more meaningful than a lot of what goes on during the day. So the journey for me is not a problem.

The other thing is the entrance examination, compulsory school age, and we talk about that in terms of its flexibility. I am so much in tune with this that I do not really see much argument. One thing again that I must say

aside from the parity question in terms of schools and zoning is that ultimately, I think this all will lead logically to the fact that some examination has to be devised in terms of certification of our students as they leave secondary schools. That to me is going to be the logical conclusion to all this. We are going to have, very quickly, to get in place an examination that will provide each student who passes through the educational system of our secondary schools with certification that says this student has accomplished this, that and the other after so many years so that when the student goes out to get a job, at the work place there is something to show to an employer from the Government of Barbados that the student has covered a certain amount of work and that you can recommend this person. You can even suggest what the student is capable of. You will see how everything works, as I said, in tandem with the kind of professional support system, people who are good at administering tests for different reasons, people who are looking at the physical, whether the child has disabilities and people who can look at the remedial aspect of it.

Having said that I will just repeat, that it is absolutely necessary that we have a flexible system which seeks to recognise the varieties of abilities. We must also recognize that we want to fulfil and supply our own mandate to see that each child's potential at some time is recognized and that we also in terms of zoning make sure that there is a parity in schools and that schools have the same equitable distribution of resources and teachers. Finally we must work towards an examination that provides certification for our students who leave secondary schools.

As I said before, Mr. President, I have great pleasure in supporting this amendment to the Education Act.

SENATOR Miss O. P. SYMMONDS: Mr. President, the Minister of Education is to be heartily congratulated on the attention being paid not only to the slow learner but to the gifted. I have always felt very strongly about that and written about it.

Presently there is no flexibility, but if conditions are met the system will have been improved. I also wish to stress what Senator Forde so ably emphasised before, that one extra year of remedial work can make a great deal of difference to a child's progress. I say that from considerable experience. I am also happy to note that those children who enter school a year later will complete their school course later. However, there may be some difficulties with those coming in later.

There are some who either through weakness of character or problems with the environment may need at the end of the 5 years to be educated outside the normal setting.

12.20 p.m

I am not talking about a school like Alma Parris which is one which I anticipate will do much for slow learners; I am not talking about slow learners in that regard, but provision by legislation may have to be made for the kinds of students I am talking about. I think my colleagues in the teaching service would know what I am talking about and that there are many like that.

I also wish to utter a note of caution. Again, as I said previously, I am very happy about the concern for the gifted and the fact that they are not to be frustrated as so many of them have been by having to remain in the primary schools when they were quite capable of going on to secondary school. Their entry will put the onus on the school to see that they are integrated into the fabric of the school environment. In addition, those preparing students for examination must be very careful to ensure that these gifted children are ready not only academically but emotionally. I think that is extremely important since this single chance may alter the whole course of their lives. I think failure for those children could be even more devastating than for 11 year olds, and I think that much attention must be given to that.

There is just one other point that I should like to make and it is that the working of the transfer process should be kept under constant review and, by doing so, any problem should show up quickly and the necessary adjustment made. I have nothing negative to say about partial zoning. I heartily support the concept and I have very much pleasure in supporting the amendments in this Bill. Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, at the outset, I rise to give my wholehearted support to this development in our educational system which was greatly needed and long overdue. However, in my contribution to the debate, I would like to make a few comments. The first one may seem radical, but I honestly feel on page 3 of the amendment:

"after attaining the age of 12 years shall not be required to leave school before he has attained the age of 17 years.",

that I would like to suggest that those years be deleted because of any foreseeable problems regarding the late development of various children. I think that if they are not ready at 11 or 12 they should not really be forced to go on to the school and therefore you need to have a bit more flexibility in the educational system to run into problems and say that even though they are not ready the children must be sent on because the legislation has given a specific age group.

Mr. President, I am sorry that I did not see the guidelines. However, I hope that attention will be paid to

the education of the parents and also to caution the parents that they should not push those children. Parents push children by getting private lessons and they like to feel that their children know more than other people's children. I think parents and teachers have to be cautioned that it is better to let a child develop at its own pace, for since flexibility has been introduced there are some middle-income families who have the wherewithal and might tend to try and push their children to be classed as geniuses when, in fact, they might not be geniuses and they might burn out very quickly.

Another observation I should like to make, Mr. President, is regarding zoning. I do support zoning wholeheartedly, but I hope that great flexibility will be brought to this zoning. I will tell you why, Mr. President. The amendment says on page 2, clause 3, that:

"the residence of a pupil shall be determined by the residence of his parents or guardian."

Mr. President, we have several situations whereby parents who work in a different part of the country might like to take their children to school...

Aside.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: They have a choice? Well, you see, we wouldn't know that, because I have not seen the guidelines and I have not read the White Paper; but I will still say this so that it might go on record that we need to be flexible and humane in flexibility so that if a mother lives in St. Lucy but is working in St. Philip the child should be able to go to school in St. Philip, etc.

We only get 3 weeks holiday.

Mr. President, I should also like to make other observations. Senator Forde who introduced the Bill made some very good comments which I have accepted and she demonstrated her keen interest in community involvement about which I would like to say a word or two. I am in favour of community involvement, but we do have to recognise that community involvement does not come by itself. I think the Ministry of Education is going to have to work closely with the Department of Community Development and the rural development scheme to stimulate community involvement within our communities. It has died out considerably and it is going to take a lot of time and effort to stimulate the involvement that existed years ago and assisted our educational system.
12.30 p.m.

Another observation I should like to make, Mr. President, regarding zoning is the shift in population. One will have to review this continuously because, as people

move into different areas, you will find that some areas will become more heavily populated than others. I am not sure how that will be dealt with, but it will be changed to suit. I am glad St. Thomas' Secondary will be opened in 1997.

Another observation I would like to make in order to boost the system is again the call for the introduction of nurses in employment in schools. It is not good enough to have a doctor and medical team going from school to school. This was done in the area of dental health and our experience was that by the time they finished the set of schools there were problems in the first school that had not been solved, so what is needed is nurses appointed to the schools to help with the assessment of the children and, if necessary, doctors; or the nurses could be attached to the polyclinics where there is an easy referral system to the polyclinics from the various schools. It is really very important to have the nurses full time, not just visiting the schools once a month.

The repercussions of these amendments, the expected benefits, Mr. President. I would like to say a word or two about how I see the expected benefits filtering down to other institutions. By being flexible and not just promoting a child for the sake of promoting a child, by evaluating the child with well tested evaluation instruments to reduce as much subjectivity as possible, we should have a better person, a more well-rounded, educated person, who leaves the school. The repercussions of that would be that by the time they get to us in nursing and in other areas we are not going to see some of what we are seeing, and what I must give an example of at this time. We are not going to see that a class, for example, was doubled to take in 60 nursing students, 48 students entered for the examination and 13 passed. That is not good enough. When you ask why, you are told: "Oh, the material is not good". We will have a better product, although at another time and place I will talk about the teaching and the examination. Obviously, these students were not taught, but they will also have to be taught in a primary and a secondary school as well.

It has implications for nursing training. Some of these people are paid a stipend out of the Government's purse, and if you take a child for three years, are you going to tell me you take 60 people for three years, end up with 48 entering the school and 13 passes? Mr. President, that is not good enough. This is not the sort of thing we would like to see.

I am congratulating you on these radical changes in education. What I was talking about, I would like to say out front, has nothing to do with this administration, nothing whatsoever. It has to do with an administration that refused to take professional advice from the professional association. That is what happened, so hopefully these

developments, and I do support my colleague, Senator Davis, who explained it very much more clearly than ever I could, all of these developments will be done with the assistance of the professional organisations.

Mr. President, I did contact CTUSAB and the Teachers' Union and they have supported this wholeheartedly. They have asked me to lend support to this Bill, but I did have to make some other independent observations. These are not CTUSAB's observations I have made, these were other independent observations, as an educator, that I felt I had to bring to this Honourable Senate. I will repeat that we in the profession and CTUSAB wholeheartedly support this Bill and wish you continuing development in education reform and look forward to more debate.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR J. A. WORKMAN: Mr. President, I rise to make a very brief contribution to the passing of this Bill.

Much has been said already today about the Government's White Paper on education, but the Government also has a yellow paper on education, or some may call it gold, which I refer to as the Manifesto. On page 17 it says:

"At the core of our youth policy is a crusade for the renewal of hope and confidence in our youth."

As an employer, as a counsellor, we meet many young people, young adults, who are very unsure of themselves, and I believe that to a large extent this stems from the fact that our former educational policies have been too widely centred on the three Rs, or on making persons lawyers, doctors and engineers, and therefore many of our young students have been forced into areas for which they are not suited at all.

Senator Symmonds in her presentation gave good expression to her concern for the gifted, but I just want to take issue with her and to say that all are gifted. It is that some are more gifted than others, and it is exactly because we are so eager to compartmentalise people into gifted and not gifted, that we have run into many problems. I know, Mr. President, that Senator Symmonds does not mean it in that sense. I must make this point because it is the way the public at large sees people. If you can excel, then you are educated, and should be educated. If you do not excel, you must be left behind.

12.40 p.m.

What I want to say, Mr. President, is that if this crusade of which the Government speaks in its Manifesto must be achieved, if there must be this renewed hope

and confidence in our people, we need to understand at least 2 words, they are, purpose and potential. I believe there is a purpose for each life that is created and that each life is created with a specific potential. Therefore, we could spend the whole of this year and next year debating the pros and cons of zoning, debating the pros and cons whether there should be an entrance examination at age 8, 11 or 15, but in the long run, what is important is whether in the period which Senator Davis referred to as the period between entrance to certification, whether during that period, the period in which the students are exposed to education, the thrust is on developing the potential that lies in that life. I think we need to have that wide vision and see as the core, the central focus, the development of the potential, whatever it may be, in that individual.

Education is defined as the process of training and developing the knowledge, skill, mind or character, and it is that character which we need to develop if we are to have sound nationhood, and sound men and women for the future of this nation. We have stopped short at the training and have missed to a large extent the question of developing, particularly developing character. Character is developed not just by having a degree or an academic certification but by moulding all that is there within the individual which is that potential.

It is, Mr. President, like the caterpillar which moves around devouring all of Senator Laurie's plans, but there is tremendous potential in there, and Senator Laurie will tell you that you will see different caterpillars but all with potential which will eventually become different butterflies. This is what we need to do in our educational system. Seek to discover what is in that caterpillar, what is in the cocoon that it may come forth in years to come and beautify the landscape even as the butterflies do.

I found a definition of crusade, Mr. President, which says "an aggressive movement against public evil." And the public evil in our educational system has been to suppress the potential that lies within the individual.

It is amazing, Mr. President, in this age to discover how many people who come for employment are unaware of the normal things around us. In recent months during an interview I was dictating a letter and, in that letter, I talked about debushing. It was shocking to see that this 25-year old young lady who was very proficient on the computer asked: "Debushing? What is that?" Little things like that. Maybe that individual was able to use her hands and use the computer but there was other potential that needed to be developed. So we are producing, and have been producing, young men and young women who are not rounded and who find themselves unfit for our society through no fault of their own, but through a teaching

system which has centred only on the academic ability that is there rather than upon the giftedness or the potential.

Mr. President, as we seek to develop that potential, responsibility lies not only with Government but with the teachers. We need then to educate our teachers that they themselves may understand that part and parcel of the process of education is for them to detect at an early stage that potential which is there and encourage the growth of that potential.

It is also necessary for us to educate the parents. The time has come in this country when parents must understand that not everybody will have what we call a white collar job. We are living in a technological age. There are many days, Mr. President, when I would prefer to be out of my jacket and the straitjacket of the legal profession and to be outside to use my hands. We need to develop those skills and let our young people understand that there is nothing in those skills which is degrading but that those are the talents which are given in their lives which they must use to make themselves useful citizens of our community in the future.

We have to educate our teachers. We have to educate our parents. We have to educate our children to the fact that not all will be doctors, lawyers, *et cetera*, but that every given talent can be used for sustainable development of the individual and of the nation.

I leave with the Senate today those 3 words, Mr. President, purpose, potential and prayer. Purpose – because every life has a purpose; potential – because in every life there is a gift, and prayer – because through prayer we have the education from the Godhead who helps us to understand the potential he has put there. I would not want to say it must be Christian education because we live in a pluralistic society. As a Christian I would say Christian education, but we need to acknowledge the Godhead from whom comes wisdom and the potential, and who teaches us through the communication of prayer to discover that potential which lies within us.

I support the Bill, Mr. President.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Mr. President, I rise to support the Bill and I just want to make an observation, that there is no rush about this Bill. It is 20 years too late. Every year we have the frustration of children who just want another year at primary school to build them up to a certain level. What happens is that if a child has a deficiency at age 7 or 8 and it is noticed, the teacher still has to make sure that he covers the syllabus by a particular age; he cannot be taken out of the main stream, so to speak, and given an extra year even at Class 1 and

Class 2 because he may be a slow learner. But because of the age barrier up the road you cannot really do much with him under the present system.

Aside.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Sir, in my day I was a bit lucky in that the age factor was not the determinant at that time. I did not even know what happened at age 9 but one morning my father just took me and carried me to Harrison College and told me I had to sit an examination. I went and sat it and managed to pass, so at age 9 I went to a secondary school. This is what people must realise. When you went into secondary school at age 9 you did not really go into secondary school. You went into a Prep School where the syllabus was basically a primary syllabus because there were no languages, no geometry or algebra. It was basically arithmetic, a lot of English, geography, history and so on. What happened then, Sir, was that you still started secondary education at age 11.
12.50 p.m.

Now, Sir, age 11 should be taken as an indicative age as opposed to a legal and mandatory age because we must recognise the normal curves. I am sure that Senator Mascoll will recognise that, because I taught him about the normal curves. So while, Sir, most students at age 11 would be expected to be at a certain level you must recognise that at the other end of the distribution, what we call the tail end of the distribution, according to the well-known laws, about 5% fall outside the two standard deviations from the norm. This Bill, Sir, is catering to that 5%, those on the lower tail and those in the upper tail of the distribution. Sir the word "tail" is a statistical term. It is not unparliamentary. It is a statistical and well accepted term.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I did not think it would be necessary to explain it, Senator.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Sir, the point is that this Bill is catering to that 5% on either end of the distribution. My concern is not so much with the top one because we are going to come out all right in the end. My concern is with those numbers whom the system does not cater to. Those who are the slow learners, those who for psychological reasons and even physical reasons, Sir, we want to cater to.

There is nothing magical about age 11 or age 16 or age 17. As I said, they are only indicative ages. What is important is that the society gets value for money. My own view is that the society will benefit by spending money on that same student for an extra year if at the end of the process that student would have benefitted as opposed to if you had only 7 years and at the end of 7 years we are

finished with you not realising that that is false economy because for the 7 years the money would have been lost. Sir, it reminds me of something that happened about 3 or 4 years ago and it shows the lack of thinking in the policy making in the Ministry of Education at that time.

Sir, we had a situation where students who went to secondary school were told that after 5 years of secondary school they would be kicked out regardless, not realising that a lot of students need that extra year even in secondary school. Some students are going to take 2 sittings to get 5 O'levels and we have to recognise that. If you chase them out after one try you will just be frustrating them. What are they going to do? If they had been given that extra year at secondary school they could have benefitted from Community College education instead of sending them out after one try when they would not be qualified for anything, not for work, not for further education. Sir, that happened about 3 or 4 years ago under the last regime. By removing this age barrier we are opening up the system where I believe, Sir, that with the proper systems in place, we can get value for money. We must remember that the bulk of this country's budget goes on education and there is no sense spending it on education when we are not doing some of the things that need adjusting in order to maximise the benefits from the vast expenditure in education.

Sir, Senator Rickinson made the point where she mentioned that 41(a) talked about 17 years. I want to stress that age as the minimum age. In other words we are saying that if a student comes in at age 12 he cannot be forced out until he gets to age 17 and even then we must allow the principals of the secondary schools the flexibility to show initiative so that they do not willy-nilly go and do things but that they would take advice from the other teachers and from parents and so on in determining whether or not they are going to apply the minimum. This age 17 must be seen as a minimum and it must only be seen that way. Sir, we want to get away from this age dominated thinking and see it only as indicative that by 11 years you expect a child to be at a certain level but we must be flexible enough to realise that, yes, there are some whom we thought for a variety of reasons would never be at that stage at that particular point in time and for whom this amendment has taken this into consideration.

The Minister of Education and her Deputy, and I must mention Deputy, because, Sir, the appointment of a Deputy at the Ministry of Education was in a sense revolutionary, it was even a better one than mine, because, Sir, the Senator has brought to education years of good experience. This was aptly demonstrated by the way she put forward her thoughts and the Ministry's thoughts and I could see that a lot of what has gone into this is as a result of her spending 20 or so years teaching at what I consider to be one of the better schools in the Island. I say so, Sir, because both of my daughters went there and one

is still at that school. I know for a fact that it is one of the better schools. So we are into a revolutionary age as far as education is concerned.

Sir, we are now dismantling an apparatus which has served us well in the past but we are tampering with it in a way to make it even better. We want to make the system better because we recognise, Sir, that the system is not perfect, that while 95% of the children may be handled efficiently by the system, it is not really catering to the 5% in either end of the distribution. So, therefore, Sir, the Ministry must be heartily complimented for bringing this to bear and there is no haste at all in it because in the coming examination in the month of April/May those 500 students will get a chance.

Sir, I want to make one last point in this, the children who are left back at primary school must be handled properly. As the Senator said, a school may have 8 to 10 but you have to make sure that they are handled in such a way that they are not ostracised and seen as failures. I call now for the principals, the headteachers and the teachers to really work on these few students to make them feel, you are here, not because you are an idiot or because you are subnormal but because we feel that by keeping you for an extra year we can bring you up to a certain level. It calls for handling these students with care because we do not want them to be distracting the other students and so on.

Sir, while we applaud Government we note that this is not without its attendant difficulties and we call upon teachers, staff and principals of primary schools to handle these students with care. They have a second chance but at the same time the system must be able to accommodate these particular students.

Sir, with those comments I heartily support this Bill and I want to congratulate the Senator and the Minister for having the foresight to make these revolutionary changes. I look forward to a fuller debate on education in the New Year. Thank you very much.
1.00 p.m.

SENATOR S. P. BERNSTEIN: Mr. President, I will not be as long as previous Senators. I support everything that has been said so far, particularly by the 2 independent colleagues, Senators Davis and Workman. There are just 2 comments I should like to make. One is the problem we face in society today and I am not sure that mixed schools are the way to go. In other words, I am not sure of co-education with all of the peer pressure that students have while entering into puberty and the little sex education in the schools. I would like to see a system where we go back to the old boys and girls schools. Surely, they can mix after school hours and on holidays. In the school itself,

when a female is excelling, there is always that psychological disadvantage in the classroom.

The other area is one of discipline. Again when I look at the society, and I agree with everything previously said, we need to get discipline and that has to start in the schools. What I would like...

Aside.

SENATOR S. P. BERNSTEIN: ...Yes, it starts at home from the time you are born, but it should continue in the schools from kindergarten right up the ladder. A lot of us sometimes fail in the schools because headmasters are afraid to flog students...

Aside.

SENATOR S. P. BERNSTEIN: ... Yes, in the past there were some problems. The long and short of it is that Senator Workman said that they should have potential, purpose and prayer and I would like to add another "p" - punishment. You can look around and see all the old timers with all the discipline they have. Today, you look at the youth and discipline is lacking. I strongly suggest more discipline in the schools. Thank you.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, I think the punishment identified by Senator Bernstein does not necessarily mean flogging. I think there should be different forms of punishment where you don't have to be actively brutalising the children in order to get them to fall in line. We in the Ministry will have to investigate, because we are not aware that the principals don't flog or they are afraid to flog.

However, Sir, there were a couple comments or queries raised by some Honourable Senators and I should just like briefly to make comments. Let me first say how exceptionally appreciative I am of the comments that came from various Senators and the things that they have identified that perhaps we did not look at in depth. Their suggestions are worthwhile and we would want to give consideration to them.

However, Sir, I should like to respond to a number of comments made by Senator Mascoll to say that I do not see it as being seedy in our approach to these particular aspects of the amendment with respect to partial zoning and the flexible transfer. As you are aware, Sir, the flexible transfer has been one of our manifesto pledges in the 1994 manifesto where on page 19 it is indicated very clearly that the common entrance examination would be continued but children would be allowed to sit it when they are ready. Mr. President, again I want to reinforce for individuals to understand that in this particular regime of the Barbados

Labour Party we make promises and we like to fulfil our promises. We keep them.

This is another effort to show that we will continue to move towards making agreement and commitment with the Barbadian public and living up to our expectations. We have a track record over the past number of years to indicate such.

The second thing, Sir, is to assure Senator Mascoll that we do not want to be speedy at all in our approach, and I would not like that word to come in. I would like to make mention of the approximately 500 children who may go forward and write that examination. Then it compounds that problem in the secondary school. I agree that there are some teachers in some secondary schools in Barbados and, most of you know, some of the newer secondary schools where a population of students averaging from 30% down to 15%, making an "E" in composition which could not even be graded properly, are all lumped into the same school. It creates tremendous problems for teachers.

I want to confess, Sir, and every Barbadian knows, every secondary school in Barbados and every primary school in Barbados has got graduate teachers who are trained and some of them have even gone as far as to do their Master's degrees and their Ph.Ds in particular in remedial education, in educational psychology and in testing and measurement. Those are the areas that we are working towards and we are pulling in teachers who are involved in those areas and putting them in committees so that they can give us the guidance that we need. They are the technocrats. We are listening and we are accommodating their requests because we see that it is necessary in this particular environment.

I want to say, Sir, that the 500 children who can be deferred with the request of parents would benefit as a result of this particular amendment we are working towards as well as those 50 gifted children who sometimes, as I have registered already, meet frustration. I know of it very well because I had 2 nieces who suffered tremendously because they repeated classes for 2 years and at the end of the second year they were not as enthusiastic to write that examination as they were in the first year, because their friends went on and left them behind in the first year and they did not find themselves fitting in well with the other children because there was nobody in that class that they knew and they could associate with. It has tremendous effect on those students.

Those 50 gifted highflyers, if you want to call them that, who may want to remain, I am sure that it will be to their tremendous benefit. So I would want to warn Senator Mascoll that for too long as ordinary teachers out there we

begged for various governments to do something with this educational system and with the 11+ examination and it fell on deaf ears. We, in this regime, have belled the cat. We suspect that there will be tremendous benefits to the Barbadian children and their parents as a result of this implementation.

Mr. President, Sir, the secondary schools are equipped to deal with the problem. If you have well trained teachers, who go on the re-training exercises, who go to Easter vacation classes, summer classes and otherwise to upgrade their skills, to work in art, to work with children at risk, to work in musical education, because they want to be in tune with what is happening and to tend to the needs of the students, I am in favour of these schools. I say without any doubt that these schools are equipped to deal with the children who come under their care.

Added to that, Sir, the schools have the resources to deal with the problem. They have the physical resources, the physical environment of the schools, they have the playing fields. All schools are well equipped with computers. Our schools have the musical instruments, if you want to look after that kind of aesthetic appreciation you want to have it promoted. The human resources are there in the form of the teachers who are well trained.

I am not saying we do not have any problems, for even we in our households have problems and I would never say that. Senator Mascoll queried whether we have the necessary equipment and the persons in that environment to deal with the needs of the children. This is no quick fix. It will take a period of time in order for us to have our interests implemented. Therefore, I am making the final point where that is concerned to say that most of the schools in Barbados at secondary level have the monetary resources. We have schools in Barbados today, Mr. President, with more than \$500 000 in savings. There was one at the beginning of last term with \$800 000 in savings. If the money is there, we don't want it in a bank account. We want that money to be utilised in the schools looking after the needs and the interests of the children to buy equipment and the various things that are necessary to have quality education being delivered to our students and our teachers.

Mr. President, I am going to wind up in a minute, but I want to add that I made Honourable Senators aware 2 weeks ago of the commitment that principals and teachers of secondary schools gave us and our 6 diagnosticians, if you want to call them that, those teachers of remedial education who were drafted into the Ministry to work with the remedial education project and have tested the children who gained under 30% in the 11+ in May 1995.

1.10 p.m.

They prepared profiles which are being distributed to the schools and the Principals of the secondary schools that are involved, 10 to 11 of those schools; those teachers set systems in place for those children who are at the First Form level; profiles of the children who are drafted in scoring 30% or less and have gone into special programmes and have pulled themselves away from dealing with the Physics, Chemistry, French, and different things. These programmes will be based on basic education, maths, English, drama, art, music and so, and will be continued until those students reach Third Form, because we feel in that three-year period they will be able to improve on their various skills and techniques. Therefore, we expect that commitment will be continued over the three-year period.

Mr. President, I want to say finally that it is our thrust in the Ministry at this time to look after the needs of those Barbadian children who are in the school system, who need the extra assistance and attention to make them become independent individuals in this society, and therefore we introduced the remedial education pilot project. However, we are not of the opinion that for the next five years or ten years we should be looking at remediation. We must say many thanks to our technocrats in the Ministry for giving us the necessary guidance in this respect, that the approach we need to look at now is developmental, that is, from the infant and the nursery levels to introduce children to meaningful activities and programmes that our skilled teachers will be able to perform their duties in such a manner that learning and interests and all the necessary things will take place there so that the basic skills our children need to develop the auracy, the literacy and the numeracy will be laid at the level of the infant stage so that as they progress the remediation programme we have started will gradually fade out. That is not, to say, Sir, that there will be no need for remediation, because I know at Alexandra School there is remediation. Some children would have come in having learnt a lot of information and be able to be programmed for the 11+ and would have been able to produce, but after that the children still need extra assistance in some areas, because they are all different individuals. Therefore, I do not and I will not want to say that the remedial education programme will stop, but it will certainly be cut back tremendously because the developmental programme giving this enrichment programme with the children working along and coming along extremely well will help those children to climb and be very successful.

So, Sir, I want to say I am extremely grateful to Honourable Senators for raising their concerns and giving their suggestions and recommendations, and we will, as flexible as we are in the Ministry, try to accommodate in whatever area we can those various recommendations. I want to finally laud the efforts of the technocrats and other officers in the Ministry of Education who ably assisted the Minister and myself in trying to get these proposals put

forward, because we know that they are long overdue and that Barbadians welcome them.

With those comments, Sir, I would like to ask that this Bill be now read a second time.

I thank you.

The question that the Bill be now read a second time was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY, the Senate went into Committee on the Bill, SENATOR Miss O. P. SYMMONDS in the Chair.

Mme. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 5 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY, Mme. Chairman reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: I beg to move, Mr. President, that the sitting be suspended until 2.15 p.m.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the sitting accordingly. 1.20 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: The sitting is resumed.

ORDER NO. 2 - EXEMPT INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 1995

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I beg to move the Second Reading of the Exempt Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 1995 to enable companies to carry on exempt insurance business from within Barbados.

The purpose of this Bill is to amend the existing Exempt Insurance Act which was first introduced in 1983. That date is important because within the Exempt Insurance Act there is a 15-year guaranteed tax exemption period so we are now coming to the end of that 15 years, so there is one aspect to this Bill that addresses that point.

Primarily, the need for this amendment rests with the change in legislation in Canada and the interpretation of rules by Revenue Canada which has impacted upon the exempt insurance companies of Canadian ownership in Barbados. Barbados is the major domicile overseas for Canadian exempt insurance companies. At the same time the Act had to be amended in such a way as not to disturb exempt insurance companies from the United States and other parts of the world which are also domiciled in Barbados.

This amendment allows those companies to be taxed in a moderate way in such a manner to allow them to be deemed under the Canadian rules and regulations to be domiciled in Barbados and resident in Barbados. These amendments address this issue. At the same time, it extends the maximum period for a guaranteed indemnity from taxation to 30 years upon application to the Minister. These various amendments all take care of that basic change to preserve our position as an exempt insurance location of choice in the offshore world.

The first amended Bill incorporating the amendments was not complete and so a new consolidated amendment has been passed around to Honourable Senators just prior to lunch.

I could go through each one of these changes to the Exempt Insurance Act, and they are quite extensive. You will note, for example, on the general insurance business, this is page 6 of the original Bill, under section 2(b) which says:

" 'general insurance business' includes the insurance businesses of all or any of the following classes: ..."

It is listed from (a) to (h) and (i) to (k) add financial insurance, workmen's compensation insurance and public liability insurance. This recognises the new forms of insurance under the Exempt Insurance Act. In fact, in recent seminars and conferences, the lion's share of the business that they were talking about was workmen's compensation insurance. This brings Barbados into a more modern position regarding this area.

Some of these areas are of lesser or greater importance. The prime areas I want to bring to your attention are the sections dealing with taxation which are on the amended section page 3, "Amendment of section 18 of Cap. 308A", which is the original Act.

I also draw your attention to page 6 of the Bill by the insertion of the definition of "assets" which includes:

(i) cash,

- (ii) bonds, debentures, fixed deposits, equities listed on a recognised stock exchange,
- (iii) mortgage loans on real estate,
- (iv) net investment income due and accrued,
- (v) premiums receivable,
- (vi) reinsurance balances receivable,
- (vii) funds held by ceding reinsurer,
- (viii) accounts receivable (except from a person with whom the exempt insurer is associated, unless approved by the Supervisor),
- (ix) irrevocable letters of credit drawn or confirmed by a bank licensed under the Financial Institutions Regulatory Act or the Offshore Banking Act.

Those areas determine what is meant by assets. This once again updates the Act and makes it a much tighter piece of legislation.

The final area is on page 9, section 14:

The principal Act is amended by deleting section 32 thereof and substituting the following:

- "Guarantees 32. (1) A licensee and a holding company are entitled upon application to the Minister to be given assurances or guarantees in the prescribed form that the benefits and exemptions contained in this Act will apply to the licensee or holding company for a period of 30 years.
- (2) An assurance or guarantee given pursuant to subsection (1) is subject to negative resolution."

Just to inform the Honourable Senate, there are companies which have been operating in Barbados for 9 and 10 years, and the magnitude and the long-term nature of their business is such that they were already starting to seek assurances so that, though they had 15 years guaranteed relief from taxation, they were wondering where they would be in the next 15 years and needed those assurances by the end of this year. So it shows how the market forces dictate how we respond to these issues and how we have to think and plan ahead in this particular area of activity.

With that, Mr. President, I would like to commend the Bill to the Honourable Senate to amend the Exempt Insurance Act.

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

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, just let me say that I rise to support this Bill and that I understand very well the need for the amendments. It would not make any sense to have a Canadian company in Barbados not paying any taxes since it would not be to their benefit to come to Barbados to benefit from any double taxation treaties so the expressed purpose really is to ensure that there is reason for the Canadians to see Barbados as a domicile and, from that standpoint, I fully support the amendments being made to the Exempt Insurance Act.

All I can hope now really is that we put the necessary marketing tools in place to promote this sector of the offshore industry even more, and although there were recent supplementaries to, in fact, give more funding to assist in the marketing process, I hope that the structure is already in place to ensure that we are seen as a more serious competitor in this area.

What I may wish to say is that the same way as we can treat the exempt industry in which we have responded by way of ensuring them a 30-year extension, we all are aware that some other industries which set up in Barbados, manufacturing entities predominantly, have been struggling to get extensions of their tax free holidays and that is an area which I think needs to be looked at because we definitely need to be certain why precisely we are seeking to attract these kinds of offshore businesses. I have not really been able to grapple with the concept that after "X" amount of years we need to put impositions or certain kinds of impositions on industries which we have initially attracted for reasons of job creation and the earning of foreign exchange and other things.
2.35 p.m.

In terms of the incentive legislation there is certainly, at this stage of our development, a need to reconsider the underlying reasons and philosophical reasons why we are seeking to attract such industries to our shores.

The other thing I wish to comment on has more to do with the regional experience. Barbados should not be resting on its laurels in believing that other Caribbean countries are not seeking to erode or to get part of the market share which they presently have. Even though there are moves afoot to look at a fiscal harmonisation package for the entire region, I am not satisfied that we have made any significant strides in that area except to say that in the last two to three years the CARICOM Secretariat actually initiated a study in the area of fiscal harmonisation. There

is no reason why a similar thing cannot be done to look more specifically at the offshore sector of which the exempt insurance would be part. If we are not yet convinced by the recent experience of even the W.I.C.B.C. that the others treat us in a way in which they regard us to be a little out front and have catch up with us, somewhat like the gender experience, it is not that you are seeking ...

Aside.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: I hope though that the principle is not necessarily to pull back Barbados but to catch up and it is similar as I said to the gender experience where I hope it is not an attempt to pull back but more to narrow the gap by way of catching up.

With those short comments therefore, I am fully supportive of the amendments before us. I also am aware that the amendments were considered way before this administration came to power.

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I thank the Senator for his remarks and I beg to move that the Bill be read a second time.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD, Mr. PRESIDENT left the Chair and the Senate went into Committee on the Bill, SENATOR Miss O. P. SYMMONDS in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mme. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 17 inclusive were called and passed.

On the motion of SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD, Mme. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee and Mr. PRESIDENT resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

*On the separate motions of SENATOR P. C. GODDARD, the Bill was read a third time and passed and cited as the Exempt Insurance (Amendment) Act, 1995.
2.45 p.m.*

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. R. R. FARLEY: Mr. President, I rise to move the adjournment of this Sitting of the Honourable the Senate. Although I have made all my wishes downstairs, I should still like for the record to wish yourself, all members of staff and of the Honourable the Senate best wishes for the season. I look forward to an active, healthy and prosperous new year.

Also, by way of information, Sir, the House of Assembly has been adjourned until January 16, 1996 and, therefore, it is likely that our first meeting will not be until the week following that and not before the 24th. Usual notice will be given by the usual methods.

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

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Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Farley, before putting the question, let me thank you for your comments and, as I did informally during the luncheon interval, I wish all Senators and members of staff a blessed Christmas and a happy, healthy and productive 1996 from all of us.

The question was put and agreed to, and Mr. PRESIDENT adjourned the Senate accordingly.
2.50 p.m.

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