
THE SENATE DEBATES

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 – 2004

THE SENATE

Wednesday, April 25, 2001

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, on Wednesday, April 25, 2001, at 11.25 a.m.

PRESENT

His Honour Senator Sir Fred GOLLOP, K.A. (President)

Senator the Hon. P. C. GODDARD (Minister of Health) (Leader of the Senate)

Senator the Hon. G. S. H. MURRAY, B.A. (Hons.) J. P. (Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office and the Civil Service)

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

Senator T. E. BARKER, B.A. (Hons.) M.A. (Econ.) (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Natural (Resources)

Senator the Hon. Dame Patricia SYMMONDS, D.B.E., G.C.M., B.A. (Hons.), P.G.C.E., J.P.

Senator Miss J. C. ODLE, J.P.

Senator J. E. D. WILLIAMS, B.Sc., M.B.A., J.P.

Senator G. E. N. BROME

Senator Miss. J. P. ALLEYNE

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

Senator C. A. MASCOLL, B.Sc. (Econ.) (Hons.), M.A. (Public Finance)

Senator LeR. H. McCLEAN, B.Sc.

Senator Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.H. (Harvard), S.R.N.

Senator C. K. LAURIE, D.I.C.T.A. (S.T.), FBSTA

Senator Sir John Stanley GODDARD, K.A., B.Com., C.A., Hon. LL.D. (U.W.I.)

Senator B. R. COLLYMORE, C.M.G.

Senator Mrs. V. E. NEWTON, S.C.M., B.A. (Spec. Hons.), M.A., LL.B. (Hons.), (U.W.I.), F.L.A. (Gt. Brit.), L.E.C.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Errington Massiah.

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Senate is now in session.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. PRESIDENT: Since the last meeting of the Honourable the Senate, I have received the following letters from Government House.

The first which is dated 2nd April, 2001 reads:

“Dear Mr. President,

I shall be unable to perform my duties from 5th to 18th April, 2001.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 29(1)(b) of the Constitution, the Chief Justice, the Honourable Sir Denys A. Williams, K.C.M.G, G.C.M. will perform the functions of the office of Governor-General during my absence.

As the Honourable the Senate will not be meeting prior to my absence, it will not be possible for the usual formal message to be sent down to your Chamber. Will you, therefore, please bring my absence formally to the attention of The Honourable the Senate when next it meets?

Governor-General.”

The second letter which is dated 19th April, 2001 and signed by Sir Denys Williams, Acting Governor-General, reads as follows:

“Dear Mr. President,

His Excellency the Governor-General, Sir Clifford Husbands, G.C.M.G, K.A, is unable to resume his

duties and has been granted further leave of absence from office during the period 19th to 29th April, 2001.

In accordance with the provisions of Section 29(1)(b) of the Constitution, I am required to continue to perform the functions of the office of Governor-General during His Excellency's absence.

As the Honourable the Senate will not be in session, it will not be possible for the usual formal message to be sent down to your Chamber. Will you, therefore, please bring His Excellency's absence formally to the attention of the Honourable the Senate when next it meets?"

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: I am commanded to lay the following documents before the Honourable the Senate:

1. Value Added Tax Order, 2001.
2. The Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2001.
3. Financial Administration (Public Enterprise Investment Fund) Order, 2001.
4. Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulations, 2001.
5. Annual Report of the Barbados Fire Service for the year 1999.
6. Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the year 1997.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE SENATE AND MOVED BY A MINISTER

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: I move that Standing Order No. 45(2) of the Senate Standing Orders be suspended for the rest of today's Sitting to facilitate discussions on the Gold Award Achievement Bill.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: I beg to move the First Reading of the Gold Award of Achievement Bill, 2001.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

OBITUARY SPEECHES

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, since our last Sitting, Senator Forde's mother

passed away and I rise to offer her deepest condolences at this time and to wish her God's blessings in going through this period of grief as we recognise that this is a very difficult time for all of us when a loved one departs from this earth.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, I rise to express our deepest sympathy to Senator Forde on the passing of her mother. I must confess that I was very much unaware of that and that hurts me to some extent. As someone who has an interest in the Forde's family, I should have been informed of the passing of my potential mother-in-law.

Let me say that I have no doubt that from the person I have come to admire over the last seven years that she possesses all of the necessary qualities to ride through this very difficult period when words can comfort, but the inner soul must be attended to in order to overcome. Perhaps the most precious gift that anyone can ever ask for is that of a mother. In that respect, all I can do is offer her my sympathy and a shoulder of comfort.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. President, I too join in expressing my deepest condolences to Senator Forde and her family on the passing of their dear mother. This will be my formal expression of such sentiments. I was able to be present for the funeral service at the Holy Innocent's Anglican Church some Saturdays ago. Those who were there or those who might have heard about it would have seen the absolute magnificent testimony of the highest compliment that could be paid to a Barbadian in our social context.

If one is familiar with the social history of Barbados, one will know that a good turnout speaks volumes about the person who is being honoured so to speak. A good turnout is one where persons turn out in their substantial numbers not to be part of a fashion parade, or be part of the occasion, but to express their condolences to persons who have survived the person who has gone beyond and also to lend solidarity and support which are the most critical aspects of it to a family who is grieving at the loss of a dear person. Those who were there at the Holy Innocent's Church would have seen the absolute high esteem in which Senator Forde's mother would have been held in the society.

There is a good old Barbadian saying that the berry does not fall far from the tree. Those of us around the Table who are familiar with Senator Forde and are exposed to the details of her mother's efforts and achievements in Barbados would, therefore, see that that Barbadian aphorism is truly genuine and applicable in this case.

From all reports, Senator Forde's mother was a trailblazer in her time. Things that women nowadays have to do through the urging of organizations, or through watching Oprah Winfrey or reading *Cosmopolitan* Magazines, or of whatever urging, her mother intellectually and distinctively knew that she had to do from the very beginning at a time when society was not as equipped as it is today, either financially or socially, to deal with these issues.

Senator Forde's mother was a business woman and a self-employed person. She worked the land. She was hardworking. She was a benefactor to her neighbours in the surrounding districts and most of all she ensured that all of her children had a foundation in education that would be able to see them through life and be able to continue the efforts that she would have started on her own, although she would have come from a lesser educationally endowed background.

She has succeeded in doing so as one can see from the evidence of her children's success, not only by Senator Forde's own success, where they have come from a very humble beginning in a rural setting of Barbados at a time when people felt that coming from the country, so to speak, relegated one to the backwoods of Barbados' life forever. Her mother was able to smash those barriers and, in so doing, made a life for herself and her children. Above all, she set an example that they have all emulated and have all followed.

Therefore, Sir, we have to be thankful for the contribution of Senator Forde's mummy. She has left an indelible mark, and if one is exposed to her grandchildren and her offsprings in general, and her second and third generation, one can see that the traits of forthrightness, honesty, commitment, dedication and courage have been passed through both the genes but most of all by socialization. Those offsprings are living testimonies of her value to society and to her outlook on life and her world view. If these are perpetuated down the line, Senator Forde's mother would never ever truly be dead but she shall go on living forever in the life and achievement of her children, her great grandchildren and their offsprings *ad infinitum*.

11.30 a.m.

I, therefore, would like to join all those who would express sympathy and lend support to Senator Forde and her family. Senator Forde was a tower of strength when my mother passed away three years ago tomorrow, and I know what she is going through.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR THE HON. Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, I headed a school which owes

its solid foundation and reputation not only to its teachers but to the many cooperative, God-fearing, wonderful parents who supported us all the years, and such a person was Mrs. Forde, and I am going to say this time not Senator Forde's mother but Denise's mother, because her sister, Denise, is the one who attended The St. Michael School and whom I got to know very well and who has become like a daughter to me.

Senator Forde herself and Waveney, her sister, I would say, among all the siblings, are the ones closest to me and, in fact, I think that I feel myself, as they feel, to be an adopted member of the Forde family.

Mrs. Forde and her husband have instilled in their children all the attributes which society expects of its educated citizens and which we are in danger of losing today, but I am optimistic because of people like Senator Forde and her siblings. Attributes like hard work and respect for authority, respect for each other, discipline, all these were exemplified. In fact, looking back we really had a pretty easy time with the children who were attending school in those days, thanks to parents like Mrs. Forde.

I can empathise, too, because she developed the same disease which my mother did, and which sometimes afflicts sadly many active people. I can empathise and sympathise and I knew what Senator Forde went through because I did too and it is heart rending to see people who have been very active and energetic, as we used to say in those days, lose their memory. There are more technical and scientific terms for it; I am being euphemistic.

Therefore I know, as I told Senator Forde, that she has the solace of knowing what a duteous daughter she was, what a loving daughter that she did all that she could to return the love and affection which had been handed to her. Her mother had a long, useful life and therefore we say, Thank God.

To Cynthia and the others, I know that they will have the strength which they have inherited to find solace in the wonderful memories and also all that has been handed down to them to pass on to generations.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Mr. President, I rise to add my words of condolence to Senator Cynthia Forde on the passing of her mother. Anyone who has lost a parent knows that there are really no words that one can express to fill that void that is created by the loss of a loved one, and a loved one being a parent.

When I went to the funeral, as mentioned before, vast numbers were present and the glowing tributes included some elements of humour as well which made me smile as it spoke to the disciplinarian that Mrs. Forde was.

I said, "I wish I had known this woman". But then I caught myself short and said, "But I do know this woman." The only thing that is different is the middle initial. Our Cynthia is Cynthia Y. and I believe Mrs. Forde was Cynthia A. Forde. So this world still has the likes of Mrs. Cynthia Forde, a woman who by words already spoken by Senator Murray so glowingly was a tremendous tower of strength, a woman who shared love and who was not afraid to give discipline but tempered with love. I recognise that that too is the spirit of our own Cynthia Forde and of the many offspring, the many children, grandchildren and great grandchildren that Mother Forde was the genus of.

She displayed throughout the endeavours of her life that no obstacle could ever be greater than the cause. This, I think, is something we should all live and aspire to. If we have a focus and a dream, nothing should get in the way of fulfilling that dream. Cynthia Forde, senior, certainly did not allow anything to get in her way.

Clearly, there was an abiding faith in the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost and with that assured knowledge, I believe, Cynthia, that you can be assured that this is not the end for your mother and that because of that, we too believe that we will again meet one day on the other side. I add my words of sympathy to those shared before and wish you continued strength in the knowledge of the Almighty for your future life. Thank you.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I rise on behalf of all the independent Senators and ask to be associated with the very fine tributes paid to the late Mrs. Forde, mother of Senator Cynthia Forde. I myself did not have the privilege of knowing the lady but from all that has been said she must have been a very fine person, and the evidence I have is the fine character in her daughter Senator Forde, whom I got to know, to respect and to admire.

Some of us, if not all, have shared the same sad experience of the loss of a mother. After all, a good mother is the finest gift any person can have. I have had that experience and I would like to assure Senator Forde that with time the grief will diminish. I can also assure her that for every day for the rest of her life her mother would be in her mind. It is a grief but God gives us the strength and the grace to bear it.

On behalf of my colleagues, the Independent Senators, I offer our sincerest condolences.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I rise on behalf of CTUSAB, the trade union movement and the nurses, of course, to express our sympathy to Senator Forde. What can one say? One can only have one mother. You can have a different husband or a different wife but one

mother. It is a hard pill to swallow, especially if you are very close, but as Senator Goddard said each day the pain will lessen. I pray that God gives you the strength to carry on and do the good work you have been able to do in the name of your dearly departed mother. We wish you all the best. God's speed.

SENATOR T. E. BARKER: Mr. President, I would wish to be associated with the tributes that have been paid to Mrs. Forde and to offer my sincere condolences to the family.

Around this time we think of heroes and while we think of heroes we also think of the men and women who have sacrificed over the years to make this country what it is and no doubt, listening to the tributes, Mrs. Forde was a hero to many in that she sacrificed and in those days it would not have been easy that she and her husband sacrificed to ensure that their children got the education which would put them in the position they are in today. That is what helped to make our nation strong, the values that our parents and our grandparents put on education. In spite of the fact that there was little or no money around, they still ensured that their children were put in a position where they could better fend for themselves, as the saying goes.

11.40 a.m.

We want to commend those persons who had the foresight and vision to know that even although they did not get the education themselves, they went all out to ensure that their children received education which has contributed tremendously to the impressive skills pool that we have in this country.

I want to commend Mrs. Forde and thousands like her who saw the value of education and ensured that their children got the best. I know that the family will be comforted by the many expressions of sincere sympathy they received and I want to add mine. I know that it is a very important family in the history of Barbados because they have produced some outstanding persons and no doubt, due in large measure, to the hard work of Mrs. Forde.

We know that she is in God's keeping because his words, as the saying goes, are going to follow her and they will indeed from all reports received.

Mr. PRESIDENT: I would like to associate the Chair with the expressions of condolences from all Sides of the Senate paid to Senator Forde on the passing of her mother, Mrs. Cynthia Forde. I have already done so in a personal way, as I had the privilege of attending the funeral at Holy Innocent's Church and was thus able to have a clear appreciation of the immense contribution which the late Mrs. Forde made to her community and to her church. There were many tributes paid at the funeral service, as

Senator Odle said, by those whose lives she touched, which were indicative of the high esteem in which she was held.

I would like to convey my deepest sympathy to Senator Forde and her extended family. May the late Mrs. Forde rest in peace.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, thank you for giving me the opportunity to sincerely express my thanks to all Honourable Senators for their warm tributes this morning. Indeed, Honourable Senators as well as thousands of Barbadians have extended words, sent cards, flowers, praise and many of them attended the service of thanksgiving.

I heard comments made about the berry not falling too far from the tree and I heard Senator Barker say very quietly that what is in the old goat is in the kiddie. I have absolutely no problem in how it is expressed because I truly believe that I have been able to emulate a number of the actions and attributes that my mother possessed. She was very dominant and she had good looks. Her character was impeccable and, of course, my Mum was industrious. She worked very hard and I was never embarrassed to say that she was an agricultural labourer. She sold her produce in Bridgetown from the plots of land she rented, and she was extremely God fearing. I think that when Barbadians talk about poverty that they have never really seen poverty like many of the women and men who grew up in communities such as our families did.

I want to sincerely thank all wonderful parents who make sacrifices to ensure that their children were able to access education, proper meals, good discipline and above all a love for Almighty God; that was what my mother stood for.

Indeed, she did not want any member of the family to collapse and cry on the ground because she always felt that one had to move on to a higher realm and, therefore, we should accept life as it is and make sure that we improved on it. She encouraged us to continue to be unified, to live in peace and harmony with everybody as well as continue to live and share whatever we had.

Mr. President, she often reminded us that she was the mother and we were the children. Sometimes we were uneasy with the outcome of certain discussions. We always stood up for what was correct because she taught us to always be upright in whatever we do.

She also referred to things like living on borrowed time when you reminded her that she needed to look a certain way when she was going to church. She felt she was living on borrowed time because she had reached her threescore and ten plus eleven more years which she said belonged to someone else. That was what she meant by "borrowed time"

because she had reached that special age mentioned in the Bible.

Mr. President, she encouraged us never to stop focussing on God and in her period of illness when she had Alzheimer's for three years, God was good to her and she was only bedridden for four days. I want to say that it had been a wonderful experience and those four days were special moments. I worked with her every morning for a year and a half to ensure that she was like a rose, those moments were important for me.

Mr. President, I want to thank my Mum and all the wonderful people who are responsible for us being here in Barbados to be able to live the quality life that we have lived and to be able to share in whatever we achieved.

I want to encourage all Barbadians who have relatives that may be struck down with Alzheimer's to ensure that they receive training to be able to understand and work with them to make them happy for whatever period of time they are on the earth.

Mr. President, it is an experience that I cannot put in words. It is a big challenge but at the end of the day when you are finished you hear, "May the Lord bless you". Sir, it is important that Barbadians take note and give support to the Alzheimer's Association so that individuals who are plagued with that disease can get the necessary care to put them on their feet. Mum remained at home with a caregiver because she worked tirelessly to put aside something to bury her and something to take care of her in her old age. Sir, that is what we were able to use to make my mother's last few years on earth wonderful years.

11.50 a.m.

Mr. President, I thank God for her life. I know that she died peacefully knowing that her children cared; that individuals around her cared and that she had lived a quality life.

Therefore, with those few comments, Mr. President, I rest assured that she is with the Master and I trust that all her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, godchildren and all others with whom she came into contact, will continue to live the kind of wholesome life that Mum lived because at the end of the day, character is significant and important.

Sir, as mentioned by other Honourable Senators, the presence of individuals in Barbados of all walks of life who called and attended the Thanksgiving Service spoke volumes to her quality life. I know that Heroes Day comes in a few days. Indeed, it is not only Mum but there are thousands of mothers, all of us in here and across Barbados, mothers who are unsung heroes, who deserve when they are alive to be told, "Mum, I love you, I respect you, you are responsible

for my reaching whatever height I have reached, whether it is a garbage collector, a postman, a teacher or whatever level, as long as good qualities have been instilled and the love for God and for fellow man." I think that is what is important.

I want to thank Honourable Senators again for their wonderful expressions of love, affection and the prayers that have gone up for us and I appreciate everything that you have done in this my time of grief.

May she rest in peace.

I thank you.

The Senate stood for two minutes in silent tribute to the life and example of the late Mrs. Cynthia Forde.

ORDER NO. 3 – THE GOLD AWARD OF ACHIEVEMENT BILL, 2001

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I rise to move the Second Reading of the Gold Award of Achievement Bill, 2001. This Act would create an Award for a single individual that would be awarded each year at the time of National Heroes Day. Sir, the Award would be for someone who has demonstrated superior achievement or performance in the previous year and it would depart from the nature of other national awards which address lifetime achievements. The Award would be based upon the recommendation of citizens. It would go to the National Honours Committee for evaluation and then the name of the awardee would be submitted to the Prime Minister for approval.

The eligibility for the Award is for persons who are born in Barbados and for persons or persons who are naturalised citizens. It could also be for persons who are not citizens of Barbados whose contribution transcends national boundaries, persons who have exhibited the highest excellence in any particular endeavour and whose diligence and sacrifice have helped in the socio-economic development of Barbados.

The Award also has specific areas of recognition that we would like to highlight, in other words, local church leaders who worship among the church congregation and local authority to enhance moral upliftment of people and whose organisations assist to raise the general welfare of the people.

Community work: Persons who voluntarily help community groups, individually assist socially organised work and lead by example when the communities are in crisis, for example, in case of natural disasters, fires, floods and hurricanes.

Artisans: Local artisans who have worked diligently in their craft and have acquired a reputation for excellence and good craftsmanship.

Agriculture and fishing: Recognition of longstanding small farmers and fishermen who continue their efforts towards feeding the nation.

Teaching: Teachers who are spoken of highly by those who are tutored by them and who have taught those scholars.

Businesses: Small businesses at the community level, especially shopkeepers, dressmakers, mechanics, hairdressers and barbers. Sir, some retail shops have become community centres of some districts, thereby, providing a wider service than just the service of commerce. Sir, some have become counsellors, support centres and so on.

Arts: Sir, from the days of the service of songs and tuk bands, local artistes have traditionally been known to thrill their local audiences. Recognition should also be given to indigenous music bands.

Cricket and sports: Recognition of sports persons who have given long service and excelled at the national, regional and international levels.

Service organisations: Persons who have given long and dedicated service to organisations such as the Lions, Kiwanis, Rotary and so on.

Health care providers: Persons who have contributed at community and national levels to improve the standard of health and to educate the public about good health practices.

Youth: Young men and women who exhibit high levels of responsibility in any field and who are regarded as good examples to their fellow peers.

Academics: Persons who go beyond the walls of the university and share their experiences through newspaper columns and other forms of publications.

Barbadians living abroad who have often distinguished themselves in various professions and have uplifted the image of Barbados and have done Barbados a specific service.

Therefore, Mr. President, you will see that the nominations would come from the community at large and then it would go to the National Honours and Decorations Advisory Council for the final choice of an individual who will then go to the Cabinet for approval and it would be awarded by the Governor-General. I think that this Gold Award of Achievement will strengthen the meaning of

National Heroes Day. It will also award people in real time for their achievements in the previous years and I think it will act as an upliftment to the nation and particularly to focus young people on the need of their service to this community and their fellowmen.

12.00 noon.

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

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator McClean.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I believe, persons would always like to see other persons being recognized for their contributions to the society.

However, what we have observed in recent times is that there seem to be looking for reasons to confer Honours on people and I think the likely impact could possibly result in the dilution of the recognition that we pay to such persons.

From the time I heard of this Gold Award of Achievement, Mr. President, I have been trying to think of what could be the rationale for it, or how one could possibly be supportive of it, and I have not been able to come up with any good reason, Sir.

I am just throwing out this as a possibility. I am not going to come down on one side or another, but what happens if the country recognizes a person for some achievement in the previous year and in the following year, or within months, that person does something which becomes extremely controversial and the society then frowns upon that person?

I am sure it is possible that it can happen to any person. In fact, that is one of the arguments that had been raised from time to time about conferring certain honours on persons before those persons reached a certain age, or while they are still active in public life.

However, what concerns me is that if we are going to be constantly giving out another Award every year, you are constantly looking for ways, and persons may not necessarily see it as an award, but a reward, or some other means by which we can show gratitude to persons for whatever reason.

If we are to continue with these Awards, it is reminiscent of the days of the old Communist regime where you always looked for a medal to pin on someone and hold that person up to society, but when the opportunity comes, you dragged them down just as quickly.

You have, Sir, a society that always sees controversy in everything...

Asides.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Order, please.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: And I can see that this Gold Award of Achievement, I am sure, will fuel the fires of controversy whenever it is made, because if it is made to John Brown, you will be inundated with comments as to why it was not Mary Jane, or someone else.

I believe it is impossible, annually, for society to come up with persons who, as a whole, the public of Barbados will accept as the person who is truly deserving of these Awards, particularly, if persons believe, for one reason or another, that there was the slightest involvement of any politician in the process.

As I said Sir, the idea might be well-meaning, but the parameters that are set out, as I heard read, could come down to persons doing something at the parochial level or within a particular profession and not necessarily be seen as national. Therefore, any Awards that you want to make, at the time of Heroes Day, that person obviously should be someone whom we see as emulating what those persons we have as National Heroes have. In other words, that person should be close to being a National Hero. As I said before, I see that almost as being impossible annually to come up with those persons who have made that national contribution without there being some level of controversy or dispute over the naming of such a person.

I believe, Sir, it is better if we seek to recognize the contributions on a wider scale that the people in the society are able to recognize, or persons can be held up as being positive contributors to the society other than going and giving this single Award to a person who might not necessarily be seen in the eyes of the public as having made a national contribution.

We already have a number of Awards by which we can recognize persons' contributions. Are we saying that these Awards we already have are inadequate to show the recognition that we have to show to these persons. We have the Gold Crown of Merit, the Silver Crown of Merit, all types of Merits. We have special Awards which are given out by the Governor-General every year for their contributions. What impact would this new Award now have on those which already exist? Are we saying that there is a need for another special category of Awards? Are we going to go on making Awards year after year?

We have just had the Centennial Awards, which obviously we would not see again unless those persons who, when reading the history books, decide at the turn of the next Century, they too will receive such Awards. But, we continue looking for reasons to hand these Awards out and I am wondering if we are not trying to create a sort of "feel-good" society, where we give the impression that there are

these glorious things going on, when in actual fact, we are not being realistic in looking at life.

I believe, Sir, that there are several more important things to be done in this country and I do not believe that it is necessary for us to be looking for a way to hand out another award to anyone in the society.

We already have mechanisms in place. We already have Awards which could be made to persons and it makes no sense, in my view, Sir, diluting those Awards which we already make to deserving citizens. I thank you very much.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Rickinson.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I do not have any problem with the Award. In fact, I would like to call for National Awards to be given to nurses as Awards are being given to policemen and firemen. I think the nurses justly deserve such an Award.

The problem I have is that people may feel this Award is not transparent and I am cautioning that everything should be done to make sure the process by which the person gets the Award is a transparent process so that people will not be pointing fingers.

I note that teachers were mentioned in the preamble and health care workers, but not nurses...

Asides.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: I know that nurses are health care workers, but I am singling out nurses in particular, especially in the face of the exodus of nurses from Barbados. We need to try to raise their morale and give them something to hold on to and more salary in order to keep them here to look after our people. With this, I do support the Bill.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Collymore.

SENATOR B. R. COLLYMORE: Mr. President, normally I would not want to comment on so simple a matter as an Award for any form of excellence in this community, but when I first heard of this measure by the News yesterday and I recognized that it would be on the Order Paper this morning, my reservation increased.

If there is some merit in awarding a special Honour for Heroes Day, when I heard the criteria which the Minister presenting the matter indicated, I would hope that there be no Award for this year, because if it has to go through that process which he has indicated, then it means that that person has already been selected.

It is not the kind of process, as Senator Mrs. Rickinson said, that could bear the kind of transparency, if two or three days before Heroes Day the legislation passes Parliament, goes through the parliamentary procedure and is signed by the Governor-General and an Award is made.

What is the hurry? I hope that there are going to be many more Heroes Days and it is the kind of thing which could be given more public ventilation before we rush this legislation three days before Heroes Day. That is what I find to be a little perplexing. In my view, it cheapens the Award if it has to be rushed like that. It could have been done last year, or earlier this year and there would have been no real quarrel, but the limited criteria spelt out in the Act do not square with the more detailed criteria given by the Minister.

We already have an Order of St. Andrew and other Service Awards and there is a special procedure for making Awards under that Order. We come now and pass a special legislation for one Award in any one year. I cannot say that as a citizen and apart from being a member of this House that I can be other than suspicious about such a provision.

Mr. President, do not let us minimize the point made by a previous speaker. An Award made each year might well be unworthy, or the person receiving it might well be unworthy of it if, within the next year something happens that does not make that person seem to have been so meritorious. I know it can happen with any Award. It can happen with living heroes, but we are multiplying that and as a citizen, I am unhappy that we are rushing this too fast at this stage.

I have to express those reservations and I hope that they are taken in the spirit in which I gave them.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Williams.

SENATOR J. E. D. WILLIAMS: Mr. President, I honestly feel a little sad this morning to be in this Honourable Chamber where we, as Barbadians, are debating a Bill that would seek to make it possible for us, every year as a country, to honour an individual whom we consider to be deserving of the kind of honour we are seeking to bestow on that person.

It says something about us in terms of the level of maturity that we, as a country, have reached where we can still be questioning the honesty and sincerity in terms of identifying someone who is deserving of an honour.

Over the years, Mr. President, all political parties have had the opportunity to deliberate and identify people who were deserving of awards and recommendations, and I can

honestly say that I believe those persons identified and selected were deserving of such an honour.

Why, at this stage, should we be seeking to suggest to ourselves or to society at large that something fundamental is going to change in our thinking as a people, how are we going to dispense rewards for work and for recognition? It is absolutely wrong to read into it what I am hearing coming from one Senator who spoke. He said it might be a reward and not an award. Why, in the year 2001, we as a people could still be thinking in those terms?

All countries, from time to time, and for whatever reason, seek to identify and reward people whom that country considers to be deserving of those awards, but in 2001, we have a difficulty because we always want to ascribe to the actions of people something that is pejorative and wrong.

Let us, Mr. President, take hold of ourselves as a people and understand that we have always done it right and on this occasion we will continue so to do, and when the Opposition, who one day, when that is, I do not know, would obviously become the Government of the day have a chance to identify and to recognize a person I believe, as I honestly believe today, that again a right decision will be made and the person receiving that award would be deserving of it. I am saying...

Aside.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: On a point of order, Mr. President. The Senator is alluding to the Government making an Award. From my understanding of the Bill, it is not supposed to be a government making an Award, it is supposed to be made by a committee.

Mr. PRESIDENT: No point of order, please proceed.

SENATOR J. E. D. WILLIAMS: Thank you.
12.20 p.m.

Mr. President, as the Bill continues to be discussed, I recognise that sometimes there is logic and good sense in doing things when you have the ability of recency, lest things fall between the cracks and something happens that an individual's performance is not recognised. Let us assume that it was the most outstanding thing that was done in a period of twelve months. Often, you hear people saying, "but you know So and So ought to have been recognised for what he did."

You create a moment in time and remember, there is a significance of using different periods in a calendar, using the significance of that period to award and recognise people. What I am saying is with that moment in time,

Heroes' Day is significant for us as Barbadians, so you want to do something special at that point in time, recognising the work, the special contribution of someone in the preceding year.

What can be so difficult with that? Rather than us recognising it, we believe that those opportunities should be lost. I cannot support that and as I will say, I will end where I began. I think it speaks to us in terms of our level of maturity or lack thereof when we can believe that there is going to be something pejorative, something negative, something wicked about trying to identify, to recognise and to offer awards to Barbadians who have done good work over the period of a preceding year. I cannot support that kind of thinking, but I do support the Bill, Mr. President.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, I rise neither to disagree nor to agree because it would be at this stage in our history difficult to perhaps justify an argument against a National Award. But on the other hand, it is difficult to understand how, over the course of a year, an individual can make such an outstanding contribution to community life and/or improvement in the economic and social conditions as to merit a National Award.

In a sense then, my major concern is the criteria that would be used to give the National Award and I say that not to be opposing anything but to be concerned. My interpretation perhaps of the National Award is that there is need to recognise people other than our National Heroes and to do so perhaps on an annual basis.

If that is so, may I suggest then that it is going to be particularly difficult to compare contributions across either profession or disciplines and therefore during the course of the year there is going to be a large degree of subjectivity used in determining who really should be given such a National Award.

It is possible within the course of one year to have several people making contributions that satisfy the criteria outlined in the Bill. I do suspect, therefore that the agenda here is very political and I do not mean political in the sense of BLP or DLP politics or NDP politics. It is very political in terms of how do we, in fact, seek to recognise the contributions of persons who are not necessarily deemed or seen in the same vein as the National Hero.

In the case of the National Hero, you are asking for contributions over an extended period of time, perhaps a lifetime. In this case, it is being suggested that you can offer a National Award to an individual over the course of a year. Now, that is where I have difficulty and I would love for the period to be extended or alternatively, I would appreciate that there be more categories for National Awards over the course of the year.

If you are not going to extend the period, then perhaps you need to identify a National Award for social contribution, a National Award for economics and a National Award perhaps for community life rather than one National Award over the course of the year.

Sir, I am suggesting again that it is going to be very difficult to single out an individual across such a wide spectrum to determine whether he or she is more deserving than the other person. As I said, I am seeing the political dimension of the National Award because it is not only the National Heroes who might have made such a contribution over an extended period who should be deserving of recognition but the smaller person around Barbados whom we may be seeking to target by this particular National Award.

In short, if I did something during the course of 1999, and I did it much better one year later, you are creating a foundation for comparison. You are therefore saying did I do enough then, or is it the case that what I have done a year later is now excellent as opposed to good or very good, so it is a question of what constitutes excellence and in which category of national life.

While I cannot fault an attempt to look to present National Awards, I am very uncomfortable that we are confining the recognition to one year because, and I repeat, I do not believe that one year constitutes enough time for a person to be conferred such an honour. It is like being at school, you are prepared for CXC's over a period of seven/eight years, then you take an exam and you are given whatever.

Aside.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Right, and it is like being at a university. You are there for three/four years...

Asides.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: ...so I have serious difficulty and it is not politically loaded, in recognising that a year is enough. I just cannot believe that it is enough. I am saying that you have to demonstrate a greater commitment to the community or to the economic and social conditions of Barbados over a longer time period for me to be able to say that you have, in fact, performed at a level of excellence to be deserving of recognition.

Sir, you are asking a national hero to make a contribution perhaps over an entire lifetime. You are asking a lot, Sir, which although we know it comes from the British or ordained by the Queen or whatever, it is recognition of a contribution that is made over an extended period of time. If we are seeking to give an Annual National Award, it does

not mean that we have to confine the recognition to a one-year recognition.
12.30 p.m.

That is my humble contribution to this debate. It has to be a more concentrated and prolonged effort on the part of the individual to be deserving. Let us not say that the National Award would be given to that person who has made a contribution during each year preceding National Heroes Day. Let us say that perhaps we have been identifying the work of individuals and that over the course of some time period we are going to give recognition to the work of the individual in that year.

If what I am saying is reasonable, then I am also suggesting that it does not have to be confined to one award per year, that you can actually search within the community and within the other disciplines that can enhance the quality of life in Barbados and confine it to the social or some other broader category and then on the basis of that you can then decide to give that recognition by way of a National Award to the particular individual or to two or three individuals per year.

I do not like the idea of confining the National Award to an individual person because you are really looking across too broad an area of contribution. I am suggesting that you cannot expect either given how life is that there is going to be only one individual who is deserving of such recognition of excellence in a given year. What I am saying to you is that it is quite possible that a two to three-year period can go forward without any person really making a contribution that is worthy of such recognition but that, in the course of one year, it is possible that two or three persons might have made a contribution deserving of this recognition.

I am just saying that in the most humble way that we cannot confine, to my mind, this National Award to contribution made during the year preceding National Heroes Day, that it has to be either subjectively or objectively and be over a longer time period for which you are seeking to recognise the contributions of whoever he or she is because nobody is going to become excellent overnight. No one is going to become excellent in an academic area overnight. No one is going to become excellent overnight in journalism. No one is going to become excellent overnight in anything. Excellence is a pursuit that is lifelong.

It is possible that one may do a good deed for an individual but we already have Awards in place which apparently recognise that. Even if you wanted to incorporate that into this Award, it does not stop you because you can always say that the person might have contributed at the community level or at some other social dimension.

I really do not have a difficulty because I am very aware that the pursuit of excellence cannot be confined to such a narrow time period.

What you may very well do is display at a particular point in time excellence, but that excellence is something that has been with you or the pursuit of it has been with you over an extended period of time. That is the sense in which I think we are indeed making a slight error in the language used in Clause 5 which says that:

"A person who during each year preceding National Heroes Day, through diligence, sacrifice, dedication to service and commitment to excellence has made an outstanding contribution..."

I am saying that as far as I see it, you cannot make that all inclusive package of diligence, sacrifice, commitment and everything overnight, and that it is far more long term in its origins than is being suggested in Clause 5 of the Bill.

Mr. President, that is my contribution to the Bill.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Mr. President, I must from the outset share Senator Williams' almost despair at the fact that at this time in our history and in our social development we could be going through this exercise in this way.

It reminds me, Sir, of the statement by a well-known Barbadian politician who is now dead, "Boy Child" Smith from St. Joseph, who used to urge Barbadians to stop peeping out under themselves and this is exactly what we are doing here now again. I would have thought that when we broke through the barriers of rewarding and awarding by conferring dignity, honour and acceptance of our own citizens through the National Heroes that we had broken that psychological barrier, but it does not seem that way.

What we have found is that people are peeping under themselves, splitting hairs and indulging in all kinds of contorted arguments in order to seek to question, which is their right, the validity and the good intent of this whole measure.

It reminds me of the time when there was only one Barbadian scholarship in Barbados. Then there came a day when we had more than one. We had five, six and now you have scholarships based on your performance. At that time when a proposal was made that there be more than one Barbadian scholarship, people watered it down and even polluted it. We have seen the society churn out and pour out others because persons were motivated because of the general upliftment of the society. Therefore, to think that we cannot do it in this regard is selling ourselves very short.

The point is that not all of our deserving citizens can be adequately awarded in our national honours every year at Independence time. For one thing, it is a very real fact that each category of persons has a limitation on the number. So immediately you are limited about the number of persons who can get a knighthood, who can become a Dame or who can get a Gold Crown of Merit *et cetera*.

If you listen to the Call-In Programmes, especially when the National Awards are made, you will hear people bemoaning the fact of what about the small man, what about this other person, and that there are only persons of a certain background who are rewarded. Persons who are deserving, in my opinion, have often been left out because you can only accommodate so much given the system that obtains at this present time and this is another way of seeking to honour those who have made a deserving and worthy contribution to Barbados.

The Centennial Award by its very name could only come around once in a hundred years. To be accorded the distinction of a National Hero is something that could only come about, like Senator Mascoll said, after a lifetime of achievement and contribution. This will mean that each generation would then have to review its history and determine who in their opinion deserves that lifetime award based on that period, so many other persons would be left out of that. This is an attempt to create a category for persons who are to be rewarded for their efforts, not by any Government, nor by any politician.

I am sorry that Senator McClean is not here because politicians very often fall into the cheap trap set by the rest of the society of seeking to pull ourselves down to make people believe that everybody's hands could be clean except politicians.

If you are a nurse, your hands can be clean. If you are an economist, your hands can be clean. If you are a businessman, your hands can be clean but as soon as politicians have to determine or decide on anything, immediately they are tarnished and sullied and go into the muck and mire of society.

I resent that because I am a politician and I know that I am no different from any other person. We all have our good points and our strong points. I wish that persons in an attempt to make cheap political points would not fall into that trap because it is going to be heaped on their heads some day too, Sir.

Asides.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: I am a politician because I do a political job.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Please, address the Chair, Senator.

SENATOR THE HON. G. S. H. MURRAY: Sir, even though politics is a practised profession, it is a job we do. Even though Senator Mascoll got beaten in his seat I still see him as a politician so we are all politicians in this respect, Sir.

The point is that we are limited and this is an attempt to reward those persons. There is a little concern about the fact that it seems as though this is being done in secret. Senator Collymore said the first time he knew about it is when he heard about it on the news yesterday. I do not understand that because there was absolute publicity about this new Award. As a matter of fact, Sir, there were ads placed in both newspapers asking the public to make their recommendations. There were ads on March 2nd, 4th, 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, *et cetera*.

12.40 p.m.

There were newspaper articles. They were not from the radio where the persons were asked to make their submissions from the bowels of the society. Persons were asked to make a submission as to those, whom in their considered opinion are worthy of this Award for having made an outstanding contribution which, as the criteria said, would have impacted on the national life of the country.

Sir, at one time in the debate, Senator McClean expressed some doubts about the society's ability to produce a person a year who could qualify. I do not accept that. Then Senator Mascoll talked about not enough time. When are we going to stop questioning and doubting ourselves? We have the political and social maturity to know that we can make a judgment and develop it and proceed with it like any other society that is seeking to reward its persons for considered efforts to the development of the society.

Sir, the point is that we have to go on awarding persons for efforts made on behalf of the society to motivate others to continue to do the same. Sir, it also exhibits an appreciation for ourselves as defined by ourselves and not as defined in the colonial office or some other external agency as we seek to define our own reality and our own world view of ourselves and contributions to society by ourselves. This is another expression of independence, not political but social and psychological. Therefore, Sir, persons who have confidence in themselves and confidence in their society to produce persons who are deserving of this Award have nothing to fear in this regard.

Senator McClean sought in his usual way, Sir, to ascribe certain questionable motives behind this Award. He accused the Government of trying to create a "feel good" society. What is wrong with trying to feel good? That is a slogan that is bandied about in North America. If you have

watched CNN long enough, you will have heard that term. What is wrong with trying to create a "feel good" society? We should try to create a good and better society by doing things that are good to make the society better off and the people better off, to improve the people's standard of life.

What is wrong with that, Sir, especially when his Party does not lose an opportunity to try to create a "feel bad" society by putting the greatest possible emphasis on all of the negatives in the society no matter how small, and seeking to give them gigantic proportions whenever the occasion arises? One counteracts the other. If they see as their role to create a "feel bad" society for Opposition purposes to achieve the Office of Government, we see it as our role and our duty to produce a "feel good" society especially when we are delivering the goods to the society in terms of higher employment and so on.

Sir, therefore, I have no doubt the public would have responded in its own way to the initiatives of this Government. While this debate disappoints me, Sir, I should not be surprised because Barbados seems to be obsessed with controversy. Last week the controversy would have been cricket. Well, there will not be anymore controversy about cricket because we have won a test match. But this controversy over this Award, Sir, will replace the latest controversy, and I have no doubt that it will be succeeded by other controversies.

Sir, I remember very well the controversy that ensued when the whole question of National Heroes' Awards was announced and those persons were designated to the highest of all possible honour and title.

Sir, I thought the debate was healthy because it allowed the people to think things through and analyse everything. I think the society is better off for it and it has a better understanding of the categorization of National Heroes. I have no doubt the same will apply to this one.

Sir, therefore this measure has my fullest support. I have no doubt as time goes on that the public will become better educated about it and the nominations will be in larger numbers. The point about transparency about this issue, Sir, is guaranteed by the fact that the nominations have come from the public as other Honours have been handled. The system is the same as obtained in the past. It has not changed since September 1994. It has gone on the same way. As a matter of fact, Sir, we have expanded the transparency.

Sir, in the past, Awards were done by names from a committee. Now the public is asked every year to make nominations. So it is not a question of this Government seeking to "reward" somebody in a backroom by using sleight-of-hand tactics or whatever. It is a transparent

procedure and the process is open. The public makes its own input and, therefore, I have no doubt that this is the first step in this process.

We do not feel that only one person should be honoured in Barbados. There was a time when Barbados had only one day named after a person. That is the Errol Barrow Day. Great man, yes, but there were other great men. The DLP Government who is having so much to say now, Sir, only saw it fit to honour one man. They did not even honour Charles Duncan O'Neal. Do you understand that, Sir? We decided that we had to look across the society and honour many other persons.

That is why we came up with the categories of National Heroes and National Heroes' Day, so that we do not have an occasion with Errol Barrow Day just being recognized as a bank holiday for persons. We have a National Heroes' Day where society collectively stands up and says, "Behold, these are our heroes. These are the persons we regard with the highest esteem because they have exemplified the most positive characteristics that the rest of the society should follow".

Sir, we do not have anything to apologize for because we have been transparent and innovative. We have taken the initiative and I am sure that this will be accepted in the spirit in which it is intended in the process of time.

Thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Mrs. V. E. NEWTON: Mr. President, I rise to make a very short contribution in this debate. It is to say that while, like most people around this Table, I support the concept of awarding those who give meritorious service or otherwise distinguish themselves in the community, I still have a few problems with this Bill. In my view, the concept is a good one but I would say that the Bill has not been very well thought out. While Senator Murray spoke of the process that was undergone to get nominations for the Award with notices in the Press and so forth, there is no provision in this Bill that that procedure has to be followed. It may be followed this time around, but who is to say that it will be followed the next time. I am not trying to impute improper motives to anyone but I would say that just as for the National Heroes' Day and the other Awards that are given yearly, the procedure by which nominations are made should be spelt out in the Bill so that we will know that each time around they are going to be followed. That is the first point. 12.50 p.m.

The second point is that while I am sure we will find persons on an annual basis to whom this Gold Award of Achievement is to be made, I find it a bit difficult in looking at section 5 to find persons who will make an outstanding contribution to the improvement of the economic and social

conditions of Barbados in one year. This would bring us back to Senator Mascoll's point that one year is probably a short time to be assessing someone's contribution for an award called a Gold Award of Achievement which you could consider to be our Nobel Prize, so to speak.

I do agree with those who have questioned the length of time in which a person is going to be assessed and I think that the procedure for having nominations and considering them ought to be a bit more transparent if they were spelt out in the Bill. Thank you.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, I just want in supporting the Bill to add a few comments to the discussion and to indicate that I may not have the particular passage in the Bible, but that section of the Bible that says that a man is not honoured in his own country touches me deeply as we deal with this particular Bill.

Mr. President, in the past we have sought to name institutions, for example, pavilions, schools, roundabouts, roads and so on after Barbadians who have done outstanding work and I think that this idea is going to move beyond that point because we will run out of institutions to give names to. We know that there are thousands of unsung heroes in Barbados, individuals who have gone beyond human call to ensure by their untiring acts that institutions they are involved in are held in high esteem and therefore I support this Bill.

Mr. President, I am one of the persons who forever will speak about recognising people and presenting them with awards during their lifetimes. I know that some National Awards and others may be offered to persons posthumously and there are times when that could not be avoided, but I support these recommendations for those individuals who have performed outstandingly, particularly within their communities. Thousands of people in Barbados do community work but there is no recognition because there is no record of it. People within the communities know who their leaders are and they rely on them for guidance and support in almost every activity.

We in Barbados at this juncture of our lives, should really be placing more emphasis on community life. We talk about families that are broken. We talk about persons moving from communities and leaving them dry. Persons in particular create a brain drain in that they move out and go into different communities to live forgetting that the communities where they lived that were cohesive in the '50s and the '60s and indeed the '70s are now broken apart and our young people have nobody with whom to identify.

I think it is important that we go the route of paying recognition to the contributions our people have made by making the difference in the lives of those who are involved.

I do not like to call names, Sir, since I have not informed you previously, but there is a gentleman living in the St. Michael area who every year offers exhibitions and prizes for young people in the area of culinary arts. He digs into his pockets.

We are talking about over the period of a year in which that old man digs into his pockets and goes all over Barbados seeking contributions, persons to do the judging, trying to gather materials because he wants to move young people forward in this society and give them some hope.

It is ironic that some days the negative acts that are splashed all over the newspapers of our young people and, indeed, some older ones hit us in the face as soon as we open the papers, but those in the communities who are performing meritorious acts are hidden away, sometimes on the back page, sometimes not there at all and the same goes for the television and electronic media.

I think it is a laudable effort for us to take cognisance of the important role that ordinary people, and I do not mean to be facetious, have made in helping to build Barbados. We have individuals who for many years have continued in all professions – I do not want to say nurses, teachers or priests, but in all professions. Yes, there will be some years, according to my understanding where there may be nobody to be presented for the Honour, but I know that the next year there will be persons because there are individuals out there performing important acts that need to be recognised.

I know, Sir, too, that there are national honours every year but everybody cannot fall into that category. Senator Murray in his presentation outlined that everybody would not be at that level but, indeed, we need to make people feel honoured in their communities and in the country, and we must not always be tearing down and pulling down as I hear every day from people whom I expect to know better. We need to give people a helping hand and lift them forward.

The Barbados Labour Party Manifesto has elaborated extensively on the building of communities and the kinds of things that will be done to help empower our people to make them feel wanted. We, as Senators and the people of Barbados, need to give our individuals more support, more recognition, and laud more praises upon them during their lifetime for the outstanding works they have been doing in any given year or over the years so that we can make them feel happy, and let our young people see there are indeed many more role models that they can emulate as a result of the praise, exposure, and recognition that would be offered to those individuals.

So, Mr. President, it is with those few remarks that I encourage Barbadians not to go down the road that the same tongue that blesses you blasts you, but indeed to uplift one another and recognise that each Barbadian who has done

something outstanding should be recognised. I know we are being influenced by the media, particularly the Call-In Programmes. There is a lot of substance that is said by many of the individuals who call in but we need as a people to sit, internalize and come up with the good things we know can carry our country forward and recognise those who have been outstanding individuals quietly or in the open and give them the rewards that are due to them. I thank you and I support this Bill.

SUSPENSION

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I beg to move that this Sitting be suspended until 2.05 p.m. today.

The question that the Sitting be now suspended until 2:05 p.m. today was put to the Senate and agreed to. Mr. PRESIDENT suspended the Sitting accordingly.
1.00 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. PRESIDENT: This Honourable Senate is resumed.

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I move that this 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, the SENATE resolved itself into Committee on the Bill, SENATOR THE HON. Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The Senate is now in Committee.

Clauses 1 - 7, inclusive, were called and passed.

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

On the separate motion of SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD the Bill was read a third time and passed.

ORDER NO. 1 – RESOLUTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE GREEN PAPER ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President this Resolution takes note of the Green Paper on

Persons with Disabilities. This Green Paper is an outline of proposed policies of the Government which are to be debated by society and the Houses of Parliament to crystallise and formulate the ultimate policy on dealing with persons with disabilities.

Mr. President, for a long time we have had private entities and Government's action dealing with those individuals in our society who are disabled in one way or another. Mr. President, when we talk about disabled people automatically we think of those born with disabilities, the more significant ones of deafness, blindness and impaired intellectual capacity. However, each and every one of us in this Honourable Chamber, Mr. President, could become disabled to some degree or other through an accident or just through the process of aging. When we talk about a policy for the disabled, that policy must focus on the dignity of life, on the continued capacity of people to contribute to the society and to enable people to adjust to their particular disability.

Mr. President, I recall a friend of mine who lost his leg while on a rescue mission in the early 1970s. He was fitted with a prosthesis and continued flying for the rest of his natural career and finally retired having done yeoman service in the field of aviation.

One of our Honourable Senators here, Mr. President, Sir John Stanley, suffered a very significant stroke at the prime of his life and his business career and through dedicated family care, perseverance and determination returned to his work, and we can all attest to his subsequent service to both commerce, the society and his country.

Mr. President, in the same way we must make the society friendly to people who have disabilities. We see repeated reminders of this in the entertainment field, through movies, films and so on. Quite often when we are talking to a blind person, you will find that people will raise their voice and this is symptomatic of how we treat people with disabilities who just want to be treated as normal people.

Mr. President, at the heart of this Green Paper is trying to educate people to put the facilities in that will enable those with disabilities to lead a normal life and to make sure that their interaction with the community is not one of stigmatization or avoidance. Persons with disabilities are often excluded from the mainstream of society and, therefore, denied their human rights. These range from invidious discrimination such as the denial of educational opportunities to the more subtle forms of discrimination such as segregation and isolation because of the imposition of physical and social barriers. This Green Paper, Mr. President, aims to reduce discrimination.

The threats of disability-based discrimination have been particularly severe in the field of education,

employment, housing, transport, cultural life and access to public places and services. Mr. President, we have heard the Minister of Social Transformation repeatedly ask for public service vehicles to be fitted with devices to enable people with wheelchairs to enter and use those public service devices. We have already started as far back as 20 years ago to reconfigure our sidewalks to facilitate the movement of wheelchairs along the streets of Bridgetown and the more modern sidewalks all have ramp facilities for the use of wheelchairs.

We come to the issue of education, and what we are talking about here is early detection of disabilities where children are diagnosed at an early stage if they have a hearing or sight impairment. This diagnosis enables corrective action to be taken at an early stage so that they can be mainstreamed into the educational system. Quite often, children who have been thought to be 'duncy' in the past, are just those who cannot hear or who cannot see the blackboard from the room. In some cases they are unable to see the blackboard from the front of the room.

2.15 p.m.

Sir, we are lucky that we have had particularly observant and caring professionals in the teaching professions who have been able to capture some of this and to take some remedial action within the school framework. However, quite often when that action has been taken, it is already too late.

Let me say that for the hearing impaired, it has been discovered that the learning process for speech takes place in the first six months of a baby's life. If you do not capture the fact that the newborn has a hearing impairment, you can then damage his capacity for language learning in later years even though the articulation of speech does not come until the second and third years of the child's life. It is that first six months of life that they show tremendous capacity for learning language.

I am happy to say, Mr. President, that the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, over the past year, has acquired the equipment to develop the skills to be able to test newborns so that we are able to detect hearing impairment within the first two weeks of life. This is a remarkable advancement in medical science. We are very happy to avail ourselves of this particular procedure.

Sir, despite some progress in terms of legislation over the past decade, the violation of human rights over disabilities has not been systematically addressed. This particular Green Paper starts to set out the policy where we will address this very important issue. Mr. President, we are talking not just from the point of view of altruism, although all of us feel very strongly about supporting and assisting

those with disabilities. Each one of us has contributed to such exercises over the years either by assisting them or by contributing to organisations who do such functions. Unfortunately, in the early legislation, a lot of the legislations and policies were based on the assumption that disabled persons are simply not able to exercise the same right as a non-disabled person because there has been a systematic approach to persons with disabilities.

Consequently, the situation of persons with disabilities often will be addressed in terms of rehabilitation and social services. Sir, a need exists for a more comprehensive legislation to ensure the rights of the disabled persons in all aspects – political, medical, civil, economic, social and cultural on an equal basis with persons without disabilities. We might say, can we afford this? We must have the objective. We know we cannot afford everything the first day but we must have the objective and outreach to try and achieve that goal.

If I might say that we do not fully understand the economic cost of caring for people with disabilities; that economic cost ties up many productive people who have to interact with people with disabilities who have not been trained to assist themselves, to look after themselves or even to contribute to the society.

I myself have experienced people who have had a retarded child and they have ignored it and put it in the back room, and as a result they got a retarded adult who could not help himself or do anything.

On the other hand, I know people that have had retarded children, who have worked with them, stimulated them and brought them up to have a normal life and to be part of our society, and they have contributed positively to their family and the society. This is what we have to strive for and we have to cut the mask of discrimination; the opprobrium that attends this sort of thing and remove the stigma for those who are disabled.

Mr. President, The Children Development Centre, is a sterling example of Barbadians coming together from all walks of life and across all political spectra to support an entity that works with disabled children; works with the early diagnosis and now has 2 000 patients under their care. However, that institution was formed with the wholehearted cooperation of Government, and in the absence of an over-arching policy was able to deal with the disabled. It was seen as a private initiative that would cost the Government a lot of money. To some extent that reality has been borne out. It was a private initiative and it does cost the Government a lot of money, but the benefits it has brought the society has shown that it has been a very cost effective operation. In hindsight, I believe that a foundation should have been set up for that particular institution where continued private sector support,

along with public sector support, could have paved the way for similar institutions or similar mechanisms to be developed and the day is not too late for it to happen.
2.25 p.m.

I believe, Mr. President, that this over-arching policy enunciated in the Green Paper will go a long way to develop a policy and framework for us to encompass the disabled and to bring them as fully into our society as is possible.

I would like to draw your attention to Professor Hawkins, a man with a very severe degenerative nervous disorder and probably one of the most brilliant minds of the 20th Century. To date, he can only communicate with computer-assisted devices. He lives in a wheelchair, but continues to write and think about spheres, physics and quantum theory that those of us who have all of our faculties and gifts that God gave us cannot really understand.

We never know when another Hawkins will come along. We never know what each human being is capable of. We never know what special gift has been given to each one of us, and because we may be born with a misshapen leg or the lack of an arm, or impaired hearing, or blind, does not mean that we do not have a gift to give to all mankind.

What we need to do in this Bill on Disabilities is to ensure that the policies outlined here facilitate the achievements of the true potential of every one of us and every disabled person in this society. We need to put mechanisms in place that will allow people to be independent with dignity. We need to be conscious of the fact that every one, the disabled and the rest of the society, have equal human rights under the Law. We have a right to education, medical care and a right to be able to use the public transportation, because transportation is a critical function of our socialization and working process.

This Green Paper on Disabilities outlines the policy objectives and its general principles. It holds the legislation and implementation of strategies in such areas of health, prevention, rehabilitation, education, training and supportive environments such as access to build physical environments. This means that in the future every Government building should have ramp facilities and facilities that will aid the blind in being able to traverse the various walkways and corridors, *et cetera*.

Now, it is no good just putting this legislation in place without having a visceral feel of what it means because, people will say that if you want a ramp they will build one and when persons get on that ramp they wonder if they are on the Olympics Ski Slopes, because it is so steep and not wheelchair friendly.

Therefore, you have to have a very comprehensive way of stating what you are trying to achieve in building these

facilities. You also have to recognize that various things have to be put in place to ensure that those systems are safe for persons. There has to be adequate warning signals which are audio as well as visual. For example, our cross-walk lights need to be fitted with an audio to allow blind people to cross at the crossing when the light is green because it is very difficult for them to see a green light. These are some of the issues we have to develop and put in place: access to communication and information, technical devices and equipment, income security and social security, family life, recreation, sports and culture, transportation and housing.

We already know we have the Special Olympics, so we have pockets of things taking place, but they are not coordinated and are not within an overall holistic framework as this Green Paper on Disabilities attempts to do.

I have already touched on public awareness which is the absolute key to everything else working. We have a tremendous legacy of stigmatization in our society for all sorts of problems. We have stigmatization with AIDS, mental illness, the disabled, and we have to get across to the people in our society that we are all one people and remind ourselves that we are our brothers' keeper.

We have to recognize the fact that your child, regardless of its capacity is your child. We have to recognize the fact that we cannot throw people on the rubbish heap. We try to rehabilitate all sorts of persons in this society, but we do not do enough for the disabled and therefore, stigmatization is one of the tremendous barriers that we have to penetrate to bring about a positive application of the policies outlined in this Green Paper.

Public awareness is the key. We have to speak out. We have to champion it in the society so that it raises the consciousness of the man and woman in the street on this issue. We have to set an example, both in business and in Government, to ensure that we make opportunities for employment and for positive activities within our organizations and for those people who can perform specific tasks at specific levels, given the proper guidance, proper environment and proper equipment.

There is a very important Chapter on research in this document and once again, we have done far too little research in our community in the many different fields; not just in the areas of the disabled, but in medicine in general. We are making a concerted effort to boost our research capacity and to improve the capacity of our research institutions to perform specific functions.

In this regard, I might say that foreign private sector Foundations have added much to the research capacity of this country and recently there has been some sign that the local private sector is beginning to be stimulated to participate in this area.

Mr. President, I believe this Green Paper on Disabilities is an excellent document. It is one that should attract commentary from the length and breadth of Barbados and from those who are interested and have a positive input to assisting their fellow Barbadians who are less fortunate than themselves in terms of disabilities.
2.35 p.m.

The definition of disability is wide-ranging. We should all recognise the fact that although many people talk about the disabled, thinking in terms of those who are disabled from birth, there are many Barbadians who are disabled as a result of accident and/or disease.

Mr. President, I look forward to this debate with great anticipation and I intend that the speeches of the Senate be specifically forwarded to the Minister of Social Transformation for his information so that it will assist in the determination for the final policy of the Government regarding the issues of dealing with or supporting the disabled in our society and putting in place the mechanisms, legislation, systems and knowledge to bring them as fully into our mainstream society as possible, and to make the quality of life for each and every one of them better, and to maximise their contributions to our society.

Mr. President, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: Mr. President, I am indeed happy to be a part of this debate on this very important matter of looking at the question of persons with disabilities in our society. I am glad that the Honourable Minister in his presentation made specific reference to persons who have become disabled by accident or disease.

I think this is very important because persons who were born with a disability are more able to adapt as they grow than persons who have lived a relatively healthy life and suddenly are faced with having to cope with a disability.

Some years ago, a former student of mine, a young man just in his 20's met with an accident that has left him paralysed for life. He was a young man who enjoyed active participation in activities and today he is wheelchair bound. Sir, when we speak of persons with disabilities, we have to consider what persons are likely to lose in terms of the potential contribution they could make to the society.

However, Sir, I must say that people who are disabled in one capacity or another are not necessarily unable to achieve, and I think that one of the problems we have faced in society over the years is that persons had tended to think that people with disabilities merely require our sympathy and are being looked on as persons whom we have to basically do everything for. In many instances, all these people want

is for you to provide the opportunity for them to help themselves. One can think of the great Homer where blindness did not prevent him from being one of the greatest classical poets up to this day.

I remember also hearing of the coach for the Australian Swim Team many years ago when Australia would have been a dominant country in swimming and the coach of that swim team was a paraplegic. I have seen an athletic coach from the United States visit Barbados and this man was so badly deformed that he could hardly walk, but these are people who, in spite of their particular disabilities, were able to achieve because the opportunities were provided for them.

I am happy to say that here in our own society, the University of the West Indies has also of late been adjusting to accommodate persons with disabilities. I remember the young man Craig Nurse and I used to admire the way his fellow students dealt with him. On Friday evenings when they had limes in the Students Union, Craig was not left out. A group of his fellow students would take him from the wheelchair and lift him upstairs so that he could be part of the activities.

There was a young lady who was blind that was able to obtain her degree. I remember when she entered the Combermere School simply because her teacher at the School for the Blind decided that this girl had the ability to go on and every effort was made to assist. I must say that the Head Teacher at Combermere at the time quite willingly accepted her into the school and she has not looked back since then.

I am saying all this to say that persons with disabilities can still make a very significant and worthwhile contribution to our society and the society has the responsibility to provide the opportunities for its citizens. Every citizen should be provided the opportunity to reach the maximum potential. However, we must agree that persons who are physically or mentally challenged have specialised needs and they will therefore require special attention.

Very often when we speak of persons with disabilities, we focus only on physical disabilities. I recall being taken to task by some colleagues in the staff room at school when I made the point that there were several children in the system who were mentally retarded. At that time, it was still politically correct to say, "mentally retarded".

I think today we refer to those people as being mentally challenged. The point I was making was not that these people were stupid or anything like that, but persons felt that as long as you say that some person was mentally retarded that it was an insult.

I saw it however, and I still see it, that any person who has a capacity that is below what is accepted to be the norm,

has some level of retardation or some disability. However, those persons can still rise to great heights if they are provided with the special facilities and given the attention that is required.

There is an ad on television now which from the Dyslexic Association. Albert Einstein was dyslexic but today to be referred to as "an Einstein" is to say that the person has exceptional intelligence. In Einstein's early days at school, it was said that he failed Maths very early in his career. However, as days went on, he became the person who is known as the greatest scientist and theoretician to have ever lived, but he had the opportunity. Sir, we have to provide those opportunities which will allow persons to achieve those things of which they are capable.
2.45 p.m.

Very often, I think, the civility of a nation is measured by the way we treat those who are less capable of taking care of themselves. In fact, persons who are less capable of taking care of themselves, animals and the environment, are generally the things that you measure how civilized a society is.

Asides.

SENATOR LeR. H. McCLEAN: The elderly would include those persons who are less capable of taking care of themselves. I heard today, one Senator in an earlier debate refer to the late "Boy Child" Smith. One of the things he said that stuck with me, is when he in his own style said that he was concerned about two people in the society, the little children and the old people, that the rest could take care of themselves. The more I think of that statement it is so profound because what he has basically said is that his politics was geared to looking after those people who are least able to take care of themselves. I think this is a measure of how civilized we are as a society by the way we treat those persons who are less capable of taking care of themselves. I must say sadly that in Barbados I do not think that if we use this yardstick to this day that we would rate very highly.

I do not think we have paid enough attention to date to the way in which we have looked after those persons who are physically and mentally challenged in our society. We only have to look around to see the lack of ramps to enter important buildings, or the insensitivity, or the lack of consciousness when persons design buildings, for example, when you put the Eye Care Department of a hospital on a second or third floor. People who are blind have to go there, but they have to climb up stairs and go back down these stairs in order to get attention. There is also the lack of ramps on major streets to accommodate persons who are disabled in crossing major highways. I am saying that to

date we have not done very well in terms of the way we deal with persons with disabilities.

Therefore, I think that this Green Paper is indeed a positive step in that regard. We have seen in some cases, as architects and builders become more conscious of the need to make special provisions for disabled persons, that some business places are having specially reserved parking areas, but we are seeing that every Tom, Dick and Harry is choosing to park in those areas that are reserved for persons with disabilities.

I think it is about time we have some legislation to seriously deal with these people. We see daily, young able-bodied persons who would go and park their cars in the parking spaces that are designated for disabled persons because normally when you drive into a place the area is closer to the door. I have had to ask the management of certain business places why they do not say something to these people when they park in the parking spaces that are reserved for the disabled and let people understand that they are not supposed to park in these places.

We have got to educate the people of this country of the need to pay greater attention to those persons in the society with disabilities. We must also give support to those persons who are making an effort to maintain some level of independence in spite of their disability. For years persons have marvelled at the quality of work coming out of the Blind Workshop, but how much attention do we really pay as a society to that facility, or how much support do we give to it? I am saying that as a society we need to be more mindful of persons who are doing things like this. How much support do we give to the School for the Blind and the Deaf or do we just see it as an institution that we can hide away our children in?

We have to start to be more conscious of the needs of these people because, as one Senator made the point, any one of us could wake up very healthy one morning and before we are able to go to sleep the night, we could be seriously disabled either through an accident or as a result of some crippling disease. In our society, fortunately, we have not had the experience of any major wars or any large number of our citizens having to be part of any major wars, but you only have to visit some of the larger countries and you will see the number of young persons who are wheelchair bound as a result of having served in a war and losing a limb.

I have seen my mother-in-law, a woman who loves to be active and who loves dancing, lose both of her legs eventually as a result of diabetes. You can see the toll that disability takes on persons when they are unable to enjoy the things they like doing. So we have got to be always mindful of these.

Mr. President, I must, however, point out something I am not too happy with in this Green Paper. I do not expect any detailed costing but at least some indication should be given for a programme or a process which would be developed to see how we can bring the situation to the level we would want it. It reflects what appears to be a wish list. For example, on page 11 we have Implementation Strategies on a blank page. I would hope that this is merely a printing error because we would really like to or I would hope that the topics are followed from let us say page 12 on or parts ...

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: On a point of order. Mr. President, until the policy is finalized and concretized there can be no implementation strategy. Therefore, the implementation strategy will come in a following document after the policy has been concretized so to speak, Mr. President.
2.55 p.m.

SENATOR LeR. H. MCCLEAN: I take the point, Mr. President, I do not intend to be overly critical of the Green Paper but I would like to see some form of proposed strategy. I assume that the persons who were responsible for putting this document together would have done so after some measure of study and therefore having done so would have some clear idea of the kind of strategies they would like to see implemented, so that you can see a sort of snapshot of what is proposed. I am sure that if persons are aware of what those strategies are, the best way to get participation or to get implementation of an idea is to involve people from the earliest level.

I am hoping one of the strategies that would be employed in attaining the goals set out by this Green Paper would be education of the people. I am not just talking about it, but about actually getting into every community and, if necessary, bombarding the public with information which will make them more aware and, if necessary, even bringing graphic details to them to indicate that we are all likely or are potential candidates in terms of the likelihood of being disabled.

Mr. President, I am sure that my fellow Senators on the Other Side would be happy to hear me say that I am happy to support the study of this Green Paper. Some of us give support when we see it as being necessary. I think this is a step in the right direction and I really look forward to the next stage when we would be putting the necessary legislation in place to ensure that all Barbadians would do what is necessary, and the legislative framework would be there to provide the necessary facilities and benefits which would help those persons with disabilities enjoy a better standard of living in this society.

Thank you, Sir.

SENATOR THE HON. Dame PATRICIA SYMMONDS: Mr. President, the Ministry of Social Transformation is to be highly congratulated on its plans to assist those with disabilities. I should like to emphasise that obviously Health, Education, Culture, Sports, Labour and Home Affairs will all need to be involved and, of course, it has been already emphasized the importance of public awareness which is on page 38 of the Green Paper which Senator McClean prefers to call education, but it all amounts to the same thing that the public needs to be made more aware.

Our Leader spoke about some negative attitudes, so I do not want to dwell too much on that except to say that there are negative attitudes worldwide although less so than there are in the Caribbean. It is changing in some cases and there is a growing awareness that the disabled are people too. I think that attitudes are still fairly prevalent, perhaps still too prevalent. It will take time because one can only legislate up to a point about attitudes, but in the long run it is a matter of how people feel about things.

Besides mentioning the subtleties and condescension which you find with people dealing with the disabled and even being uncomfortable, some people will even cross the street to avoid being near to them. It gives them a feeling of discomfort and then because we are not culturally accustomed, we as adults do not always exhibit acceptable behaviour to the disabled so that you find children will still tease them or sadly, and even worse, taunt them. These are things we have to look at.

I know that Senator Forde will talk about Education and what it is doing and what it has done but, of course, because of my deep and abiding interest in education, I know she will forgive me if I touch on some of the things which the Ministry of Education has been doing, and especially with the Learning Centre and the Challenor School who have brought children into the mainstream. There are units where children, apart from areas of literacy and numeracy, are socially integrated so that these children are beginning to feel themselves a greater part of the society.

I should like to point out here too that the disabled make excellent role models. I remember when Senator Philip Goddard was talking about someone he had known and I remembered years ago reading about Douglas Bader who had been an amputee of both legs and the tremendous courage which he displayed. I have never forgotten that.

The patience which they display, the efforts on behalf of themselves so that they succeed in areas such as sports and commerce, for example. There are some who are, and I am not talking now about slow learners, but there are some who are intellectually handicapped and find it difficult to

articulate what they want, and I think they need even more help at school and at home.

I do not think, Mr. President, that you would be surprised to hear me say this, but I think that the language needs to be upgraded. I think this is very important psychologically because we still hear words like "inmates" being used in referring to those in some institutions. When words like "patients" are used and "children in residential care" or you hear about people being "tied-tongue", that is a familiar Barbadian saying instead of tongue-tied; these terms are culturally insensitive and I think we have to be careful about those.

Senator McClean mentioned the mentally retarded, but it is true that the Barbados Association for the Mentally Retarded still retains that name and I must confess that I am a life member of that Association. I have also been on the Executive and I have asked about it and I would like to say publicly here that I should like to see the name changed to a more appropriate nomenclature than the Barbados Association for the Mentally Retarded. I hope that will be done.

I was very pleased some time last year to see the School for the Deaf and Blind had been renamed the "Irvine Wilson School" after the first Principal and that the school which was formerly known as the "School for Pre-Vocational Training" is being called the "Ann Hill School" after one of its pioneers.

I know that the Ministry of Education supports not only financially but significantly, technically and morally, the Learning Centre and the Challenor School. As far as I understand, the Learning Centre will also benefit from the EduTech programme. Again I wish to say that the Barbados Association for the Mentally Retarded, as it is still called, which runs the Challenor School has done an enormous amount for the mentally challenged and their respite care is something of great significance which I hope will gain even more support from the relevant Ministries.

It has proved of immeasurable benefit to parents who have wanted a break or had to go away and needed somewhere to leave their children. It is interesting to note too that they plan to restart the adult programme for respite care. I know the Rotarians were very helpful in starting this. I would also like to pay tribute publicly to volunteers like the Honourable Cecil DeCaires, Mr. Stanley Chapman, Mrs. Marina Leacock who has been a member of that Association for over 15 years and its current President for 15 years and Her Excellency June Clarke who was once a President and who encouraged me to get involved in the Association for the Mentally Retarded, and Eileen Murray-Ainsley, as everybody knows, an inveterate social worker.

3.05 p.m.

There are people who are very interested in helping those who are disabled or differently able, as it is called, and I do hope that it is in the schools more and more.

I understand that one of the units where disabled children went into the mainstream in a particular school were so much accepted that the other children began to treat them like their normal peers, and when some rather cruel insensitive children from another school began teasing them, they rose to their defence. These are things that are heartening when we think of attitudes and what we can do to change them.

I think that Green Paper will also do much to help us in our attitude to the disabled and help us see them becoming a part of the mainstream and given the opportunities in which they can do so much to be successful in leading fulfilling happy lives.

Mr. President, again I congratulate the Ministry of Social Transformation on this Paper which is really a beginning.

Mr. President, I thank you.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Mr. President, I would like to add to the discussion on this important Green Paper on Disabilities being presented by the Ministry of Social Transformation. Indeed, I should start by lauding the efforts of that Ministry as well for the Unit that has assisted in coordinating the activities, the Multi-disciplinary Task Force on Disabilities that was established in January 1996.

Mr. President, all Barbadians are aware of the theme that was offered a few years ago to indicate that disability does not mean inability and I support that theme one hundred per cent.

The Barbados Labour Party's Manifesto of 1999 at pages 9 and 10 clearly indicated the Barbados Labour Party's pledge to persons with disabilities and getting them involved in the growth and development of Barbados. Hence, the policy of inclusion is not only to include those from other political parties who want to join this great Labour Party in helping to push Barbados forward, but the policy of inclusion speaks to those who are disabled and to include them into the mainstream, and the growth and development of Barbados.

Mr. President, the Leader in this Honourable Chamber made mention of the testing of children within primary school for certain impairments, speech, hearing and sight and the referrals that go to the polyclinics and private doctors for those individuals who may be tested and found to have some disability in those areas mentioned earlier.

Sir, we have a great example in none other than Kerri-Anne Ifill from Combermere School who pursued her studies at the University of the West Indies and has been extremely successful. We know there is a child at St. Mary's Primary School and one at St. George's Primary School just to mention a few.

Indeed, Mr. President, I can speak of my own career where in 1975 I had a young child in the classroom who was physically challenged, and it was a joy to be able to work with him as it was my first experience, but it helped to bring out from within an appreciation of what parents, teachers and others who deal with children who are physically or mentally challenged undergo.

It also gave me an opportunity to be able to empathize, share knowledge and skill to suit the level of that child and to let him go home with a high self esteem and a little more knowledge day after day. Sir, I was 23 years' old but the exposure helped to fortify my strength and understanding how disabled individuals should be treated, and my appreciation has now been extended to many others within the various communities.

Mr. President, the policy of the Government of Barbados extends to the provision of equipment like hearing aids, walkers, braces for dental purposes as well as for the feet and things of that nature. I support the comments made earlier by Senator McClean about commonsense although more often than not we disagree on other issues.

Mr. President, the mandatory codes that are recommended, I have seen a tremendous change in some of the sidewalks even though some of the things I see I do not like because the sidewalks are sometimes high, but there is an effort to make the changes gradually. I have always said that Rome was not built in a day, but whatever efforts are made we should laud them and when there are difficulties we can highlight them so that improvements can be made as time goes on.

In most of the schools in EduTech 2000 such as Sharon Primary, Westbury School, Christ Church Boys and the new schools like St. Christopher Primary, Ignatius Byer Primary and the Lester Vaughn School among others, all the bathrooms and sinks are equipped with handles to facilitate those individuals who may be mainstream that would certainly need that kind of facility to assist them within the regular school.

Mr. President, ramps are also included in the plan. Other Honourable Senators mentioned the Irwin Wilson School and the call for a name change. I will not go down that road because when I look at the word "handicap" it says the same thing to me, so I will not deal with that issue now.

I would like to say that the Irwin Wilson School now has modern equipment and they can manipulate the technology in a manner that makes the difference in their lives and makes them feel special. I am happy that kind of thrust has been pursued to bring a higher level of achievement and development of self-esteem among those young students who really need to be dealt with in a sensitive way and make them feel proud to be citizens of this country.

Sir, the Prevocational Centre where many of the students were not coping with the primary or secondary school has been renamed after an outstanding lady, Miss Anne Hill, who made an outstanding contribution to the development of that school in the 1970's.

Mr. President, mention is made of the Learning Centre and the Challenor School and the students have been offered bursaries in many instances. There are monetary grants annually from the Ministry's end to ensure that those schools continue to cater to the needs of students who are put there under the care of those skilful teachers. Mr. President, it is fine to speak about what is happening but it is another joy to visit the classrooms and see the dedication, commitment and skill with which the teachers, tutors and care givers deal with children who have disabilities.

3.15 p.m.

I support the mainstreaming to ensure that all students who have the capacity to learn in the setting would get that opportunity. I further support any effort where the child who has disabilities may be able to attend the regular school sometimes in the week because he or she has the mental capacity to meet those needs, but to be referred to his or her institution where the necessary rehabilitative training can take place as well. That is a way of helping them to gradually get into the stream of things in working and rubbing shoulders with those who appear to be normal in a particular sense.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that a new facility was offered to those students at Erdiston Annex. Sir, because of the closeness of those schools they have sports together, and there are times of the week when they have prayers together. This is an opportunity where those children who are seen as normal children get an opportunity to rub shoulders and foster those children who display certain disabilities.

Mr. President, I want to laud the efforts of those Principals who ensure such actions take place. I know, Mr. President, that the students at Charles F. Broome get that opportunity of working in close association with those children of the Charles F. Broome Annex. They are all in the same compound but they are separated at times of the day for reasons which we all understand, but for worship and activities, such as games, they all come together. Sir, that is the route we should go in helping our young minds and

training them to develop and appreciate an interest, love and care for others who may not be as fortunate as themselves in some areas.

Mr. President, it is at this time that I would want to make mention of the Variety Club and the efforts it has made over the years to ensure that those who are disabled reap the benefits of whatever facilities are offered in this society. I know they have worked towards raising funds, training parents, supporters, well wishers and others to better handle those who are mentally and physically challenged. I know they have a bus that helps in taking the children across the country, not only to school, but, indeed, to visit places where they can recreate. They can have fun in the parks, at other homes, meeting other students and so on. I think that effort is also laudable.

Asides.

SENATOR Miss C. Y. FORDE: Sir, the Senator is reminding me that the bus was given duty free, for which I think Government has the responsibility to support any non-governmental agency and any agency that sees it fit, whether it is for health, education, social transformation or whatever, as long as it is going to bring about a change in the lives of individuals. I have every respect for, and I support any Government that makes that effort to ensure that the equipment and materials are duty free as it helps to reduce the expenses the parents and others in that association would have to pay.

Sir, the Association, BARNOD, also should be congratulated for its continual effort in ensuring that it reaches those individuals who have challenges. Mr. President, I want to laud the efforts of Mr. Cleveland Mayers and the outstanding work he does in the institution. Indeed, when I attended the funeral of the late Mrs. Delaney Barker last year, who was one of the leading people in agriculture in Barbados, Mr. Mayers read the Bible Lesson fluently using Braille, and I thought that was a golden opportunity for the rest of Barbados to see that a man who was in the prime of his life, as the result of a disease that might have taken over his body, whether it is diabetes, glaucoma or whatever, he still continues to play an active role in upgrading his skills and letting others see that to be blind is not the end of the world. There are still other important things and other opportunities for growth and development. I know that BARNOD would have played a significant role in helping both these gentlemen to reach that particular stage in life and let them know that they do have an important role in changing others.

Mr. President, they caned chairs such as these. We mop our floors with mops made right here in Barbados. Our living rooms have on display ceramics, paintings and craft that are made by the hands of disabled persons in Barbados.

The Challenor School, the Association for the Blind and many other institutions give them opportunities to be productive citizens. I think those kinds of efforts need to be lauded and the individuals need to be visited by us who are able-bodied to tell them how we use their products in our household so that they can get the motivation to want to carry on and to know that they are serving useful purposes.

Mr. President, we often see on the Government Information Services programme a young man who is disabled but is employed by Government. Indeed they are many others that I see daily. I think that more of that needs to be done so that those who are indoors feeling that they are not wanted, or that they have a skill that can make them useful citizens, that kind of motivation is necessary for those persons to want to go on. I really feel proud of that young man as he expresses the challenges that he met when he first started to work in the Department.

Sir, I know that BARTEL and other companies in the private sector are getting people involved who are physically challenged. They are getting on to their list of employees and I think that is a laudable exercise. The disabled do not want to be pitied, Mr. President. They want to be given equal opportunities to display their skills and to earn a living honestly.
3.25 p.m.

Indeed, they want to raise their own families. We know of a situation which I would not go into now because of the time constraint, but they want to raise their families. We know of a blind couple who have their own children and who have successfully raised them on their own. We know of blind individuals who perform every year at various activities and forms of entertainment across the length and breadth of Barbados.

Indeed, the efforts of that young man from St. George who has no legs and who was break-dancing, are to be lauded. We need to further encourage them that they are serving a purpose, that God has made them, but it does not mean that they should let these disabilities give others the impression that it is an inability to do whatever that has to be done.

Mr. President, I support the comments made by Honourable Senators about disabilities knowing that disabilities can overtake our bodies at any time, therefore, for me disabilities know no boundaries, no class, no status, no political preference. We all acknowledge, Mr. President, that a stroke, a fall from a horse, from getting into a bus, an operation, a disease, or some kind of action can overtake our bodies and instantly, we, who are walking around now can become disabled.

I support the call for all the recommendations as well for public awareness. Yes, we will find people who are

insensitive because there are people who will see me and laugh because I am fat, but it does not mean that I am going to cower and go into a corner and die. Therefore, even though it is insensitive of many to be critical like that, when dealing with the disabled we need to let them know that there will be criticisms, but there will be ways in which you can deal with the criticisms without cowering and going into a corner and not producing.

Normal persons also get criticized. People might say, "her head is so big", or "her mouth is so loud." That is the way it is with me, but I know I have a sense of humour and self-confidence and therefore, it might not bother me. There are others I know, who even though they look normal and everything is well with them, will go into a corner and want to commit suicide. We need to let them know that there will be challenges out there. People are going to want to criticize them, hit them, tease them, but they must not let that stop them from reaching their goal. If we continue to do that, as we do with our normal children, I am sure that those disabled will come to the fore and be forces to be reckoned with in another five years in Barbados.

Mr. President, the wide exposure that Barbadians now have they did not have 20 years ago, and I am sure it will help to encourage them to bring their children to the fore and offer them opportunities for further education, development of their skills, participation in the world of employment, especially now that we have the Internet at our fingertips and the technology is there.

Indeed, in one morning show last week we saw strapping women who had husbands that were dwarfs and *vice versa*. It was an interesting programme to watch, because I said to myself that I am not so sure I would want to walk around with a short person as my husband. But it gave me a sense of appreciation to see that those women have their goals held so high and they are aiming towards those goals. This is that type of technology that I am referring to. Indeed, there is a lot of literature. There are movies and a number of other activities that the public of Barbados and indeed the world have that can be used to further sensitize us.

Mr. President, in closing, I also want to praise the co-ordinators of the Special Olympics Team, the supporters and all those persons involved, because activities such as these can help the disabled to feel special. They compete with one another more aggressively to me, if I can use such an expression, than normal people who are participating in activities sometimes. I am sure that to be recognized, to be applauded, to be cheered on, to have parents with you and supporting you, to have others on the field with you motivating you is a very special and important part of their lives, but without the Special Olympics that would not have happened.

I encourage all parents, guardians, teachers, caregivers and others to continue working with the students, children and adults, whichever of them comes into their care and to continue giving them that dedication and commitment, continue to help them to develop their self-esteem and self-worth through praising them and giving them opportunities to produce, and I am sure that as long as that happens we will have a group of Barbadians coming forward appreciating, supporting, facilitating, doing all the things that are necessary to incorporate those disabled into the mainstream of our country.

I would prefer not to go into other specific Ministries since the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Transformation have played their role. The University of the West Indies and many others have assisted in some respect. The Ministry of Transport and Works, because they are the ones that help with the sidewalks and road signs. I want to laud the efforts of all the institutions: governmental, private and non-governmental, that have been put into ensuring that normal people, as well as the disabled feel a part of the growth and development of Barbados in this new century.

I trust that Barbadians will continue to be educated and appreciative in helping to bring our disabled into the mainstream of things so that they too can become the productive citizens that I know many of them have been.

It is with those comments, Mr. President, that I support this Resolution. I thank you.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Senator Odle.

SENATOR Miss J. C. ODLE: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I am very grateful for the opportunity to say a few words today on what I consider to be a very important document which would lead to a significant piece of social legislation.

For a very long time in this Senate or in the Lower House, we may have dealt with issues that do not touch the lives of persons in a direct way, and the legislation that will be developed out of this Green Paper on Disabilities is going to be a very important one, hopefully in the not too distant future.

Sir, as I read through the Green Paper on Disabilities, I find it to be extremely comprehensive. It looks into just about every area that one would imagine one needs to consider in order to bring about legislation.

It is my hope, Sir, that this document, like other Green Papers on tourism and other issues, would make its way out into the public domain for wide discussion. I know that, certainly at the level of the NGO's movements, they may already have been discussed, but I would like to see a town

meeting set up. If there was one already, maybe I have missed it, but I was not aware of one that was widely discussed, but I would like to see this in the public domain at the present time before the draft stage becomes a reality.

Mr. President, our Members spoke about the need for public awareness and there is quite a long page on that. I think many Senators have already spoken about the need to be sensitive and to be aware of persons with disabilities and not to pretend as though those persons do not exist and to shut them away into a corner.

In his opening remarks, Senator Goddard made reference to situations where a child with a disability was shut away and that what you later got in life was an adult who is not able to contribute or to participate in any meaningful way in the society. This shutting away process still exists and it must stop.

It gladdens my heart when I come into contact with persons with disabilities. For example, there is a young client of the organization in which I work, whose mother at a great cost to herself both in time and money, brings her child to receive beauty services, and it is the highlight in the life of this young lady. She is 22 years old.
3.35 p.m.

It is such an outing for her and every single person that works in the organisation is a part of that. I must say that in the initial stages of her visiting, there was discomfort and fear even on the part of some of the operators in the organisation because they did not know how to act, they did not know how to speak, they did not even know if they should speak to the individual, and it was almost as if they needed to speak about the person as if they were not even there. I am glad to see that now that is beginning to change.

I think the more we encourage ourselves to be involved in processes where persons with disabilities are given an opportunity to come out and shine and be incorporated into the mainstream of life, so too will we be better informed and therefore treat persons with disabilities as normal and not to do as one of the other Senators mentioned. You may be deaf, you may be blind but are spoken to in a loud tone of voice, and Senator Goddard made the comment that some people are inclined to do so.

Sir, what I would like to see developing further, and I note it in the Green Paper at page 31, is family life. I am aware of the challenges where a family, particularly if it is a family where they may be a single parent or one parent for whatever reason or another, has to cope with all aspects of care giving for a person with a disability, they themselves can come under tremendous stress. It is with interest and gladness I note that the National Disabilities Unit, which

was set up by this Administration, makes provision for assisting in that regard, having during the year 2000, coordinated a Telephone Link Support Group which has as its aim a number of initiatives. One is to provide companionship for persons with disabilities. Another is to help persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers to develop a way of coping.

Sir, in order to get through a day, a "normal" person needs to pull out all the stops sometimes to make that day meaningful and a success, and sometimes just pray that you can get to the end of the day and hope that tomorrow would not be the same. This Telephone Link Support Group has that as one of its initiatives to assist in that regard.

The Telephone Link Support Group also has as one of its responsibilities, to make the concerns known to the Unit because often, there are many people with all kinds of concerns, and if you do not share them, you do not know that there might be somebody else experiencing something similar and you believe that you are carrying that burden alone. The Telephone Link Support Group is created to assist in that regard. It is to encourage sharing and the building of confidence in oneself.

Senator Forde spoke extensively of the need for one to be confident with oneself so that you can be a contributor in a meaningful way in whatever your area of expertise, or just even in terms of your daily look and how your face manages to smile or not to other human beings as you go through each day. Importantly, Sir, the Telephone Link Support Group is to provide moral support.

We spoke earlier about groups coming together to try and reinforce. Certainly, even on our side, when we have our group meetings, this is to show and encourage everyone that this might be a way to do one thing or another to make ourselves present a better case as time goes on.

Part of the work, Sir, that the National Disabilities Unit is also doing which will work hand in hand with the legislation when it comes, is the acquisition of buses through the Transport Board. I am informed that there have already been some buses acquired and these were acquired through the lobbying and advocacy of the National Disabilities Unit.

I do not know how many buses there are but I wonder how many people know that they are there for this purpose. A discussion like today's will be an ample opportunity for information of this sort to go out. Very often, Sir, good things happen in this society, but it is almost like hiding a light under a bushel and therefore the information is not as publicly known as it should be.

The other area within the document that was of great interest to me, Sir, is the area of housing, on page 37. I

remember many years ago when I was involved in another programme, there was an initiative by a service club in collaboration with the National Assistance Board of the Government of Barbados and the Challenor School. This was a project where they had created two homes on the compound of the Challenor School so that two of the young adults could share a unit and take care of their business, doing their own cooking, doing their own washing and so on, but still under the confines and on the property so that they were independent but at the same time in a secure mode. This great initiative was taken many years ago and I would like to see more of that kind of initiative taken by the service clubs in Barbados.

I know that the Optimist Club is undergoing a similar programme but this is not for persons with disabilities. This is for young persons who currently need to move on from the child care residential facilities, but need to be still in a safe place.

As I look at the Housing as is outlined on page 37, part of the initiative that this will take is the assessment of housing needs for persons with disabilities and the ability to acquire housing lots and units. Sir, we know that in Barbados at the moment, there is a great and sustained pressure by many to get Government units both in terms of houses and to get land. I do not know how the Government could ever provide all of the housing that is required, but I know the efforts are ongoing. Sir, whatever efforts are ongoing must include units for individuals with disabilities, and any new units that are being built now within the context of the Government's housing programme should, as a matter of priority, set aside a certain percentage for individuals with disabilities. I am not aware that the building code is already in place but units now under construction, even before the legislation comes in place, should have ramps, *et cetera* to ensure that the provision is made for security and safety with respect to persons with disabilities. Sir, I am pleased that this aspect has been taken into consideration as well.

Sir, I would also want to take this opportunity to urge, and Senator Forde spoke to it already, the whole concept of volunteerism with respect to organisations of all sorts, particularly organisations that deal with persons with disabilities. I recently spent a day at the Special Olympics and I have to say that I really had a good time. Now volunteering is not new to me but it was the first time that I had actually worked in this particular type of programme. Sir, just the way the athletes received their awards and medals, it was as exciting as if we had been at the World Olympics. One thing I will say though, we had a tremendous amount of support from a lot of young people: the Cadet Corps, the Defence Force, many school children and so on.

I would want to urge all individuals in Barbados to take the opportunity to try and give a little hour or two in any

given week to an organisation such as this and not leave the brunt of the responsibility of volunteering to the same small core group of individuals who nearly always at every event can be seen to be doing different things with different organisations. We have to perpetuate that spirit of goodwill and that spirit of sharing that used to be such a great part of the Barbadian landscape in days gone by, and I would wish that we could keep this to the forefront of our minds.

I also want to commend several of the schools – and I myself did not know that there were so many schools that had children with disabilities – to continue the work in that regard. I am more familiar with the Thelma Vaughan School because it is in very close proximity to where I live and several of the residents there have reached a stage now where they are going to be needing to have their own residential arrangements, and several of them are capable of earning a living.

3.45 p.m.

I will not call names but there is one young man in particular who has no fingers but who plays the most beautiful music I have heard in a long time on the keyboard. He has been able also to support himself in some regard by working as a waiter and he does it so very well. Sir, he has not allowed his disability to cloud his drive.

Sometimes if we take the time to just sit, which is a wonderful way of volunteering, and chat and listen to some of the views of these persons, who oft-times can be overlooked because of their physical psyche because we may believe, stupidly so, that they have nothing to offer, nothing to share or nothing that you can learn from, it is amazing some of the ideas that can come forth. As regard the whole concept of networking, if each and every one of us would take that opportunity, it is amazing the deep reach we can have in terms of creating a better life for persons with disabilities.

In saying a better life, it reminds me that – this is not the time for politicking – the motto of this Barbados Labour Party is one that speaks very much to the creation of a better life for our people. When we speak about our people, every Barbadian is our people and we really and truly need to be conscious that we do not marginalise any further any group or groups of persons in Barbados, and that is, with or without disabilities, because sometimes when you marginalise people, and Senator Forde mentioned this, they are inclined to retreat into themselves and perhaps will not be as valuable or not as great an asset as they could be in the context of sharing in the total landscape of Barbados.

With those few words I want to say that I am very happy that this Green Paper has reached the Senate. I look forward to wider discussion on it and on hearing of the input in the public domain as well by way of the television, the

newspapers and from those who will actually be the beneficiaries of the legislation that this Green Paper will give rise to.

Sir, without further comment I wish to support this particular Resolution.

SENATOR Mrs. P. E. RICKINSON: Mr. President, I rise to support this Resolution to take note of the Green Paper on Persons with Disabilities. A lot of the contribution that I had planned to make has been made by other persons including the Leader of Government Business and I will not try to make them again. I would like to congratulate the Ministry for putting forward this Paper and join in the chorus of having it discussed a bit more widely.

Mr. President, in Barbados, we have always had a special place for the visually challenged. We have the Blind Workshop and the Lions Club have supported them and several people have more or less adopted them. However, when it comes to the mentally and physically challenged the same cannot be said for them. I feel we would need to deal with the mentally and physically challenged a bit more comprehensively and pay more attention to them.

I would just like to say a few words, since this has not been touched, about disabilities from mental illness and mental disorders which, according to the burden of the disease worldwide, account for the largest percentage of disabilities in what is called the global burden of disease. The increase in their share of the total global burden will be about 15 per cent in the year 2020 which would be a bigger proportionate increase than cardiovascular disease. This just gives us an indication of the enormity and the potential problems we will have on our hands with regard to mental illness and disorder and the disabilities arising from mental illness.

I know we have been hearing about how Government plans to address it but we will have to do a bit more and start implementing some of those plans that we have been hearing. I think we need to start off first, Mr. President, with defining in Barbados what we mean by mental illness, mental disorder and the disabilities arising from them. We have to just make a definition, get that out and let everybody know exactly what we mean by that.

I know the Leader of Government Business has been trying his best to change people's attitude and he is doing a good job. It was like that with polio, it was like that with diabetes, it was like that with cancer and it is just going to take time and public education over and over again.

I think what we need to do in Barbados as well is to decide what a psychiatric hospital is, because as you know the trend now is moving away from the building of

psychiatric hospitals, and these are people with disabilities I am talking about, to the building of halfway houses and small homes for people with disabilities. Any one of us who has travelled worldwide, in France, in particular, will see people who all they can do is to drive the wheelchair by just blowing into a computer and they go and do their shopping but they are very independent and live in homes. They might have a house mother or someone to assist them. I know it is going to cost a lot of money but that is the trend today.

In fact, many countries have closed down their psychiatric hospitals because of the technology that is available. You really have the medication now to give people and they do not need to be locked away, so people with that type of disability can be integrated into the community bit by bit.

I would like to see us decide on what a psychiatric hospital is and if we want one. I would also like to see us expand the Psychiatric Unit at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) because people accept when their children go into the psychiatric ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital as there is no stigma attached to that but it is a different kettle of fish when they go to the Psychiatric Hospital. I think the more we try to integrate psychiatry into the general public health system the better we will progress regarding the acceptance of the disabilities in the area of mental illness. I do not think we will make very much progress until we look at these key issues and actually decide what they are and where we are going from there and then be able to have a general discussion.

In the Green Paper on Persons with Disabilities, I notice in the area of primary prevention on page 19 they have mentioned psychologists. They are talking about primary prevention of disabilities, but they have not mentioned my pet project, the nurses. Mr. President, we have been hearing recently from no less a person than the Head of the World Health Organisation about the different talents of nurses. I have been talking about it and now you are hearing about it from other people. Nurses can go and test those children in the schools.

In fact, they can go into the pre-schools and the nursery schools and test them but they are only doing it on an *ad hoc* basis. They need more nurses out there attached to given schools. Some days they will work in the polyclinics and some days they will go into the schools. This is not something that is definite all the time and we need to make that definite so that you can employ nurses in the schools who can do the testing of the school children right through all the forms until they leave school. We need to have nurses attached to the schools just like how you have teachers. The schools will pay the nurses and they will do the assessment of the children.

3.55 p.m.

We must admit that this is a world full of behavioural problems. We need to access them and treat them early. The Leader of Government Business talked about that, but I am talking about the implementation stage. In the secondary prevention, I am asking for community nurses. Now there is a programme at the Barbados Community College that has started training Public Health Nurses. They need to put some Psychiatric Nurses in that programme so that they can be put into the community to assist with the behavioural problems and the disabilities of our young people.

When we talk of disabilities, we tend to think of the people who are visually challenged. We do not seem to feel that those people who go and smoke marijuana and break into houses, *et cetera*, have disabilities. These are behavioural problems. These are disabilities that go far and wide. We need to look at this and we need to use our nursing personnel and give them some incentive so that they can get some job satisfaction and go out there in the community and assist.

For example, Sir, there is the disability of incontinence when they cannot hold either their faeces or their water. That is a specialty in nursing in other countries. The nurses work with the person and they teach them how to deal with that situation, and they walk around like you and I and go out to functions once they know how to deal with it.

Sir, colostomy, is another disability. Our nurses can go out there and help in this area so that the person will not become a burden on their family and health care system. They should not be going to the hospital for treatment. Let the nurses go out into the community and look after them.

Another area I would like to speak on that Senator Odle spoke about was housing. Now to me I think that this is one of the most important areas in dealing with people who have a disability. It is the bedrock of maintaining a normal lifestyle in the society. I think we have to make a serious decision. Apparently, the policy has not been made but I hope that when it is made they will decide on the mix of housing that is needed regarding persons with disabilities. We are going to have some in institutions, halfway houses and homes. Some of these will have to be built.

In fairness to the Government, at the London Bourne Towers I know there are some people who have been given places there. At least I know one who is visually handicapped and I was very pleased to know that she was given one of those nice apartments in the new London Bourne Towers. That is a start and that is the way to go and I hope that continues. She is very happy with her apartment and she is very comfortable. Once we start doing this, Sir, we will be able to integrate people into society much more.

We are accustomed to the visually challenged, but we are not accustomed so much to the physically and mentally

challenged because they are either shut away in a Psychiatric Hospital or in the home. When you start dealing with them, it brings out different types of emotions in people who never knew that they had those emotions. This is very good for the society and it makes the society a bit more humane, kind and conscious, like the example of the young persons in the school who defended their territory when the children wanted to make fun of persons with disabilities.

Quite a lot has been said, Mr. President, about education and public awareness and that is my pet topic. You know that I am always calling for health education in the Ministry of Health. There is only one person there and we cannot get very far in Barbados unless we get that Health Education Unit adequately staffed and financed to make audio visuals and get it properly staffed. One person really cannot do the job. I had the job and I had to resign because it was too stressful. It nearly killed me. It is too much work if you are going to do a good job. You need a cadre of people to work in the Health Education Unit and to go out. I am hoping that with the advent of people looking at the disabilities and HIV/AIDS, because that is a disability as well, plenty of money will be coming for that. It seems as though a lot of money is floating around. I sincerely hope that you can incorporate that money to help with some of the other disabilities as well.

Sir, I have a note here about the help. I would like to see district teams working with agencies going out into the community in the area of health education in order to sensitize the public. They are doing quite a lot in the newspaper but we need a bit more face to face information to help make them a bit more sensitive.

As far as the sidewalks are concerned, I would like to bring to the attention of the Ministry of Social Transformation that there is a sidewalk down by Sandy Lane with pillars sticking up that has no right to be there. It is not good for people with disabilities and it is my understanding that there is something being done at Mullins. I sincerely hope that they will be able to widen that sidewalk in the Mullins area and also remove those spikes that are sticking up on the sidewalk down by Sandy Lane. Let them know that it is not good for people with disabilities.

Mr. President, regarding the employment of people with disabilities, I think perhaps that one should provide some form of incentives to the private sector to employ more people. Some do employ people with disabilities but if we could give some form of incentive to employ more people with disabilities that will go a long way to help us integrate them into the society a bit more.

Sir, last but not least is the area of respite care. The Government does try to give respite care at the Geriatric Hospital but there is not enough space there. It is hoped that

in the near future we will be able to build some form of housing or place for people who look after people who are physically and mentally challenged, because they do get stressed out. They need to have a rest or go on holiday.

The Challenor School is not big enough to leave many children there. They do leave some children there, but we need places where we can leave the elderly and also those people who are physically and mentally challenged for one or two weeks so that we can give their caregivers a little breather. This is how it is done. I do not know if a local company would be willing to build it or if an organization would be willing to coordinate it. It is that type of institution plus a hospice which we really need in order to carry us further in our health services development.

Again, last but not least, I would like to congratulate the Director of the Psychiatric Hospital and the staff for the work they are doing there. They have done quite a lot of work because when you go in there you notice it, even though some of the nurses are going overseas. Sir, the Director has set up a lot of committees and the management there is very modern that one would like to see it repeated in other institutions in Barbados.

4.05 p.m.

I know that I come and am very critical in some areas, but I think that when people are doing an excellent job they deserve praise and I would like to see the Psychiatric Hospital continue on the road it is on. It has a peer review committee and it is doing a very good job.

With this, I support the Bill, thank you.

SENATOR C. A. MASCOLL: Mr. President, I rise to give full support to this Resolution but I have a few remarks to make. For one, I have spent a number of years at the Psychiatric Hospital. As a young boy, my father was a male nurse and he was the one who initiated the rehabilitation project where the patients were asked to grow vegetables and to have skills in dressmaking, tailoring and cooking. This project occupied the land between the back of the Psychiatric Hospital and the Farm and it is in that respect that during my vacation from school I spent quite a lot of my time on the compound of the Psychiatric Hospital and I am very familiar with it.

The unfortunate recent event there which perhaps this Side needs to hold onto is in a very eager representative whose pursuit is only political and not broader – I have said what I have said – and it could be to the detriment of a lot of measures and policies taken by the Government but that is another matter.

As it relates to the Resolution, I am concerned that over the years so far we have attempted to deal with a

number of social factors in Barbados; crime and we have also tried to look at the economy and now we are looking at disabilities. What we appear to do is to bring a Green Paper and then say somewhere in the body that we intend to undertake studies and research. I do not know if I am biased, but when the crime situation came to this Senate I said then that perhaps we need to do a study first on the crime situation to be able to decide and determine the kind of policies and the direction we should be going in.

As it relates to the environment, we should do likewise. We should have our studies on the environment and then out of that we should formulate policies for the future management of the environment. As it relates to the disabilities, I also feel that somehow we should have our research done and then we should out of that information seek to formulate policy and direction for this very vulnerable group in the society.

Let me say that perhaps what is needed is for us to speed up the process of public sector reform from the point of view of being able to assess what we already have within the public sector and what information is available for analysis before we begin to make all of these commentaries.

I would like to introduce into this debate in fact some information on disabilities in Barbados. As it stands in Barbados, about one per cent of our population has disabilities of sight. That is just under 2 500 people altogether. That represents one per cent of the total population as it relates to hearing disabilities. About half of one per cent of our population has problems with hearing. In both cases, persons over the age of 65 represent about 75 per cent of persons affected and in both cases between 60 to 65 of all persons affected happen to be females. The concentration of disabilities in sight and in hearing is among the female population and is concentrated after 65 years and over.

There are other disabilities as well such as mental retardation where between three quarters of one per cent of our population or just about 900 to 1 000 people are, in fact, affected by this disability but in this case the persons between the ages of 15 and 45 represent well over 70 per cent of all persons affected and persons between 25 years and 35 years constitute more than 50 per cent of that 70 per cent affected by mental retardation.

What I am seeking here to describe is that our approach to disabilities has to take into consideration several different types of disability, and then we need to understand the characteristics of the respective kinds of disability. As in the case of sight and hearing, it seems as though those two are concentrated more among the geriatric population, whereas other forms of disabilities reside in the younger groupings of Barbadians.

I say that to say therefore that our strategy cannot be homogenous; it has to be a heterogenous type of approach towards disability policy. That is important. If we were to look at the question of slow learners which has to be and is considered a disability, persons between the ages of five and 19 represent well over 60 per cent of those affected. In that instance, the total affected population happens to be somewhere between 500 and 700 people in Barbados.

I have made those comments without reference to my source, but I am saying that there is a source and it happens to be the Population Census which is the best source you can ask, so that even if you want to do a study in the future, there is existing already in Barbados information collected not by way of a survey which is going to be just a sample of the population. This is an entire census. This happens to be slightly dated but a census was done in 2000, so I am saying that in fact it does not matter, and there cannot be any substantial change in the distribution when it comes to this information. Between 1990 and the year 2000 there would not be any remarkable difference in the types of disabilities that you have in Barbados.

I am also saying that it does not matter because only last year we conducted an entire survey on the total population which is a census. In there must be contained information of the types and kinds of disabilities and age cohorts and other things which we can appeal to, so we do not have to be scrambling to look for a national survey on persons with disabilities.

What I am saying to the Minister of Health is that somewhere in the Barbados Statistical Service there is a host of information on the whole question of the health of the Barbados population. What you are going to get from here on in will just be a sample rather than an entire survey of the population because it would be too expensive to fund an entire survey.
4.15 p.m.

Without charging a penny, Mr. President, I am simply offering the Minister of Health information and advice because I am a Barbadian and I feel a very special connection with disabilities. There is already existing across the street from this Senate a host of information on this whole question of understanding and characterising disabilities in Barbados.

While I understand the need to have a survey done, I am saying that somehow, we in Barbados do not make adequate use of existing information. What is most important is that even if we conduct a survey now it would be interesting to find out what has happened over the course of the last 10 to 15 years to determine why it is that we have had an increase or a decrease in the incidences of disabilities

regardless of the kind of disabilities that would occur in the society. From the point of view of making comparison and being able to explain what is happening to our health system in Barbados, a historical analysis would provide us with that and, indeed, what we should be seeking to understand more so is how perhaps we can seek to explain why there has been the particular trend in whichever direction there has been the trend.

Mr. President, if you turn to the 1990 Population and Housing Census on pages 151, 152 and 153, you are going to find categories of disabilities relating to sight, hearing, speech, upper limb, lower limb, neck, spine, mental retardation, slow learning and others. This is not a partisan political issue. This is a very important area of concern for Barbadians which cannot be divided along political lines because regardless of which side of the fence you are on politically, you are concerned about the vulnerable groups in society. It is a special area of attention that we cannot politicise. It has to be treated as a national concern and that is why I am making these suggestions to the Minister of Health that he does not need to start from scratch and that information is, in fact, available for some degree of analysis.

I am not sure that it is obvious to some people in the public sector that this information is available. You get the same thing as it relates to taxation and understanding what is happening to the income tax system and to VAT. There is a whole host of information in the Inland Revenue Department that can be analysed but because of the system you do not have direct access to it. I have said it in this Chamber before that perhaps there is need for a change and that the most critical factor for Barbados' future management has to be public sector reform. It is a necessary condition. It is not efficient, so it is necessary that we reform the public sector. How it is done is another matter but it is absolutely necessary because we are talking of a future that has to do with efficiency of management of productivity.

There is no way in which we can continue to allow the public sector to lag behind the private sector or you will get all forms of inefficiencies. In essence, you cannot have an engine with four pistons functioning adequately with only three pistons. In similar vein, an economy cannot function simply on the basis of a private sector. The public sector is equally critical and in many cases, may be even more critical because it plays a facilitating role in the affairs of the economy and the society at large.

I know that other Senators would have adequately dealt with many of the concerns that are generally expressed about many of the inadequacies in Barbados as they relate to the livelihood of persons with disabilities like access to stores, sidewalks, the question of transportation and generally putting the infrastructure in place to make life easier for persons with disabilities. Those things are necessary and

obvious, but I am still suggesting and I have always been saying that if you want to find solutions for any problem, you need to be able to diagnose the problem. The only way in which you can diagnose the problem is with information.

When you have reached this level of concern you cannot be speculating any longer. It has to be that proper policy is informed by research, and research, therefore, becomes paramount to my mind even before you begin to put this kind of framework in place. This should be done long before you conceptualise the need to put proper legislation in place for persons with disabilities. You do not have to wait until you formulate the White Paper to know that you have to do proper research. In fact, it makes absolute sense to put such initiatives in place so that your policy can eventually be informed most adequately by information and not by speculation.

I, therefore, am making the contribution with the understanding that this is going to be a very broad area of concern for those who propose to manage this special area and would require the cooperation of several different Ministries in order to provide the necessary infrastructure for persons with disabilities. You are talking about coordinating a policy across Ministries. It cannot be confined to one Ministry even though it will have to be a Ministry that is accountable or responsible for the execution of the policy.

Mr. President, that in itself makes it even more challenging from the point of view that you are seeking to coordinate across a variety of Ministries in order to deliver a package to the disabled. As I said, disabilities themselves would be of a variety and, therefore, we would have to approach areas of disabilities in accordance with the characteristics of the disability. It cannot be a one-sided approach to management or the future management of disabilities in Barbados.

I would, therefore, end by saying that just like crime, the economy, or the environment, it is absolutely imperative that we do the necessary research in order to put the kinds of policies in place that carry the process forward because, at the end of the day, we do not want this exercise to be another exercise purely in public relations on the part of Government but an exercise that takes the information from the pages of the paper to the public in a form that they can say it is a job well done.

4.25 p.m.

A job, even though it may be targeted at a specific group in the society, will bring joy to all persons because you are talking about uplifting the plight of a special vulnerable group and we are all sympathetic.

Those of us who have been fortunate not to have more than, or have at least one form of disability – and all of us seem to have at least one form of disability – those of us who have been fortunate to have at least one, feel a very special need to ensure that we make life as comfortable and rewarding as possible to this very special group in the society.

I thank you, Mr. President.

SENATOR Sir JOHN STANLEY GODDARD: Mr. President, I feel that I need to join this debate as one who has had some experience with physical disability that has already been referred to. Sir, that happened 14 years ago and I have been extremely fortunate that my recovery has been quite remarkable and I had very little to do to achieve that result.

Sir, my contribution was based on patience, prayer and perseverance but also others – doctors, nurses, physiotherapists and the love and support of family and friends, and anyone suffering from a disability needs that type of support service, especially the love and support of a family and friends.

Mr. President, there is very little that I can add to this debate because there have been some outstanding contributions from all sides, but I would like to commend the Minister of Social Transformation and highlight his wish that this document before us be given the widest circulation so that suggestions would be embodied in the formulation of the final document to help the operations of the Ministry.

I would also like to express two wishes arising out of my experience. The first is that every healthy person, and most of us enjoy reasonably good health, whenever they see another person with a disability, mental or physical, just remember “there but by the grace of God go I”. That should arouse empathy and a compassion within them.

Secondly, for us to be truly a caring society, I think that if we aspire to that, there is room for a lot more voluntary work. That care, support and love, of which I spoke, can be given in most cases by members of the family within a home and also within an institution. Sir, there are so many things that volunteers can do that do not require any specialised technical skills but just to be there with those who are suffering from disabilities.

Sir, I would like to see in the public awareness campaign emphasis placed on that particular aspect to arouse the conscience of the people in this island, that people with disabilities are human and are entitled to a better quality of life and that those same healthy persons could be in that same position because “there but by the grace of God goes I”.

Thank you, Sir.

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, in wrapping up this debate I would like to thank Honourable Senators for their heartfelt and sincere comments regarding the issue of creating an environment to integrate support and generally benefit those with disabilities within our society.

I would like to thank Senator Mascoll for his comments regarding the census and I will pass those comments on to the Minister of Social Transformation. I would also say that we have conducted in Barbados an eye study over the past 12 or 17 years. It has been the most comprehensive eye study ever done in the world and the statistics from that will also be used in this programme.

I do not think that a lack of studies will stop us from moving forward quickly on this matter, but there will be a recognition that ongoing studies are to follow up from our baseline information and also see the effect of the various programmes that will be put in place which are going to be very necessary.

Senator Rickinson spoke extensively about the mental health aspect of disability and the Ministry of Health is engaged in a comprehensive programme of reviewing our mental health programmes. We have already recognised that there is need for an expansion and upgrading of the psychiatric wing of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. We also recognise that we have to redefine the care given to mental patients and a redefinition of where there should be cared. This would be the strengthening of the polyclinics’ outreach programme and rebuilding of a new institution for a redefined health care programme. Sir, that is well on the way and recommendations of a very exhaustive study will be ready for us within a month.

Sir, what came out of this debate was that this is not a single Ministry problem but the lead Ministry in this event is going to be the Ministry of Social Transformation, as can be seen from the Paper. This Ministry of Health obviously will be well integrated into the programme. I might add that similarly we are looking at our geriatric problems and the care of the elderly and that also is a multi-ministry issue. The Ministry of Health has taken the lead on this but has integrated the Ministry of Social Transformation and the Ministry of Housing for an inter-ministerial team to develop a national policy which would be multifaceted and diverse in the care support of the elderly in our society.

Mr. President, you will see that there is going to be an interlink of all of these programmes and no longer are you going to see a clear-cut separation between one Ministry and another. This will be a total comprehensive Government programme pushing this whole process along. Sir, Transport and Works is also an integral part of this.

Mr. President, with that it gives me great delight to recommend this Resolution to the Honourable Senate and beg that it do now pass.

The question was put to the Senate and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

SENATOR THE HON. P. C. GODDARD: Mr. President, I now move that the Senate adjourn *sine die*.

Mr. PRESIDENT: Before putting the motion for adjournment, I should like to draw to the attention of Honourable Members that the Opening Ceremony for the Mid-year Executive Committee Meeting of the CPA will be held in this Honourable Chamber on Monday, April 30, 2001 at 10.00 a.m.

As you are aware, the CPA Committee is the representative body for the 160 branches of the CPA in the Commonwealth. The 40 or more members and advisors who would be coming here in the next few days are drawn from the several regions of the CPA – Africa, the Pacific, the Mediterranean region, the South Atlantic Caribbean, Canada, Australia, Britain and so on.

I am advised that formal invitations should reach you by Friday of this week. I might also add that on Friday, May 4, 2001, the local branch of the CPA will be hosting the Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony at the Sherbourne Conference Centre. I look forward to your attendance at both events.

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

CONTENTS

MINUTES

The Senate met in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings on Wednesday, April 25, 2001 at 11.25 a.m.

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

Mr. PRESIDENT 1

PAPERS

Senator the Hon. P. C. GODDARD 2

1. Value Added Tax Order, 2001.
2. The Customs Tariff (Amendment) Order, 2001.
3. Financial Administration (Public Enterprise Investment Fund) Order, 2001.
4. Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulations, 2001.
5. Annual Report of the Barbados Fire Service for the year 1999.
6. Annual Report of the Department of Labour for the year 1997.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THE SENATE

Senator the Hon. P. C. GODDARD 2

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Senator the Hon. P. C. GODDARD 2

Gold Award of Achievement Bill, 2001.

OBITUARY SPEECHES

Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard, 2; Senator C. A. Mascoll, 2; Senator the Hon. G. S. H. Murray, 2; Senator the Hon. Dame Patricia Symmonds, 3; Senator Miss J. C. Odle, 3; Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard, 4; Senator Mrs. P. E. Rickinson, 4; Senator T. E. Barker, 4; Mr. President, 4; Senator Miss C. Y. Forde, 4.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 3 – THE GOLD AWARD OF ACHIEVEMENT BILL, 2001 6

Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard, 6, 14; Senator LeR. H. McClean, 7; Senator Mrs. P. E. Rickinson, 8; Senator B. R. Collymore, 8; Senator J. E. D. Williams, 8; Senator C. A. Mascoll, 9; Senator the Hon. G. S. H. Murray, 11; Senator Mrs. V. E. Newton, 13; Senator Miss C. Y. Forde, 13.

ORDER NO. 1 – RESOLUTION THAT PARLIAMENT TAKE NOTE OF THE GREEN PAPER ON PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES 14

Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard, 14, 31; Senator LeR. H. McClean, 17; Senator the Hon. Dame Patricia Symmonds, 20; Senator Miss C. Y. Forde, 21; Senator Miss J. C. Odle, 24; Senator Mrs. P. E. Rickinson, 26; Senator C. A. Mascoll, 28; Senator Sir John Stanley Goddard, 31.

SUSPENSION 14

ADJOURNMENT 32

Senator the Hon. P. C. Goddard, 32; Mr. President, 32.

SPEAKERS IN THIS ISSUE

BARKER, Senator T. E.
COLLYMORE, Senator B. R.
FORDE, Senator Miss C. Y.
GODDARD, Senator Sir John Stanley
GODDARD, Senator the Hon. P. C.
GOLLOP, His Honour Senator Sir Fred
MASCOLL, Senator C. A.
MCCLEAN, Senator LeR. H.
MURRAY, Senator the Hon. G. S. H.
NEWTON, Senator Mrs. V. E.
ODLE, Senator Miss J. C.
RICKINSON, Senator Mrs. P. E.
SYMONDS, Senator the Hon. Dame Patricia
WILLIAMS, Senator J. E. D.