

SENATE*Tuesday, September 01, 1998*

The Senate met at 1.30 p.m.

PRAYERS[MR. VICE-PRESIDENT *in the Chair*]**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION****Tobago House of Assembly
(Land Acquisition)****33. Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt** asked the hon. Minister of Tobago Affairs:

Can the hon. Minister tell this House whether the THA has plans via the Sub-Intendant of State Lands to request the President to acquire lands on its behalf this year?

If the answer is in the affirmative, could the Minister state what purpose the acquisition is intended to serve?

The Minister of Tobago Affairs (Dr. The Hon. Morgan Job): Mr. Vice-President, the last time I was here I endeavoured to respond to both parts of this question and had formed the opinion that I did not do a very good job with part (b) of the question. [*Interruption and laughter*] Unfortunately, I do not stand with a great deal of confidence here in terms of providing additional information on the question of “whether the THA has plans via the Sub-Intendant of State Lands to request the President to acquire lands on its behalf this year”. I did say that the Tobago House of Assembly is in pursuit of acquiring lands for a stadium and sports facilities in Tobago and to my knowledge this is in the process. I do not know what additional information I was required to provide.

I did say that if a specific question was asked of me I would try to contact the Tobago House of Assembly to find out what the details are. I did speak to Mr. Charles since the last occasion I was here and after a discussion with him I did not get the impression that the allegation with respect to the sequestering of property in Tobago without due process had any substantial foundation in fact. I do not know if the hon. Senator has a specific question which she wants to file.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, I have filed a specific question which is whether or not the THA has plans to acquire lands on its behalf this year.

Oral Answer to Question
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How much land? Is it just one piece? Is it just for the stadium? Are they acquiring lands in various other places to do other things? I do not know how more specific it can get. What purpose is the acquisition, or acquisitions, intended to serve? I do not know how else to put it, Mr. Vice-President.

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Vice-President, I am not aware of any plans at this time to acquire any lands other than the ones that I know are in process with respect to the stadium.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, do I understand the Minister to say that he is not aware or that there are no such plans? Did Mr. Hochoy Charles say there were no such plans or is the Minister just saying that he does not know if there are any such plans?

Dr. The Hon. M. Job: Mr. Vice-President, I do not want to take the risk to speak for Mr. Charles without being able to document it. I am saying that to my knowledge I am aware of the request in process to acquire lands for the stadium in Tobago. I am not aware of any other acquisition in process.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, could I ask the Minister to make himself aware? [*Laughter and desk thumping*] Should I file this question again? Mr. Vice-President, may I ask that this question be carried on to next week when the Minister can make himself aware of what is going on?

Mr. Vice-President: I think the Minister has made it clear and whatever answers are given to questions in here have to be given with the best knowledge of the Minister to whom the question is addressed. As I understand it, the Minister has come here to say that as far as he is aware, and that is as far as he can go. I presume that he has taken whatever steps needed to be taken to make himself aware and on that basis he has come here to say that, as presently advised, he does not know of any plans beyond those he has disclosed. Therefore, unless a question of some other sort is filed that may or may not relate to the acquisition of lands in Tobago, I do not want to have this matter further pursued. Therefore, I consider that the Minister has completed his answer to question No. 33, unless there are further questions the Senator would like to ask.

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, I understood the Minister—and we can check this with the *Hansard*—to say that he did not know what to ask Mr. Charles and therefore he did not ask him. I do not know whether that counts as having done everything he can do to make himself aware. If in your opinion it does, I will be guided.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS

The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. Vice-President, before we get into “Government Business”, I would like to indicate that we had, in fact, on Friday—

Sen. Daly: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. Under which item is this statement being made?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President—

Sen. Daly: Under what item of parliamentary business has the Minister risen to speak? We are supposed to have an Order Paper on which things appear in a certain way and I am completely unaware whether this is a statement by a minister or an answer to an oral question and on a point of order the Minister has no business making any statement unless he can identify what item on the agenda he is addressing.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: On a procedural motion, Mr. Vice-President—

Sen. Daly: Mr. Vice-President, can I have a ruling on my point of order? As far as I know you are still in charge, but it appears as though the Government wants to take over the legislature, but as far as I know you are still in charge. Can I have a ruling, please, Sir?

Mr. Vice-President: We are under item No. 15 on the Order Paper “Public Business; Government Business” and I would invite the Leader of Government Business to indicate what “Government Business” he plans to deal with.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, on a Procedural Motion I am indicating to the honourable Senate that we are proceeding with Bills Nos. 10 and 11 on today’s Order Paper. I did in fact inform the Clerk of the Senate who did make every effort—although we did indicate to hon. Senators that we would be dealing with the Sawmills (Amdt.) Bill and Forests (Amdt.) Bill today. I did ask the Clerk of the Senate to inform Senators that the Government will not be proceeding with these two Bills but will, in fact, be proceeding with the Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill as well as the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Bill. Apparently some of my colleagues were not around when the attempt was made to contact them, therefore, there was a communication problem in this regard, but I would like to extend Government’s regret on this particular matter. In any event, Sir, we would like to indicate to the House that we would like to proceed with Bills Nos. 10 and 11 respectively.

1.40 p.m.

Sen. Daly: Mr. Vice-President, on a point of order. I draw your attention to Standing Order 48(3). I do not have all the amendments. The rule to which I refer is subsection (3):

“Subject to paragraph (2) of this Order, no Bill shall be read a second time until it has been printed and circulated to Senators.”

I take it that “Senators” here refer to all sitting Members of the Senate. I did not receive the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Bill until I came here today, and I am reliably informed by, at least, two of my colleagues on the Independent Bench that they did not receive this Bill until they came here today. As far as I can see, this is a prohibition against debating a Bill which has not been printed and circulated to Senators, and it certainly was not circulated to me. I would like your ruling please, Sir.

Mr. Vice-President: I am indebted to you, Sen. Daly, for bringing this particular section to my attention. I am well aware of subsection (3) of Standing Order 48. I will enquire of the Clerk as regards—I am being told that both Bills which have been indicated in the proceedings were, in fact, printed as per the subsection and circulated to Senators. I will be enquiring as regards how the circulation took place and on what date.

Mr. Vice-President makes enquiries at this point.

I have called for the two files on the two Bills before us—It appears—I have not received the file on the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Bill, but it appears that the Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill was read a first time some time ago. I was wondering whether in the interest of saving time, we could start debate on that particular Bill and go to the other one when I get the records of the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Bill. There is no motion before us.

Sen. Daly: I am not agreeing to anything. Anything we have to do, let us have a debate and a vote. I have raised a point of order with the greatest respect.

Mr. Vice-President: The point of order I trust relates to both Bills.

Sen. Daly: No, Sir. I have taken the point on the Tobago House of Assembly Bill because it was never circulated to me. I have the Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill.

Mr. Vice-President: I now have with me both the circulation register of the Senate and the Senate Bill book. I am looking at the records and considering the point of order that is before us.

The record reveals in both instances that on August 20, 1998 both Bills that were made mention of, the Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill and the Tobago House of Assembly (Amdt.) Bill were introduced and circulated on that day. Therefore, the provisions of Standing Order 48(3) have been complied with.

1.50 p.m.

Sen. Daly: Mr. Vice-President, could you guide me? Do I get to inspect the record? It is a question of fact that the Bill was not circulated to me. It could have been put in an envelope on the desk, or the wrong Bill could have been put on the desk. Do I get to inspect the record?

Mr. Vice-President: Sen. Daly, I have the records here and I would make sure that they are made available to you.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, as I was indicating earlier, the Government did, in fact, indicate to the honourable Senate that it would be proceeding with Bills Nos. 1 and 2 today. I subsequently contacted the Clerk of the Senate and asked her to contact all Senators to let them know that the Government would be proceeding with Bills Nos. 10 and 11 today, instead of Bills Nos. 1 and 2. As such, I am proposing that we proceed to Bill No. 11, "An Act to amend the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54" and later we could probably deal with Bill No. 10, "An Act to amend the Tobago House of Assembly Act, 1996."

Agreed to.

DENTAL PROFESSION (AMDT.) BILL

Order for second reading read.

The Minister of Health (Dr. The Hon. Hamza Rafeeq): Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move,

That a Bill to amend the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54, be now read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to achieve mainly two things. Firstly, to allow for the recognition of the University of the West Indies Medical Faculty Dental School Degree to be recognized by the Dental Council for the purpose of registration of the holders of these degrees. Secondly, to amend the composition of the Dental Council itself.

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The Bill before us consists of nine clauses. An amendment that was agreed to in the other place has also been circulated. Clause 3 defines the Minister to whom reference is made later in the Bill, as the Minister to whom responsibility for health is assigned. Clause 4 introduces the Schedule with which we would deal later on. Clause 5 deals with the proposed composition of the Dental Council. Clause 6 is what is called a consequential amendment. Clause 7 gives the Minister the authority to:

“...after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any University, College or other Institution.”

Clause 8 also gives the Minister the responsibility, in collaboration with the Dental Council to:

“...review the curriculum and training programme of the University of the West Indies Dental School...”

Clause 9 is the Schedule. As I said, amendments have been circulated and we would deal with them from time to time as they come up.

Mr. Vice-President, dentistry is an important part of health care but because of competing interests, this aspect of health care has not been given the recognition it deserves and the resources it requires. Because of this, we have, in Trinidad and Tobago, an unacceptably low ratio of dentist per population. I will quote the statistics. It says:

“There is a population of approximately 1.3 million people in Trinidad and Tobago and approximately 50 per cent are under the age of 18, the age most at risk for dental disease. The number of dentists registered in Trinidad and Tobago by the Dental Council gives a ratio of approximately one dentist to 12,000 persons. The World Health Organization recognizes that there should be one dentist to every 2,500 people.”

In simple terms, Mr. Vice-President, this means that there are 20 to 25 per cent of dentists available to fulfill the required demand.

Mr. Vice-President, because of this, as all of Trinidad and Tobago knows, we have seen over the years, a situation in which unqualified persons have been practising certain aspects of dentistry, sometimes to the detriment of their so-called

clients. It is against this background and similar experiences in other Caricom countries, that the Dental School Faculty of Medicine in the University of the West Indies was established to serve the needs of the people of Trinidad and Tobago and those of the Caribbean territories as well. It is the only Dental School in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The school offers a five-year training programme leading to a doctorate in dental surgery. It accepted its first batch of students in 1989 and, so far, five graduating classes have completed the course of training. As a new institution—I think all of us would agree with this—the Dental School had its fair share of teething problems and has faced its fair share of challenges as well. It has sought to address these problems and even though the situation is not perfect at the Dental School at present, it has reached to the stage where international external examiners have expressed satisfaction with the performance at the school and the graduates therefrom. I will return to this a little later.

In the case of many categories of professionals in Trinidad and Tobago—doctors, nurses, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons and, of course, dentists—before they could practise their professions they are required to be registered by the local regulatory body; the body that governs the profession. In the case of the dental profession that body is the Dental Council. The Dental Council was established under the Dental Profession Act. Mr. Vice-President, I would like to run through the procedure by which a dentist could become registered.

Section 5 of the Dental Profession Act says:

“A person is entitled to be registered to practise dentistry on making application therefor where he—

- (a) is the holder of a diploma;
- (b) shows to the satisfaction of the Council that he is of good character; and
- (c) pays such fees as may be prescribed”.

Section 15 says:

“The Council may in order to be satisfied that the qualification of an applicant for registration is sufficient to assure the possession by the applicant of the requisite knowledge and skill for the efficient practice of dentistry—

- (a) grant temporary registration and make recognition of the qualification conditional upon satisfactory performance during the period of temporary registration; or

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- (b) make the recognition of the qualification conditional upon the passing of an examination conducted by the Board of Examiners appointed by the Council under section 12.”

Mr. Vice-President, the relevant section 12 says:

“The functions of the Council shall be—

- (d) to publish for general information a list of universities, colleges or other institutions the diplomas of which are recognised by the Council.”

As you can see, therefore, Mr. Vice-President, a list of dental schools referred to in section 12(d) of the Dental Profession Act does exist. This list contains 89 schools, the graduates of which are registered to practise their profession here by producing a diploma from any one of these schools, showing a certificate of good character and paying the necessary fees. There is no requirement for graduates from any one of these institutions to write a licensure exam before they are registered by the Dental Council.

2.00 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, among that list of schools, the University of the West Indies Dental School is not included. For the graduates of the local dental school to be registered, the Dental Council has stipulated that they must submit to an examination set and administered by the Dental Council. This has come about since over the years the Dental Council has expressed concern over the adequacy of clinical and practical teaching of the students as well as reservation of the curriculum itself.

Several attempts were made between the dental school itself and the Dental Council to resolve the problem. One of the things that was proposed was that a practical training programme—a period of internship—of one year under the supervision of a registered dentist, be implemented. Even though this was implemented, this did not succeed in dispelling the concerns of the Dental Council that invoked the section which says that they must submit to an examination. Incidentally, the fee for that examination is at present \$2,000 per student, which must be paid by the student before the examination. The Dental Council has for some time now, made representation for that fee to be increased to \$4,000 per student.

Mr. Vice-President, since I assumed office in 1995 and even before, to the other Ministers who held office, several representations were made by the dental school, by the graduates and the students themselves, to have the issue resolved. Since assuming office, I myself facilitated several meetings between the various stakeholders—the Ministry of Planning and Development which has a responsibility for tertiary education, the Dental Council, the dental school, representatives from the graduates and the students, and, of course, the Ministry of Health. Several discussions were held and suggestions and recommendations were made. Even though the matter was thoroughly explored, the issues remain unresolved.

Mr. Vice-President, in March of this year, Cabinet appointed a ministerial committee comprising the Minister of Planning and Development, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Attorney General, to consider the issue and make recommendations on how to resolve it. The committee was supported by a technical committee comprising representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Attorney General. The committee held consultations with representatives from the dental school, the Dental Council and representatives of the students and graduates. The issue was again comprehensively explored and a recommendation was made to Cabinet. Cabinet deliberated and the present Bill is the result of Cabinet's decision.

Mr. Vice-President, over the five years that the final examinations have been administered by the University of the West Indies Dental School, the results are as follows:

YEAR	NO. OF CANDIDATES	NO. OF PASSES
1994	19	17
1995	17	9
1996	17	11
1997	21	13
1998	30	13

These are persons who passed the exams on their first attempt.

Comparatively, the Dental Council has administered three sets of examinations to graduates who have passed the University of the West Indies examinations and

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who have completed a year internship. The results of the first attempt are as follows:

YEAR	NO. OF CANDIDATES	NO. OF PASSES
1995	13	10
1996	11	3
1997	9	2

Mr. Vice-President, I must add that the entrance requirement to the dental school is extremely high. Some of the best students, including national scholarship winners, are admitted to that course. A comparison of the examinations will reveal that there are significant differences; that is, the examination as administered by the University of the West Indies Dental School and that as administered by the Dental Council. The examination administered by the Dental Council has changed significantly over the past few years. In addition, the examination by the Dental Council is administered by local general practitioners and practitioners from the region, while the university exam is administered by university lecturers and external examiners from recognized universities abroad.

Mr. Vice-President, I would just like to quote from a letter from Professor Thompson who is the director of the dental school at this point in time. He says:

“In their qualifying final dental examinations, all dental students are assessed by experienced university examiners from the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Canada, many of whom currently occupy the posts of deans of prestigious dental schools.”

Mr. Vice-President, with your permission, I would like to read into the records, in detail, some of the comments made by the external examiners who were involved in the assessment of the students for the 1998 examinations. The first letter is written by Professor D. Williams who is the Dean of Clinical Dentistry, St. Bartholomew's and the Royal London School of Medicine and Surgery and Member of the General Dental Council of the United Kingdom. It is addressed to the Director of the dental school. It says:

“As I come to the end of my first three-year term as external examiner, I would like to share my thoughts with you on the school.

I recognize some of the difficulties which have confronted the school in recent years and am most impressed by the dedication which many of your faculty have shown. Some of the new appointments also appear to be very promising.

This spirit, together with the opportunities that are being seized, indicate to me that the school has an exciting future. It seems to be unfortunate that there is currently a stand-off between the school and the Trinidad and Tobago Dental Council. I feel that every effort should be made to negotiate an understanding so that students who graduate from the university are automatically registered by the Dental Council. I cannot help feeling that this issue should be addressed urgently. The biggest issue confronting the dental profession in Trinidad must be the large number of untrained and unregistered practitioners in dentistry.

Finally, I would like to repeat how much I have enjoyed my time..."

Mr. Vice-President, there is another letter I would like to read. This is from Dr. Lorna Mc Pherson, Senior Lecturer and Consultant, Dental Public Health, University of Glasgow Dental School. In it she says:

"I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to examine the various elements of the course, and at this stage wish to provide you with my preliminary assessment with a detailed report being sent at a later stage.

I found the course to be very comprehensive and of a very high standard. The examinations were well organized, the components very relevant to the subjects and the marking scheme and criteria for marking very appropriate. The overall standard of the candidates was very high and, certainly, at least comparable to that found in fourth year dental students undertaking dental public health degree examinations at the University of Glasgow."

Mr. Vice-President, the next letter is from Dr. Robert Clark who is Professor of Prosthodontics, Guys and St. Thomas Medical and Dental School, again addressed to the Director of the University of the West Indies Dental School. It says:

"I have just finished examining your excellent students and feel I must write to you personally to record my surprise and concern that success in the final DDS examination does not entitle graduates to automatic registration on the Trinidad and Tobago Dental Register. Surely this is the result of a legislative oversight when the school was set up which should be corrected as soon as possible.

While I appreciate that the intern year is designed to consolidate clinical skills, your students have already reached a level of competence at least equal to other schools in other jurisdictions in which I have examined.

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I can see no good reason why they should not join the dental workforce as independent practitioners immediately the intern period is completed.”

Finally, Mr. Vice-President, a letter from Dr. Horthon, consultant of orthodontics and paediatrics at the University of Bristol, again addressed to Professor Thomson. It reads:

“Having discovered the local arrangements for recent dental graduates of the University of the West Indies, I feel I should write to you. Passing students in the University of the West Indies final examination for DDS, I feel they achieved equivalent status to their United Kingdom and BDS counterparts. The low success rate in the local Trinidad and Tobago Dental Council Board Examination gives rise to serious concern for the questionable standards of the internally regulated examination.

It is difficult how a considerable investment in dental education at the University of the West Indies can be sustained when there are such high local patient to dentist ratios not being satisfied by appropriately trained graduates. There is a distinguished and able group of external examiners, past and present, who are past students in the DDS in the University of the West Indies, equivalent to the United Kingdom graduates expecting that they would work locally. The inability to practise as a right on receipt of the local DDS should be rectified as soon as possible.”

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if, before the Minister passes on to another phase of his argument, he could confirm that graduates of the University of the West Indies Dental School undergo a year of internship after their five years in the school.

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: Certainly, the graduates of the University of the West Indies Dental School go through a period of internship and it is after their period of internship they are subjected to the Dental Council's examination.

Mr. Vice-President, very briefly also I would like to quote from a couple other reports by external examiners on certain aspects of the programme. I would quote from Professor John Lamy, Queen's University of Belfast. Again, he addresses the letter to Professor Thomson and it says:

“I was very pleased for this to be my second year as external examiner to the University of the West Indies Faculty of Medicine, Medical Sciences School of Dentistry in relation to oral surgery including exodontia, pain control

and anaesthesia, human diseases, general medicine, general surgery, oral and maxilla facial surgery.

Overall, with one exception, I was very pleased with the standard which prevailed in both clinical years.”

It goes on to speak about the arrangements at Port of Spain and San Fernando Hospitals. Then he says:

“In the practical aspects of the examination, I was very happy to have the opportunity to examine the patients prior to the students seeing them and once again a wide range of conditions were presented of the appropriate standard to which the students were being tested.

As you know, during oral examinations, I was again happy to examine the students on the basis of clinical cases involving slides and discuss the aetiology and management of each case. This again was well organized and with one outstanding exception, the students were of a very high standard. As you know, we were all unhappy with one student and this individual has rightly been asked to resit the year as his knowledge seems to be way below that of the others.”

Mr. Vice-President, I would just like to quote one final letter. This is from—I hope I can get this name properly—Dr. Samara Wikrama, Department of Conservative Dentistry, St. Batholomew’s and the Royal London School of Medicine and Dentistry, London. In it he says:

“There was an interesting mix of cases with appropriate radiographs provided, the quality of the radiographs were good.”

For the practical examination, he says:

“It was well organized and well conducted.”

He did say—and I cannot put my hand on it—that there was need for more training in the clinical aspects of dentistry.

2.15 p.m.

These are some of the reports which have been given by some of the external examiners who have examined students at the end, and during their course at the University of the West Indies Dental School.

Sen. Prof. Kenny: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder if the Minister could confirm whether or not there were any adverse reports from external examiners.

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: As I said, that letter from which I read says that there was a deficiency in the clinical part of the training. I would read from other letters which deal with that.

Mr. Vice-President, there have been praises as well as serious criticisms of the dental school with which I would like to deal.

There are two letters, one by Prof. Newton Johnson who was the director of the school at one time, and one from Prof. Prabhu who was also director of the school at one time.

I will not be dealing with these two letters because it appears to have been—and this was alluded to in the letters themselves—a serious personality conflict between the two previous directors and the Dean of the Medical Faculty at that time. Fortunately, those Professors are no longer at the dental school and the Dean is no longer at the medical faculty. There is a new Dean and Director, and there is a harmonious relationship which exists between them.

Mr. Vice-President, there is a report from the General Dental Council in England dated March 1996, and my information is that the investigation was carried out six months before this.

The report raised serious concerns about the dental school when it was done. For instance, it said that “we do not judge the intern year to equate to the United Kingdom’s vocational training scheme, but that it was a further year of closely supervised clinical training.”

Mr. Vice-President, the dental school has since then adopted the Bristol University Dental School’s course, and they are also adopting the Bristol University Dental School’s year of vocational training after the DDS degree, and this was one of the clauses which has been amended and circulated. We are now institutionalizing that year of vocational training after the completion of the DDS degree.

Secondly, the report said that one of the major problems which has affected the school almost from its inception had been the difficulty in attracting and retaining academic staff. It spoke about the shortages of staff at the dental school.

Again my information is that from an establishment of 30, there are 22 permanent staff at present, six whose contracts are pending and this would bring the complement to 28 which is close to a full complement in the dental school.

Mr. Vice-President, an observation was made that there were not enough patients and at this early stage of its report it wanted to highlight another major cause for concern which affected the quality of teaching and experience gained by the under-graduates and interns and the number and attendance of patients. This was in early 1996. I had been informed by the director of the school that there is, at present, a waiting list of nine months because of the volume of patients and there is a patient recall system which has been established.

There is another observation that of the 10 committees of the School of Dentistry listed in the submission to the General Dental Council that the activities were not streamlined. Since then, the dental school has taken steps to streamline the activities of these committees and the 10 committees have been reduced to four. There is now an education committee, a management committee, a staff/student liaison committee, and a research and development committee.

Then there was concern that phase 1 extends over a period of two and a half years and my information is that this has been cut to two years to bring it in line with other universities.

Mr. Vice-President, there were several other concerns and my information from the Director of the Dental School is that most of them had been addressed satisfactorily at this time. If there are queries from the other side I would be willing to respond to them in my winding up.

Sen. Prof. Spence: The hon. Minister read out a number of commendations from external examiners from the United Kingdom, not the least of whom was on the Dental Council of the United Kingdom. Medical students were able to register in the United Kingdom as doctors, I wonder if the same thing now applies with the dental school. In view of what these people have said, I assume the answer would be “yes”, but I want to know.

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: I think the dental school itself has not been recognized by the General Dental Council because the report from which I read was conducted by the General Dental Council in which they raised certain concerns, so at this point in time, the school is not recognized by the General Dental Council for automatic registration.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: I heard the Minister mention a number of students had failed the dental examination. What has happened to those students who failed the Dental Council examination, as they had failed the University of the West Indies written examination in their first attempt? Were they successful in their second attempt?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: Yes. My information is most of them had passed at the second attempt with just one or two failures.

Mr. Vice-President, I think all the parties in this issue have one goal and that is to provide a high standard of dental care for the population of Trinidad and Tobago. The assessment provided by the external examiners gives us some confidence that the graduates are of an acceptable standard. Some of them are working abroad and doing quite well, some are in practice in Trinidad and Tobago and also doing quite well.

There is an amendment which has been circulated in which—

Sen. Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, I am sorry that the Minister is being interrupted so often, but there are some important questions on which we need to get information, and this is coming on us sort of unexpectedly.

The Minister said that a number of graduates from the University of the West Indies Dental School are working abroad, does this mean they have received licences to work abroad? Is the Minister saying that they cannot get licences to work here, but they can get licences from abroad, and in which countries are they working?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: My information is that they are in the United Kingdom and the United States. Firstly, they had gone there after they had received their licences in Trinidad and Tobago, that is after they had passed the Dental Council degree. I am not too sure whether they had to subject themselves to another examination, but my information is that they have not.

We have now institutionalized the year of vocational training, that is after they have completed and passed the University of the West Indies Medical School Dental Faculty degree examination and got their DDS degree, they now have to subject themselves to one year of vocational training which would be patterned along the lines of the Bristol Dental School's year of vocational training. This would be done under supervision by a registered dentist, and at the end of that period of vocational training, they would have to be certified by the University of the West Indies and with the production of that certificate to the Dental Council, they would then be eligible for registration.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Sorry to interrupt you again Minister. I want to know whether the Bill should not take account of that fact. The Bill does not refer to that year of vocational training.

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: I am sorry that the hon. Senator does not have the amendment which has been circulated. My information is that it has been circulated and the amendment deals with the year of vocational training.

Mr. Vice-President even though that is so, we have now placed the University of the West Indies on a schedule of universities where graduates would be given automatic registration with the exception that those from the University of the West Indies Dental School would have to go through a period of vocational training for one year. It does not mean that because the school's graduates can now have automatic recognition, it can produce sub-standard graduates. We have now included in clause 8 of the amendment a provision whereby the curriculum and training programme would be monitored by the Minister in collaboration with the Dental Council and I intend to establish a monitoring team which would begin that exercise after the passage of this Bill.

The fact that the Dental Council has not recognized the University of the West Indies dental degree, has impacted negatively on the school and has adversely affected it. The Government of Barbados, for example, has said that their legislation does not allow them to register graduates who are not registrable in the country in which they have gained their degrees. Because of all this, we are introducing a Schedule to the Bill, a list of dental schools from which the degrees would be automatically recognized and in the case of the University of the West Indies dental degree, the holders would have to undergo a period of vocational training.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Mr. Vice-President, is the Minister saying after the internship, there is no need for a licence from the Dental Council, and he or she can just practise?

Dr. The Hon. H. Rafeeq: No, I am not saying that, I am saying that after the year which would be called vocational training, where the student has to be certified as having done a successful vocational training, this certificate has to be taken to the Dental Council for registration. Registration with the Dental Council is absolutely necessary before they can practise. It is not an automatic situation.

Mr. Vice-President, clause 5 deals with the composition of the council and we are proposing the amendment as circulated which says:

- “(a) a Chairman who shall be President of the Board;
- (b) a Vice-Chairman who shall be Vice-President of the Board;

- (c) a Secretary who shall be Secretary of the Board;
 - (d) a Treasurer who shall be Treasurer of the Board;
 - (e) two members appointed by the Minister of Health, one of whom shall be the dentist holding the most senior dental post in the Ministry of Health, the other, a lay person to represent the general interest of the public;
 - (f) two members appointed from the Medical Faculty of the University of the West Indies;
 - (g) one medical doctor appointed by the Medical Board of Trinidad and Tobago.”
- (2) The members referred to in subsection (1)(a) to (d) shall be dentists.”

2.30 p.m.

Accordingly, the executive positions—those are chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer—will all be held by dentists. Let me assure this honourable Senate that an alteration of the council's membership will in no way decrease the control which is now exercisable by the profession in its functions, but will enable the University of the West Indies and others to contribute immensely to the deliberations of the council. The council could then avail itself of the university's expertise in dentistry and in so doing ensure the welfare and improvement of the dental profession, not only in Trinidad and Tobago, but in the region as well. The new composition includes a medical doctor whose role on the council is becoming more and more important. Dentistry and medicine are closely related professions. As a matter of fact, for some post-graduate disciplines in dentistry, a degree in medicine is a prerequisite. For the first time also, a lay person is being placed on the council and there is precedent for this on other boards as well.

Mr. Vice-President, the Government views dentistry as one of the important aspects of health care. There are many steps that we have taken and we are in the process of improving the quality of dental care given to our population and this is just one of them. On the issue at hand, as I said, several meetings and discussions were held trying to resolve the issue, this we have done as a sort of last resort. When one considers the larger picture, the plight of the graduates and the needs of the population, we feel that it is necessary to enact this piece of legislation at this point in time, but we have introduced the necessary safeguards.

I hope that we can receive the necessary support for this measure so that the students, in whom both the Governments and the families have invested considerably, can begin to more easily practise the profession for which they have been trained and to improve the standards of dental care in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, I beg to move.

Question proposed.

Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams: Mr. Vice-President, before I begin my contribution this afternoon, which probably would not be as thorough as I would like it to be because of the circumstances by which notification was made, I would like to very much express, on behalf of this side, our disgust—although I do not want to call it that—with the fact that we felt that the parliamentary agenda has not been treated in such a way as to give us the opportunity to make the kind of contributions we would like to make. This has been going on like this for quite some time and I think we need to speak out on it. I listened to Sen. Daly as he made his comments this afternoon and we too were very upset about the manner in which this has been done.

When we left here last day we were told about what we were going to do and as Senators who are being put here to make contributions, we went along trying to work on the Bills which were on the agenda or which we were told would have been on the agenda. Only to find out over the weekend that there was going to be an entirely different change in the agenda. That meant some of us got the messages and some did not get the message until today. In fact, one Senator, as she walked into the dining room today was told about it. I had to ask the Leader on my side here to give me a copy of the THA Bill this afternoon and that kind of thing went on. I think we have to do much better than that if we really want to carry this Parliament in such a way that we can really work on behalf of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

Let me again register the disgust of this side on the manner in which we were treated in terms of how the parliamentary agenda was handled. I do not know if the Government does not want us to make contributions, but I think the contributions we were trying to make are ones which would assist. Because what we are doing is not for the Government side, it is for the people of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] I think we need to give the people of Trinidad and

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Tobago the opportunity to be heard through us and, therefore, I would hope this is the last time that we will be treated in such a manner. I really feel this was an abuse of the power. It would not seem so to some of us, but it is. Because one knows that one can do it, people do it. I am only hoping that from now on, we will be told, and when we speak here and we make an arrangement in good faith, that that will be carried out. [*Desk thumping*]

Let me just say, I am not saying anything against the parliamentary team who tries to get hold of people, but if one is out from one's home for a weekend, there is no way they can get hold of one. Not expecting to come and find anything else, I left home since Sunday evening, not expecting to find a change in the agenda. It so happened that someone whispered to me afterwards, and I called Sen. Montano, and I was almost shocked when he told me what was going to be on the agenda. I had to hurriedly run around, could not even find places open to get information. Nevertheless, seeing that we are here and we will be renegeing on our duties if we did not make the kind of contribution that we think that we would like to make, I do not know how much support we can give to some of the documents that we have before us, but we will attempt to do so. Again, let me say, I hope this is the last time that Senators will be treated in this manner. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Vice-President, I listened to the hon. Minister as he made his presentation on this Bill. I asked two questions during his presentation. Both of them, at the end of it I asked myself: Why are we here debating this? I really want to know what is the true reason for debating this. One question I asked him is: Whether or not those who failed the Dental Council examination—because I thought they failed it, from what I was hearing, the Dental Council exam is much too difficult, it is not in line with what is happening around the world, but I was pleased to hear from the hon. Minister that those who failed on the first attempt passed on the second attempt. Which means that it is not an examination which one cannot pass. Probably, there was some other reason for what was happening, so they passed. That is why they could leave and go abroad and work. Because those who would have left without it when they had gone to the European countries would have been carrying temporary registration. So the fact is, the people passed. He said one failed. So if that one person or two persons failed, I wonder: Why are we here changing the entire legislation? If the others could pass, then we should see what has happened that people should go and do it.

The second thing I was a little perturbed about: What is going to happen after this first year of training, whether or not the Dental Council will no longer be able

to license people? I was told that after the year of training, one still has to go to the Dental Council for registration and licensing. I am wondering therefore: Why are we here? It seems to me, to some extent, that we are using legislation to correct a fundamental problem. I want to know, if one has a problem in other disciplines—now you tell me you have no problem because people cannot pass the examination—whether you are always going to come to the Parliament to use the parliamentary majority or legislation to correct problems. I am very concerned about it. Why are we wasting time here going through this?

What I feel should happen, we should be very seriously, not going through this Dental Council Bill, but getting it to some committee, where people examine what is happening at the Dental School at the University of the West Indies, examine what is happening with the Dental Council, bring things together to let things work; rather than coming here and getting a Bill through to make almost automatic registration for those people who went to the school. I am a bit concerned and very worried about the manner in which we are trying to solve problems. We can legislate and solve any problem in this country, but at the end of the day: Is it the best for us? The hon. Minister would really have to convince me that it was necessary for us to come here to use legislation to get around what is the fundamental problem.

When I listened to the hon. Minister, he read submissions from—first of all there seemed to be a problem with the course and from what he said there seems to be a problem with the clinical part of the course, which is the practical part of the course. Let me tell you, if one is having a problem with the practical part of the course—I am already afraid of dentists—do not use legislation to solve that, because we have to go and sit there, this is health, this is life and death, do not use the legislation to solve that problem. If one feels that there is not enough practice and the Dental Council said so, why do we go through the unnecessary—and put that into the programme. But do not just send this and say legislation should do it and automatically, the students will be registered and life goes on like a song. I am very perturbed.

In fact, when I came in here those were not some of the concerns I had, but as I heard the hon. Minister speak I really got more and more concerned. Then one of the hon. Senators asked whether or not all reports have been favourable. Because all the reports from the external examiners which have been read here this afternoon seem to be quite favourable in terms of the work of the school. There were two unfavourable ones that we were not privileged to hear what those people

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had to say. If we are coming to examine a system, we need to know all parts of it. There is the University of the West Indies Dental School, which is new and there is the Dental Council. One is supposed to pass the examination at the UWI Dental School, and then the Dental Council has an examination which one is also supposed to pass and people are passing from what was said.

Let me just backup a bit. All over the world, people in the health care and most of these systems, be it engineering or law, have the same type of system where one passes the theoretical examinations and then one goes to the governing body for some sort of registration. I have a daughter who is into health care. When she left the university, she had to go and do her board examination, an examination for which she prepared, before she was able to get a licence. My nephew is a doctor at the San Fernando—he has now gone to the United States to do some work and before he went there he had to go to Barbados to take a qualifying examination, even though he was registered here, to get into the schools over there. He went to Barbados, he did three examinations over there which make him eligible to get into the hospitals or wherever it is to do further work. Therefore, it is not unusual, this is the procedure. People have to be careful about what they do, but in Trinidad and Tobago, instead of working the system and seeing where there are problems and trying to iron them out, we walk into a Parliament and we say, legislate and that will solve our problems. It will not.

Therefore, some of the information which you and the Vice-President might have heard before, I will really have to share it with the Parliament this afternoon, even though I had to hurriedly go and get it. I ran around very quickly to get some of it. I want to read some of the same documents which the hon. Minister used here this afternoon. He chose to read some and I will choose to read some. I have to go very slowly, because I did not have them on time. He talked about Dr. Newton Johnson, Lecturer and Exam Co-ordinator, London Hospital Medical College. Dr. Newton Johnson wrote this letter prior to his coming to work at UWI. The last page shows the case and I am going to read it for you. He sent it to Prof. Prabhu. Let me read what he said before he came:

"What I would advocate is that the Dental Council adopt a similar line to the UK GDC and the Dental schools over here - namely, that representatives of the Dental Council are satisfied about the quality of the graduates by virtue of their final degree examinations and that the 'external examiners' doing their job. The Dental Council need to be convinced that the UWI examiners ARE of a satisfactory standard."

And we will come back to that.

2.45 p.m.

“I see little wrong in being totally open—the Dental Council need to see the depth and breadth of the final examinations. This is so important. From what I saw, you have had external examiners of the highest quality and reputation. The Dental Council need to appreciate this important fact.”

In fact, he was asking that they bring the Dental Council on board. I am quite sure they might have heard that the Dental Council had been saying that they had not been kept on board with everything that was happening, and I also have with me here a bit of correspondence between the University of the West Indies School of Dentistry and the Dental Council from 1990—1995. It began on June 7, 1990, and up to 1995, they had about 38 lists of correspondence. So, from the very beginning, the Dental Council had been trying to keep in contact with the UWI school.

The one I read just now is from Dr. Luther Johnson before he came. He came to Trinidad in July 1996, and I want to read into the record what he calls his personal statement to the Vice-Chancellor and his team, dated December 1996. I could read the whole report, I could probably let the Independent Senators who asked, see some of what had been said. In the long analysis that he gave here, he said something like:

“Subsequently, there have been several other harshly critical reports tabled. For example, the General Dental Council of the UK made a formal visitation in March 1996 and documented over 50 serious points of concern.”

None of those were shared with us this afternoon. Other critical reports have been submitted by the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago, and there are many criticisms to be found in the former reports of the external examiners to the school.

If I read all that was said here, I think it would satisfy some of the questions that had been asked before. When I turn to page 3 of this document, he says:

“It is simple to identify the cause of all the problems...*a total mismanagement of the clinical facilities*”

That is the problem; the clinical facilities. A total mismanagement of the clinical facilities! That is where I think the Dental Council was not satisfied, because that is the area in which they were examining the students. That is the practical part. That is the thing that concerns us a lot.

He also went on to talk on page 5—this, again confirms the whole business of the weaknesses in the clinical area:

“Prof. Walker will be in a better position to describe the inadequate nature of the curriculum and the DDS course. I shall restrict my comments to the clinical aspects of the course, and I can say that the clinical course was splintered and unco-ordinated.

Please note that some 40 per cent of the DDS degree marks are awarded by continual assessment. I was appalled to find that all of the 40 per cent is arrived at through laboratory and written exercises, and that *none of this 40 emanates from an assessment of clinical skill or competency.*”

I think we need to look at these things very closely when we are talking here today because, as I said before, we are trying to legislate a weakness that has been observed by the professors.

“An attempt was made to cobble together some form of in-house student assessment system in anticipation of the GDC visitation to the school and their potential criticism, such assessments were not in place.

Upon arrival at the school, I found that all that was done was a cosmetic attempt to duplicate the in-house assessment system I have been running very successfully at the Royal London Hospital Dental College for some 13 years.”

I could go on like that when I talk about the comments that had been made.

Hear again, what Prof. Johnson said:

“One of the main criticisms levelled against the school by the DCTT and some of the external examiners is that there is no constancy in the education and training of the students. Students are taught in a certain way in the classroom and laboratory by up-to-date full-time staff, and then they are taught sometimes differently, almost totally differently, when they are supervised by part-time staff.

There is a massive question mark of quality hanging over the entire clinical part of the DDS course.”

We are talking about the clinical aspect of the course, and that is why I am asking, could you sit here very comfortably when we see a problem, and ask us to legislate that problem away? It would be unfair.

Other reports from the external examiners. This document which I have here before me came from the office of the Dean, and this is the report of the external examiner in conservative dentistry, and he says:

“The current use of the continuous assessment marks is to be commended as this gives some edge to those students who have performed steadily throughout the course. Allocation of 40% of marks to incourse assessment is similar to that in many other schools in the UK and elsewhere. The School should consider withholding students who fail to pass incourse assessments from taking the final examination.”

That is one of the external examiners’ comment from the same document we are reading. I am going to read a few more from Prof. Cummings, a Professor of oral medicine. He says:

“There are a number of specific areas which I wish to record for future development:

1. Standardization of the marking system throughout the School of Dentistry and inclusion of a specified viva percentage within the system.
2. Careful monitoring of students’ progress by competency-based testing systems, rather than the present system of continuous assessment.
3. Further curricular development along the lines of the report on the future of dental education published by the Institute of Medicine, USA, 1995.”

All these are reports given by external examiners.

There is one also by visiting examiner, Prof. John W. Frame:

“This is the third successive year I have been involved in the examinations. This year, all the examiners expressed the opinion that the average ability of the student was below that of the previous two years.”

Let me just give the last one from Prof. Frame. He talked about Prof. Thomson, and he has been noted as the only stabilizing factor in that school:

“As I mentioned in my two previous reports in 1994 and 1995, I feel that the students’ experience in clinical dentistry is below that expected of fourth year dental students in other Universities. However, they appear to have a good exposure to oral and maxillofacial surgery, through attendance at Prof. Thomson’s clinic and operating sessions.”

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Mr. Vice-President, from Prof. Mc Gowan who was from the faculty of Medical Science School of Dentistry. He was a Professor of oral surgery, University of Glasgow. In one year, he said:

“The standard achieved was satisfactory, but performances did not reach the dizzy heights of last year's groups.”

It means that he thought from that time standards were falling.

Let me just say that I have looked at these as some of the comments on the UWI Dental School. I am not saying this to criticize UWI. I am a product of the university, and a very proud product as well. They went through the programme, and some of the external examiners have identified that there were some weaknesses in the clinical part of the course. There must be reasons why the practical part had some problems, and that is why the Dental Council was so concerned, because one of the things is that one wants to be very proud of one's products, and at this college, we had some island scholars doing very well. That is why, after they went through this and they failed the first time, they were all able to pass, except one or two.

I need to congratulate the Dental Council. Before I came here, some people told me that the Dental Council was a group of people who did not wish any new dentists to come into their circle and, therefore, they were trying their best to have an examination so difficult that people could not pass. When I looked at the Minister's figures, I said to myself that, probably, it is so. Nobody could pass it, but now I am hearing that the students passed it on their second attempt. Probably, the work that they did during the year before their second attempt was what was needed. Therefore, instead of coming for this legislation, why not look at that particular part of the legislation and work on it. This has been happening all over the world.

When the Minister talked about the dental school staff, I have before me a little table of the dental school staff. I am no medical person. He will tell me what he wishes to tell me now. One of the things I noted—I would not go through all the levels—was that there were many vacancies. There were many areas in which the school was not adequately staffed. That could have given some reasons why there might be problems. I do not know if they did not have enough supervisory people.

What I noted here is that there were seven fully registered members of this dental school, and 16 with temporary registration. My research told me that those 16 with temporary registration were not given registration by the Dental Council

because the schools from which they qualified were not among the list in Trinidad and Tobago and, therefore, they were given temporary registration. He might correct me if I am wrong. I said to myself, they could not get full registration here, but they were teaching our students, and they expect at the end of the programme that they should be fully registered automatically. Here we had a staff of 16 temporarily registered persons who could not get full registration within Trinidad and Tobago. They were lecturing to our students and, most of these people were expatriates. I am seeing two from Trinidad and Tobago who were fully registered. The rest are from abroad.

3.00 p.m.

Most of them were from Asian countries and there were one or two from Nigeria. Mr. Eric Thomson from the UK and Mr. Kantin from the USA were fully registered, but the others had temporary registration. I think we need to look at that.

We can come here and present the facts but we have to give both sides of the story, and that is what concerns me this afternoon. When I decided to come to this Parliament today I had other views, but when I heard the Minister speak and got the vital answer about the students who failed on their first attempt but passed in their second in that area of practice, I realized it is not that the Dental Council wants to keep people out—otherwise they would not pass them—but we could get it without legislation.

I have another submission to the Vice-Chancellor by Richard T. Walker in December 1996. I need to read this which is the other side of the coin that I spoke of before. If the external examiners said these things, what we need to do is correct them. I am not critical about the university and the Dental Council, that is why we have the external examiners and their report. I, myself, am an external examiner and I know what reports are. When you get a report you should try to correct the problems stated. We would have been a first rate school.

One of the things Mr. Walker said is that:

“physically the Dental School is a first rate facility and the undergraduate students displayed intelligence, motivation and responsiveness. They were first rate students and a credit to the Caribbean”.

We ought to be pleased to hear that. We are happy that our education system has produced students of that calibre so that Mr. Walker could have said that.

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He continued:

"In all other respects the School, at the present time, is third rate. There have been a number of criticisms levelled at the School over the past two years from various bodies, including the General Dental Council of the UK (1996), the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago (1996), the Pro-Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Review (1995), and the reports of external examiners.

Over the first seven year of its history many reasons have been offered for the failure of the Dental School to develop as it should including:

Failure to retain high calibre academic staff

Poor management within the Dental School

Too few patients—"

I could imagine this would be part of the clinical problem.

"Lack of academic leadership

Lack of money

Lack of continuity of teaching."

When you get reports like that, all you should do is to see how you can correct the things that were said. This is nothing against anybody. Anywhere exams are done and external examiners are brought in, they usually send a report, and one looks at it to see why there has been this report and improve on it. I do not see how legislation is going to help us with the calibre of the academic staff, weakness in the clinical areas or anything at all. This is my concern.

The hon. Minister read from a report of the visiting committee of the Dental School University of the West Indies which was made up of Dr. LaForrest Garner from the USA; Dr. Erica Veatch-Harris, Jamaica; Dr. Jeffrey Meek, Jamaica; Dr. Max Sobrian, Trinidad; Dr. Fred Weel, Barbados, Dr. Don Allen, USA and Dr. William Gilmore, USA. Again, we have these failings here and we are having a problem. There were several things noted:

"2. Poor communication exist between the dental administrators and the faculty and students; school and the Dental Council."

I am wondering why there was such poor communication between the Dental School and the Dental Council. Apparently the Dental Council had been trying to get a line to the school, but that is not our problem. My concern is that we have a

problem in the clinical areas, correct that and there would be no need for legislation.

Prof. Walker also said:

3. The clinical experiences of the faculty needs to have greater depth.
4. Oral surgery needs more student oriented faculty.
5. Faculty must develop more hands on clinical teaching so students will develop competency."

That does not say anything about the theory. We know that the theory was there, but we are saying that the practical part is lacking. No. 7 says:

"Improvement in clinical teaching and professional comradeship must be done by hiring local or regional practitioners."

Most of what I have said here is about the clinical competence and that is what needs to be improved. I am not casting aspersions on anybody, as a Parliament, together, we need to look at this closely and see whether we are going the right way, whether this legislation would improve anything we have here.

Another part of the report states:

"Relative to the charge given to the Visiting Committee it is clear to the visiting committee that the Class of 1994 is not clinically competent to independently practice dentistry."

Probably that was why some of them failed but when they worked another year, they passed. They were not "clinically competent to independently practice dentistry."

"Whether or not they will be competent can be determined only by further evaluation near the end of the internship year. Until this is corrected and determined the school is found not to be acceptable for accreditation.

Future classes will be competent at the end of the proposed five year curriculum only if the clinical program is greatly enhanced."

I would like the hon. Minister to tell us whether or not the clinical programme has been enhanced.

Mr. Vice-President, these are some of the problems we have been looking at in terms of what is out there. Why are we here this afternoon? Why do we want to

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change this legislation? What is wrong with the Dental Council? They did not like the Dental Council. They did not pass the students, but the Minister said that they passed them eventually so the Dental Council is not a group of people who do not want anybody else to enter. I am convinced that they set an examination and those who took it in the second chance passed.

We looked at the staffing of the school. The Dental Council is going to be changed. In the new legislation there is a new council and that should consist of four persons elected from among members of the board who are dentists. I like that, but I am wondering why only four. There are nine persons. Why should they be in the minority? Why only four? Are they trying to get around the Dental Council by doing it this way, so that they can have what they want go through? They are elected from among members of the board and only four persons would be elected to the board. I am very concerned about that. They should be in the majority on the council and should be able to regulate their own affairs.

I am saying that the other five should be appointed by the Minister, there is no way it could be any other way. These four would be elected from among the members, the other five would be appointed by the Minister; two from the Ministry of Health, including the senior dentist, and one lay person to represent the public interest. I do not know what that really means. Could the Minister explain it to me? We have reached the place where we cannot afford to waste members. We are looking for registration and trying to improve a number of things, yet lay people are being brought in. What would the lay persons be doing there?

There is a problem and the Minister is trying to rectify it. He says that there are lay persons on other boards, but I am strictly looking at this health facility and wondering why. There are two members from the dental school and one doctor from the medical board. I still do not know why a medical doctor. The majority on this council should be elected from among the dentists. Legislation cannot be used to get around a problem. We are not foolish and not seeing what is happening. I am seeing that the legislation is being used to solve a problem and he went straight to the composition of the board. This is not the first time that I am seeing a board being used in these subtle ways.

I remember we said that about a board some time ago and the Minister was very arrogant when we talked about the composition of the board. Nevertheless, when it went to the Lower House and came back to the Senate with amendments, we saw that what we were saying was correct, but it was already changed because he was probably getting more heat down there. But this does not have to go to the

Lower House and come back. In fact, this went to the Lower House already. I do not know why this board is still here with four persons. This was probably the amendment. I still say there should be more persons who are dentists on this board, they must have the majority.

I am not happy about the medical doctor. The Minister himself just said that the people doing dentistry had to be pre-med students and some had to do a whole basic medicine course. I knew someone in health care not doing any of these things and that person had to sit and fight through with all the dental courses just to be able to go into a branch of health care. So they are quite competent in terms of the medical aspect of it, there is no need to put one here. Give up that space to another one of the dentists. In fact, later on we will have to see to it that this dental school becomes autonomous and moved out of the faculty of medicine altogether. I think we could talk about that instead of going to this.

There is a quorum of five but at least two of whom should be appointed under paragraph (e) and (f). I still say that we need to improve even on the quorum. Whatever we do, we will have to look at the board and the quorum again. I am not happy about it. I do not know why we came here with the Bill in the first place. I do not think we need to sit here and work through this at all, things were going quite fine.

I think we should let some people investigate this whole question about the UWI school and the Dental Council and come back to us with a solution. I think we need to let this lie. There is a serious problem, legislation is not solving it, let us sit and discuss it. Put it to a committee and let it investigate, bringing the people involved together, because we cannot leave our health in the hands of legislation like this.

There is a list of dental schools at the back and, of course, we are just adding UWI to the list. I believe any other school could be added to the list as we go along. I asked if the list is closed, could we reopen it and keep adding other schools to it. The Minister said that there is going to be a monitoring team. All of this is to get through so that those who are weak in the clinical aspect would remain weak. No attempt would be made to improve that. The Minister could put as many monitoring teams as he wants, he could tell me about the year training programme that he wants to put, but all that would not solve the problem.

We are looking at this vocational training that is coming in there and I am asking who would do the checks and balances, probably nobody. There would be

no checks and balances because there is no need for that because the legislation is saying there is almost automatic registration. The Minister is selling us out with this.

3.15 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, we also want to look at the whole question about this review and I have some serious questions to ask. The Minister in collaboration with the council, reviewed the programme of the school. Let me look at the amendments.

“(1A) Notwithstanding subsection (1) —

- (a) a person who is the holder of a diploma from the University of the West Indies Medical Faculty Dental School is entitled to temporary registration; and
- (b) a person who has registered under paragraph (a) is entitled to full registration upon presentation of a certificate from the University of the West Indies Medical Faculty Dental School certifying that he has successfully completed a one year period of vocational training.”

I have some problems here. Who instituted this training programme? Who is supervising these students on the training programme? I do not know anything about that. What are you telling me about the rules, the procedures and the regulations? Will these students be paying for this year’s programme or are you going to put them there with somebody who does not want to have them there? Tell us something about this. At the end of it, who says you are certified? Is it because you went there for the year, automatically the person writes you up and says you are certified and then you take that to the Dental Council? What are we trying to get away from? What we have here is the Dental Council not having anything to do with standards in terms of the student. We have gone the long way around so that the Dental Council will not have anything to do with the standard of the students. Every other profession has something to do with standards. Why are you going to take this away from this dental school?

As I said before, prior to today I would have had other thoughts, however, after hearing that the students are passing after working a little harder and probably after getting out there and realizing they are weak in the clinical areas and having received some kind of assistance, on coming back they pass the exam, I would say give it to the students in the school and let them be registered as they

were doing before. I see no problems with that. Everybody is saying, yes, vocational training, a year. We have heard nothing in depth about the vocational training. Probably it is in somebody's mind right now or it might just be good enough for the Bill. We have gone through a number of bills in this Senate where things are on paper and nothing is going further. We are here every Tuesday and now, every Thursday. We are passing bills and we are very proud of the amount of work we are doing, but what happens after with the implementation? I do not think we can feel very proud about it.

Therefore, I am a bit concerned at this time. Where do we go from here? This is written in the amendments, the Minister wants us to accept it but we were told nothing in the opening presentation about rules that are going to govern this, the procedures, the regulations, whether people will be paying or not. When they leave this one year, is it automatic, therefore, that they could just go to the Dental Council which will just rubber stamp after one year that they went to do vocational training somewhere with somebody? I do not know who are the persons and whether we have enough of them. In fact, we saw too few patients was one of the problems experienced. When they go to that person, can that person do what we want done?

Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, as I have said before, I have some serious concerns about this Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill, but I do not want to suffer any of our young people out there. I know their parents have put forward a lot of money to help them to get to where they are in their career. I know the frustrations they have gone through with nobody heeding the call to assist. I know all of that and I feel that we need to do something to improve the areas where there is a problem. I do not see the automatic things about this Bill. I do not know what the Minister would have to do to convince us this afternoon, that he has really worked hard on this. After this, it is automatic. After leaving the UWI school, you stay a year doing practical training and automatically register. I think more needs to be done.

What I think we need to do, is that somewhere this Bill should go no further. We should have some committee looking at the whole issue of the school and the university to see how we could help to correct the areas of weaknesses. Our students are bright and intelligent. The reason some of them fail is simply because they did not have what was required at the time. Again, we are a new university in terms of this. I am casting no aspersions, but it is a new school which is developing. As a Government we need to assist them to develop, to give them

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what is necessary, and this cannot assist. This is going to stunt the growth of that school because this is automatic now.

We want to make efforts in giving them more money and to employ better staff. We want to do a lot for those young people. I know how frustrating it is—and it is our fault—for some of them to be out there now. As I heard before, not many of them are out there; the Minister said they have passed on the second attempt, so the crisis is not there. Forty of them are working in the Caribbean and some in the United States, so why is there need to ensure that this Bill is passed? What we need to do is ensure that on the first attempt they pass and if you feel that something needs to be done to their work or their practice, then we must implement it. As I said before, I am not happy to stand here this afternoon. When I look at this and I do so critically—some people say there is more in the mortar than the pestle—what is it the Minister is trying to get around? I do not know, but as someone who worked with schools and with young people, I think we need to look at this carefully. These are some of my main concerns.

When Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt asked about persons in the United States, some of them are on temporary registration. I know one who is there, not having been able to be certified by the Dental Council there, he went there but got a temporary registration. He does not have a licence or anything and is not practising. He is working with someone. He probably did not get through here and his parents sent him abroad. We would not like to have that happen. We would want them to qualify here and be proud of them when we send them abroad. The way we are doing it here, we are not really assisting the profession; we are not assisting those young persons.

Even if we assist those who are there now—and I do not think there are many of them who are waiting to get registration—what we are seeing is that we are going to be lowering our standards. We are not going to be focussing on the problem and at the end of the year that would be a fledging school; we will continue to get these reports from all these examiners; we will continue to get staff. If you look at the level of the staff, they probably do not have permanent registration or even have the money to pay the staff to get full registration. I do not know.

Mr. Vice-President, there are certain problems and I am wondering why the Lower House did not call for this to go to a Joint Select Committee, not for this particular problem, but the whole issue of the school and the council to be worked out so that the Parliament can send a signal that we are really interested in those

young people. As far as I am concerned, I see no crisis now because I was told just one or two did not pass. It is not new that we have people failing examinations, but we will try to ensure that we put the correct structures and programmes in so that we would be proud of those students. My heart goes out to all those who have gone to the school. We want them to have faith in us. I do not want any external examiner going back and writing adverse reports about our school. Regardless of what is done, the external examiners can still write those damaging reports. This legislation will not stop the damaging reports and whether one fails to read all the reports or some alone, the reports are there for all to see all over the world. Therefore, we are sending our students outside with registration as fully qualified people, but when those persons abroad see them, they are going to look back at these reports and see that they were not up to the standard because of the damaging types of reports.

Mr. Vice-President, that is my contribution. I really regret that we have to use this method to do what we want to do this afternoon, but I am hoping that good sense will prevail and all of us would understand that people's health is involved. I am sure you know of persons who died because they had bad dental care. That is easy to happen—broken jaws, not enough clinical experience and all kinds of things. I am not saying that is going to happen to our people. I wish them all well and a very bright future, but I think for this group and for groups coming after, we need to be much more serious about what we are doing. Instead of legislation, let us pull a committee together to investigate the whole thing and come up with some kind of programme that is going to assist. There is no crisis; only one or two failed. Let us hope that when they take the exams this year, they would pass.

I thank you, Mr. Vice-President.

Sen. Prof. John Spence: Like previous speakers, I want to make the point that changing the order of the items that we are to discuss makes it extremely difficult for us to participate meaningfully in parliamentary debates. As Sen. Daly pointed out earlier on, we are all working people with occupations. Although I am retired, I have a family to look after. Therefore, it means that we tend to schedule our activities for addressing the bills in accordance with when they are ready. I certainly would have spent the weekend addressing this Bill had I been aware it was going to be discussed today. So, in advance, I apologise for any disorder in the way that I will be trying to present ideas.

I think it is an extremely important Bill. The nature of the discussion so far indicates one of the problems immediately with this Bill. We have been discussing

the merits and demerits, first with the Minister giving the merits and Sen. Yuille-Williams giving the demerits of the University of the West Indies Dental School. Clearly, Parliament cannot adjudicate on the competence of a dental school. [*Desk thumping*] That is what we are being asked to do in this Bill, because we are being asked to approve a scheduled list of dental schools that we are saying will be for automatic registration irrespective of what our professional dentists may say. How can we do that? How can we probably approve this list of dental schools as being appropriate for automatic registration of dentists in Trinidad and Tobago? This is not our job as parliamentarians. This is for the profession to do.

We are striking a very fundamental blow at professionalism in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Let us understand clearly what we are doing. We are not adjudicating on the University of the West Indies Medical School; we cannot do that. What we are doing is to say that the dental profession is incapable of regulating its own affairs and, therefore, we have to structure the regulation of this profession in such a way that we modify and control what the profession would do. That is what we are seeing. Perhaps that is what we must say, but let us be perfectly clear, each and every one of us, as to what we are doing because there are other professions in Trinidad and Tobago. Until now, the principle on which we operate in our profession is that it should be self-regulatory. [*Desk thumping*]

If we look at the Medical Council we will find that it is composed of members of the medical board. Maybe it is our intention to change that, but do we intend to change it in such a way? The hon. Minister is a medic. Do we intend to change it in such a fundamental way that we control what the medical board must do? We must face the fact that if we are doing it to the dental board then the same thing applies to the medical board, the engineering board which registers the engineers and the legal profession which registers the legal persons. So, we have a serious issue to discuss today. It is not a light issue by any means. We have to understand precisely what we are doing. It is a very fundamental step we are taking in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Vice-President, just looking at the Bill, apart from that very fundamental issue that we have to address, there are at least two points that spring to mind easily on this Bill that make me wonder how it has gotten so far. My point is clause 5 which says that the board shall be managed by a council which shall consist of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary and a Treasurer. Who appoints these goodly gentlemen? The Bill is silent. The parent Act says that the council shall be appointed by the board. The board consists of all dentists in Trinidad and Tobago and they should elect the council.

Here is a Bill being presented before us that has passed the House of Representatives that has four officers and—

Dr. Rafeeq: I thank the hon. Senator for giving way, but I understand you do not have a copy of the amendments. That is one of the amendments which says:

“The members referred to in subsection 1(a) to (d) shall be elected by and from among members of the Board who are dentists.”

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: What amendments, Mr. Vice-President, may I ask?

Hon. Senator: House of Representatives, August 19, 1998.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Where?

Dr. Rafeeq: In clause 5(b).

3.30 p.m.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Okay, thank you for very much.

Mr. Vice-President, you see the difficulty that we labour in trying to debate a Bill when it is sprung upon us at the last minute. At least we must have all the information at hand to make a sensible contribution.

The other point I want to make, Mr. Vice-President, is that as far as I am aware there is no medical faculty at St. Augustine. I do not know if other Members are aware of a medical faculty. I am aware of a faculty of medical sciences.

Again, here is a Bill brought by the Government through the House referring to a faculty that does not exist. Would the hon. Minister like to comment? How can we really take it seriously? What other things are there that we may not have discerned by the way we are having to debate the Bill? I hope we at least amend the name of the faculty.

Mr. Vice-President, apart from those obvious issues, there are other points that I would like to make about the Bill itself. If we look at the same clause 5(f) it says:

“two members—”

And I think there should be an amendment here:

“two members from the Faculty of Medicine Dental School.”

Again, we are talking about a profession which should be self-regulatory. These two members as here stated in the original Bill need not be dentists. I think in the

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amendment they have to be from the medical school but they still need not be dentists because there may be physiologists in the dental school who are not dentists. More than that, they should not just be dentists because we were told earlier on that they are members of the dental school who will not be registrable in Trinidad and Tobago because they do not have diplomas from any of the dental schools listed in the schedule. Do we want, on our Dental Council, persons who are not, in fact, registrable as dentists in Trinidad and Tobago? My amendment to this would be—and, of course, I have not had the time to draft it—that under clause 9(f) these members should also be members of the dental board, that is, they should be capable of having full registration in Trinidad and Tobago. That would at least keep the council with a majority of members on the dental board.

Then, Mr. Vice-President, we come to clause 7 which says that:

“The Minister may by Order, after consultation with the Council, amend the Schedule by adding thereto or deleting therefrom any University, College or other Institution.”

Therefore, we remove entirely from the profession in Trinidad and Tobago the responsibility of saying which dental schools throughout the world are appropriate for automatic registration.

First of all, we have done it if we approve the schedule. We have said that the Dental Council will no longer say which schools are appropriate. We have said it as a Parliament. We are all experts, I presume, in dentistry so we can say which schools are suitable and which are not. That is what we are doing by approving this Bill.

More than that, we are saying after we have done it, at least as a Parliament, that the Minister will do it after consultation but consultation does not mean he has to take the advice of the Dental Council. He can consult with them and then do his own thing. We are asking the Minister of Health to now make that decision.

Personally, if we are responsible as parliamentarians and we are being asked to approve the first list, if the Bill did not have a list and just said that the Minister would draft a list subsequently, then I would say it has nothing to do with us. But if we are going to approve the first list then I would think we have to approve any subsequent changes as well. Therefore, as an amendment here I would propose that the Minister may by order subject to affirmative resolution of Parliament. In other words we must come to Parliament, have a debate and we say yes, that is good to go. Anything to make sure that we are not moving completely away from arbitrary decision making on the part of any individual.

Then we come to clause 8:

“The Act is amended by inserting after section 45 the following new section:

46. (1) The Minister may in collaboration with the Council review the curriculum and training programme of the University of the West Indies and make recommendations thereon.”

Why has this got to be in a Bill? Clearly, the Minister can review it any time he wants. Does this now, because it is in this Bill, mean that the University of the West Indies has to agree to a review? Has Trinidad and Tobago now legislated that the university will make a review because we put it in this Bill? Who are the recommendations made to? To the Dental Council? To the Minister of Health? To the university? How is he going to do this review? In collaboration with the council?

Mr. Vice-President, I really think we have a great deal of issues in this Bill which are not straightforward and which are making a very big change in the way that we view not only the dental profession. Let us be quite clear. What we are saying, if we pass this Bill, is that we do not have confidence in the dental profession in Trinidad and Tobago to do things they should do. Will we then say we have no confidence in the medical profession? When one sees what is going on in medical health in Trinidad and Tobago one may perhaps believe that is the conclusion we should come to, but I certainly will not support it.

Mr. Vice-President, when I looked at this issue when it first was mooted that it would be legislated, I had, first of all, a reaction that perhaps, indeed, the profession has been a bit archaic and reactionary and not welcoming fully the fact that there was a new development in Trinidad and Tobago in the dental school and I felt that perhaps there was need for something to happen in order to make a change. Then it occurred to me, looking at the Bill when I first got it, that perhaps what was necessary was that if, as a Parliament, we are going to address these issues seriously we should, in fact, have a select committee. My view was that we should interview the Dental Council and we should also interview the University of the West Indies.

I then looked at the problem that we have at the moment with the legislative agenda where we are forced to consider some very critical Bills within four weeks. Most of these Bills really require select committees. We have at least two at the moment with select committees. They are very critical Bills and I am sure we will

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come up with serious amendments in some of those Bills having reviewed their clauses critically. But, as I say, I was tempted to say all right, perhaps this is a serious problem which has to be addressed and perhaps we should let it go, trying to make what amendments we can as we go through the Bill here and now. That is why I started to formulate some amendments as to how we might address some of these issues. But listening to discussions so far—there have only been two speakers—makes me feel that we really have a serious problem. The issue is not whether the University of the West Indies is competent or not. It is much more fundamental than that when we look at the divisions of this Bill and what we have been asked to do. I think we should recognize if we are talking about the University of the West Indies Dental School there have been problems but they are working to address these problems. I think we can assume that eventually the university will be responsible enough to address them.

I will not go into details of what external examiners say or do not say except to make this comment. I have always believed that the University of the West Indies should continue to have external examiners as they have done. I have absolutely no doubt that passes given to the dental students in the individual subjects mean that those dental students have arrived at a particular standard which will allow them the pass. I have absolute confidence in the University of the West Indies' ability to select its external examiners and, therefore, that the passes that students get are quite valid. I have no quarrel with that at all.

The problem, however, is that when you look at individual external examiners' reports which tell you that there is excellent work being done, what you do not know is if there are some gaps that do not have external examiners at all. Therefore, if there is a subject that has not been covered you will not pick that up by the reports. That is why the overall review as is proposed in this Bill is an extremely useful one.

In our other professional faculties, engineering, medicine and so forth, we have been able from the inception of those faculties to obtain recognition of the United Kingdom Board of Engineering to be registered in the profession in the UK and, in the case of medicine, they can be registered by the United Kingdom Medical Board. What happens in those cases is that those bodies periodically review the University of the West Indies so that the engineering boards in the UK will send people out to review the engineering schools here and if they are not up to mark they will not be allowed to be registered in the United Kingdom. Similarly for the faculty of medicine. I think we have been told that there has been such a review of

the dental school and at the time of that review the standard was such that the students would not have been registered in the UK in spite of what the external examiners said, some of whom are on the Dental Council of the UK.

I want to also make this comment about external examiners. I will never forget one external examiner's report which was actually for a postgraduate degree not for an undergraduate degree. It shows you what you have to be extremely careful about. The comment of this examiner was that in the UK he would not pass the student but since it was UWI he would pass him. We have to be extremely careful about attitudes like that which says we will not do it in our country but you are just a developing country so we will not object if you do it. We have to be extremely careful in judging when people are making those statements. I have no doubt that the Medical Council in the UK or the Engineering Council send their review teams here and say yes, this is up to standard that they mean it and, indeed, they will be registered in the UK or in Trinidad and Tobago.

Again, this is another departure that we are making. This time the university is making. The university has so far guarded very jealously the fact that the professional faculty is registrable in a developed country. The UK is the one that we have the most affiliation with because we started with the College of London University.

What is happening here is a very unusual situation. We look to ourselves here and our profession has said certain things with which we do not agree. We as legislators are being asked to, in effect, overrule the profession. That is a very serious issue and I do not take it lightly at all. I think it is incumbent upon us at least to have a select committee where we interview the Dental Council of Trinidad and Tobago and understand why they are making these noises and see whether we cannot get a solution because I understand there is a problem. We cannot, in our country, have a dental school by the university which has such a strong reputation and then those dentists cannot practise here. What is wrong? There is a fundamental issue here and to me it is amazing that it has got to this stage.

A lot of people in my opinion are showing dereliction of duty for not having addressed this issue earlier. We should not have to be faced with a decision such as this to, in effect, negate one of our leading professions on the basis that we as legislators know better than they do. That is what we are being asked to do. To me that is an extremely difficult thing to have to do.

3.45 p.m.

Honestly, I need to have some more information from that profession before I, as an individual, can say that is what I want to do.

Mr. Vice-President, I understand there is a problem which has to be solved. It is most unfair for people to go through an entire five-year programme in a reputable university and then to find they cannot practise their profession. That is wrong and should have been addressed four or five years ago, when the first set of students came out, or before the first set of students came out; when the dental school was set up. We should not have set up a dental school in Trinidad and Tobago if we were unable to manage it in the way that we have managed the Medical Faculty and the Engineering Faculty.

Why has this happened? That is an issue that also has to be addressed. Now, in thinking about this issue, I notice that the Bill proposes a committee in clause 8 to look at the dental school. What about the other faculties in the university? What Trinidad and Tobago should be doing, is what Jamaica has done. Jamaica has set up a university council. They have their own Technical University; they have the University of the West Indies and they have said, "We have to look at this."

What do we do? We rely on whoever is the Minister responsible, go into council and then come back to report to Cabinet as to whether the university is functioning well or ill. The hon. Minister of Finance then has to fork out whatever sums of money are needed to run this institution. Can anybody on the Government side tell me that there is a different review of courses for the university? Because I have been in Government and university circles for quite a while now, and I am not aware of any other system of review.

Indeed, I do not know whether the Government is aware of the fact that two years ago, the university stopped issuing detailed annual reports. The last detailed annual report by the University of the West Indies was issued in 1994/1995. I could go back to 1945 and look at the annual departmental reports to see what each department was doing; what staff there was; the qualifications of staff; what papers were published in that year and so forth.

Now, there is a glossy public relations magazine which comes out—the Vice-Principal's Annual Report—which gives no details at all. There is one statement about publications: that the Campus at St. Augustine has had over 100 publications in the 1996/1997 academic year. Of course, even that statement raises eyebrows because a campus of that size should be having about 500 publications,

not one hundred. But, then, if we cannot look at the detailed departmental reports including the School of Dentistry, we do not know what is going on, yet, all the government representatives including the representative for Trinidad and Tobago, has gone to council and accepted this as the report—the detailed departmental reports went to council every year up to 1994/1995. Now, we have this and nobody said a word; they just accepted it.

So that is why we are getting into the situation which we have with the dental school. Because, in Trinidad and Tobago, in spite of the fact that we are paying Ministers of Finance \$100 million a year, or whatever it is, nobody is looking at it. So this can happen and suddenly we wake up and we are then asked to pass legislation which will, in effect, downgrade our professional body in dentistry.

In 1977, in the White Paper on the University of the West Indies, the concept for the university council was first proposed. Here we are 20 years later, not having gone in that direction, worrying about a faculty at the university that we have not been looking at, at all. We have not been looking at the whole institution. That is not to downgrade the university, or to say that it is not doing a good job. I think the university is doing an excellent job and its standards in many respects are very high, but that does not mean that it does not need external watching, in the same sense that the hon. Minister has put into this Bill, a lay person to watch the dental profession. I think that is a very good idea. All the professional bodies should have a lay person to keep an eye on the profession, to make sure that they are not, in fact, in their monopolistic position, exploiting the rest of the community. So that is a good idea and I will certainly support that.

To say at the same time that what we are doing is to take away from the profession its self-regulatory function, let us understand what we are doing. We are saying that Parliament now has the capability of adjudicating and legislating on a professional function. We are saying, as parliamentarians, that the School of Dentistry at Howard University and at New Jersey are competent institutions to which the graduates would automatically be registered by the Dental Council. I am not in a position to say that. Honestly I am not. So, whose word am I taking for this? Was this list prepared in consultation with the Dental Council? I do not know. Would the hon. Minister like to say? I will sit.

Dr. Rafeeq: The parent legislation provides for a schedule of universities to be published and that list was published by the Dental Council. The only institution that has been added to that list is the University of the West Indies.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: Thank you very much. I am extremely relieved to hear that. I looked at the parent Act before making my comment and, of course, the Schedule was not attached to the parent Act, so this is why I asked the question. I am glad that we have the Dental Council making the original list. Can I ask if they also added the University of the West Indies to the list?

Dr. Rafeeq: They have not added the University of the West Indies to the list. That is what we are seeking to do in this Bill.

Sen. Prof. J. Spence: So my point is quite valid. What we are being asked to do is to say the profession of dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago is not capable of judging whether a dental school should be such that its graduates automatically register in Trinidad and Tobago, but the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, which I think does have one dentist in its Lower House, is capable of making that judgment. Well, quite frankly, I must tell you that I am not capable of making that judgment.

In closing, I will say that certainly it is incumbent upon us, at least, to try to inform ourselves as best we can on this issue and, therefore, it is my proposal that we put the Bill to a Select Committee.

The Minister of Education (Dr. The Hon. Adesh Nanan): Mr. Vice-President, I rise to support the Bill to amend the Dental Profession Act, Chap. 29:54.

Before I get into the discussion on the Bill itself, I just want to trace briefly the evolution of dentistry over the years, and I want to go back to the Mayan times around 300 AD, on the outlook of dentistry at that time. Briefly, just to show how it has evolved, because in Mayan times, 300 AD, the tools were primitive. I do not know how many are aware, in terms of the dental changes. In the 19th Century the concept of dentistry was to extract all the teeth in the mouth because it was felt at that time because of sepsis or bacterial infection, the best way was to remove all the teeth in the mouth and to use dentures or false teeth. I just wanted to put into perspective in terms of where we are going in dentistry, that is to show the evolution of dentistry and how the theory of dentistry has changed over the years.

Just briefly to touch on Mayan dentistry and what was used in 300 AD. I will make reference quickly to what we are using now. In 300 AD, the Mayans used primitive tools to drill holes in the front teeth to put in jewels. A round, hard tube was spun between the hands or in a rope drill with a slurry of powdered quartz in

water as an abrasive, to cut a perfectly round hole through the tooth enamel. The inlay, a jewel, was then cemented in place. The stone inlay was ground to fit the cavity so precisely, in 300 AD, that many have remained in the teeth for hundreds of years. What I am trying to show is that in 300 AD and today, the basics of dentistry remain the same.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to bring you up-to-date in terms of dentistry as we move into the 21st Century and dentistry in the present day environment. We have moved from those primitive tools to what we now have in dentistry called slow speed and high speed hand pieces. The hand piece we are using today is 400,000 revs per minute as compared to what was used in Mayan times. The tools used in dentistry today have been modified but the basics still remain with respect to the curriculum, hence the importance of the curriculum and the vocational training that the Minister of Health has introduced in his amendment to this Bill.

I wanted to bring the Senate up-to-date in terms of the evolution of dentistry, where we are in the profession, and what exists in Trinidad and Tobago, the region and the global environment, in dentistry. Because this is a very important Bill, not only in terms of how the profession is regulated, but how Trinidad and Tobago, the standard of dentistry and the public as a whole would benefit from this particular amendment to the Dental Profession Act.

As a practising dentist, from 1992 up until 1995 and, as a graduate from one of the recognized universities here on the Schedule, Howard University College of Dentistry, I want to speak from experience in terms of putting the trauma on the unsuspecting public and why I am supporting this amendment. I listened to Sen. Joan Yuille-Williams speaking about the depth of clinical experiences necessary, or the clinical inadequacy of the students at the dental school and the hands-on dental teaching required.

As she spoke, what came to me very quickly was the phenomenon of hand to eye co-ordination. Any curriculum in a dental school is designed like a mosaic—there is a pattern from year to year. At Howard University College of Dentistry, the programme is 44 months. There is no vocational training period—44 months as compared to the curriculum at the University of the West Indies Dental School which is five years and the one year vocational training. In 44 months the curriculum was structured in such a way that we were able to come out of that dental school to be recognized by the dental council and practise dentistry.

4.00 p.m.

Now, I want to speak about the aspect of vocational training. In that four-year period the course was structured in such a way that the first two years was basically theory and the last two years was a matter of practical and theory in combination.

Mr. Vice-President, when the Senator spoke about hands-on clinical teaching, we started in year one and learnt everything about the tooth in terms of appearance and we were given a block of wax—in year one—to carve a replica of one quadrant of every tooth in the mouth. Every tooth in the mouth we had to carve so that we would be familiar with the dimensions of the tooth and the curriculum was structured in such a way to initiate hand-to-eye coordination and we built up as we moved along the curriculum.

So, I am speaking in terms of hands-on clinical teaching. It started at the very low level of carving teeth on wax form and then we moved on to models in year two. We moved on to models and that is where we developed our hand-to-eye coordination even more because then we had to work on these models as representing teeth in the mouth. Even as we moved to our practical third year we still had to do work, if we could not find patients, on models. So, we were still continuing with hand-to-eye coordination.

What about patient shortages? In almost every dental school there are patient shortages for various reasons. In Howard, the patients' files are given to a student in the third year and you had seven or eight patients assigned to you and for reasons such as migration or death, as the case may be, the patients could not be contacted. So you had to be very creative in terms of how you built your number of patients.

Very briefly, I remember when we had to recruit patients. In terms of clinical requirements we had to have so many patients to do so many requirements in terms of number of dentures, extractions and fillings. To recruit patients to do dentures we had to go to the groceries and wait around for the little old ladies and men who would come along to bring them into the system so we would be able to furnish them with either partial, removable or complete dentures to meet our requirements. So in terms of patient shortages, I am sure that there are very creative methods that can be used to get patients to come in, because the university was offering a reduced fee and payment plan to fulfill the needs of these patients. Of course, there was a need because people who did not have dentures or

had no teeth in their mouths could not chew food properly so they definitely needed remedial dentistry. So that is one area in terms of addressing patient shortages.

Mr. Vice-President, I also want to speak about the reports and to put on the record that any new dental school takes seven to 10 years gestation to reach maturity: Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia and the Middle East countries. We heard that during this particular period of gestation, there are a number of criticisms levelled at the particular institution. There was a point made that I wanted to put some clarity on in terms of our graduates. When they have graduated from the dental school they are given a DDS—Doctor of Dental Surgery—but in the United Kingdom there is an allowance for temporary registration, and to some extent in the United States, where you do not have to be from a recognized university. Once you are accepted into a post-graduate one-year programme or a four-year programme, you are granted temporary registration. So, what happens is that you have your DDS, you go up to the United Kingdom or the United States of America and you are assigned to a hospital as was mentioned. You then have to do one year but to practise in the UK you have to take the UK exam which is a very difficult examination. In fact, in terms of passing rate, 95 per cent of students cannot pass it because it is a very comprehensive one. When we graduated from Howard University of Dentistry we had our DDS, which is a Doctor of Dental Surgery, but we could not practise in the United States unless we took the North East Regional Board examination or the local board examination of the area where you want to practise; Florida, California.

So, in the US you must take the North East Regional Board examination and pass that before you can apply for a licence. You do not have to come from a recognized dental school to be accepted into a post-graduate programme in the UK or US. If you want to practise in the United Kingdom or United States of America you must take the relevant examination in the two territories.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Mr. Vice-President, the Minister just said that after having gone through a course of study which would equip you—and I know he could relate this to us—you must take a board exam. I want to ask whether or not you have a problem therefore with our students taking a board exam here because you just said that you must take one there to qualify. Therefore, it seems to me that you are supporting the fact that the dental council can have the examinations here.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Vice-President, let me just clarify a certain area because when you take the North East Regional Board Exam, it is not a new exam. The structure of the Howard University Dental School final-year exam is what we call a “mock exam” for the North East Regional Board Clinical Exam. So, you are being trained throughout the curriculum to prepare yourself for that exam.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, can the hon. Minister tell us then whether the university in question collaborates with the board or council in the setting of this examination and what is the curriculum or syllabus for this exam? What kind of collaboration is there between the university/institution and the board or council?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Vice-President, I do not know if the hon. Senator is making reference to the North East Regional Board.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Yes.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: As I said in my opening remarks, the basics of dentistry remain the same. Whether it is conservative dentistry, restorative dentistry, prosthodontics—fixed or removable—oral surgery, endodontics, orthodontics as the case may be, the basics remain the same.

4.10 p.m.

If one is going through a curriculum one will be preparing not for the North East Regional Board exams, one will be preparing to work on a patient. If one is to become a competent dentist, when one prepares for the North East Regional Board examination, one is also preparing directly to be a successful and capable dentist. The North East Regional Board is not going to—it is not like one is going to prepare oneself for the North East Regional Board. The North East Regional Board standard is that once you pass that board examination you could practise properly on a patient. I think that is what the curriculum would determine, how capable you are as a dentist. Let us say one has a private practice and a person walks in and says, “I have a problem with my tooth” one will take a proper radiograph, and would be able to make a proper assessment and a practising dentist must be able to say “I can handle this and I cannot handle that. It is a specialty area and must be referred.” That is the point here and not so much the board examination in the various states.

In California they have moved away from gold preparation as compared to some other states, so the requirement would change from state to state. The point is, one must be able to do a root canal procedure on a patient if he so desires. Modern dentistry is moving in such a way that the dentist would do the utmost to save a tooth. It is costing a fortune in the field of periodontology. This is because the trend of dentistry is to save a tooth, and not to extract a tooth.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: I take the point, but I am asking a very specific question that those of us who teach in universities have to answer. That if one is setting an examination and one's university is taking those examinations, the teachers in one's university are going to get hold of past-papers to see what it is you are requiring and immediately—it is a very bad thing but it happens—your examination partially determines what we teach. After a while one might say, “you know Cambridge is not setting proper exams for West Indian students, let us write to Cambridge and tell them that this exam is really not appropriate, could they please include so and so?” As long as a relationship exists between an independent institution and an independent examining body, a collaboration takes place between them as to what the university feels is fair for them to ask or the examining body, may say “you do not have a very good degree if your people cannot do this.”

In various parts of the United States where there are board examinations, are these institutions that take those board examinations in collaboration with the setters of the examinations?

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Vice-President, in answer to the Senator's question, it would be determined based on state to state analysis. But, I put the point that what the Senator was speaking of in terms of collaboration, it is slightly different in the profession of dentistry although one would try to make the link between what is being examined and what is being taught.

In terms of dentistry, the procedures speak for themselves. It is not going to change. It is the requirements that will change. For example, at the Howard University Dental School, we were doing 10 complete dentures. In the examination for the North East Regional Board, there was an examination procedure where one had to do a partial denture on a patient. One was doing the procedure and one was also being tested on the standard being produced in terms of application on a patient. After the 1 1/2 hours to 2 hours test procedure in terms of actually producing that partial denture, the examiner would come around just to put the denture in the patient's mouth, ask the patient to close, look at the lip line and just to do lateral excursion in the mouth. If any teeth fell out—this is in a wax

form—one would fail because this is exactly how it is in the mouth. I think that is how the collaboration between the school and the council operates.

Sen. Prof. Spence: Mr. Vice-President, I saw the hon. Minister looking a bit worried. It seems to me that the hon. Minister of Education was making the most powerful argument for rejecting this Bill. [*Desk thumping*] I wonder before he concludes, if he can explain to us why is Trinidad and Tobago wanting to depart from the excellent procedure which he has set out that obtains in the United Kingdom and in the United States.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: I do not think I need to respond to that. What one is missing here is the standard of dentistry in Trinidad and Tobago. What we have operating are very competent private dentists but there is also that unqualified aspect of dentistry. In fact, when I visited Howard University recently and spoke with two of my professors, my professor in removable prosthodontics and another professor in fixed prosthodontics, they supported the curriculum fully in terms of its clinical adequacy. That was why when I heard clinical inadequacy I was a bit upset because these professors justified—they came down here as external examiners, and they were quite supportive of the students. In fact, they told me that some of the students were even better than students at the Howard University Dental School in terms of their capability and clinical experience.

To hear about shortfalls in clinical experience—the Minister of Health spoke about the curriculum and the change over from the dental school to the Bristol University's curriculum, I think that is something we should put on the front burner in terms of a new curriculum. That is why I fully support the Bill in terms of the new curriculum, the vocational training aspect of it, and our students capability. We have to face the fact that the University of the West Indies Dental School is the only dental school in the Caribbean serving six million persons and supported by 14 territories.

This amendment to the Dental Profession Act would lift the standard of dentistry in this country, and I fully support the amendment. I gave the hon. Senators and my colleagues the dental profession aspect of it, where we are today, where we were in Mayans times in terms of dentistry and the evolution of dentistry as a very precise profession.

Before I close, I would just like to say something in terms of the profession, the accuracy that is required in dentistry and how the mouth is different, how the

sensitivity of the tongue is different because any restoration that is done on the mouth without proper precision will be magnified tenfold. I support the amendment, and I have laid down the clinical requirements in terms of a curriculum.

Sen. Yuille-Williams: Mr. Vice-President, I am not trying to push a point but I got a bit confused. I liked what the Minister was saying. He was trained at Howard University. I know he went to a good school, and I listened to what he said about dentistry so I have no problems about his career as a dentist. I congratulate him. I want to know whether he did not find the board exams useful as part of his career; whether he found it necessary for them to have that board exam; and, whether or not the university was aware of the board examinations and therefore part of the preparation was towards that.

4.20 p.m.

Dr. The Hon. A. Nanan: Mr. Vice-President, I think I answered the last part of that question earlier, in terms of the preparation. The preparation was not so much for the board examination, it was for one to be a capable dentist actually working on patients. In fact, the clinical aspect of the board's examination is set on patients. So we have patients coming in to be assessed in terms of how the students perform on the patients. I think that needs to be cleared up in terms of the requirements. The requirements are designed in such a way that when one is finished, one is able to work on patients.

Mr. Vice-President, I want to fully support the vocational training aspect put forward by the Minister of Health's amendment. I want to say, specifically, why it is necessary. When one is finished a five-year training programme, one is trained in the basics of dentistry and there is much more that one would be faced with when one goes into private practice or on rounds at the various hospitals. That is where one gets that experience because when one is in dental school one works at one's own pace, but when one is in a hospital setting one has to develop that speed, that hand-to-eye co-ordination that would come with the vocational training and that is why there is need for that one-year training to become more familiar with the environment.

One would normally be doing one patient per day and when one moves into the hospital or private practice one would be attending to 40 to 50 patients, depending on where one is. One must, therefore, develop speed as one goes along. One is also going to see new routines. One has been trained in the basics and emergency

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procedures, but there would be situations to which one would have to refer. It is a learning experience. It is what one would call continuing education in the practice of dentistry.

I thank Members for the opportunity to make a contribution here and I fully support the amendment to the Dental Profession Act.

Mr. Vice-President: Hon. Senators, it is going on to 4.25 p.m. and I think it is convenient to take the tea break at this time. We will resume at 4.55 p.m.

4.25 p.m.: *Sitting suspended.*

5.00 p.m.: *Sitting resumed.*

Sen. Danny Montano: Mr. Vice-President, before I begin my substantive contribution, I would just like to join my colleagues on this side in expressing my disgust really, at the disgraceful manner in which the Government has moved about the parliamentary agenda. It is not sufficient to try to call Senators on a Friday afternoon on a long weekend, a long weekend that is significant to some of us, it is just not good enough, Mr. Vice-President. I think that not only hon. Senators, but I think that the country at large needs better care and attention.

Mr. Vice-President, in dealing with this legislation at hand, I would like to be fairly brief, but I would like to endorse the sentiments of Sen. Prof. Spence, and he really has hit the nail right on the head. As I see, it Mr. Vice-President, there are two distinct issues here, neither of which, in my opinion, should be the subject of legislation.

The first issue that Sen. Prof. Spence articulated is the question of the technical standard of the university. Now, Mr. Vice-President, some of us have received some documentation dealing with this, and there are letters and correspondence and so on. Sen. Yuille-Williams made a pretty good contribution in terms of letting us know what some of the substantive arguments were, what some of the difficulties were with the standard of education at the university. But the standard of education at the university does not fall within the ambit of legislators. We can express concerns if we receive certain bits of information, but it is difficult for us—unless we were ourselves to commission a study to report back to this Chamber—to form any hard and fast opinion as to the standard of the university or the standard of any one faculty. Therefore, I do not particularly want to deal with that issue. My argument really, is only one—that is how on earth, and why on earth? Because the Minister has made no case.

Why on earth has the Minister brought the technical proficiency of the university into the public forum here? Of what business is that of the legislative process? It does not seem to be our business here at all! We do not legislate the standard of technical competence of engineering. We do not do it for law, we are not doing it for accountancy. Why are we saying anything or interfering with the dental profession?

We know nothing about that, Mr. Vice-President, we know nothing about that at all. That is completely outside the competence of every person in this room. What are we talking about it for? We know nothing about it.

Mr. Vice-President, the other issue that is far more significant to me as a professional, is the question of the Government legislating the standards to be met by a professional body.

Mr. Vice-President, to the best of my knowledge, all the professions in this country manage their own affairs. They have their own institutes, and they regulate their own standards, they regulate on their own the professional conduct of their members, and they look after themselves. Some of them have been set up by statute, but they are not regulated by the state; for the most part, they regulate themselves.

Mr. Vice-President, as a Member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Trinidad and Tobago, I take great pride in such membership. Let me tell you, Sir, that the students who are admitted into that institution have a long struggle, and it is a good one.

Mr. Vice-President, the students who pass, and who enter the system are worthy, are qualified. But, let me advise you that at the last sitting of the final examination in June of this year—and most of the students are registered with the British Association of Certified and Corporate Accountants, the ACCA Body—they write the examinations that come out of the United Kingdom. The average pass rate on those final examinations, Sir, is less than 50 per cent. Therefore, every professional accountant in Trinidad and Tobago has had to fail and resit at some point.

Well, Mr. Vice-President, I was fortunate I did not fail. I did my qualification in Canada, in Ontario, where the pass rate was, in 1974 and still is, an average of 39 per cent. So in Canada, as well as here, you have a situation where the odds are against you from succeeding on a first attempt.

Now, we heard during the contribution of Sen. Yuille-Williams that in terms of the dental students here in Trinidad and Tobago, by the time that most of the students have tried the board examination for the second time, they are succeeding.

Mr. Vice-President, that is exactly what pertains, as far as I am aware, in the accountancy profession, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with that. That is just the institute itself, making sure that there is a general level of proficiency outside there. That is all.

Therefore, Mr. Vice-President, there is no case to bring this legislation in front of this body; and with all due respect, the Minister has made no case at all. Why does he want to particularly interfere with the dental institute? Are we going to hear next, that somebody else is going to bring a Bill to interfere with the Institute of Chartered Accountants? Or the Institute of Bankers? Or the Law Society? Or the Institute of Architects? Or the Institute of Engineers? Why all of a sudden the dental institute?

5.10 p.m.

Mr. Vice-President, with all due respect, I listened to the Minister. He has made no case. I listened to the other Minister and astonishingly he has made a case for the retention of the board examinations by the Dental Council. [*Desk thumping*] And that is a position which I wholeheartedly endorse.

Mr. Vice-President, understand it. You know that the legislation as it now stands does not mandate that the university graduates write examinations. It means only that insofar as the Dental Council is concerned, the graduates are not “up to scratch”; they will require this independent examination.

If and when—and I would hope very soon—the university can bring its standards up to the requisite international standards, which we all would like to adhere to, then one would assume that the council would do away with the requirement for the examination altogether. That is the desirable thing.

So, Mr. Vice-President, why do we have this piece of legislation? Why is the Government trying to push this thing upon us and telling us that we have to come here early in the morning until late at night to debate a non-issue? This is a giant non-issue! It is just a non-issue. It is not worthy of our time and effort to stand here to debate this.

Mr. Vice-President, what we keep hearing—I do not know if it is true or not—is that the genesis of this legislation came about because a close associate of the

Government has a family member who has a vested interest in passing these examinations. Now, I do not know if you can pass it the first, second or third time, but I am sure, based on the reports which I have been hearing about the students at the university, he will succeed; because everything that I have read here, everything that I have been told, is that the quality of the students themselves is of the highest calibre. So that is not the issue; the issue is the quality of the instruction. It would be an obscene gesture for any Senator who is in any way associated or involved in this legislation to stand on his legs and say anything about it. It would be disgraceful conduct, in my opinion, Sir.

Notwithstanding that, the Minister has made no case. Why on earth does this honourable Senate have to debate, at a late hour, the proficiency standards of the Dental School of the University of the West Indies? Nobody here knows anything about dentistry—I do not know of anybody who likes going to a dentist; but beyond that, nobody here knows anything about it—perhaps the Minister himself may know something about it.

Mr. Vice-President, what are we talking about? Indeed, what are we talking about? We have views from this one saying that the standards are no good. We have views from another one saying that the standards are all right, and so forth. But, the people involved, do we have the right to stand here and say that they do not have the right, the capability, or the competence to regulate themselves? Is that what we are saying? That we should not allow the dentists to regulate their own affairs?

Why is it that there is nothing in this legislation about trying to discipline a member? There is nothing here about a member's discipline, if his conduct is unbecoming to the profession. We are not saying anything about that. Why not?

Why are we not saying anything about the continuing professional education that is now an intimate requirement of almost every profession in the world? We are saying nothing about that here. I know, in my own profession, unless I attend and take a certain level of academic hours of training every two years, I cannot retain my professional licence. Mr. Vice-President, why is there nothing inside here about that? Because the truth of the matter is that we are not dealing with standards at all. There is some agenda inside here that is really invisible. And the Minister has not been forthright, he has not come straight out and said what the real agenda is. We do not really know what it is.

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It is a waste of Parliamentary time, in both places to bring this legislation here to have us discuss the academic standing of the Dental School of the University of the West Indies. It is nonsense! We should not be wasting our time with that; there are far more serious issues that we have to deal with here, Sir.

More than that, before I take my seat, Sir, I would like to let you know that by no stretch of the imagination am I, as a professional accountant, going to agree to the legislative interference of this Government or any other government in any of the professional associations in Trinidad and Tobago. I will never vote "yea" on this! I will not do that. There are Senators on that side who know exactly what I am talking about; and to suggest anything else is sheer rhetoric. Because you sit there wearing a UNC jersey with a big sunshine on it, does it mean that you are doing anything right?

Hon. Senator: Rising Sun.

Sen. D. Montano: Rising Sun? Let me tell you something, my friend; you are looking in the wrong direction because your sun is sinking.

Mr. Vice-President, let me just close, and make an appeal to my fellow Senators. If the Minister wants to make a case to suggest that the original legislation is flawed in some way, somehow the enabling legislation would be bettered if a few minor changes were made, I am willing to sit and listen. But I have not heard that. What I have heard is that the Minister wants to literally emasculate the Dental Council in such a way that the council will have only four members of its own on the board and there will be five members nominated by the Government. In other words, there would be a professional association controlled by Government appointees. That is what you face.

Mr. Vice-President, who is next? The Institute of Chartered Accountants? The Institute of Bankers? The Society of Architects? The Society of Engineers? The Law Association? God forbid!

My young friend over there, Sen. Cuffy-Dowlath, would she stand on her legs and vote in favour of a law society council/board controlled by Government nominees? Would she accept that? Because that is what you are asking the dentists to accept; and you have made no case as to why that should be so, or why the dentists are not capable of regulating themselves, or should not regulate themselves. You have made no case! I would like to hear what you have to say about that.

I have drafted certain amendments to this Bill, which I hope Senators may pay some attention to. I hope that the Government would just withdraw the whole Bill, but failing that, it has got to be changed. Let the council regulate its own affairs. I am sure that none of you has any real idea as to why the Government proposes to regulate the Dental Council.

5.20 p.m.

Why have they picked on the Dental Council as opposed to the Institute of Chartered Accountants, bearing in mind that the accountancy students have had to struggle with foreign examinations for years? They write these foreign examinations and fail and try again and fail, pass one or two and fail again and so forth, but they have not seen it fit to interfere with the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

They have sat back and allowed the accountants to manage their own affairs and we have done so with a measure of competence which has earned the respect of the community at large.

I submit that the same is true for the Dental Council, therefore, why has the Government selected the Dental Council as opposed to any other society? Do not think that it is not difficult for the accountancy students. All the courses are set in the United Kingdom and sent here, and those who can afford would go to one of the accountancy schools for lessons. But they are far removed from the source and anybody who has had any serious academic training would know that being close to the source one gets to know where the emphasis is likely to be and Sen. Prof. Ramchand was talking about that a while ago.

When one is studying a subject and is a long way from Britain, then one is working in a tremendous vacuum under the most difficult circumstances, and Sen. Williams would know because she is a qualified accountant and she knows how difficult it is, and I hope she has managed to pass all her examinations in one go, but there is the likelihood that she did not. I will tell you that nobody I know in Trinidad and Tobago is going to chastise or even ask her how many times she wrote any particular paper. Nobody cares! People only care that she finally got through and is a professional chartered accountant and that is all that matters.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: I want to know if the people who write that accountancy examination have already written and passed a set of examinations?

Sen. D. Montano: The accountancy examinations are basically in three levels and there are a number of subjects in each level. The students must write a certain number of subjects at one sitting in each level whether it is three at a time in Level I, or two at a time in Level II, or whatever, but they must write a certain number of subjects and pass all.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Persons who have sat the dental examination set by the University of the West Indies Dental School are being burdened by having to write an additional examination, whereas in some of the other professions it is not an additional examination, but their examination.

Sen. D. Montano: That is a good observation. In Trinidad, because the Institute of Chartered Accountants does not yet have its own ability to examine students fully, we have had to rely on external agencies. In the United Kingdom, the Institute of Chartered Accountants accepts university graduates. In the first instance, one must have succeeded with a certain number of subjects and they give you the course subjects with which you must join the institute. When one has passed all that, one then has to tackle the institute's final examination. That is how it is in the United States of America, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The university is really the first step although, theoretically, by the time one has done the university he has done everything, but the professional examinations tend to take you a little beyond. The university tends to give all the technical knowledge one has; the professional examinations tend to measure one's ability to put it all together to be able to work with it and that is the difference. As the Minister of Education said, it is really a test of one's ability to practise as a professional, it is just not a test of how much one knows, it is much more than that. That is the point.

Members would have to forgive me for talking about accountancy, but it is what I know. The fact of the matter is that the principle is the same and I know that the students who have to write examinations try and try again. Sen. Marshall would know exactly about what I am speaking. Those of us who have any conscience at all make every effort for our students to finance their studies and encourage them when they pass their examinations, and when they fail we have to give them the time off, or study leave to write the examinations. We do the best we can for them, but the reality is that nobody necessarily expects to pass the first time around. So my question is, what is wrong with that? Especially when the Minister himself said that almost all the students managed to pass on the second try. What is the big problem?

It is only a question of time before the university will be able to organize itself so that the students get their practical experience up to the required level. At that point, you can be reasonably assured that the council has no particular interest in running a set of examinations for anybody. It is a costly and time-consuming effort for them and, therefore, they do not want it anymore than anyone else, but they want to ensure that the professional standards are adhered to, therefore, let them do their own thing.

In the context of what I have said, one can see that the Minister has made no case for interfering with the structure and machinations of the Dental Council. I cannot support this.

Thank you.

Sen. Martin Daly: Mr. Vice-President, I think if Naipaul had read this Bill and followed this debate, he would be condemning us for being so irredeemably, hopelessly, Third World. This is a typical Third World problem and we are behaving in a typically Third World way and I would demonstrate why.

There is a problem: the question whether the problem should come to the legislature. We would deal with that shortly. The problem is this: I do not have the numbers because of course—and I would be gracious about the legislative agenda having regard to the very productive talks I was able to have with the Leader of Government Business; but the fact is, I am not as well prepared for this as I might have been. The problem is that a number of young persons at a certain degree of expense have trained as dentists at the local school and apparently, they cannot practise their profession because the Dental Council would not register them. That is the problem as I understand it, and indeed, there is a similar problem which has developed in the legal profession concerning people who have obtained external degrees and have not been through the University of the West Indies faculty and cannot get places in the law school because the treaty which deals with legal education is construed as guaranteeing a place to a University of the West Indies student, however bad, as long as he or she passes.

I was part of a committee which was set up by the Attorney General to look into this problem. I should say in passing, I hope no one has observed that I am any easier on the Government as a result of being appointed by the Attorney General, because I see that rubbish written in the press all the time, but that would be for you and the public to judge.

There is a problem and somebody has to deal with it. It would not be sufficient to say that because we cannot interfere with the composition of the Dental Council that we cannot address the problem. I may say that I may associate myself very strongly, in due course, with the previous speakers who have said that there is no way the Government should be allowed to interfere with the composition of the Dental Council, but I will come to that.

It does not follow that there is not a problem which has to be dealt with even if it is the wrong way of going about it, and I would submit that the oppressive way of going about it is to interfere with the composition of the Dental Council. I think the point has to be made that the only way the problem can be solved legislatively is to simply make those amendments which make the qualifying at the University of the West Indies school the qualification which has to be recognized. There is no need to do anything beyond that and indeed, it is useful to see that what is provided for, in the amendments made in the House of Representatives is that a person who is the holder of a diploma and so forth, is entitled to temporary registration. A person who has temporary registration, can then get full registration if the Faculty of Dental School certifies that he has successfully completed a one-year period of vocational training.

Of course, the use of the word “vocational” there is quite ignorant. What they mean is “professional” training, but that is another matter. The word “vocational”—as I am sure the professor of English would agree—has absolutely no place there.

In principle, the Government needs to examine the merits of the case of the two man rats—and we have come to the presence of the two man rats group—brought to them by the persons who have qualified and cannot get registration on the one hand, and the claims of the council on the other, that the school is not qualifying persons properly, either because of a lack of practical training or because it does not have all the courses which should be taught. The Government has to examine that and make a decision on what it is doing about it.

In my view, and of course, that is what is certainly irredeemably Third World about it, the dentists have gotten on their high professional horse, and the members of the faculty have gotten on their high professional horse and have lost sight of the problem. Each one is trying to show how much brighter and how many more foreign professors they know than the other one. I can bring along “Lord this”, and “Sir that”, or the other, from this or that foreign university. It is so Third World.

There is an educational problem and the competing groups of man rats are trying to solve it by trotting out foreign professors whom they know, who probably cannot remember their name, to say your students are excellent and the other side say no, your school is bad. How much more Third World are we going to get that we have to drum up support from our foreign friends to solve an educational problem in this country?

Mr. Vice-President, I have to tell you that we kill a lot of trees—these lobbyists—to send this paper. I do not know which set of paper that came to me—whether the one generated by the pharmacy debate, or that generated by this debate—I found more disgusting and not worth the paper on which it was written. I am not going to be impressed by what some foreign professor says about our educational problem and we just have two man rats each one trying to show it is brighter than the other and do each other down and they have long lost sight of the genuine problem which has been created by inducing these students to train and pay for their education and then cannot be registered.

The Government has to examine this problem and there should be people, either from the Ministry of Health, or the Ministry of Education to co-opt local experts—please do not bring anybody from away—to decide whether the school is up to standard. The Government must make that decision, and there is nothing wrong with the Government making that decision and coming to Parliament with it. If the Dental Council does not think that the University of the West Indies ought to be one of the schools, there is nothing wrong with the Government coming to the Parliament and seeking to legislate to make the University of the West Indies one of the schools. Of course, it would have to assuage our fears which would have been raised of whether this is a good thing to do, having regard to the objections from the Dental Council.

5.35 p.m.

That is the parameter of the problem. All these other provisions about changing the composition of the council are nothing more than a *coup d'etat*. That is what you are doing, you know! This is just like a coup. You are saying the Dental Council does not agree with us, so what are we going to do. We are going to buy a legislative *coup d'etat*, throw them out of running their own profession. I will not countenance that.

I certainly will not support this Bill on this occasion. Even though I may have to leave temporarily, I will be telephoned if the vote is ripe before I have

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completed my business transaction scheduled for 6.30 p.m. Let me say, I will not support this Bill. If there is any change, I am not accepting any amendments, with the possible exception of Sen. Spence's amendment to provide for two members of the dental faculty to be on the Dental Council. They have business there because they are dentists.

I do not think we should get too carried away about the fact that the Minister wants to legislate this problem. The question is: Why is our society so shallow, so superficial, so “manrattish”, so egotistical, that this problem could not have been solved by negotiation with the Minister or someone else acting as an honest broker between the two sides, before all the egos and everybody lined up their foreign friends to tell us what to do in Trinidad? Do you mean, big professional men cannot sit and say, if the Dental Council says, "The shortcomings of the school are A, B and C", then the faculty cannot say, "Well, in relation to those shortcomings, we say so and so, but in order to meet your points we will give these undertakings or we will beef up this course". You are telling me that cannot be solved without coming to Parliament? That the country is so bankrupt of conciliation in its soul that we have to come here and legislate for this problem? Have there been any attempts to bring the parties together under anybody's chairmanship? Have you gone to ADR, which is so fashionable now—alternative dispute resolution? Or is it after each set of big egos pound on your door, you make a decision and come here to legislate?

I would be much happier dealing with this problem by legislation, if you could demonstrate to me that conciliatory methods have failed. I will not feel offended, as some of my colleagues, if ultimately, you have to legislate against the objections of the Dental Council to make your recognized school, but my preconditions would be that some genuine effort was made, first of all, to keep out the foreign advisors on both sides and to deflate the egos on both sides. I read a letter there that is so full of literation by one of the professors that I could not understand what he was saying. That is my position.

But the Government does have a problem. The Government is made up of politicians and a political party and if young people and their parents are banging on their door and saying, "We voted for you, we put you in office, we could kick you out of office, we cannot have our children knocking around not being able to register," then the Government has to deal with it; they cannot duck it. I am not offended if we have to legislate for the problem, but I would much prefer that we were legislating for the problem after attempts at conciliation.

Perhaps my good friend, Sen. Gangar, might be able to conciliate this matter. Since, from all reports, he conciliates far more difficult matters of gas prices and other things like that. I do not see him coming here to legislate that Enron must get more gas than AMOCO; he works that out in the boardrooms in Houston or wherever it is they go. He works those things out. He does not come here to legislate these things.

Really, I would like to suggest to the Government that you have to convince us that UWI is a worthy addition to the list. It is not that I do not understand the point that has been made by my colleagues that we are in no position to judge. The Government has made a judgment, they must support their judgment and convince me that their judgment is correct. I am going to conduct my own investigation about whether UWI should be added to the list. I will listen to your reasons and if they are convincing, I might accede to that.

Under no circumstances, as I have said, is the Government to interfere with the composition of the Dental Council. Indeed, it is unnecessary, it is high-handed and it is oppressive. Because if the dispute is over whether UWI should be one of the recognized schools and you are legislating to make UWI a recognized school: What are you going to interfere with the council for, they have not done you anything else? If they have done something wrong in your judgment, or inappropriate—to use the word in current parlance—by refusing to recognize UWI and you solve the problem by putting UWI on the list, what do you want to go and mash up the council for? That is completely high-handed and oppressive! And amounts to a *coup d'etat*. That is my reason.

Sen. Kuei Tung: Senator, do you think in practice, that if the Dental Council has refused to accept UWI students, that merely putting them on as a recognized degree, meaning that you have legislated, that they are now a recognized provider of this course or whatever, that the Dental Council will suddenly change their heart and say, "Well we now recognize it"?

Sen. M. Daly: The answer to that is very simple. If the legislation is properly drawn and UWI is on the same plane as Oral Roberts, Loma Linda, Fairleigh Dickenson—that sounds like a professional model that you might like to look at—if they are on the same list as a recognized school and the council refuses to register some student, then he will be able to compel them by the appropriate legal proceedings to register him. They will not be able to refuse him anymore than they could refuse anyone from Alabama, Baylor, Tufts and so on.

Dr. Rafeeq: What about the position, if the position remains the same that the Dental Council can amend the Schedule, tomorrow morning they can strike off the University of the West Indies?

Sen. M. Daly: I take the point and I am always happy to give legal advice to the Government. I prefer to do it in another forum where it has different consequences. They are both very valid questions, but you would have to make sure that you write the law in such a way that the Dental Council cannot, so to speak, have its own *coup d'etat* and refuse to recognize the UWI school, but those are drafting matters that could never be a justification for overthrowing the council. While I accept that it may be in the interest of the council, I see some of the foreign professors are saying that the dentists want to keep the numbers small, that is a very serious thing to be saying about a professional body. While I accept that they might have some trade interest or self-interest in how they conducted themselves, I feel absolutely certain that the reason that the Dental Council is so obdurate about this matter is because it is not accepting your *coup d'etat*. I am sure if they were approached on the basis, first of all, of moral suasion to accept UWI—let you have their recommendations on how to improve the UWI situation—we would not be here.

Neither of the questions which has been raised is anything more than technical about how best to draft the legislation. You do not need to have a legislative coup in order to bring the Dental Council to your point of view with regard to the acceptance of UWI; that is a drafting matter.

Of course, if we had a properly organized agenda, we would have time—I would have the time, since it usually falls on me—to take the points raised by the hon. Ministers of Finance and Health and complete the free legal advice by committing it to a draft. But I cannot do so if we are going to be here until 10 or 11 p.m. and where the only consideration is the vote. That is why we are conducting the parliamentary business so badly. We are now doing it in this confrontational, hurried way and, so, we cannot pass laws that can stand any scrutiny.

Both the points which have been raised are good points. When do you expect us to start working on this draft? Now? Do you have any parliamentary draftsmen here who could vet anything that we produce, because the Independents who do all the amendments—sorry to say—always say that we are not parliamentary draftsmen and anything we draft has to be vetted by the parliamentary draftsman.

Do you have a parliamentary draftsman here? Even assuming that I stay here until the vote and can produce a draft, and that is why we are perverting—*[Interruption]* I do not know all of them, Mr. Kuei Tung. You seem to know some of the more obvious ones. *[Laughter]* I compliment you.

So that is the problem if we conduct parliamentary business and you must pass this now, hurry kind of thing. It cannot work like that. There has to be a period for reflection, there has to be a period for amendment, there has to be a period for technical dialogue over the particular legislation. That is why we are going so grievously wrong with this "disorder paper" on which we are working. We have got to have time in order to do these things. We cannot simply say, we are going to start at ten and whenever it is, we are passing this Bill in whatever shape. It cannot work like that. You see the advantage of dialogue when we have those kinds of questions.

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, arising from what the Senator has been saying, there is some doubt about some of the universities that are on the Schedule. Although, if I were him, I would not dispute Oral Roberts, although I might dispute "Oral Clinton". *[Laughter]* I wonder if the Senator could elicit from the Minister how some of these universities got on to the Schedule in the first place. And whether, there is some process by which they are reviewed from time to time. Because if you got on in 1960, we do not know if in 1980 the school has any standing.

Sen. M. Daly: I am happy now to be elevated to that level, but I really do not know the answer. But what we try to do in dispute resolution is not to make new disputes as we go along. I really am not too concerned. The children—and I like to think of them as children—who have qualified as dentists are not really too concerned about the Oral Roberts people getting in. If I was a betting man, and I am becoming a betting man, because we are now running a book on which number on the Order Paper will play today. *[Laughter]* If I was a betting man, I am quite sure, if you make an appointment, it would be rather expensive—well, perhaps not if you are a minister, they probably still fix ministers mouths for free, or presidents at any rate. So if you went to each of the dentists registered here, I am sure you would pick up, maybe two Alabamas, three Loyolas, four Texas, five Howards, I am sure this list is based on where people trained abroad: it is nothing more than a self-interest list.

So that, I really do not want to be too concerned about whether Oral Roberts and Marquette should be here. We have a problem with people who have *bona*

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fide spent their money, passed their examinations and can be left out of this profession just because two groups with big egos are having a war about who is bigger, better, brighter and who knows more foreign professors. But I really urge the Government to understand that the single most counterproductive thing they have done is to try to perpetrate a *coup d'etat* on the professional association. I have tried to demonstrate in my contribution that it is not necessary to do that, if you have decided that, over the teeth of the objections of the Dental Council, you want UWI to be a recognized school.

Other members have dealt with the absurdity of the other clauses about reviewing the curriculum and my good friend, Sen. Dr. St. Cyr, talked to me privately about invasion of academic freedom, so most of what is in this Bill is completely unnecessary. We simply need to take the part that you are legislating about UWI, refine it in such a way that there is no loophole which the Dental Council—assuming they decide to act without *bona fides*... That is another thing, we are so Third World that we think that if the legislature passes something making UWI a school that the Dental Council is going to continue to resist, particularly if you withdraw your tanks off their lawn. Take your tanks off their lawn! And leave the professional association alone.

5.50 p.m.

So, Mr. Vice-President, on this Bill, as with many others, we have a lot of work to do. It is not going to be done by us not being well prepared for the debate. It is not going to be done if we cannot follow the usual tradition of when we get to a certain point in the debate, adjourn the debate in order to amend, so the technicians can do their work. Why do we have to go to 11.00 p.m. or we have to have a vote? Are we never going to do any constructive work? If my only role here is to say "yea" or "nay", I have no interest in being here. I want to take part in a dialogue, do some technical work and hear and receive other people's views. Why are we suddenly not being able now to follow the established practice of when we get to a certain point in the debate and the trend of the debate becomes clear, adjourn to see if we can resolve the matter by proper drafting and a proper exchange of ideas?

While I am on the subject of the Lotto, I hope relevantly, Mr. Vice-President, you will appreciate that the numbers for Tuesday were 1 and 2. The numbers for today were 10 and 11, and I suppose, in due course, we will learn the caprice and will not need anyone to ring us up and tell us what numbers will play on the Order

Paper today. I am not entirely surprised that we are doing the legislation by reference to Lotto, because I was looking at the prize giving and I will show how this is related to the dentists in a minute.

I was looking at the prize giving—as I like to call it—from President's House last night, and how irredeemably Third World this was. There was the prize giving, and the two interviewers were rounding up the various awardees. The interviews are always very interesting. I never miss them. I am a sort of prize-giving fanatic when it comes to the national awards. It is a very uplifting thing. The whole country gets to see people who are honoured and they do not know who they are. At 6.40 p.m., they were in the middle of interviewing someone—thank God it was not Paul Castillo in his wheel chair—and the interviewer says—and I sit between two men of cloth who have certain views on the Lotto—“Anyway, we are very pressed for time. At 6.50 p.m. we have to do the Lotto.” *[Laughter]*

Then, the last interview is being conducted. I did not know the fellow. He was dressed in a wonderfully floral tie and a wonderful smile. I did not know who he was, and I particularly wanted to hear his interview, but they gave him 30 seconds. They kept nudging him and saying, “We have to go now. The Lotto!” We are so irredeemably Third World that we do our weekly business on the “disorder paper” by Lotto, and we relegate interviews with national awardees to the drawing of the Lotto.

When are we going to wake up? I say this, Mr. Vice-President, because that is the outlook, and that is the country that produced this absurd dispute between the Deans of the faculty of medical science on one side, and the dentists on the other side. It is very important that we see how ridiculous we are. That is the type of country that produces this kind of dispute which could readily be settled by a mediation. Since we are here, and if it is the Government's intention to add UWI to the list, let us do it by proper drafting, and take your tanks off the Dental Council's lawn.

Sen. Diana Mahabir-Wyatt: Mr. Vice-President, I just wanted to point out that I was one of the people who got no notification on Friday that we were going to discuss this Bill today, and I have had this enormous pile of documents to which Sen. Yuille-Williams was referring as having had to run around and find. I had it in my briefcase for the last three months.

It is an enormous pile of documents, and I had time to go through them in preparation for this debate but, I must say that at the interval, I was not much

wiser. I was coming in here today—and this really proves the value of a debate—to say, “What is the matter with this Dental Council, anyway?” I read the relevant comments made by the relevant experts “from foreign”, and one of them said that if the dentists previously licensed by the council had been required to pass an examination that was simpler in form, and a new examination is introduced to coincide with the completion of the residency training of the first class of graduates, then it could be reasonably concluded that there is an appearance of inequity, as well as what could be interpreted as an attempt at restraint of trade.

It looked to me like restraint of trade but, I am not a dentist. I am not someone who is on the university council and knows the ins and outs of university politics, and I felt rather inadequate, in spite of all the reading I went through, to sort between these opposing claims of this should be and that should be. I agree entirely with Sen. Prof. Spence's comments about people who are not experts trying to deal with something which really demands the knowledge and understanding of an expert. If Sen. Prof. Spence had not suggested that we send this to a select committee, I was going to do it, because I really think that it does not belong here; it belongs with a select committee.

The advantage of not having a prepared written document to read from as one's contribution to the debate is that I was persuaded otherwise by people who made contributions to the debate itself. Particularly listening to what Sen. Prof. Spence had to say made me realize that this debate is very important and, perhaps, it needs to be aired before it is sent to a select committee, because I am also concerned about what appears to be an increasing Government move to control everything, to remove empowerment from communities and centralize it in Government's hands.

We talked here about communities of dentists. Last week we got a report from the National Trust Select Committee in which Government was trying to re-do the council there so that the people who are involved in environmental concerns no longer even have much say at all. It happens in other ways, in other communities, with NGOs. What was an election slogan of empowerment for people is becoming, rather, a reality of restriction of people, of disempowerment of people, and that bothers me.

I have no objection, in principle, to the legislation. I do think that there are times when legislation has to be used, if everything else fails, to solve silly, stupid fights which are really “two man rat in one hole” as Sen. Daly said. We have a set

of documents here, with people pleading on one side and trying to conciliate and being ignored, and if they are going to behave like children and will not listen, then perhaps legislation is the only way to go.

I am not, in principle, against the legislation. I am not an apologist for UWI. I just hope that the dental faculty teaches dentistry better than they write English, because we have a three-page document here from the School of Dentistry, dated May 18, 1998, that has about 15 grammatical errors, and at least 12 errors in punctuation, and using the word "abject" in a way it has never been used before. While I could comment on the English, I do not think I can comment on dentistry. It is not their job to teach people how to write English. I am very sorry.

Sen. Kuei Tung: The Senator said something that is of grave concern to me. She said that there is a perception that we are attempting to over-control, and I say that because that runs counter to our philosophy, which is decentralization. I am wondering whether she got that perception because of the number of pieces of legislation that has come about.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: My answer is that it is not the number of pieces of legislation that comes before us. I am very much aware that it is their philosophy to decentralize and, certainly, that has been consistent in terms of the Ministry of Finance, where they want everybody to take care of their own problems, and Government to take care of none, so why should it put its precious budgeting money into things that I keep trying to fight it for.

I referred to the National Trust legislation last week. The original conception of the board of the National Trust was that it should be largely composed of citizens who are concerned about the national heritage. That has now been moved to being controlled by the Ministry people. With the Consumer Protection Act—remember we got this commission that did not have any people on it. *[Laughter]* It had only officials on it. This seemed to me to be another example following what Sen. Spence said about the professional body which was intended to run dental standards now having the professionals in the minority.

This is worrying, because one of the things I really believe in and accepted, in statements of the Government's philosophy was the empowerment of people and the communities—not just the physical geographical communities, but the professional communities, the communities of interest. The perception that we are moving away from this does not come because of the piles of legislation. I do not mind that. That is what we are here for. I was, as I said, concerned when the

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Minister made his opening remarks. I was very concerned to see that in the first year, 1995, in which the Dental Council set its own exams, 77 per cent of the students passed. The year after that, 27 per cent passed; and the year after that, only 20 per cent passed. This takes us down even below what Sen. Montano talked about with the failure rate for accountants. That is appalling.

There seems to be something very strange about it, especially when in 1998, 100 per cent of the students from UWI passed; 13 out of 13 passed. Now, we do not know what has happened to the Dental Council exams, but to, all of a sudden, impose examinations of standards which they were not taught—

6.05 p.m.

Dr. Rafeeq: In 1998 it was 13 out of 30 passed.

Sen. D. Mahabir-Wyatt: Thank you, Minister Rafeeq, but while I had some queries, as do other people, about the actual provisions on this—and I know it was the Dental Councils that chose the Norma Lindas and the Farley Dickinsons—I thought it was absolutely astonishing that they did not include places like Ireland, the University College of Dublin Medical School. There were none from Australia, New Zealand, India or Switzerland. They have famous medical schools yet none of them appear here, so obviously none of them is up to our standards.

There are other comments I would make as well. In clauses 8 of the Bill where the Minister makes recommendations on the curriculum and training programme at the University of the West Indies, it does not say to whom the Minister may make those recommendations. In clause 5(f), it surely means two members appointed "by" the medical faculty and not two members appointed "from". If two members are appointed "from", who appoints them? Presumably it should be "by".

I do not really want to go into the other comments that have been made because they are so petty, and I am sure they can be taken up by drafting. I would also like to be convinced that all these endless letters back and forth trying to coax the Dental Council into talking and making some accommodation, have continued up to the present day. If they have and the Dental Council has just dug its heels in, I can understand the necessity for the legislation.

I support the comments made by Sen. Martin Daly about the composition of the council. I also support the comments made by Sen. Prof. Spence about the select committee.

Thank you.

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The Minister of Public Administration (Sen. The Hon. Wade Mark): Mr. Vice-President, before moving to adjourn the Senate this evening and having regard to the various contributions made today, we on this side have decided to take into account a number of these contributions.

The Minister of Health and the Government will, in fact, be taking into account the views expressed both on the Front and the Back Benches, Opposition and Independent Senators. If it becomes necessary, we will contact the Senators directly on these matters as we seek to have this Bill shaped in the manner that is acceptable to all parties and in the interest of the profession as well.

Many of our Senators today, because of the manner and style in which the Bills were changed, shared their concerns and I appreciate those that were expressed earlier today. However, I give the Senate the assurance that, as we seek to do a number of things, we have many Bills which I can tell you this evening, once we put them on the agenda, we will circulate them through the Clerk of the Senate to all the Senators. Those are the Bills we are going to be dealing with between now and the end of this month.

For the record, and before the Senators have these Bills before them formally, I inform the Senate of the Bills that we must debate and attempt to conclude, as far as practically possible, on or before September 30, 1998, so that, at least, we can have a clear framework as to the Bills we are going to deal with.

We are going to continue our Tuesday and Thursday sittings. On Tuesdays we will meet from 10.00 a.m. and go until 10.00 p.m. As we proceed with our Bills, if it becomes necessary, we can change to 1.30 p.m. until 10.00 p.m.

On Thursdays we will go from 1.30 p.m. until about 9.00 p.m. If we decide otherwise, collectively, we will go beyond the time. But at the end of the day I assure Senators they can plan their business carefully and properly. Tuesdays we go from 10.00 a.m. until 10.00 p.m. and Thursdays, from 1.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m. If it becomes necessary, via consensus we can decide otherwise. Those two days will remain stationary and will anchor our feet in that arena.

Sen. Prof. Kenny: Mr. Vice-President, I wonder whether the hon. Minister will give an indication as to how we would manage select committees during this period, because we have been given a deadline for one select committee, within two weeks, and I think it is going to take about two months to do it properly. How do we fit these select committees in?

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Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: I am always available for discussion on these matters. I am a democrat as you know. [*Desk thumping*] You can always count on me and we would discuss matters.

Sen. Shabazz: Mr. Vice-President, I want to know whether the order in which the Bills are coming if they will remain in that position as we go along?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, I am going to outline the Bills which number at least about nine. I would attempt as far as is practically possible to provide the Senate with an order. If there are changes to the order, I give the commitment that I would inform Senators long before. [*Interruption*]

We have a report from a select committee dealing with an Act to Amend the National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago, that is on the Order Paper for debate. We are going to continue with the Squatter Regularisation Bill, which is the second Bill.

The third Bill is an Act to confer on cohabitants rights and obligations and to give the courts jurisdiction to make orders with respect to interest in property and maintenance. That is Bill No. 3. We will come to the order just now. [*Cross talk*] [*Interruption*]. Have some respect!

The first one is a Motion, this is the third Bill, it is a Bill to Amend the Tobago House of Assembly Act. We were supposed to deal with that today but that will come at another time. We also have the Dental Profession (Amdt.) Bill which we are dealing with right now, that is on the Order Paper already.

We also have an Act to provide for the Regulated Industries Commission. We are trying our best, as Sen. Kenny indicated, to see to what extent we could conclude the Planning and Development of Land Bill. We will talk about it, but it is now before a select committee. We also have the Financial Year Bill coming up for debate on Thursday and the DNA Bill which is before a select committee, that has to come back here.

Mr. Vice-President, those are the Bills and Motions that we are seeking to conclude on or before September 30, 1998. We will meet, discuss and dialogue as far as is practically possible, in an effort to ensure—

Sen. Prof. Ramchand: Mr. Vice-President, what about Sen. Dr. St. Cyr's Private Motion on economic policy?

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Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: That is carded for the fourth Tuesday in the month, so we have no problem with that. I am dealing with Government Business and I am giving the Senate an appreciation of the Bills that we are trying to complete on or before September 30, 1998.

I inform my fellow colleagues and Senators to keep Tuesdays and Thursdays free; Tuesdays from 10.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. and Thursdays from 1.30 p.m. to 9.00 p.m.

Sen. Shabazz: Mr. Vice-President, we know that this Thursday we are debating the Financial Year Bill. I ask the Leader of Government Business if on Thursday he would tell us what we will be doing on Tuesday, and on Tuesday let us know what we are going to be doing the following Thursday, to keep an order and also, because we are rushing to keep their agenda, we would be able to do research to have a proper debate.

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, as I told my good friend Sen. Shabazz, what we would attempt to do is provide the Senate, as far as is practically possible, with an orderly approach to our legislative agenda for the rest of the period. For instance on Thursday, we will deal with the Financial Year Bill.

The Minister of Public Utilities is expected to come on Thursday and if we are able to complete the Financial Year Bill, we are going to address the Regulated Industries Commissions. On Thursday, at least, there are two Bills to look forward to debating and concluding.

Sen. Shabazz: This will be my final question. If we do not debate the Regulated Industries Bill on Thursday will it then come on the Order Paper for Tuesday? Will we keep that order and not this kind of "disorder paper" that has been presented?

Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, I am going to discuss the matter with the Clerk of the Senate and will provide as far as is practically possible, an orderly approach to the Bills in question. We cannot spoon-feed Senators. When they come to this Parliament they must be prepared to debate every matter on the Order Paper. I want to make that clear. [*Desk thumping*].

Sen. Jagmohan: Mr. Vice-President, with due respect to your good-self and each hon. Senator here, it is in extremely bad taste to make reference to "spoon-feeding Senators". That is not a parliamentary expression.

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Sen. The Hon. W. Mark: Mr. Vice-President, since I have offended my hon. colleague and other Senators, it was not meant in that way. When we are here and we have an Order Paper, we try our best to see to what extent we can complete it. All we are saying on this side is that we have eight Bills and we would try as best as possible to let Senators know, in an orderly fashion, how they are going to come up.

I am going to discuss the matter with the Clerk of the Senate before we leave this evening, so that when the Senators get their Order Paper it would reflect the Bills that we would be dealing with in an orderly fashion. I just wanted to alert hon. Members about the Bills that we are going to deal with.

Mr. Vice-President, we have attempted to allay the fears. I know it has caused some concern to many of our fellow Senators but we want to assure them that we are trying our best to complete a number of important Bills that have already been passed in the other place. If we do not complete them we may have some difficulty in having to reintroduce them in the next session of Parliament. We hope that they would bear with us as we proceed with our Order Paper.

Mr. Vice-President, at this time I beg to move that this Senate do now adjourn to Thursday September 03, 1998 at 1.30 p.m.

Question put and agreed to.

Senate adjourned accordingly.

Adjourned at 6.22 p.m.