

INTERIM REPORT

of the

Advisory Committee on Government  
Hospitals and Institutions

Appointed By His Excellency The Governor "To Enquire  
Into The Salaries And Other Conditions Of Employment  
Of Nurses And Other Subordinate Employees in Govern-  
ment Hospitals And Related Government Institutions  
And To Make Recommendations As It Deems Fit."

Georgetown, British Guiana  
April, 1966

## Interim Report

To His Excellency,  
Sir Richard Edmons Luyt K.C.V.O., K.C.M.G., D.C.M.  
Governor of British Guiana.

Your Excellency:

Pursuant to the powers conferred upon you by Section 6(1) of the Labour Ordinance, Chapter 103, you appointed us in terms of the following notice of appointment published in the Official Gazette of Saturday, 29th January, 1966:-

### Appointments

#### Labour Ordinance, Chapter 103

Approval has been given for the appointment with effect from 25th January, 1966, under Section 6(1) of the Labour Ordinance, Chapter 103 of an Advisory Committee, comprising the undermentioned persons, "to enquire into the salaries and other conditions of employment of nurses and other subordinate employees in Government Hospitals and related Government Institutions and to make such recommendations as it deems fit":-

The Rev. F.H. Talbot  
Mr. Harold Wilkinson

Chairman  
Acting Principal Establish-  
ment Officer, Ministry of  
Finance.

Mr. Neville Griffith  
Mrs. Nora Johnson

with Mr. W.R. McArthur, Labour Officer - Secretary.

2. In accordance with the terms of our appointment, we have the honour to submit the following Interim Report as it is the view of the Committee that several urgent matters should be dealt with immediately, rather than await the submission of a full report which would involve an extended period and greater detail.

3. In submitting this Interim Report we have endeavoured to present a realistic view in that, we have taken into consideration the country's present economic situation. We have also anticipated the projected plans of the Government for the general improvement of the conditions under which the nursing and subordinate employees work.

### Introduction

4. We met in private on 27th January, 17th February, 24th February and 31st March, 1966, when matters as to our terms of reference and programme of operations were discussed. Mr. C. Byass, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Health, and Miss M. Harding, Matron, Georgetown Hospital, were interviewed by the Committee on 3rd and 10th March, 1966, respectively, and representatives of the Medical Employees Union on 7th, 14th and 21st April, 1966. We met in private on 23rd April, 1966, to draft an Interim Report.

5. To be able to deal relevantly with some of the issues raised, certain hospitals and institutions were selected for visitation. The Hospitals and Institutions visited are as follows:-

| Hospitals and Institutions        | Date Visited       |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. The Palms                      | 9th February, 1966 |
| 2. The Mahaica Hospital           | 12th " "           |
| 3. The Mahaicony Cottage Hospital | 12th " "           |
| 4. The Lethem Cottage Hospital    | 15th " "           |
| 5. The Best Hospital              | 22nd " "           |
| 6. The Leonora Cottage Hospital   | 22nd " "           |

Problems relating to the institutions visited were discussed with Senior Administrative Staff. Employees of all grades were permitted to express their grievances quite freely, and indeed needed no encouragement.

6. At each meeting with the representatives of the Medical Employees Union full scope was allowed the representatives to clarify, and or develop points in the memorandum the union had submitted.

7. Mr. C. Byass, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Health, who had performed the duties of Senior Personnel Officer in that Ministry, and Miss M. Harding, Matron, Georgetown Hospital, were invited and did give evidence before the Committee on behalf of their Ministry.

8. Interested organisations in the terms of reference of our Committee were invited to submit memoranda for consideration by notices published in the Official Gazette and the daily newspapers on Saturday 29th January, 1966.

## Evidence and Submissions

1. Delay in making appointments

(i) According to the administration, it is the custom and practice for the list of successful candidates at the Nurses' Final Examination to be submitted to the Ministry as soon as possible after the results are known, and for such persons to be appointed Staff Nurses with effect from the month following that in which the examination was held.

(ii) It has been represented to our Committee that student nurses at the Berbice Hospital, who were successful at their final examination in May, 1963, were appointed with effect from 1st January, 1965, instead of with effect from 1st June, 1963, although they did assume the responsibilities of the post of staff nurses, with effect from 1st June, 1963, because of the fact that the necessary list of successful candidates had not been submitted to the Ministry promptly. It has also been brought to the attention of our Committee that nurses who qualified after May, 1963, were appointed before those who qualified in May, 1963, with the result that those nurses who qualified in May, 1963, have not only suffered financially, but have lost their proper seniority as well.

(iii) The administration has confirmed that the information contained in paragraph (ii) is correct and that the main difficulty in remedying the situation is that provision was not made in the 1965 or 1966 Estimates to meet the arrears of salaries which would have to be paid to the employees concerned.

(iv) We recommend that the necessary provision estimated by the Ministry of Health at \$12,000.00 be made in this year's Estimates to meet this expenditure so that the staff nurses in question could be appointed with effect from their proper dates, in keeping with normal practice.

2. Student Nurses

(i) We recognise that there is a shortage of trained nurses. The direct result of this shortage is reflected in the following situations:-

- (a) The student nurses must of necessity receive very little supervision and training in the wards.
- (b) The student nurse is often called upon to assume responsibilities for which she has not been properly trained.

(ii) This shortage of trained staff is most acute in the outlying hospitals and the accompanying result is the fact that the student posted to these hospitals is also denied adequate training.

(iii) We recommend:-

That the student nurse should complete at least one year of the prescribed period

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training before being posted to an out-station, and further that out-stations should have an adequate number of trained nurses so as to ensure the proper supervision and training of student nurses.

#### Transfers

(i) It has been represented to our Committee that nurses are at times transferred at very short notice. This situation must necessarily create problems for the nurses concerned. We have also noted that staff nurses are posted to out-stations for a period of one year. For married nurses in particular this would mean a disruption of their family life.

(ii) We recommend:-

(a) That nurses should be given at least one calendar month's notice of transfer.

That the period of posting to an out-station for staff nurses should be reduced to nine months.

(c) That a roster system of transfers should be implemented so as to ensure that all nurses will serve at out-stations.

#### 4. Night Duty - Georgetown Hospital

(i) We have noted that night duty runs for a period of two months. Representations have been made to reduce this period. Any reduction would result in an increased frequency of tours for each person. The problem lies in the fact that in some instances nurses do not secure sufficient sleep during the day. We recognise that under ideal situations with proper hostel accommodation provided, it would be easier to ensure that the nurse has had adequate sleep.

(ii) We recommend a roster system that would ensure an even distribution of night duty.

#### 5. Post Graduate Training

(i) It is our intention to deal with this matter in more detail in the final report, but we feel that because of its importance and urgency it cannot be over-looked.

(ii) The prospect of receiving post graduate training can serve as an incentive for nurses and the importance of their profession. We strongly believe that the possibility of, and desirability for specialist post graduate training should be communicated to nurses from the period of their probationary training.

(iii) We are aware of the fact that many post graduate opportunities are available to nurses in special fields.



It appears that nurses are not fully aware of these possibilities. Further it appears that the Ministry has not taken advantage of the various available post graduate opportunities.

(iv) We also feel that post graduate training in the United Kingdom should not be presented as the only source, but the opportunities available in Canada and the United States of America should be explored to the fullest.

(v) We recommend:-

That at the close of the probationary training period, special sessions should be conducted for successful nurses at which time they should be given full information on opportunities available and the standards required for post graduate training in special fields e.g. tutors, health visitors, psychiatric nursing etc.

## 6. Male Nurses

(i) There are four vacancies for senior male nurses which have not been filled for some time, mainly because of strict financial circumstances in the past.

(ii) We recommend that the existing vacancies be filled forthwith as there is need for senior male nurses in the following wards:-

- (a) Male Medical and Surgical
- (b) Police
- (c) Observation
- (d) Male Eye Ward, and
- (e) Social Disease Clinic.

## 7. Issuing of Uniforms

(i) The present system of condemning uniforms i.e. a uniform has to be condemned before a new one could be issued, is most unsatisfactory and not in keeping with the practice that exists in other sections of the Public Service.

(ii) We see no reason or justification for maintaining the present system and recommend that there should be an annual issue of uniforms.

(iii) The issuing of shoes annually to employees has left much to be desired and as a result is the source for grave discontent. The administration has explained that the main reason for this is the present practice of purchasing shoes in bulk through the Crown Agents which does not permit prompt issues.

(iv) We fully appreciate that there may be savings in purchasing the items through the Crown Agents but in the light of the existing situation obtaining in the

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Ministry of Health, we recommend that shoes be purchased locally through Tender Board Procedure. This would ensure the prompt issuing of these items to employees.

(v) We also recommend that the number of shoes allowed each employee annually be issued at one time in keeping with what pertains in other departments and Ministries.

8. (i) Sanitary and Recreational Facilities

(a) Sanitary Facilities

On our visit to Institutions we noted the lack of adequate sanitary facilities for employees. The facilities if any provided, are far from satisfactory. To our great dismay we have also observed that female employees in particular do not have adequate dressing rooms.

(ii) We envisage that when the new hospitals are built standards would be greatly improved. Nevertheless we are of the view that the present situation should be corrected immediately.

(iii) We recommend that the following facilities be provided immediately.

(a) Dressing Rooms (Male and Female)

(b) Toilet and Washing Facilities (Male and Female)

(b) Recreational Facilities Georgetown Hospital

(iv) The upper flat of the Nurses Hostel which is the recreation room is also being used as a class-room. There is no reading room for student nurses; there are not enough chairs, and the radio and refrigerator provided have both been out of order for some time.

We recommend:-

(a) That a reading room be provided

(b) That sufficient chairs be made available

(c) That the radio and refrigerator be replaced

(d) That the class-room be housed elsewhere, and

(e) That recreational facilities should also be provided for ancillary staff.

9. Cleaning of Wards

(i) We have noted that ward maids have to use their hands to squeeze wet mops after scrubbing, the reason being a shortage of mop buckets. The continuance of this state of affairs is detrimental to the health and welfare of the ward maids, especially those working in

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infectious wards.

(ii) Mop buckets are essential, and there could be no justification for not having sufficient mop buckets, when we are informed that they are available locally at a cost of seven dollars and fifty cents each.

(iii) We recommend:-

- (a) That as far as possible floors in hospitals should be tiled, or
- (b) That floors should be polished or painted with a water resistant varnish if tiling is not possible, and
- (c) That sufficient mop buckets be provided immediately.

#### 10. Muster Roll

(i) At the Mahaica Hospital, attendants are required to assemble out-doors at 7.25 A.M daily to answer a roll call and receive instructions as to their assignments. It is the view of the administration that this muster roll is necessary to prevent the attendants from loitering in the mess hall after breakfast.

(ii) We consider this system antiquated and unnecessary. We are informed that a roster of duties is prepared monthly which itself condemns the need for a muster roll.

(iii) we recommend:-

- (a) That the muster roll should be abolished forthwith.
- (b) That employees be required to sign a time book on reporting for duty, and
- (c) That a list of relief assignments be posted on a notice board at the gate and in the mess hall daily.

#### 11. The Palms

(i) We appreciate the fact that efforts are being made to provide better amenities. However, we are deeply concerned that nothing is being done to give the nursing staff the feeling that they are engaged in a specialised field of nursing.

(ii) we recommend that post graduate study opportunities be made available to qualified nurses stationed at this institution.

(iii) We also recommend that a system of in-service training for nurses' aides at the Palms be instituted in consultation with the trained tutors from the main



training school, in the interest of efficiency.

We have the honour to be,  
Your Excellency,  
Your obedient servant.

F.H. Talbot Chairman

H. Wilkinson

N. Griffith

N. Johnson

W.R. McArthur

Secretary.