

LORD OWEN SPEAKING IN THE 5<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF COMMITTEE  
STAGE OF THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE BILL, HOUSE  
OF LORDS, MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2011

My Lords, I reiterate some of the comments that have already been made by many noble Lords on the sense of urgency about this issue. Above all, I feel rather like the man in the Bateman cartoon who mentions the words "party politics" in the **Health and Social Care Bill** in the **House of Lords**. There is here a very deep question. It is frankly inconceivable that there will be legislation in the next Session; I would think it would be almost inconceivable that there would be legislation on this before the next election, which is currently scheduled for 2015. Politicians simply do not usually go in for a repeat hiding, and this Bill has already had one hell of a political controversy. If we have legislation, it may be all on medical education, but it opens up a whole realm of party politics, which I just do not see being done.

Therefore, I want to make a practical suggestion to the **Minister**. There is a way through this if there could be bipartisan agreement. One only has to think of a situation in which there is no legislation until 2016 to realise that we are facing a real chasm in medical education and continuity. As I understand the legislation, the **Secretary of State** is empowered to create special health authorities. Whether he does that or removes the ones that are necessary, that power is

there. If not, he could easily take it in the Bill.

There is so much cross-party agreement that doing something about health education is pretty urgent. I would have thought that it would be perfectly possible to meet most of the demands. The noble Lord, Lord Ribeiro, is completely right. We are not in a position to legislate now on anything other than a structure. That structure might be a temporary special health authority. It is not worth prejudging the question but, if it was a special health authority, it would need some form of regulation passed. As long as an agreement could be made-first on the **clause** that would be in the Bill, along the lines more of **Amendment** 47B than 47A; and, secondly, with the main substantive regulations for the special health authority done through an affirmative resolution-then it would be perfectly possible for us to move on the creation of this training authority, which has to embrace all the health professions and be pretty wide-ranging, some time at the end of 2012 or early 2013. That would meet the wishes of most people in the **National Health Service**.

It is really not enough to rest on the fact that there will be a Bill in the next **Session of Parliament**. I have already tried to convince my own college, the **Royal College of Physicians**, that it is highly unlikely that this will be fulfilled. As practical politicians, we should ask the **Minister** to take this away with a measure of real good will to see if there is some way through this issue which does not prejudice the long-term future but allows us to fill a very serious gap.