

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1966 - 71

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THIRD SESSION OF 1966 - 71

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, 5th June, 1970.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 2.40 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour Sir J. E. T. BRANCKER, Q.C., . F.Z.S., (Speaker):

Mr. E. ST.A. HOLDER, J P.; Hon. C. E. TALMA, (Minister of Health and Community Development); Hon J. C. TUDOR. C.M.G., M.A., (Leader of the House); Mr. J. W. CORBIN, J.P.; Hon. G.G. FERGUSSON, (Minister of Trade and Tourism); Mr. R. ST.C. WEEKES,

J.P.; Mr. W. R. LOWE, J.P.; Hon. N. W. BOXILL,

(Minister of Communications and Works); Mr. J. B. YEARWOOD. J.P.. (Chairman of Committees);
Hon. A.DaC. EDWARDS.(Minister of Labour, National Insurance and

Housing); Mr W. C. B. HINDS:

Mr. C. A. E. HOPPIN.

J, P, :

Mr J. M. G. M. ADAMS, M.A. and Mr. ELLIOTT

D. MOTTLEY

Prayers were read.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER:

I am afraid there are no Minutes for confirmation.

PAPERS LAID

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay on behalf of the Prime Minister the Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations of 1970.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders 5, 14, 16, 18, 19, 40 and 45 be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Government Business be now taken.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that. The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order No. 1 in the name of the Hon. Leader of the House.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Your Honour do now leave the Chair and the House go into Committee of Supply.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. YEARWOOD in the Chair,

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that the Hon. Minister of Communications take charge of these Resolutions in the absence of the Hon. Prime Minister.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. N. W. BOXILL:

Mr. Chairman, I am somewhat gratified and I am somewhat surprised; what we are doing here today we could have done last Tuesday without any fanfare or anything like that. First, I want to make it clear on the floor of this House, either the Standing Orders of this House want fixing or I am interpreting them incorrectly. No Minister, as far as I know, has any right to be asking permission to deal with a matter that belongs to the Government; that is the first thing that goes on that is wrong inside here. Any Minister should be able to get up and deal with any measure that belongs to the Government.

The second thing is that when a Minister gets up and makes a proposition it does not necessarily have to be seconded because a Minister represents the Government, and I see here a Minister makes a motion and a second Minister has to second it; when a Minister gets up, he represents the Government, he

makes the motion and the question should be put and we go on to deal with the Government's Business.

Mr. HINDS:

On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, exactly what is before the Committee?

Mr. CHAIRMAN:

What is before the Committee are two Resolutions to appropriate the sums of \$100,000 and \$120,000 respectively; let the hon. junior member for St. Thomas proceed to deal with these Resolutions.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1970-71 No. 1

Hon. N. W. BOXILL:

The Addendum to this Resolution, Mr. Chairman, sets out the reason for this. As I pointed out last Tuesday, this was really nobody's fault; in my Department we employ over 3,000 people as casual workers, and when you have to compute salaries for this amount of people, if you compute it on a straight basis as you do for the average Civil Servant, it would have been quite easy; but when you have to do this on as many pay sheets as you have persons this is where you get the problem. In the Capital Works Programme a man might be working at Nelson Street during the time when the new rates began and then he might have been shifted to Bolton Lane, the Harbour or to any part of the Island; so as a result of this, despite the fact that we were paying people overtime to expedite this matter, this money was in the 1969-70 Estimates and this is a revote. It has lapsed because the physical resources which we have were not able to cope with the amount of people that we have to pay.

I am dealing with both Resolutions simultaneously because one is to pay Capital Works staff and one is to pay Unestablished staff. Some of the people have been paid already, and as I pointed out, we could not get through paying all the people by the 31st March. As hon. members on the opposite side would know, the new rates of pay came into operation - I think it was agreed some time in December - so as a result of this, this is why I am asking the House to approve these two Resolutions simultaneously because the comment is going to be the same for both. As the Addendum sets out in the first Resolution,

All arrears of salaries and wages resulting from the 1969 Salaries Revision were not paid or accounted for by 31st March, 1970.

It is therefore necessary to seek a revote of funds totalling \$100,000 to complete the payment of arrears under Current expenditure.

In the next Addendum for the \$120,000 it reads almost the same way.

All arrears of salaries and wages resulting from, the 1969 Salaries Revision were not paid or accounted for by 31st March, 1970.

It is therefore necessary to seek a revote of funds totalling \$120,000 to complete the payment of arrears under Capital expenditure.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, without much further ado, if hon. members on the opposite side have any questions to ask, I will be willing to answer them. I beg to move that this Resolution for \$100,000 do now pass.

Hon. G. G. FERGUSON:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

2.50 p.m.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE 1970-71 No. 2.

Hon. N. W. BOXILL:

Mr. Chairman, as I have pointed out to hon. members on the opposite side, this Resolution is similar to the other one.

I beg to move that there solution for \$120,000 do now pass.

Hon. A. DaC. EDWARDS:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Your Honour do now report the passing of two Resolutions in Committee of Supply.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. CHAIRMAN reported to Mr. SPEAKER who resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On the separate Motions of Hon. J. C . TUDOR, seconded by Hon. N.W. BOXILL, the two Resolutions were read the first and second time and agreed to.

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Item No. 5 be taken next.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I am asking leave to take Charge of this Order in the absence of the hon. and learned Prime Minister.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

CIVIL ESTABLISHMENT (GENERAL) (AMENDMENT) (No. 3) ORDER, 1970.

Mr. SPEAKER:

Order No. 5 is to move the passing of a Resolution to approve "The Civil Establishment (General) (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 1970."

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, this is the Civil Establishment Order which is intended to give effect to the new proposals announced by the Prime Minister in his Statement in this House on the 12th May in respect of Police pay. That Statement has been printed and circulated to hon. members and it sets out the reasoning behind this new retroactive payment which goes back to the 1st January, 1970. The Establishment Order indicates, I believe, in its Schedule the comparative tables with the proposed revision from 1st January, 1970, and the Statement itself explains in some detail the basis upon which these proposals have been made.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

Mr. HINDS:

Mr. Speaker, this Order arose out of a Statement made by the Prime Minister of this House on the subject of Police pay to which the Leader of the House made reference not many minutes ago. Now, that Statement is in itself extremely misleading. It contains matters which the Prime Minister ought to have known did not constitute statements of fact. As a result, Mr. Speaker, the Statement as a whole tends to set up or to create within the Police Force a situation which - I well remember it suited the Prime Minister on that occasion to attempt to lay the blame at the feet of others. I speak in respect of his remarks about trying to create mutiny within the Force.

Now, this Statement, the Leader of the House tells us, was circulated, but he, apparently, did not know that an attempt had been made to circulate it amongst the Police themselves. What I am saying is that until this day less than one-third of the members of the Police Force have seen it for themselves. 3 p.m.

Most of them have heard of the statement. In the last paragraph of the Statement, the Prime Minister said "It has been agreed that any question of retroactive pay for the Police with effect from 1st April, 1966, will be closed."

Mr. Speaker, the matter of Police pay is a matter of very grave concern. It is a matter which, as has been trotted out to this Honourable House, shows that an attempt has been made to pull wool over the eyes of the members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, for in the very Statement made by the Prime Minister, it is acknowledged that the Police had a claim to retroactive pay from 1st April, 1966. The Prime Minister in that Statement of 12th May said that he had never ignored the validity of their claim; but the Prime Minister in addressing this House on, I think, 9th December, stated that we did not owe the Police any back pay. I want to put it bluntly, Mr. Speaker. Our view is that the Police deserve better treatment than this, and if they do not know how to protect and preserve their own rights, it could hardly be expected of them to protect and preserve the rights of the members of this community.

Mr. Speaker, one has got to bear in mind that the Police have now been offered what amounts to a salary increase from 1st January, 1970. This must be taken as being offered in lieu of what they were entitled to as at 1st April, 1966, taking all the intervening circumstances into consideration. It cannot be denied that what has been done in this instance is merely laying the foundation for new members to join the Police Force and leave sooner. It may sound a bit paradoxical, but in the Police Force today conditions obtain which do not lend themselves to being emulated by the policeman who would like to

be of service to his country. There are a number of withdrawals. I use the term "withdrawals" because the Commissioner of Police seems to favour that term, but our own experience is that when a policeman has been allowed to withdraw, in nine out of ten cases he has just quitted the job without being allowed to do so, and the easiest way of going about matters is to have it chalked up that the policeman had been allowed to withdraw. You will find that many young men will join the Force merely to get the new salary that is offered, they will effect a saving a little more readily, and from that saving they will pay their own passage to the United States, Canada or somewhere else that offers much more than the Royal Barbados Police Force has to offer. There are very few young men who will join the Force today and have the encouragement to remain, and that encouragement ought to come from the senior men in the Force; and when I say the senior men, I refer to from the Commissioner of Police right down the ranks. 3.10 p.m.

We have had a very long, and I am even saying tiresome, attempt at explaining the process employed in this exercise of Police pay; but, Mr. Speaker, what has been lost sight of is that the policeman who at the 1st April, 1966 became entitled to an increase averaging \$30 a month - what that policeman seems to have lost sight of is that it did not come overnight, but that, through his diligent and careful performance in the years immediately preceding 1966, those are the things that entitled the Salaries Commissioner and others to have come to the conclusion that the policeman was entitled to much more than those in the categories IV and V, which prior to that time formed the basis on which the salaries were computed. We have got to ask ourselves if a policeman at the 1st April, 1966 was entitled to a salary increase of \$30 per month, and the Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister, merely acknowledges it with one corner of his mouth and with the other corner of his mouth is saying that he had no back pay for the Police. We have got to come right along the line to ask ourselves what becomes of the policeman who is in the Force at the 1st April, 1966 but resigned up to the end of December 1969.

At the 1st April, 1966 they were entitled to so much; they did not get it in 1966, nor 1967; it was not available to them in 1968; they were only reminded of it in 1969; but now as from the 1st January, 1970. Police are to be given a salary increase. What we are saying is that the salary increase from the 1st January, 1970 does not take into account, bears no relation whatsoever to the policeman who was in the Force at the 1st April, 1966 and who continued in the Force, as I have said, up to the 31st December, 1969; what is the position with that policeman? That is the thing that has to be taken into consideration, not that one is going to ignore the policeman who was in the Force prior to 1966 and remained in the Force up to and immediately preceding the 1st January, 1970 when these salaries are supposed to come into effect.

Mr. Speaker, the Police have been told, in the course of their negotiations, that all of the money was out of the Consolidated Fund at the 31st March, 1970. That kind of statement could only have come from a very responsible person, because one has got to bear in mind the circumstances prevailing at the time when the statement was made, and it was further stated that it was the second time since the present Government had come into office that the Minister of Finance had found that he had an empty Treasury.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to attempt to enumerate the numerous persons, including Ministers, who have carried out a raid on the same Treasury; I do not want to do that. I do not want to make reference to the thousands of dollars that were made available as back pay to a handful of Ministers. I do not want to make any reference at all to the vast sums spent on what we are told are Overseas Missions, on all of these houses having to be bought in Washington and London out of the taxpayers' money; but the police who, if a riot broke out tomorrow, have got to face the music - they cannot say they are not reporting for duty; they cannot say the battle is too hot and they must run. 3.20 p.m.

They, Mr. Speaker, are the people who have to observe law and order, and if we needed a week ago evidence as to the importance of the Police in this country, we do not have to look for it now. The Public Order Bill in itself establishes the importance of the Police in this country. Mr. Speaker, our contention is that since the members of the Royal Police Force are of such importance in a community, our view is that they should be properly paid. We do not say merely that they should be properly paid, but we detest and decry any effort on the part of anyone who tries to rob them out of that to which they are rightfully entitled. The Statement of the Minister of Finance in this House on the 12th May admits that the Police had a claim.

There was a time, during the course of negotiations, when the Police were led to believe that their back pay would have been paid to them in instalments. Even that, they were willing to have, but all that has happened is that the Police have been kept back; they have reached breaking point; they are now made to be so hungry that they are telling themselves that half of a loaf is better than no bread. That is what has been done to the Police; they have gone through starvation to the point that they have contented themselves by saying so.

Mr. Speaker, all that has been offered to the Police amounts roughly to this: From a Station Sergeant upwards gets approximately \$60 per month increase; Sergeants, Corporals and Constables with over 19 years' service get \$25 a month increase; a Constable with from 10 to 15 years' service gets \$20 a month increase; and if a Constable has fewer than 10 years, his increase ranges from \$10 to \$15 a month. Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not difficult for the Police to get what is due to them. Nobody should have to teach the Police how to get what is theirs. Everybody else held out his hands at the counter of the Treasury and got his backpay. Why is it now that the Police are not to get their backpay - because it goes back to 1966? It is entirely a matter for the Police if they continue to be silly and if they continue to sleep on their rights.

All of this talk about how the salary was computed; the Fields Commission; Category A, Category B and so on, - all of this talk does not amount to a row of pins. One has to remember that it might appear pretty attractive on paper that the Police have got salary increases, but deductions have to be made for income tax from Police salaries in the same way as they are made from the salaries of other people. The

Police are now denied the marriage allowance which was at one time available to them. What is the reason, Mr. Speaker, for not paying the Police their money in 1966 when it became due? It was not paid to them in subsequent years, but now it is seen that the Police are not prepared to hold on any longer to any fair promises that are to be offered, the salary increase is made from the 1st January, 1970.

Mr. Speaker, the Police pay is based on what is referred to as Factor A, which is the average annual earnings of Categories 5 and 6 of key-scale workers. The workers in Category 6 get \$1.10 per hour, but if this is multiplied by 44 hours a week and by 52 weeks in a year and add 45% of the first figure multiplied by 44 and 52 respectively, Factor A is arrived at. The 45% of Factor A added is called Factor B, and then 20% of both is added and called Factor C and worked out to the nearest dollar in all cases and then divided by 12. That is the basis on which a Constable's salary is arrived at. The Constable is then entitled to two long service increments. 3.30 p.m.

It means therefore, Mr. Speaker, that when the formula is applied in all its stages, a constable's salary would amount to \$365 per month with two long service increments of \$20 making a total of \$405. A constable starts at the Training School at \$210 per month, and after six months of training, he gets an increment of \$15 which brings him to \$225, and then he continues by annual increments of \$15 for nine years before he can reach \$345 which would come about in his tenth year. He would have to go between 17 and 22 years before he reaches \$365, and then with an annual increment of \$20 it would bring him after having completed 22 years of service to \$405. I believe I can say, Mr. Speaker, that very few policemen, if any, ever reach there.

Mr. Speaker, we have got to ask ourselves a few questions. When the Police are given salary increases, exactly what does it mean in the long run to the community? The men deserved money, but we maintain that there is so much wrangling among certain officers in the Force that it is having a very dampening effect on members lower down the scale. There are members of the Force who will tell you that if you gave some policemen charge of the Treasury, it would mean nothing to them as long as they have got to be in a Police Force which is governed not by the Head of the Force, but by others very near the tail. One has got to bear in mind that the Police Force has its hazards like many another occupation, and I may say more so, perhaps, than some others. In England and in other countries where mining for coal is carried out, the coal-miners consider themselves as specialists. The window-cleaner in sky-scraper buildings is considered a specialist; but with all that the Police are called upon to exercise during their career, they are still not considered as specialists in their field. Our view is that we need a general revision of salaries, of training, of morals, of everything else in the Police Force.

Sir, I well remember that in the year 1938 a policeman coming out from the Training School was supposed to have in his head a fair knowledge of the five volumes of the Laws of Barbados; but today policemen coming out from the Training School only know how to turn sommersaults over each other's

backs. You see policemen along the streets chewing gum, and despite the statements made by the Leader of the House as to the conditions under which the Police live, some of them, I understand, are still sleeping on bug-carrying canvass cots. I am to wonder how long this condition will be allowed to remain in the Force. If we want to attract the type of policeman who is to be a credit to the country, there are certain officers whom it would pay this country much better to pension off and have them go home. I could name no less than four of them. Their presence in the Force is in itself forbidding, and it does absolutely nothing by way of credit to any young man who would like to make policing a career.

Mr. Speaker, I can say for myself that an attempt is being made to recruit to the ranks of the Force young men who have had a secondary education, but it is after these men are recruited to the ranks that they meet the obstacles. There are some Officers in the Force who have not had the benefit of a secondary education, and they are the ones who wilfully go out of their way to make life difficult and a burden to the young man with education when he joins the Force. I can attest to that myself. So it is not all easy; it is not merely a question of increasing the salaries from 1970. There is the burning question which remains, and that is, is this the answer to the wrongs in the Force? 3.40 p.m.

We say "No;" and if the Government were to set about at as early a stage as possible to right those wrongs to which reference has been made, we are sure that in the not too distant future we would begin to see that we are getting nearer to having a Police Force of which the country could be proud. I do not think there is any necessity for me to labour this point much further, except to say that it is not true for anyone to tell this Hon. House that the Police have agreed with anybody that their backpay from the 1st April, 1966 is out; they have not agreed, and even today when we are asked to vote in favour of this Order we have got before us, the Police themselves have not all had an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the contents of the proposals that are made supposedly in their favour. But we ought to urge upon the Police to have self-respect to show us that they know that Police money has far less purchasing power than that of any other member of the Community. Remember, Sir, the policeman has got to remember that he is working in a department which, if he is faced with the greatest of difficulties, he has got to leave inside his own fold and go outside and look for assistance. That is the situation that is facing the Police, and the sooner they can realise their importance in this community, the sooner they would have the Minister of Finance eat his own words again by saying that he did not owe them any back pay and then turn around to say that he never ignored the validity of their claim. With those words, Mr. Speaker, I think I have covered enough on this matter and I leave it to other members to make their contributions.

Mr. J. M. G. M. ADAMS:

Mr. Speaker, after my friend the hon. junior member for St. Peter has given us those few words, perhaps I ought to tell hon members that I am going to make a long speech because I only intend to take five minutes. I want to support this Resolution; I was among those hon. members who have had occasion to mention in the House before that the Police had a genuine pay grievance, and when the Prime Minister in the preliminaries to the delivery of his Budget explained quite cogently and carefully

that everything the hon. junior member for St. Peter and I had said on past occasions was justified, I for one applauded that part of his speech. I could not, however, think that he other than disfigured the occasion by referring to persons who sought to incite a mutiny in the Police Force by telling the Police that they had a justified pay grievance. On the one hand, he was saying that the grievances were justified and on the other hand I formed the impression that he was pointing a finger at the hon. junior member for St. Peter and myself, among others, who, he said, were inciting this mutiny in the Police Force, and since then we know that the cudgels of negotiations in respect of this matter were principally taken up by the Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police, we have to wonder whether the Prime Minister is seeking to re-define mutiny in some way unknown to the dictionaries even of the hon. junior member for St. Thomas. Subject to those few short words, I support this Resolution.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. J. C. TUDOR:

Mr. Speaker, I do not think I need trouble the House anymore with Government Business this afternoon. I am grateful to hon. members of both sides for the efficiency and despatch with which we have disposed of these very pressing items. I know that hon. members on both sides of the House as well as Your Honour are bidden to several and quite variable functions this afternoon, and that all of us are anxious to attend at least some of them, but certainly one. I beg to move that this House do now adjourn till Tuesday next at 12 noon.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division. 3.50 p.m.