

THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1971 - 76

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FIRST SESSION OF 1971-76
HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

Tuesday, 13 th March, 1973

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour N. G. A. MAXWELL, LL.B., (Speaker); Hon. C. E. TALMA, C.B.E., (Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House); Hon. G. G. FERGUSON, (Minister of Home Affairs); Mr. W. R. LOWE, J.P., (Chairman of Committees); His Honour C. A. E. HOPPIN, (Deputy Speaker); Hon. P. G. MORGAN, C.B.E., (Minister of Tourism, Information and Public Relations); Mrs. G. L. EASTMOND; Hon. P. M. GREAVES, B.A., (Minister of Housing, Lands, Labour and National Insurance); Dr. the Hon. R. B. CADDLE, (Minister of Health and Welfare) and Mr. A. MORRISON.

Prayers were read.

Mr. SPEAKER:

I have received a letter from the Public Relations Officer of the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation. The letter reads thus

**BARBADOS INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
CORPORATION**

Pelican Industrial Park, Bridgetown, Barbados, W.I.

Date: 16th February 1973

The Speaker

Barbados House of Assembly

Public Buildings

BRIDGETOWN

Dear Sir:

As I indicated during our telephone conversation, the IDC is shooting a new promotional film, and since the stability of the Government plays a major role in our investment promotion efforts, we are seeking your permission to allow the film unit to shoot some scenes, during the House of Assembly Meeting on Tuesday, February 27, 1973-

Mr. Noel Smith of Advertising & Publicity Service, our Advertising Agents will be in touch with you to outline the necessary requirements.

Looking forward once more to your full cooperation in this area.

Yours faithfully

Barbados Industrial Development Corporation

P. A. VANTERPOOL Public Relations Officer.

Tuesday, 27th February, 1973 has gone, but I would certainly like the feeling of hon. members to this request which to my own mind, there is ample precedent for allowing cameras to be in the House of Assembly and the purpose for which the cameras are being brought in the House of Assembly is a very laudible one also, but since it involves the comfort and convenience of members in that the shooting of a film would involve a certain measure of glare, heat and discomfort, I thought I would seek the feeling of members on both sides to this request from the Barbados Industrial Development Corporation in shooting a film to assist in the promotional efforts of the Industrial Development Corporation. If it is your wish I shall intimate to them, subject to what the Leader of the House says, that the annual Estimates will soon be coming up for consideration and this might be an appropriate time to have this done.

Hon'bles L.E. SANDIFORD, F. G. SMITH, Messrs. J. M. G. M. ADAMS, H. deB. FORDE, W. C. B. HINDS and R. St.C. WEEKES entered the Chamber and took their seats.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

Yes, Mr. Speaker, there has been precedent for this in that it has been

done on previous occasions and it is all in the interest of promoting trade and our production etc. The IDC has established numerous factories which provide employment for a number of young women and quite a number of men too, and is performing its role in the development of our society. A request such as this is regarded as being reasonable and has been entertained in the past, and I can see no objection to it whatever.

Mr. SPEAKER:

I shall reply to them saying that this meets with the approval of the whole House.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER:

The Minutes of this Hon. Chamber for Tuesday, 27th February, 1973 are before you for confirmation. The Minutes are hereby confirmed.

PAPERS LAID

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

Mr. Speaker, I am afraid the papers have not yet arrived, but what I proposed doing was mainly the laying of the annual Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. The only Item on the Order Paper stands in the name of the Minister of Health and Welfare, and it is to move the second reading of a Bill to repeal the Midwives and Nurses Registration Act, 1932. I think the Minister has intimated that he is not quite prepared to deal with this today but the object of meeting was mainly to lay the annual Estimates and I am afraid they have not yet arrived. I may have to move that the sitting be suspended for half an hour because there is no business to be proceeded with.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. F. L. WALCOTT entered the Chamber and took his seat.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I move formally that the sitting be suspended for half an hour.

Hon. G. G. FERGUSON:

I beg to second that.

Mr. ADAMS:

Do I understand that the House was summoned to meet at 10 o'clock this morning, an hour most inconvenient to many of the private members - and it will be observed that three members of the Opposition and His Honour the Deputy Speaker are the only non-governmental members present - at great sacrifice we have come here at 10 o'clock to be told by the Leader of the House that we have come here to witness yet another example of well-known inefficiency, and the Estimates cannot even be laid? What is the point of calling the House for 10 o'clock and then asking for a suspension till 10.30? The only business on the Order Paper is a Bill which the Minister of Health is not ready to proceed with. We cannot support the suspension, Sir, in these circumstances; how can anybody talk about 10 o'clock? The House has had 40 meetings in a year and a half, and members are not hard worked in the sense of attendance at the House, but 10 o'clock is an inconvenient hour, and yet the persons who are responsible for producing whatever has to be produced in the House this morning can produce nothing and there is

no business whatsoever. The House should adjourn.

I do not believe I can move the adjournment, I believe the rules do not permit the same, and I believe in observing the rules and construing them correctly.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

On a point of order, Sir, the hon. member is correct in saying he is not in a position to move the adjournment, but the position is that the object of calling the meeting for 10 o'clock was to accommodate not only the members of the Government but also the Opposition owing to the cricket Test Match that is on.

Mr. SPEAKER:

No point of order.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

That is the object of doing these things. The hon. members were not here so they are not apprised of what went on.

Mr. ADAMS:

Therefore nobody could accommodate us if we were not here. (Hon. F. G. SMITH We want you to get a prize for the best dressed man at cricket). I thank the hon. member for St. Michael South Central for congratulating me on a very minor achievement, one to which I daresay he does not aspire. We cannot support any question of a suspension, I do not know anything about accommodation for cricket, we have not asked about accommodation for cricket, let the House adjourn if there is no business.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The question is that this sitting be suspended for half an hour, until 10.45 a.m.

Mr. ADAMS:

On a point of order, Sir, the hon. member for St. Michael North West is reading a newspaper which is obviously not connected with the matter in hand and it is forbidden by the Standing Orders.

Mr. SPEAKER:

While that is strictly true some latitude is allowed to all hon. members.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES:

Mr. Speaker, he cannot prove I am reading any paper.

Mr. SPEAKER:

The point of order is well taken and members are advised to observe the Standing Orders.

The question that the sitting be suspended for half an hour, until 10.45 a.m., was put and resolved in the affirmative, the House dividing as follows: 10.10 a.m.

AYES:

Hon. C. E. TALMA; Hon. G. G. FERGUSON; Hon. P. M. GREAVES; Dr. the Hon. R. B.

CADDLE; Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD; Hon. F. G. SMITH; Hon. P. G. MORGAN; Mr. LOWE; Mr. WALCOTT; Mrs. EASTMOND; Mr. HOPPIN; Mr. MORRIFON and Mr. WEEKES. -13.

NOES:

Mr. ADAMS; Mr. HINDS and Mr. FORDE. - 3.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW entered the Chamber and took his seat.

On resumption

Mr. SPEAKER:

The sitting is now resumed.

Hon. A. DaC. EDWARDS entered the Chamber and took his seat.

Mr. ADAMS:

On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. What is before the House?

Mr. SPEAKER:

No point of order. PAPERS LAID

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, I beg to lay the Draft Estimates 1973-74.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES Hon. C. E. TALMA:

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance, I beg to give notice of a Bill to grant a sum of money out of the Consolidated Fund and to appropriate the same for the service of the Island for the year ending 31st March, 1974.

Also on behalf of the Minister of Finance, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to approve under Section 10 of the Barbados Harbours Act 1960, the Estimates of the Port Department for the year 1973-74.

BILLS READ A FIRST TIME

Messrs. C. L. BOLDEN and Evelyn E. GREAVES entered the Chamber and took their seats.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW:

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to grant a sum of money out of the Consolidated Fund and to appropriate the same for the service of the Island for the year ending 31st March, 1974 be now read a first time.

Hon. C. E. TALMA:

I beg to second that.

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

LATE ARRIVAL OF DRAFT ESTIMATES 1973-74

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW:

Mr. Speaker, before we enter on the Government Business for the day, I just want to make a personal explanation. I am responsible for the financial matters which come before this House, and we were faced with a situation this morning in which the House was treated with no respect at all in which documents which should have been sent to the House were not sent to the House. I wish to make the position clear that these documents were ready from Friday last week, and there was a special Cabinet meeting yesterday afternoon in which the Estimates and the Memorandum on the Estimates were approved, and there is absolutely no reason why those documents should not have been in the possession of the Clerk of the House by five o'clock yesterday afternoon.

I have spoken to two very senior Government Officers, both of them at Permanent Secretary level, on the matter during the suspension of the sitting of the House today, and all they can tell me is that they gave instructions that the documents should be sent down. I want to say that I had a meeting of all the Permanent Secretaries two weeks ago, and I told them that there are 15,000 people drawing salaries and wages out of the Consolidated Fund week after week and month after month. There is only one Minister of Finance, and if I have work to do I do not have an alarm clock that goes off at four o'clock in the afternoon or at five minutes to four. They do not need any alarm clocks, because they have a built-in alarm system that goes off about 2.45 p.m. in the afternoon when they start packing up their

As a member of the House and the second longest standing member of the House, I will not put up with the indifference and truculence of the Public Service of this Island in the way in which they deal with the House of Assembly. They knew that the House was sitting at ten o'clock this morning. If they knew that the House was sitting at ten o'clock this morning, and they had to wake up at six o'clock to drive those documents down here themselves, then those documents should have been here. I am not going to defend any Government Officer who is so anxious to get to cricket that he cannot even consider that members of the House have the public business to transact.

I just want to say that the Government Printery has worked overtime in order to get these Estimates ready. If this had been a case where we had sent the Estimates to the Government Printery, and the Government Printery had worked all night and the varitypists had dropped down with exhaustion, then I think the House would have sympathised and commiserated with the Government Printer. This is not a case in which the Government Printer did not have the documents ready, because the documents were perused by me in the same form in which they now appear before members.: as early as Friday last week.

Sometimes I come to the point of exasperation. When I complain about the lack of interest shown in the discharge of duties by Public Officers, people think that I am unduly critical, but I do not see any point in any Minister of Government getting ulcers or high blood pressure when we have a lot of lackadaisical people, whom I have described as an army of occupation, who are not concerned with

putting in five minutes overtime or appearing in an office five minutes early. By five minutes early, I mean fifty-five minutes late, because they invariably come into their offices one hour late every day. The average Public Servant in Barbados who does not have to dispatch over a counter, the lower echelons as it were, comes into his office on an average of one hour late every day and leaves forty-five minutes early.

I work a 16-hour day for and on behalf of the Government of Barbados because I do not have any other job. I get paid from the Public Treasury, and I do not have any other kind of job or source of income. Therefore if I can put in that kind of work load, I think it is only reasonable to expect Public Servants to put in half. I want to go on record, and if anybody moves a Resolution deploring the lack of interest and the contempt with which the House is treated from time to time by Public Officers in Barbados, I on this side am willing to second it. I should only like to remind members, because they are always sounding off in the newspapers, that Ministerial responsibility means that you must protect the Public Service. 10.50 a.m.

I refer to Sir Frank Soskice, the Solicitor General in the House of Commons, I think it was during the case of Crichton Down in which Sir Thomas Dugdale, the Minister of Agriculture was involved. Speaking on the subject of ministerial responsibility he said that a Minister is generally responsible for the acts of a public officer where he is given instructions for certain actions to be carried out, and even if those actions are carried out badly the Minister is still responsible. But where a public officer takes it upon himself to do something which the Minister has not authorised or alternatively he does something which the Minister has specifically forbidden him to do, then there is no moral or legal or conventional obligation on the part of the Minister to defend such public officer. I will go further. As a matter of fact, Sir Frank Soskice went further and said that far from defending a public officer, he has a duty to the public to inform the public of the recalcitrance of the public officers which are concerned, and that is the way I feel about it.

We took the unusual measure to come here at 10 o'clock this morning so that hon. members would have the Estimates in ample time for due consideration so that by the sitting next Tuesday, we can dispose of them in the statutory period of five days so that the Other Place may conform with the provision of the Constitution and have the Estimates and Appropriation Bill passed by the 31st March in each and every year as the Constitution of Barbados dictates. We took all these precautions to come out early to do this and you get a senior public officer informing me that he gave instructions for them to be sent out - a man who is in a managerial position. I am quoting myself two weeks ago addressing a special session of Permanent Secretaries when I expressed my dissatisfaction over the way in which they were managing their departments and ministries, and I said that a man who is in a managerial position cannot afford to be a one ulcer man in a five ulcer job. A man in a managerial position has got to get out and see that the work is done. You cannot get in your office, light your pipe, pick up the telephone and tell somebody Who has just come into the public service three months ago to send these papers down to the House of Assembly without even mentioning a time, or that the House is waiting for them. That is not management; that is obtaining money by false pretences, because anyone that is in that position has a duty to see that the machinery of Government functions efficiently, if it means that he has to take a broom in his hand and sweep a floor to set an example. A good manager has to be capable of doing all these things to impress upon the people who work with him the kind of work he expects, and I do not expect anybody to tell me on the telephone that he gave instructions. This is Parliament of Barbados and it is not too much for a Permanent Secretary to get in his car and bring these documents down here and

be waiting here when the messenger, bailiff, gate keeper, custodian or whoever he is opens the office at 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock in the morning. He should be haunting the precincts of the Public Buildings with these documents to make sure that the Legislature is able to carry out its job.

I have a lot of other things to say about the public service. They have made the mistake of asking me to address them some time this month, and I will reserve some of the things I have to say for their annual general meeting. That is the biggest mistake they could make. I am not here to hold a position or to fill an office; I am here to perform, to do things for the people of Barbados, and therefore I expect the people who are being paid, who got an average of 40% increase in the recent salaries revision to perform, and I do not think the House should sit down here and expect the kind of indifferent treatment that is being meted out by the public service, because there is absolutely no reason why these documents should not have been here this morning. I am just saying it as a matter of information so that nobody gets the impression that the Government Printer had the matter held up or the Cabinet had it held up, or there is some other good and sufficient reason why we could not have proceeded with the business of the House expeditiously today.

As a result of the similar conduct of which i was just complaining, there were some Supplementary Estimates which had to be completed before the end of the financial year which should have been here today, and one hour's overtime work yesterday afternoon would have afforded us the privilege of dealing with these Supplementary Estimates with the permission of the House this morning. Despite the suspension which took place this morning, up to now we have not got those documents which altogether could not constitute two or three pages of typing, and the instructions were given yesterday afternoon that these should be sent down today. As a result, I make no apology for it because I am tired of apologising. Anybody who has to apologise so often should resign his job. I am not apologising for my own defaults.

Unfortunately, the members will be asked to come back on Friday afternoon to deal with these supplementary matters, and they will know who to take it out on, not on me.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. C.E. TALMA:

Mr. Speaker, in view of what has just been said, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Friday, 16th March, 1973, at 12 noon.

Hon. G. G. FERGUSSON:

I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 11.00 a.m.