THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION OF 1976 – 81

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 7th December, 1976.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.15 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour W. C. B. HINDS, (Speaker); Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW, B.Sc., LL.D.; Mr. R. St.C. WEEKES, J.P.; Hon. L. S. CRAIG, (Minister of Labour, Welfare, Youth Affairs and Sport); Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS, M.A., (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Planning); Hon. C. L. BOLDEN, LL.B., (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs); Hon. F. G. SMITH, Q.C., S.C., B.A. (Leader of the Opposition); Hon. H. [illegible]RDE, S.C., M.A., LL.B., (Attorney [illegible]d Minister of External Affairs); Dr. R. [illegible]DLE; Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD, M.A.; Mr. [illegible] SIMMONS, LL.M.; Hon. Miss B. A. [illegible] (Minister of Health and National [illegible] Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, (Minister [illegible]ations and Works); Mr. J. G. ODLE, [illegible] Committees); Mr. M. C. C. WARD; [illegible]S. ST. JOHN, (Deputy Prime Minister, [illegible] Caribbean Affairs, External Trade, [illegible]nd Tourism and Leader of the House); [illegible]L. JOHNSON, B.A., M.A.; Hon. L. R. [illegible] M.A., (Minister of Education and [illegible]ity Development); and Mr. DeL. O. [illegible]IAW.

[illegible] *were read.*

[illegible]ONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[illegible] SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting [illegible]sday, 23rd November, 1976 are before [illegible] confirmation.

[illegible]Hon. [illegible] B. St. JOHN: I beg to move that [illegible]Min t[illegible] confirmed.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

The Question was put, and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received copies of Accounts and Statements for the month of September, 1976 prepared by the Accountant General.

THE PRESENTING OF PAPERS DEFERRED

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I am asking leave that this item be postponed until later in the Sitting.

THE GIVING OF GOVERNMENT NOTICES DEFERRED

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I am asking leave that this item be postponed until later in the Sitting. The documents have not yet arrived.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' NOTICE

Dr. CADDLE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of this Resolution.

Mr. SPEAKER: What the hon. member is now entitled to do, the House being in session, is to hand to the Clerk at-the-Table his notice, and undoubtedly the Standing Orders must be taken to provide the Speaker an opportunity to consult with the Clerks at-the-Table on the matter and arrive at a decision.

PAPERS PRESENTED

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I ask Your Honour's permission to revert to Item (f)

Papers. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Hon. Prime Minister I beg to lay the Training Report for the year 1st April, 1975 to 31st March, 1976.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I am asking your permission to revert to Item (g): Government Notices. On behalf of the Hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Planning I beg to give notice of a Resolution to authorise the advance of the sum of $1,500,000 from the Consolidated Fund to be placed at the disposal of the Government for the purpose of making advances of salary or wages to Government employees on the terms and conditions set out in the Schedule to the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to approve of the compulsory acquisition of land at Oistins, Christ Church, for the purpose of alleviating congestion in the area.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Planning I beg to give notice of a Resolution to grant the sum of $1,205,166 out of the Consolidated Fund and place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1976–77, Part II – Capital, as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1976–77, No. 24, which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

BILL

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Bill to incorporate the Barbados Boy Scouts Association.

FIRST READING OF BILL

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I am asking leave to revert to Item (k), First Readings of Bills.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to incorporate the Boy Scouts Association be now read a first time.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Government Business be now taken and that Item No. 1 be the first order of the day.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

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

Government Business was called.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to move that Your Honour do now leave the Chair and the House go into Committee of Supply to consider one Resolution.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

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

12.25 p.m.

RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE NOTE TO ITEM 2 – CONVENTION CENTRE UNDER CAPITAL HEAD 117 – MINISTRY OF TOURISM INFORMATION AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Chairman, this item stands in the name of the Prime Minister and I am asking for leave to deal with it.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: There being no objection, leave is granted.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Chairman, the object of this Resolution is to permit the erection at a different place in Dover in the parish of Christ Church of certain facilities which were originally scheduled to be erected to the north western side of the new convention centre at Dover. The decision to amend this was taken by the previous Cabinet and all of the requirements have been carried out. The reason why the facilities are to be moved and changed is that the Parks and Beaches Commission had registered an objection to the changing facilities at the point where they were originally scheduled, and it has now been decided that instead of erecting the changing facilities on the beach side of the convention facility, that a playing field be substituted to the north western end of the playing field. It would have the

providing facilities for a large number of people who use Dover playing field for a variety of sports. There has been no pavilion in that area for a very long period of time, and there have been repeated requests for the same.

I therefore beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: Just briefly, Mr. Chairman, the Opposition is not objecting, except that the Leader of the House has shown more graciousness in admitting that this was one of the matters in the last Government. I wish he would advise some of the other Ministers that, like the naming of the school the Wilkie Cumberbatch School, that was also an act of the last Government, and decided by the Cabinet, and I am very glad to see that the Leader of the House is at least in the House prepared to admit that he is just doing what the last Government did. I wish he would convey this sense of decency to some of his colleagues.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: The hon. member must not be so sensitive. We are not in a dissimilar position to which his Government found itself after 1961.

The question that the Resolution do now pass, was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Resolution in Committee of Supply. Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, the Resolution was read a first, and second time and agreed to.

RESOLUTION TO AUTHORISE THE BORROWING BY THE ISSUE OF TREASURY BILLS OF FURTHER SUMS NOT EXCEEDING $30 MILLION

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 2 stands in the name of the Hon. Prime Minister, to move the passing of a Resolution to authorise the borrowing by the issue of Treasury Bills of further sums not exceeding $30 million.

Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, over the last few years the Government of Barbados frequently found itself in financial difficulties. These difficulties have been canvassed extensively over a period of months leading up to an election campaign on which the electorate cast a verdict, one may very reasonably surmise, on where much of the responsibility lay for what has been going wrong, and I do not intend to canvass the issues over again upon this occasion. Sufficient to say that the Government has had difficulties with what is known as cash flow over periods of time that even when Government revenue combined with Government borrowings has been sufficient to cover the financial responsibilities of Government, there have been occasions when the Treasury has had very little money, and these occasions would have been made worse were it not for the use of Treasury Bills which are a device by which Government raises money for short periods of time in order to meet its day to day liabilities.

On March 30 of this year in a previous Parliament it was necessary for the then Government to ask for an increase in the amount which may be borrowed by means of Treasury Bills from $70 million to $100 million. Not withstanding this increase, and Your Honour may well feel that very little restraint in Government spending was shown during the run up to the general elections, it becomes again necessary, and the necessity was recognised even before the change in Government, for the Government to ask the House for a further increase in the Treasury Bills limit. The present amount outstanding against Treasury Bills on October 27 at any rate was $91,600,000.
12.35 p.m.

It appears to us that it will become necessary for further amounts to be issued in the ensuing financial year and we are therefore asking for the upper limit to be raised from $100 million to $130 million. This is necessary to deal with the current account deficit which has been left to us by the previous Government and which is estimated at an amount of $38 million. We hope and we anticipate, however, Mr. Speaker, that this increase even with the bad projections which at present exist should be sufficient for our foreseeable needs, at least to March, 1978.

I think that the subject of Treasury Bills having been canvassed so extensively earlier this year perhaps needs no further addition at this time, but if there are any outstanding questions which members of the Opposition wish to have answered I will be glad to assist. Since, of course, Mr. Speaker, so many of them were in the previous Cabinet, I expect that there are many questions to which they might be able to give me

the answers rather than requiring an answer from me.

I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Speaker, just a week ago the hon. member for St. Thomas, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, gave vent in this House with the assistance of televised services to an attack on the financial competence...

Mr. SPEAKER: Would the hon. member for St. John just take his seat for a moment? I am sure the hon. member is well aware that if he wants to debate a statement made by the Minister he must move a substantive motion to that effect. Having not done so, the hon. member will in no wise be permitted to debate that statement here today. The hon. member may proceed.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Speaker, I am not debating the statement, I am stating that last Tuesday in this House the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance delivered an attack on the financial – what he called infelicities and incompetence of the previous Government, blaming the deficit on current account to which he has alluded here today on the financial mishandling of the affairs of this country.

We will be introducing a substantive motion to discuss the statement which the Minister made under the guise of parliamentary privilege, and also the lack of facilities afforded to the Opposition to reply over television. We will be doing that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Would the hon. member for St. John please take his seat for the moment?

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I did not know it was necessary for me to sit unless there were two members on their feet for you to address me, but if you want me to sit down I will.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member for St. John will not rule this Chair. The hon. member for St. John in the course of his address so far has alluded to what he calls an address by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance under the guise of parliamentary privilege. We are asking the hon. member for St. John to desist from employing that type of language. Change your phraseology. The hon. member may proceed.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I am not quite clear what Your Honour's rule is. If Your Honour is ruling that the word "guise" is unparliamentary I do not know, it is not clear to me, I know of no authority in Erskine May's or anywhere else.....

Mr. SPEAKER: You will not challenge the Chair.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I am not challenging you, I am asking if there is authority for it.

Mr. SPEAKER: You will not challenge or argue with the Chair. Will the hon. member for St. John please take his seat and discontinue his speech? (Hon. F. G. SMITH: Do not raise your voice at him). I am hearing very loud Asides from the Opposition benches.

The Opposition Members left the Chamber at this stage of the proceedings.

Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: If no other hon. Member is rising to speak, Sir, can I reply to the few words which were said?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: If you please, Sir, some reference was made to a statement in which it is said described the deficit as being due to the infelicities of the Government. I am not aware that the public statement made any such description, but I am no more entitled to debate what I said than any other hon. members; I understand this, therefore I will not pursue it any further, I will just be very short since the question of the deficit was attempted to be raised by the hon. member for St. John, I will just tell the public what the nature of the deficit is.

It seems that there have been one or two small miscalculations and small underestimations in the past of the deficit position, the debt position, and for the benefit of the House I will mention that I have already given the figure for Treasury Bills. We have not increased it during the last month, we have not had to borrow any more during the last month, it is still $91,600,000 as of Independence Day, the figure for debentures, these are general loan funds, is $99,105,120, special loans $43,316,671, giving a total national debt at the present time of $234,021,791. Questions are sometimes asked, and these figures

which I give are authentic as of November 30,1976.

This Government understands that a country needs a national debt, however we repeat the pledge which we have so often given to the public that we will not be running this island into debt for current account purposes as far as we are able. We will try to get this country out of the mess in which it is left by the hon. member for St. John, we will be undoubtedly having to increase the public debt in future, we are dealing with it in this Resolution to deal with the cash flow position, and during the ensuing year we will be able to negotiate and finalise a number of outstanding overseas loans, and indeed negotiate for a number of new overseas loans, but these will all be committed to projects which will develop Barbados.

The Oistins project which we are reshaping entirely, and which only this morning I held a meeting in my office with representatives of the European Economic Community indicating that there may be need for more finance than was previously thought for the Oistins project, because we view it as a project for the development of Barbados. I think the hon. member for Christ Church South Central will be glad to hear when they were suggesting it would cost three or four million dollars I said five million would give us proper development for the area. These are the sorts of projects, a health service study being now carried on in the Ministry of Health, perhaps new school buildings, these are the sorts of projects with which this Government will be concerned when we are borrowing money, we will not be borrowing money and pledging Barbados' credit and involving ourselves in Bath Plantation, International Seafoods or Carib West or similar old boy network operations comparable to those which would disfigure the public finance of this Island for the last five years.

I beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

The Question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

12.45 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, that concludes Government Business on the Order Paper for today. I beg to move that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 14th December, at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

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

12.48 p.m.