
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1976 – 81

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Friday, 24th February, 1978.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 10.15 a.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour W. C. B. HINDS, J.P., (Speaker); Mr. R. St.C. WEEKES, J.P.; 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. H. deB. FORDE, S.C., M.A., LL.B., (Attorney General and Minister of External Affairs); Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, (Minister of Health and National Insurance); Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, (Minister of Communications and Works); Mr. J. G. ODLE, B.Sc., (Chairman of Committees); Hon. L. R. TULL, M.A., (Minister of Education and Culture); Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW; Mr. L. L. SISNETT; and His Honour E. E. ALLEYNE, LL.M., (Deputy Speaker).

Prayers were read.

Messrs. TAITT, GREAVES and JOHNSON entered the Chamber took their seats.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG entered the Chamber and took his seat.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, 21st February, 1978. Hon. Members would have received copies but, in my view, they would not have had time enough to digest the Minutes. As a consequence, I do not propose to accept a motion for the confirmation of those Minutes today. I would prefer if confirmation were deferred until a later date.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, in the light of what you have said, I beg to move that confirmation of the Minutes be deferred.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there is no objection, the confirmation of the Minutes will be deferred. There being no objection, the confirmation of the Minutes is deferred.

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS

Mr. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I gave notice of a Resolution, and I would like to know what is the position with it. It is a Resolution on Daylight Saving Time, and I would like to get some indication as to whether the Resolution.....

Mr. SPEAKER: I have been instructed by the Clerk that it is being processed, and you will be advised in due course. Possibly, at the next sitting you might be able to deal with it.

Mr. GREAVES: I understand it, Sir.

Hon. F. G. SMITH entered the Chamber and took his seat.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 6(3)

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Order 6(3) be suspended for the remainder of today's sitting.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. SIMMONS entered the Chamber and took his seat.

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the Instant Order of the Day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point. Now that Government Business is the instant Order of the Day, I want to say.....

Mr. SPEAKER: Are you moving Government Business?

Mr. GREAVES: No, I certainly would not like to do that, but I just want to say that I received my papers about two minutes ago. I refer to the papers which we are going to do today. I was under the impression when we finished on Tuesday last, that we were coming back here to do the amendment to the Banking Act, but I was just given a bunch of papers with a number of Resolutions and a number of items on Government Business. I do not think that this is fair to Members of the Opposition. My colleague here indicates that he received his papers yesterday, and I think that we should be treated in a better way by the Government, as far as sending papers to us is concerned. I do not think this is fair to me or to any other Member to get papers for a sitting of the House two minutes before the House sits. 10.25 a.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am advised that copies of all papers were circulated to all hon. members yesterday, but copies of the Banking Bill were circulated to hon. members in this Chamber on Tuesday.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, I think you are correct. What I would like to know from the Leader of Government Business is whether the entire Order Paper will be dealt with today, or whether Government Business will only deal with the Banking Bill which everybody understood we were meeting today to do. That is what the Opposition is asking.

Mr. SPEAKER: We have heard the Leader of the Opposition. What the Leader of the Opposition has raised is a matter which ought to have been settled between the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of Government Business, not inside this Chamber, but in their respective chambers between them.

Mr. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, on the question of the distribution of the Banking Bill, I do not know what the convention is, but at the time when the Banking Bill was distributed apparently I was not in the Chamber and as a result I have not received a copy of the Banking Bill. I am not raising that as a quarrel — I am prepared to do the Banking Bill; but I am just making the point that I did not receive a copy of the Banking Bill.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I would like to appreciate what the hon. members on the other side complain about, but Government proposes to do Item No. 2, and I would hope that members of the Opposition also would assist in letting us conduct Item No. 3. We propose to do Item No. 2 which is the instant Order of the Day and Item No. 3.

Mr. SPEAKER: Item No. 2 is the Instant Order of the Day.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that pursuant to Standing Order No. 42(5) that notwithstanding that an interval of not less than five days has not elapsed since the first reading, that the House do agree to proceed with this Bill forthwith.

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

Hon. F. G. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, the Opposition is not objecting except to say that when we were in power you used to hear all these complaints about bringing lawyers back at 10 o'clock on a day. I have lived to see you doing the same thing, buying old houses and buying this and calling back the House at 10 o'clock when you used to complain every time when we were in Government. I just want to draw it to the attention of the House. History is turning full circle.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I am quite sure that is not fair for the Leader of the Opposition to say that we used to quarrel when we had to come back. What we used to complain about was the time factor that instead of 10 o'clock it should be 11 o'clock. We threw that out to you. We did not tell you to come at 10 o'clock. We suggested 10 o'clock and you said all right, so there is no complaint now.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, if nobody else wishes to speak, I do not believe that we can conduct business on the basis of what the Opposition used to say and what happens now. I would not mind conducting it on that basis if the Opposition wished to be quoted accurately, but we cannot conduct it on the basis of the hon. member's memory. What used to happen in the last Parliament was that Parliament did not meet every week; it used to meet every two weeks for the most part and then when a week had passed hon. members would come back the following week and be told there were urgent matters that had to be done in all their stages that day. If they used to meet every week, notice could have been given and some of these urgencies could have been removed. We tried to meet every week and very seldom asked this.

It is known that the Banking Bill is an urgent matter. I believe that the couple of days have been used by the Opposition to good effect to find out all they can

about the matter. I would have suggested to them that if instead of crawling from source of information to source of information *sub rosa* they had telephoned my office and asked me to give them the necessary information, I would have told the Leader of the Opposition how much we are paying for the bank, who has accounts there, which are the bad accounts. I would have told him privately which I may not be able to tell him in here during the debate. But in this general manner we are not trying to force the House to deal with for example export promotion, the Post Office and M.C.W. which might arise under Standing Order No. 42(1) even though we need no leave to proceed with Item No. 1 or Item No. 3. They are only motions of which one day's notice by a Minister is sufficient. We are not pressing the supplementary on the House; we are asking to deal with two small narrow subjects and I am glad to hear that the Opposition are not opposing this motion.

The question that this Bill be proceeded with forthwith, was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

THE BANKING (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1978

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, this is really a very simple matter. When the Banking Act was originally passed, the Banking Act Cap. 322 which I believe is a Bill of 1963, no provision such as is commonly found in Banking Acts was made for transfer of a banking business from one bank to another whether by sale, amalgamation or otherwise.

As hon. members are aware, the Government is currently engaged in an exercise involving the transfer of the assets of the Bank of America in Barbados to the Barbados National Bank, and it has been represented to us and we agree that this is a convenient moment to pass general enabling legislation so that the type of vesting order that is customarily made on bank transfers in other countries can be made in this particular matter. It might not be absolutely and strictly necessary for all these arrangements to be made where the transfer is to a Government which is in a position to guarantee the assets of the depositors and guarantee the debts of the Bank of America, but nonetheless we think that it is wiser to follow the conventional course as if this was a transfer between banks that might not necessarily be Government institutions or one of them might not necessarily be a Government institution. We are therefore seeking to have the Banking Act amended by introducing a new Part to be entitled Part VIA and headed "Transfer of Banking Business".

10.35 a.m.

The sections which will comprise the new part are in the Bill circulated. Section 18A provides for a

Banking Business Vesting Order, 18B provides other provisions setting out the terms and conditions under which the Vesting Order will operate. I anticipate that the terms and conditions may be the subject of analysis in Committee, and therefore I will not dwell on them at this stage. Section 18C permits the Minister responsible for banking to exempt parties to a banking transfer from the payment of a stamp duty or property transfer tax where this is considered appropriate.

There is some urgency about this matter, Mr. Speaker, since it is desired to make the Vesting Order at the earliest possible stage consistent with the decision of Parliament, should the Government be fortunate enough to have those decisions given in its favour, and the draft Order has already been prepared, it cannot of course be made until the enabling legislation is passed, but if the Leader of the Opposition wishes to see a copy of the draft Order I will make it available. It is confidential for now, Sir, but it will not be confidential in a couple of weeks' time, when in due course it is made if as we expect this Bill is passed.

I therefore beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: Mr. Speaker, this Bill as the Minister of Finance clearly indicates is to enable the Government generally in banking arrangements to take over, as the Objects and Reasons say, to make provision for the transfer of banking business and for related matters. With provisions such as these, there can be generally no complaint, because as I say, in the business of Government from time to time occasions may necessarily arise where the general provisions of a Bill of this nature will be necessary.

I am yet to understand what open Government means. Perhaps I am an idiot, but I cannot understand what open Government, as practised by the present Government, means, because the purpose of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and the reasons why these provisions are being introduced into banking legislation is because the Government in a Paper in this House has indicated to the public that they intend to take over the assets of the Bank of America, which I assume would fall under the provisions of this particular part of the Banking Act. The rationale or the reasons behind the necessity for the take over, and therefore the necessity for these provisions, are yet to be explained to the public, and the involvement and the financial commitment of the Government in this particular venture is yet to be told by a Government that talks about open Government. I don't know what that means, as I said, I am just repeating catch phrases I hear and read from time to

time, and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister has got to be more open with the country who are all, not only the depositors and the persons who have investments in this particular bank.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: I didn't know the law of libel applied in the House of Assembly.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition is imputing a dishonest motive to the mover of the Bill.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: In what way, Sir? By saying what?

Mr. SPEAKER: Please don't question the Chair.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: I want to know so I won't repeat it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please don't question the Chair.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is that I am hoping.....

Mr. SPEAKER: Having heard from the Chair that you have imputed an improper motive in bringing this Bill, that is, to cover up for Ministers and what not, please withdraw, you have been in here long enough.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: I am not withdrawing, Mr. Speaker, I haven't said anything, I am just saying what I am entitled to speak. I have nothing to withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Hon. Leader of the Opposition will withdraw from this House for the remainder of the day's sitting.

Hon. F. G. SMITH withdrew from the Chamber. The other members of the Opposition present also withdrew from the Chamber.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I did not hear that, but there are few things more despicable than saying something nasty and then running away when the blows begin to share. It is quite untrue, disgusting, disgraceful, contemptible to make any suggestion such as was made by the Leader of the Opposition, about Ministers owing money to the Bank of America. I have heard that the Leader of the Opposition was smelling around and sniffing around trying to elicit scandal in this particular matter to see if any member of the Government had an account at the Bank of America. I have not been able to discover any, but I have just given instructions that the Secretary of the Barbados National Bank has been asked to telephone the interim Manager of the Bank of America and have it placed beyond doubt what situations there are with Cabinet

Ministers or anybody else connected to the Government who has an overdraft at the Bank of America.

It is disgraceful that when we are trying to carry on decent and open Government that we have to be accused of these things, which could not be said on a political platform. The Leader of the Opposition has already had to pay me libel damages for disgraceful things he had said in Independence Square, Sir, about my conduct while in office. He could not go again and say this in Independence Square without putting his pocket at risk once more, and I really feel that at some stage we really should deal with this by way of censure or other disciplinary activity inside the House. Even when it was known to us that Mr. Edwards, a former Minister of the other Government, was very heavily engaged with City Bank, really was placing deposits of the National Insurance where other matters relating to the other Government were being handled.

Members of the Opposition returned to the Chamber.

10.45 a.m.

Even when we knew that we did not come in here and make the insinuations which have been made this morning; we regarded it as something which if true should be dealt with in its own context. I am actually overcome that we should be accused of taking over the Bank of America for reasons such as that suggested. And I am going to say this: if it is in the minds of members opposite that these can be the motives of the Government in dealing with the Bank of America then they need not ask me any questions at all about the taking over of the Bank of America. If they intend to ascribe the worst possible motives to this, and if by their Leader and the other hon. members who walked out they intend to ascribe the worst possible motives to the Government, then they can stew in their own nastiness; I have no answer to give them except that if the information is returned to me, for the information of other hon. members on this side and for your own information, Mr. Speaker, I will make known if any member of the Government party has an account with the Bank of America.

Mr. SANDIFORD: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member for St. Thomas — the Minister of Finance — indicated that members of the Opposition may have walked out because they subscribed to some view that there might be some improper motives in the Government in taking over the Bank of America. I would like to indicate that I left the Chamber a few minutes ago in order to check with the Leader of the Opposition on certain matters which occurred in here; but when I got out there he had already left. My walking out had nothing to do with motives in taking over the Bank of America, and I would like the

hon. member for St. Thomas to withdraw that imputation about myself and other members of the Opposition that our walking out was an endorsement or some assumption that we were subscribing to a view that Government was taking over the Bank of America because of some nastiness. I would like him to withdraw that remark that we are subscribing to some view that the Government is taking over the Bank of America because of some nastiness. That is imputing dishonourable motives to members on this side.

Mr. SPEAKER: As I understand the Hon. Prime Minister to say, if the walking out by members of the Opposition was for that purpose, he was not prepared to give any information about the take over; he would have no explanation to give. That was the tenor of his debate as it appeared to me.

Mr. TAITT: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it possible in the context of the Ruling you have just given, for us to hear from the Reporter the words which the Leader of the Opposition used which has now resulted in what I myself consider to be an imputation on the character of the Opposition?

Mr. SPEAKER: I merely wish to advise the hon. member for St. Michael South West to take his seat and I wish to inform him that on any occasion he or any other hon. member wishes to challenge the ruling of the Chair he must do so by tabling a substantive motion. The Standing Orders make ample provision for this.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I would like to say that I am grateful to the hon. member for St. Michael South for disassociating himself from the insinuations made by the Leader of the Opposition and perhaps I should indicate to him that if he was in here he might not have taken quite the view of what was said that he appeared to have said in his speech. I really was a little taken back. I thought he was withdrawing the imputation for himself which the Leader of the Opposition made, and I appreciated it. I do not know why he went any further.

Mr. SANDIFORD: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would not like anything that I say to be misinterpreted by the hon. member for St. Thomas, the Prime Minister. I was not disassociating myself or associating myself with anything the Leader of the Opposition said I was dealing with the point made in his address by the hon. member for St. Thomas when he seemed to indicate that members of the Opposition withdrew in support of some insinuation, and I was making clear that I walked out and other members went outside only to have consultation and discussion and this had nothing to do with imputations of the Government. That is the point I am making and I would not like it to be misinterpreted and I would be

glad if the hon. member for St. Thomas through you, Sir, would withdraw any statement that I was disassociating myself with what the Leader of the Opposition said. I think that is misrepresenting what I said.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I do not want to embarrass hon. members any further, so I would draw a veil over that. I am very glad that a disgusting suggestion having been made and the Opposition having then walked out, they have come back in to contribute something to the discussion of this Bill. I cannot get through the logic of the hon. member for St. Michael South.

The manager of the Bank of America has informed the Secretary of the Barbados National Bank that he does not recall any account for any member of the Cabinet or any other member of Parliament on this side. I have questioned my colleagues and one Cabinet member said he once had an account there but it is now only a few cents – less than \$1; one Parliamentary Secretary said he had an account and the bank now owes him \$5.55; and one other member of Cabinet says one of his children has an account at the Bank of America – in credit. There does not appear to be any account, debt or any other activity on the part of any of the seventeen of us. I have not asked you, Mr. Speaker, so I should say sixteen of us.

I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

The question that the Bill be read a second time was put.

At this stage members of the Opposition attempted to leave the Chamber.

Mr. SPEAKER: Hon. members cannot leave the Chamber at this time. This is contrary to Standing Orders. Please take your seats.

The question that the Bill be read a second time was then resolved in the affirmative without division.

10.55 a.m.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I beg to move that Your Honour do now leave the Chair and the House go into Committee on this Bill.

Hon. C. L. BOLDEN: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. ODLE in the Chair.

Messrs. TAITT, GREAVES and SANDIFORD left the Chamber.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Chairman, I beg to move that Your Honour do now report the passing of one Bill in Committee.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: 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.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a third time.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: I beg to second that.

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

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Bill do now pass and he cited as the Banking (Amendment) Act, 1978.

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: I beg to second that.

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

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Order No. 3 be the next Order of the Day.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 3 is the instant Order of the Day.

A Resolution to approve the guarantee by the Minister responsible for Finance of the repayment of a loan of U.S. \$2,123,500 and interest thereon made by the Caribbean Development Bank to the Barbados Marketing Corporation for the purpose of financing part of the cost of relocating the Corporation - was called.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, a part of the policy of the Barbados Labour Party has always been for many years to pay the greatest possible attention to agricultural diversification in this country and to give the greatest possible assistance to small farmers and to persons not directly concerned with large scale sugar farming in carrying on agricultural activity. For many years it has been clear that the greatest constraint on agricultural diversification has been a marketing constraint. The Ministry of Agriculture has done good

work. It has been heavily staffed with technical expertise, and it has provided services telling farmers what crops to grow, how to grow them and when to grow them, but these services have not been matched with a corresponding effort on the marketing side.

Barbadians are, of course, not incapable of marketing agricultural products. Our survival over three hundred years as a sugar-producing country in many adverse circumstances would indicate this, but we have fallen down in the marketing of the vegetables which we have been encouraging farmers to grow for so many years. Since 1965, when the current Retail Price Index was compiled, vegetable prices generally have risen to something like 900% in Barbados. At the same time the production of many former food staples, ground provision, Sir, sweet potatoes and yams, has fallen in the country despite all the pressure to diversify and grow more food. It is true that we now grow a formidable array of green vegetables, onions, tomatoes and other vegetables, which were never more than exotic crops produced on a small scale many years previously, but there have been intense marketing difficulties with all of these crops.

The price of onions in Barbados for much of the year is unnaturally high because of the need to protect local onion growers. The prices of cabbages, lettuces and other green vegetables are usually higher in Barbados than they would be if we imported all of our supplies. It is said that we should be glad to pay these prices because of the saving on foreign exchange and on the employment which the growing of these vegetables gives to farmers and on the general effect on farm income. Certainly, farm income, Sir, has been supported at every possible level in the last five years by the growing of vegetables but, Sir, at a very heavy price to consumers.

I think it was the 1976 sugar crop which was confidently predicted to put the sugar industry in a state of ruin; so confidently that the then Prime Minister released \$3½ million from the Sugar Levy Fund to assist the plantation owners. Yet, Sir, no account was taken at that time of the profit of over \$4 million that was made by those same plantations on the production of vegetables, and at small farmer level there is some evidence that the relatively high prices, which the consumers are paying for vegetables, have proved a boon to income. Nonetheless, Sir, a balance must be struck, and this Government feels that we have gone too far in the direction of high prices for vegetables in Barbados. We have allowed the price of the typical green vegetables eaten by Barbadians to multiply many times and, of course, the price of fruit has also multiplied, with consequent highly adverse effects on the cost of living.

11.05 a.m.

One of the traditional means of reducing the price of anything is to produce more of it and make more of it available to the consumer, and we have seen recently that the heavy production for example of cabbage has resulted in a very substantial reduction in the price of that vegetable in the markets of Bridgetown; but we fully accept that you cannot tell farmers to diversify and when they diversify fail to create such marketing conditions for them as will allow them to expect a reasonable price for their products. If we went back to the production of sweet potatoes that existed in 1958/1959, sweet potatoes would probably sell in Barbados at times such as these for six cents or eight cents per pound. Last year we had the spectacle of sweet potatoes for which Barbados is peculiarly suited in soil conditions and rainfall conditions going to 75 cents to eighty cents a pound when in the neighbouring island of St. Vincent they could have been supplied at that time by two Barbadian importers at a landed cost of 20 cents. We have taken steps to deal with that by imposing price controls on sweet potatoes and by warning that we are prepared to impose price controls on all locally produced foods. At the moment it is only sweet potatoes and onions, but we are prepared to see to it that the cost of living does not show artificial increases as a result of these wide fluctuations in the price of vegetables. What then are we going to do for the farmers?

This loan which the Caribbean Development Bank is planning to make to the Barbados Marketing Corporation will go towards the setting up of a processing plant which it is anticipated and expected will be able to absorb for processing and ultimate marketing both in and out of Barbados all vegetable surpluses that are grown or can be grown in Barbados under present day conditions. The island obviously can grow more carrots that can be absorbed at any one time, more potatoes, more green vegetables, all these things. Until and unless we get these marketing facilities, we will continue to get these situations of glut because a proper price cannot be offered for the excess carrots and excess vegetables if it is hoped to market them under present day conditions. So the B.M.C.'s facility when built at the Pine — it is between the Pine and "Highgate" where we are going to put up the facility, will have provision for canning carrots and other vegetables of that sort, will have the special freezing facilities needed to deal with green vegetables, and it will be geared to the entire range of Barbados' vegetable production and this is not regarded by itself as the end of everything.

As hon. members will know, we have set up an export promotion agency and very active steps have already been taken to ensure that farmers will have every assistance in growing crops for export. We are looking at exotic vegetables, eggplant and peppers. We are growing crops for export and placing them in suitable export destinations. I think that this will be sufficient to

persuade hon. members of the wisdom of the Government entering into guarantees on this matter.

There are a few ancillary matters to which I will make reference. First of all the special position of sugar plantations. There is an outcry among the biggest plantation owners in this island against the plantation levy. It is suggested that this amounts to a mere tax on the Sugar Industry and that there is nothing which the sugar industry can do to assist in alleviating unemployment. We reject this argument entirely and altogether. The sugar industry has reduced employment much faster than it has reduced its output. The record output of the sugar industry in this island was in 1958 just over 205,000 tons of sugar. Last year it was 117,000 tons but one third of the labour force was used to gather in that 117,000 tons as was needed in 1958. I am not saying anything against productivity, but I would suggest that a careful analysis of unemployment conditions in Barbados will reveal that the difference in employment between 1960 and the present time can be entirely put down to people leaving the sugar industry, and jobs not being provided in other industries to make up for their departure. In 1960 when our party was last in power the unemployment rate in this country was just a little over 8%. It is persistent at the present time in the range of 13½% to 16%. It varies seasonally between these limits. Jobs are being provided all the time but people are entering the labour force at almost the same rate as we are expanding employment. We believe that the sugar industry has a part to play in our strategy of employment generation. It has been made clear from the words of one of the advocates in the sugar industry, one of the more important persons in the hierarchy of the Sugar Producers' Federation, that they regard the maintenance of farm prices as being more important than the maintenance of full employment. It was to the Minister of Labour this very week I believe that the gentleman concerned said how is he going to take on more people to grow more food if he has nowhere to grow more food, that he grew 5,000 pounds of cabbages and they only took 2,000 pounds from him down at the B.M.C., and he has to run about trying to sell the other 3,000 pounds. Well, Sir, they run about trying to sell the sugar and therefore I think it is no particular hardship to run about trying to sell the cabbages and sweet potatoes as well.

This venture into which the B.M.C. is entering is a recognition of the fact that plantation owners as well as small farmers do reasonably require some element of improved marketing facilities, and some processing facilities which will make it possible for them to take on a larger labour force in order to produce more food, food which can both be domestically consumed and exported. I may as well warn the public that we at present have import limitations on canned vegetables

and on pre-prepared foods of certain sorts and certain vegetable preparations. This will intensify when we have our own processing facilities because we will see absolutely no reason to allow anybody to export mixed vegetables to Barbados in tins if we are producing them in our B.M.C. processing plant and giving employment to Barbadians. These are some of the strategies which are embraced in the present measure.

Finally, Sir, I would just refer to the past. The necessity for a processing plant at the Barbados Marketing Corporation has been well recognised for many years, and when we came into power we found that arrangements had apparently been made to construct the B.M.C. processing plant in my own constituency of St. Thomas between Edghill and Cane Garden Estates. I am not a technical man in the agricultural field. If hon. members wish statistics on this point, they will no doubt get it from the Minister of Agriculture or the Barbados Marketing Corporation, but we were advised that that site was unsuitable. It has insufficient water, it was too limited in space, the area was too small, it was very close to the highly built-up areas of Shop Hill, Jackson, Melrose, Chancery Village and Arthur Seat, and indeed the area is becoming even more built up now with the opening up of what looks like a chattel house development in Cane Garden, and we do not think it was a suitable site.

11.15 a.m.

Indeed, Sir, I have said before in the House that I think the choice of that site owed a good deal to considerations other than suitability for a processing factory. The persons connected with the place, the same persons connected with City Bank, connected with Best Properties Limited, connected with various of the activities which are now being investigated with the Commission of Enquiry, and therefore we scouted around for a suitable site elsewhere. The Minister, I know, thought that we should go into more distant parts into St. Philip, I myself thought that there was a site in Christ Church which was recently mentioned in the House, Sir, which might have proved more suitable. The Deputy Prime Minister had his eye on another site, so it is not after casual thought that we have finally settled on expanding the complex of buildings on the Government owned land at the Pine, Sir, it is after giving very careful consideration to sites in St. Thomas, St. George, Christ Church, St. Philip, and elsewhere in St. Michael, that we have finally settled on this site, had it accepted — it will be near the CDB, Sir, they can see their work going on under their very eyes — had it accepted and made our minds up to carry on the facility on this spot.

In all the circumstances, Sir, I am sure that hon. members will agree that it is this type of guarantee alone which should be brought to the House, a

guarantee of a loan from a reputable international organisation for reputable purposes, purposes which will advance employment, which will have the widest possible effect on employment and upon local production and import substitution, and I am sure that all hon. members will join in giving this guarantee by the Government of the repayment of the loan to the Caribbean Development Bank which is required for the purpose of setting up a BMC Headquarters and marketing plant.

I beg to move that the Resolution do now pass.

Hon. C. L. BOLDEN: I beg to second that.

Mr. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Resolution. The Rt. Hon. Prime Minister has indicated during the course of his introduction that considerable thought was given before the actual site was decided upon, and I want to comment on this, because we have seen in the past how areas were selected and chosen without due consideration of a number of factors, and this Government in arriving at the site in the Pine has gone about it with proper thought and consideration, and what we can term as proper and careful study.

Other areas in Christ Church and St. Thomas, and around the same area, were looked at and after careful consideration it was decided that the present site was ideally suited for the location of the processing plant. In selecting a site there were factors of transportation, easy access to such a plant, because these are factors which must be taken into consideration. We should be familiar with the agricultural belt and the area that produces the most vegetables, and surely in that area we will find people from Christ Church, St. Philip, St. George and St. Thomas and St. John will be able to find not only a plant near to them but will be able to avoid the congestion if the plant was located in the Bridgetown area.

We must look too at the plant of itself and the advantages of it. In the past large quantities of vegetables were grown by certain farmers and they had to either undersell their vegetables when there was a glut on the market, or in a number of cases they had to throw them away because there was not any proper processing facility, facilities where the glut or extra or excess amount of vegetables could be kept or processed, and this has caused many farmers to be concerned thereby losing income, and we must realise now that the setting up of this processing plant would enable the farmers who would normally have had excess vegetables to have then taken at the processing plant.

One other benefit that will be derived from this processing plant will be that instead of having the

scarcity which now prevails after a glut of vegetables and then a scarcity at some time during the year, the plant will be able to take the excess and thereby enable at a time when vegetables cannot be grown allow people, purchasers, the housewives in particular to have their vegetables obtainable in the various supermarkets or outlets. In other words, Mr. Speaker, this new processing plant will help to maintain steady prices, and this is very important, because when there is a scarcity of vegetables or any other commodity, as you know, the prices automatically rise, and we will now be able to keep or stabilise the prices of vegetables, and this will be a tremendous asset to the Barbadian consumers, so this processing plant does have a very important asset.

As I said, I welcome this particular Resolution, and what is significant about it is, that this Government is seeking parliamentary approval before the Government embarks on agreeing to such a sum, or aid, to the Barbados Marketing Corporation. That is significant, so when members of the Opposition talk about open Government they must understand what we mean by open Government, not only letting people understand and know what we are going to do but letting the public see that we respect the Hon. Chamber by bringing before this House Resolutions and major transactions which would involve them. So that is one of the significant features of open Government.

11.25 a.m.

We are not entering into any deal that was entered upon by the former administration. We are prepared to come here and let Parliament know that we are going into a business and are seeking the approval of the House before we guarantee such a loan. And today as other hon. members speak and make their contributions it is very significant that we let people know that we understand what the problems are in this country and that we understand the plight of the farmers. They will welcome this because they have been concerned in the past. Housewives also have been concerned because they have had to pay high prices for vegetables. So in doing this we do support the Government and we do hope that the benefits which this processing plant is expected to bring to the country will be forthcoming in the not too distant future. As I said, I must congratulate the Government for taking such a step and for their farsightedness in seeing the necessity of a plant of this nature which would help farmers, housewives, and the economy as a whole. I am reminded that the former administration have been talking about this since 1969 and nothing came out of it. We have taken the step because we understand the importance of agriculture and the importance of trying to reduce our import Bill, for this will help towards the curtailment of much of our imports. I hope that those people who are not *au fait* with the responsibilities of

Government will understand this as a step in the right direction in helping to improve the financial and economic situation of this country, and I give my wholehearted support to this Resolution.

Hon. C. L. BOLDEN: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments on the remarks of the last speaker. One of the principal problems facing the development of agriculture in this country is the need for proper marketing facilities and arrangements. As the Hon. Prime Minister said in introducing the Resolution, we have discovered that despite all efforts made by the Ministry of Agriculture in persuading farmers to grow vegetables, there is still a serious gap in the distribution system inherited from the last administration. Typical of this is the fact that when sweet potatoes were being sold at the farm at 15 cents per pound they were reaching consumers in Bridgetown at prices as high as 80 cents per pound. So you had the farmers complaining that they have to grow the foodstuff but are getting less benefits out of the transaction. But I wish farmers to understand that the plans created by this Government are plans not only for the consumer but also for the farmers, and any malfunctioning of the system will occur if farmers themselves seek to break down the arrangements which are made for proper marketing and distribution. Construction of the new BMC is to take place and I understand from the engineers it should be finished in about two years time. But the satisfactory operation of the complex will depend upon farmers appreciating that it is being built for them and the country as a whole.

When I took office I thought that a method of distributing onions was to allow the BMC to be the sole purchaser from the farmers. Mr. Speaker, you and the public have read in the newspapers about the confusion the onion trade, with people complaining about shortages and gluts. But I believe it is time that the general public should know a little more about what happens with distribution of vegetables in this country. You agree that the Marketing Corporation be the sole purchaser. Now it is necessary to cut off import licences at a given time so that you utilize imported onions before you start with the local crop. We were advised last year at a late time to cut off import licences. When we cut them off there were over one million pounds of onions on the market. So you must take your mistakes of the past and try to set a proper pattern for the future. But still this year you have a situation that although you negotiated a fixed price for farmers and want to set a pattern of distribution, farmers themselves break down the system and seek to do their own marketing until a situation arises that there is too much produce and then they come back to the Marketing Corporation. What we are trying to do is to have an organized system whereby you can distribute your crop and keep prices at a certain level. I believe that farmers

should get a good price for their products, but I think consumers should get a good price too. If you get gluts you will dishearten the farmers and I would like the farmers to understand that it needs cooperation between both sides to maintain a regular flow of distribution.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the new facilities of the BMC will bring a new impetus to agriculture in this country. I believe we need such a facility so that our own marketing can be fully organized, because I believe that by letting the farmers know that they have marketing facilities they can produce to the fullest and then capitalize on export markets for exotic crops. This would not only benefit the economy locally but also from foreign exchange earnings from exporting crops which can be produced in Barbados.

Mr. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the previous speakers and I have taken notice of comments made by the Prime Minister about the marketing of vegetables in Barbados. But I am not yet satisfied in my own mind that we in Barbados fully understand the impact that marketing can have upon making agriculture an economically viable proposition in Barbados. The Barbados Marketing Corporation has the responsibility of providing an outlet for farmers, but in the minds of farmers for a number of years this has meant that the BMC should serve as a dumping ground for produce which was for all intents and purposes unsaleable in Barbados and which farmers did not wish to feed to their horses or pigs as the case may be.
11.35 a.m.

Second, third and fourth-rate produce was showered on the Barbados Marketing Corporation to the extent that it was continually shoveling under the taxpayers' money in wasted exercises. Thousands of tons of produce used to be dumped in the sea every year because people recognised the Barbados Marketing Corporation as the burial ground for unsaleable produce. Under this administration we have sought to revise that thinking so that people can understand the true role of the Marketing Corporation as it was conceived in the Act.

I do not really believe that we fully appreciate what the Marketing Corporation is here to do. I will give you an example, Sir. I do not believe that there has ever been any serious thought about exporting crops like okras, as an example, from Barbados before. But if you were to read the Trade Statistics for Agriculture in the United States you would discover that that is one of the most heavily imported items of agricultural produce into the United States, and for years Mexico and the other Central American countries have been hanging on very stubbornly to that market.

The Barbados Marketing Corporation made negotiations with an overseas firm to export 50,000 lbs.

of okras per week from this Island. We called in what we regarded as the serious farmers in Barbados, we had meetings with them, we put the proposals before them, they appeared excited, everybody decided that it was a good idea and we should go forward with this project. They allocated certain acreages to the Barbados Marketing Corporation's Okra Programme. At the last meeting we held with those farmers, one of them looked at me with a twinkle in his eye and said: "I think we are going to get competition." I did not quite understand what he meant then, but suddenly out of nowhere people started making counter proposals. It was said that the Barbados Marketing Corporation was not paying enough for okras and let us go off and dispose of the okras on our own. Some of those farmers, who sat down around that table and negotiated with us in good faith, turned around and allocated the acreages which were pledged to us to somebody else with the result that we are now in the embarrassing position in Barbados of having contracted for 50,000 lbs. of okras a week and are hard pressed to provide 2,500 lbs. when the week comes! Yet, in this Island last week okras were sold at 80 cents per pound in the supermarkets. It is a commodity which is in more abundant supply in this Island now than it has ever been in the history of Barbados. There has never been a time in this country when okras were more plentiful than there are today; yet, farmers were still able to find ways of getting supermarkets to buy them at 80 cents in violation of an agreement which we had to supply us with okras for the export market.

Sir, I like to point out that Rome was not built in a day and that the show must go on. The Barbados Marketing Corporation will continue to discharge our responsibility to this Island as long as we have breath. Whether farmers are prepared to abide by decisions which they themselves help to reach, or whether they want to continue to demonstrate bad faith, we will still survive and go on because we are not ephemeral people. We are here to stay.

Sir, I believe the time has come when we in Barbados, and I am particularly speaking to farmers now, must recognise that there has to be a system of disciplined approach to marketing. Marketing is a very integrating kind of discipline. It does not mean selling. It means the co-ordination of exercises that have to do with all the way down from production up to the point where the ultimate consumer gets the product. All of those things that are in between there relate to marketing, and, unless all of those elements are finely co-ordinated and tuned, we are going to continue to have the kind of problems we are having in Barbados. I remain convinced, Sir, all of us at the Marketing Corporation, and I am sure those in the Ministry of Agriculture are convinced, that agriculture can be promoted to the point where it is a significant income-earner for Barbados. We are in desperate need of foreign exchange, and we believe

strongly that that foreign exchange can come through the effective exploitation of agricultural marketing opportunities in this Island.

Sir, I do not look at the Barbados marketing as significant at all. It is too small to be significant to us. We feel that we must launch out into the deep and go after the exotic markets like North America and Great Britain. The consumers in this Island figure very significantly in this entire exercise of the establishment of a processing facility up at the Pine. I had the unhappy experience of hearing a responsible business man in Barbados say that if he could buy an item for 50 cents and sell it for \$80, he would sell it for \$80 and hang the consumer! Mr. Speaker, a part of the responsibility which we have at the Barbados Marketing Corporation is to try to see if we can bring some equilibrium to prices in the market place, and we are not prepared to hold still for unscrupulous people, who do not have generous supplies of conscience, to exploit the consumers in this Island.

Consumers in Barbados themselves are to blame to some extent because they have to recognise that there are times when they have to turn away and keep their money in their purse and let the farmer and others keep the things they have. I have seen a farmer drive through Bridgetown and dump carrots in the street rather than lower the price to the consumer. That is the kind of irresponsibility that we find in Barbados: people without any semblance of conscience at all. It is disgraceful and reprehensible, and I believe that we in Barbados, and the consumers particularly, will have to get up in mass and demand from these people who are producers a better deal. The Barbados Marketing Corporation is prepared to assist in that exercise.

Sir, the Minister responsible for Agriculture talked about onions a minute ago. This is one of the items that will figure very prominently in the new plant to be established up at the Pine. Onion farmers have been producing onions in Barbados now for a number of years. Last year the Barbados Marketing Corporation was given sole responsibility for marketing. A price was agreed between the Minister and the farmers, surpluses were allocated to other and participating countries, and at the end of the exercise everybody jumped on the Barbados Marketing Corporation and said that we spoiled the onions and caused people to lose thousands of dollars and all kinds of nonsense even though that was, perhaps, by any objective analysis, the best onion-growing year in Barbados. The marketing was not free from hitches. It had problems in it as any new exercise will have, but it was orderly. The consumer got a good product. In the past consumers used to get green onions, and when they took them home they would begin to sprout, drop into holes and become rotten. We insisted, in the interest of the consumer, that all onions had to be acceptably dry in the field first before they could go on the market. The

farmers howled and complained, and some of them sneaked away the onions through the grape-vine and got them on to the market.

This year, again, the Minister, at a meeting which I attended, asked farmers if they were interested in marketing for themselves and every man said: "No, Sir. You let the B.M.C. do it." The price was agreed at 36 cents a pound, and yet those same farmers are busily out there engaged in an exercise of selling onions on the market and the Barbados Marketing Corporation, which is supposed to be the sole exporter, is having difficulty now meeting the ANP allocations to Trinidad and to Guyana. 11.45 a.m.

This is another example of what I term bad faith, and farmers are going to sooner or later have to stop doing that nonsense. I am going to appeal to the Minister responsible for agriculture to let there be a more close relationship between the B.M.C. and the A.D.C. to press Government's surplus land into production so that we will not have to be at the mercy of farmers who are not prepared to cooperate in the exercise to get Barbados moving in the field of agriculture. When they see us surviving with the use of A.D.C. land they will get the message, and I am saying to put the A.D.C. land into effective production, let the B.M.C. market them and any of the responsible businessmen farmers will get the message that there is something good down at the Marketing Corporation and they will jump on the bandwagon as well; but we cannot allow ourselves to be plagued for food by men who have not yet grasped the vision of what we are trying to accomplish through this exercise. We are on stream; we are on target. We expect to be able to hand over a completed contract by approximately 1st November, 1980. This is the target date; we can possibly shave off about five months from that projected deadline, but according to our present schedule this is the time when we expect to be able to present a plan that is operational at that new Pine site.

I would like to point out that we could perhaps have gone ahead with the old proposals that were left by the old administration and bring this project on stream a good deal sooner, but we do not intend in this Government in any case to build white elephants. Under the old arrangement if we had gone ahead and built what they agreed to build, we would have had one of the most sophisticated white elephants constructed or conceived by mankind. They were calling for cold storage capacities that could perhaps supply all the United States for the next forty years, the most monstrous exercise in putting together a lot of numbers which did not really mean anything. The result is that we have to go over the entire project and put out new proposals for project evaluation, a new market survey to

make certain that what we are putting forward is indeed the kind of project and in the kind of scale that can be effectively utilised by Barbados and will not be a drain on the Government's purse. They had proposed to purchase land at Edghill plantation at \$10,000 an acre for the construction of the B.M.C. Project. We do not believe that anybody had any business buying land at that kind of rate and in that particular location for the siting of an industrial complex, and therefore for that and other reasons we decided that perhaps we ought to look far afield.

As the Minister of Finance indicated, we went to several sites before we finally selected the one we have now chosen.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to hold the House up, but we would like to point out that it is going to take time for us to accomplish all of the objectives which we hope to accomplish. We believe that this facility that we are building will provide us with the ability to market good produce, we will have effective grading machinery, we will have good packaging facilities, we will have good distribution facilities, we will have good chill and cold storage facilities, and all these combined will give us a superior product to all that is currently available in this region, and we will be able to effectively compete with all of the other countries which now hold a major share of agricultural markets in Great Britain and the United States. Already, Sir, we have gone to the United States with one shipment of okras and we expect to be shipping out the next shipment this coming Wednesday. We will shortly be taking off with yams and those who have been rejoicing

because our yam crates did not arrive on schedule will have to stop rejoicing because they are here and eventually all these exercises will be fulfilled. They are calling for aubergine and watermelons; all these are products which Barbados can grow without any difficulty at all, and from which we can reasonably expect to earn significant foreign exchange for the cause of our people in Barbados. Sir, I will hope that we who have this project to carry forward will continue to demonstrate the will necessary and that we will have the backing and understanding of those who must participate with us in what is really an exercise in partnership.

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

On the motion of Hon. H. deB. Forde seconded by Hon. C. L. Bolden, the Resolution was agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. H. deB. FORDE: Mr. Speaker, that is the end of Government Business for today.

I beg to move that this House do not adjourn until next Tuesday, 28th February, at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. C. L. BOLDEN: I beg to second that.

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