
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION 1976 – 81

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 23rd October, 1979

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

PRESENT

His Honour W. C. B. HINDS, J.P. (Speaker), Mr. R. St.C. WEEKES, J.P.; Hon. L. S. CRAIG, (Minister of Housing, Lands and the Environment); Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS, LL.M.; Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, (Minister of Health and National Insurance); Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs); Mr. J. G. ODLE, B.Sc., (Chairman of Committees); Mr. M. C. C. WARD; Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B., (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry) (Leader of the House); Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW; Mr. L. L. SISNETT and Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, M.Sc. (Econ.).

Prayers were read.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES entered the Chamber and took his seat.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, 16th October, 1979. I am advised, however, that copies of those Minutes were received only this morning, and under the circumstances we cannot ask for confirmation today. I am sure there will be no objection to my saying that confirmation of the Minutes should be postponed.

Messrs. JOHNSON and SANDIFORD entered the Chamber and took their seats.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR

Mr. SPEAKER: I want to announce that during the Recess, Mr. T. H. Kurmeer, a member of the House of

Commons of the Isle of Man paid a courtesy call on me and very kindly presented me for this Hon. House a vase which is on display in my Chambers. On behalf of this Hon. House I expressed appreciation of the generous gesture to the visiting fellow parliamentarian.

PAPERS LAID

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Prime Minister I beg to lay the Public Officers Loan and Travelling Allowances Regulations, 1979. On my own behalf, a Report of the Registrar of Trade Unions for the year 1978–79.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Planning, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to amend the Note to Item 9 under Head 19(3) – Ministry of Labour and Community Services; and to grant the sum of \$1,061,877 out of the Consolidated Fund and place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1979–80, Part I – Current, as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1979–80, No. 10, which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

On behalf of the Minister of Finance and Planning, a Resolution to grant the sum of \$308,500 from the Consolidated Fund and place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1979–80, Part II – Capital, as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1979–80, No. 11, which form the Schedule to the Resolution.

On behalf of the Attorney General, I beg to give notice of a Bill to amend the Fire Service Act.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to move that the Bill to amend the Fire Service Act be read a first time.

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

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

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice that Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 22 asked by the hon. member for St. Michael South West is ready.

Mr. TAITT entered the Chamber and took his seat.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, Item No. 5. I beg to move that Item No. 5 be the first Order of the day.

Mr. SPEAKER: Item No. 5 of Government Business is the instant Order of the day.

Mr. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, Order No. 5 has been called and we on the Opposition are raising a protest at the late delivery of the papers. I myself received the matters which we are entering upon for discussion only last night and it is impossible for the Opposition to proceed efficiently in terms of making a contribution to these public matters with such late notice, and we want to register our protest and we are asking that these matters of which notice was only given to us last night, or Sunday, that we do not proceed on these matters today.

I am speaking with a full consciousness of the importance of proceeding with Public Business, proceeding with all due deliberation, and I hope that the words that are coming from this side would be accepted in the spirit they are spoken, but we do not believe that it is right to ask the Opposition or to ask this House to proceed in dealing with important Government matters without having adequate time in which to consider those matters and preparing for debate and discussion. 12.25 p.m.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, the Government is not responsible for the disposition of these matters and it is obvious that there has been some slippage in the procedure which we periodically hear

from both sides. I do not know the specific matters on which the hon. member is speaking. As I understand it, he is dealing with the Land Tax Act which pertains to the Budgetary Proposals and which in accordance with the law of Barbados, once the matter is announced in the Budgetary Statement of the Minister of Finance the implementing legislation proceeds within a reasonable degree of time so as to insure that changes or relief of taxes occur during the current financial year. However, in view of the fact that the hon. member has obviously forgotten the Budget and the points he made during the Budget Debate and I think he is making a request that we do not proceed with this matter today, I am willing to defer this matter.

Dr. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make it clear that I am speaking as a Parliamentarian, someone elected by a constituency of this country and someone paid to come here to do the people's business. It is absolutely important if one is to make a contribution to the public life of this country in this Honourable Chamber that the necessary papers should be made available to all parliamentarians and in particular to those sitting on this side of the House in order that we can study the papers, have the necessary consultation and do the necessary research in order to be in a position when we come to this Chamber to make a satisfactory presentation on behalf of the people of this country. We are not here as delegates, we are not here for the purpose only of sitting and voting; we are here as representatives, and as representatives we can only perform that function with proper knowledge and proper inputs from all sources — your constituents, interested groups and people within the community. And I am saying that this is not an isolated slippage but something that has been happening with a frequency that makes one feel that there is some major defect within the administration of Parliament. It is my view that the Government has a responsibility to take note of this matter seriously. It is not a request we are making, we are demanding that Government takes cognizance of our position as representatives and defer those matters on which we have not had adequate time to make proper study. This is in the interest of Parliamentary procedure and democracy.

I see elsewhere that coming from the Other Side there is a statement in one of the Resolutions to come before this House speaking about cooperation between the Government and Parliament as necessary for the good Government of this country.

We are demanding this deferment as a right and hope that we will not have to come to this House again to make this kind of protest.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, the report from the other side is only cold soup warmed over. For the past thirteen years that I have had the honour of sitting in this august Assembly I have been hearing this kind of complaint. You, Mr. Speaker, while in Opposition have carried on a crusade against the late delivery of papers. So this is nothing new. Members on the Government side have complained about late delivery of papers, members on the other side have complained; and when I hear nonsense coming from the hon. member for St. Michael South Central that he has been elected by the people to make sure that the people's business is conducted in a proper manner, you will appreciate the fact, Sir, that all of us are elected by the people and not he alone.

As regards the Leader or Deputy Leader of the Opposition — I am not sure what he is I have been told by the Clerk at the Table that the hon. member's papers were delivered to his business place at Prince William Street on Friday, at the Dragon Bar. If the hon. member for some reason or other did not get the papers until late last night I will have to defend those persons who are responsible for the delivery of the papers. But it is not an accusation where the Government can sit back and be satisfied with the late delivery of papers. The Leader of the House has said that he agrees with the protest coming from the other side and is prepared to defer consideration of the matter. That could have been the end of it but we cannot help hearing the hon. member for St. Michael South Central in his lilac uniform today who must always get up and say something at every moment after one year in Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that you while sitting on the Opposition benches for ten years repeatedly called on the Government of the day and protested against the late delivery of papers. This is not anything about priority of Government or Parliament. Our business is conducted on Tuesdays and after that papers have to be sent out, so why does the hon. member for St. Michael South Central get up and contribute utter nonsense to a debate that is unnecessary.

Mr. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask again about the delivery of papers. I got mine yesterday afternoon. I see that there is no procedure in respect of the delivery of Parliamentary papers comparable to the system that operates in business houses or lawyers' offices. I would like to know if when papers are being delivered there is anything against having the delivery clerk having a book to enter the time of the delivery and have the book signed by whoever receives the papers on behalf of the parliamentarian. This seems to me a system that should be instituted without delay and then we would know whether delivery was made on a Friday or on the day before a meeting.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have heard the complaints of hon. members regarding the late delivery of their papers. 12.35 p.m.

I am advised that in the case of the Acting Leader of the Opposition, the hon. member for St. Michael South, that his papers were delivered at his business place on Friday afternoon. I am advised that in the case of the hon. member for St. Michael South Central, his papers were put at his residence on Sunday morning. I have just heard from the hon. member for St. Philip North; and investigations are proceeding on that particular; but I will promise this Hon. House that I will carry out a thorough investigation once more and see what can be done to speed up the delivery of papers to hon. members.

I want hon. members to realise that Parliament exercises no control over the printing of the papers, and they cannot be delivered to hon. members until they have been received from the Government Printery. I do not want to blame the Government Printery at this point, but the matter will be investigated, and I want to promise hon. members that I will do so with all despatch.

Mr. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I have made a statement concerning the late receipt of papers, and I couched it in very quiet and courteous parliamentary language. You yourself, from the eminence of the Chair, indicated that you are advised that I received my papers on Friday afternoon.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will caution the hon. member. I did not say that the hon. member for St. Michael South received them on Friday. What I did say was that I was advised that they were left at his business place on Friday afternoon.

Mr. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I am saying categorically and I am telling this House that I received my papers on Monday evening; that the papers were delivered on Monday and not on Friday.

Mr. SPEAKER: I promised hon. members that I will investigate the matter first because I myself am not satisfied with the late delivery of papers.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, I share the concern of hon. members, especially since I am the Minister who is responsible for the Government Printery under the Cabinet portfolio. I get very concerned over this question about the late delivery of papers, and especially when I heard the hon. member say that his papers were delivered on Monday, because anybody who is employed by Parliament to deliver those papers must know that if by his own default he cannot or does not deliver those papers until Monday that his job is at stake; and therefore the hon. member should appreciate that he is either endangering the Government Printery

or somebody in Parliament; and I will be glad if the hon. member will say specifically, not that somebody handed him his papers on Monday but say specifically that the Assistant Marshal or Deputy Marshal did not deliver them until Monday. It is not enough just to get up and say that "I got them on Monday". He should say I got them from home. From whom is the important factor. They might have been given to him by a secretary who had them since the previous week; but if he is specifically saying that it is the Deputy Marshal and it is he who delivered them on Monday, he should tell the House. If he cannot say who delivered them I am not going to investigate it. I care nothing about it, and indeed if he is unprepared to say that it was an officer of the House of Assembly, if he is unprepared to set out the circumstances, I myself would not be prepared to pay attention to his request for a delay.

Mr. SISNETT: Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are some points which the two hon. members have made about persons responsible for the delivery of the papers. I myself make a genuine effort to have the papers delivered on Friday as the papers are ready for delivery; but I am told that the bone of contention is that members of the Opposition use a business address as their delivery address; and that when the staff gets to the office of these members it is usually closed; but that does not mean that the staff did not make an effort to get the papers delivered on time. I myself received my papers around 4 o'clock on Friday. I made an enquiry from the staff upstairs who were the next people to receive their papers; and they said that they were going to the restaurant of the hon. member for St. Michael South, and his restaurant I was told, was closed at 5 o'clock; and henceforth he could not receive his papers until Monday.

This is a grave reflection on members of the staff; and I do not think that we can condone attempts of the Opposition that the Bill be postponed because of the late delivery of these papers. The staff did make a genuine effort to get the papers to them, but because their mailing address or their business address was closed, it would be impossible for them to get their papers until Sunday or Monday.

Mr. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify certain points. First of all I would like to say that I have grave doubts that the papers were delivered at my place of business where I can easily collect them. That place of business was closed at about 8.20 on Friday night. I myself left that place at 8 o'clock on Friday evening. If the member who shares responsibility for Parliamentary Affairs wants to fire somebody, he will have to do that on his own accord. Do not involve me in that. I do not have any responsibility in that regard. If the hon. member does not want to pay any attention to what we say from the Opposition or he does not care,

that also is his business. I am making a protest about this late delivery of papers and I am stating that those papers were received at my place of business on Monday morning and I received them later on that day. I got the view that the Leader of Government Business indicated that he would not be proceeding with this Item, and I am quite satisfied with the statement of the Leader of the House; and I think, quite frankly that that is the end of the matter.

1.45 p.m.

I thought that was the end of the matter quite frankly, but when the hon. member for St. James got up to give some impression that I was misleading the House and you yourself, Mr. Speaker, know I have pointed out to this Chamber what an important matter it is when members.....

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not want to interrupt the hon. member for St. Michael South in the middle of his speech, but I have given this Honourable House the undertaking that I will have this matter thoroughly investigated and I think that should be the end of this debate.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: If I may crave your indulgence for a moment, I happen to have heard what the hon. member for St. James said, and I must say I agree with him. It cannot go on that little frivolous technical points like these should be allowed to drag down political life in this country. This is a case where it should be investigated to the end. The address of the hon. member is the Dragon Bar, Prince William Henry Street or wherever it is. The Deputy Marshal of the House said that he went there at 5 o'clock with the papers and it was closed. The hon. member said he was there until 8 o'clock. The hon. member should be asked to put that in writing and the Debates Committee investigate the matter. I am tired of coming and hearing conflicts of evidence between hon. members and members of the staff. It is bad enough when it is between hon. members and each other; it is even worse when it is between hon. members and members of the staff. The matter should be investigated to the end. My information is that the Deputy Marshal is prepared to stand by his statement. If the hon. member is prepared to stand by his, let us have the matter hammered out and let the Debates Committee deal with it.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, in view of that I think we will proceed with Item No. 1.

THE FINAL APPROPRIATION (1978-79) ACT, 1979

Mr. SPEAKER: Item No. 1 is the instant Order of the day, and stands in the name of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister to move the second reading of a Bill to grant an additional sum of money out of the Consolidated Fund and appropriate the sum for the service of the Island for the financial year ended 31st March, 1979.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Speaker, this is the usual Supplementary Appropriation Bill and its presentation to the House is required by law. This consolidates the supplementaries during the past financial year in the sum of \$29 million.

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

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

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

On the motion of Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS seconded by Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. ODLE in the Chair.

On motion of Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS seconded by Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN, the Preamble was postponed.

Clauses 1 to 4 inclusive were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

The Preamble was called and passed.

On the motion of Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS seconded by Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS seconded by Dr. CHELTENHAM, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

THE ADJOURNMENT

Hon. H. B. ST. JOHN: Mr. Speaker that brings us to the end of Government Business for today. We have nothing else we can get on with today.

I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 6th November, 1979, at 10.00 a.m. and I give hon. members on the other side notice that we are prepared to commence Items 2 and 3 in the month of November starting 6th November if necessary. 12.55 p.m.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: In rising to second that, I will say that it is the intention of Government, Sir, to submit the Integrity Legislation, which is in the Second Reading of the House, to a Select Committee. We will be seeking to have a Select Committee to have a debate on the 6th November or unavoidably as soon as possible thereafter as the case may be, but subsequently we will be giving all members of the House, private, backbench members on both sides of the House the opportunity of examining the Bill before a Select Committee.

I would want the Opposition to come prepared and I very sincerely hope that any Select Committee appointed to deal with such an important matter will meet with the full participation of members on both sides of the House because we have had a long history of Select Committees in which the Opposition have been appointed and on which they do not serve.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, 6th of November, at 10.00 o'clock in the morning was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.