

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1986-91

Tuesday, February 2, 1988

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

PRESENT

His Honour L. A. Weekes, J.P. (Speaker)
His Honour J. J. Payne, (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. L. E. Sandiford, B.A., M.A. (Econ.) J.P. (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs)
Hon. H. deB. Forde, Q.C., M.A., LL.B., (Leader of the Opposition)
Hon. B. M. Taitt, B.A., (Hons.), M.A., LL.B., (Hons.) (Minister of Health)
Hon. P. M. Greaves, Q.C., B.A. (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Transport, Telecommunications and Immigration and Leader of the House)
Hon. E. E. Greaves, B.A., Ed.M., (Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce)
Hon. Dr. D. G. Blackman, B.A., M.A., (Minister of Transport and Works)
Hon. M. A. King, Q.C., LL.B., (Attorney-General and Minister of Legal Affairs)
Hon. N. K. Simmons, (Minister of Employment, Labour Relations and Community Development)
Hon. H. A. Blackman, B.Sc., (Econ.) (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Mr. D. A. C. Simmons, Q.C., LL.M.
Mr. O. S. Arthur, M.Sc., (Econ.)
Mrs. M. Barker-Welch, (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Employment, Labour Relations and Community Development)
Hon. C. V. Walker, (Minister of Education and Culture)
Mr. L. L. Brathwaite, J.P.
Dr. E. A. Simmons, M.D.
Hon. W. W. Hall, (Minister of Tourism and Sports)

Mr. C. A. Neblett, B.A., (Parliamentary Secretary, Prime Minister's Office)

Mr. C. L. Trotman, M.A.
Mr. R. L. Morris, B.A., Cert. Ed.
Mr. P. J. M. Miller
Mr. R. P. Byer, LL.B., L.E.C.
Mr. D. J. H. Thompson.

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, January 19, 1988.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I move that the Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, January 19, 1988 be taken as read and confirmed, Sir.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no objections or corrections, let these Minutes stand confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to announce that I am in receipt of the following:

The Report of the Ombudsman on his functions under the Act in respect of the year 1987.

PAPERS Hon. E. E.

GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay:

The Annual Report of the Barbados Export Promotion Corporation for the Financial Year ending 31st March, 1987.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I give notice, Sir, of the following:

A Resolution to grant the sum of \$337 383 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1987-88, Part II - Capital as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1987-88 No. 40.

A Resolution to grant the sum of \$745 863 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1987-88, Part II- Capital as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1987-88, No. 41,

A Resolution to grant the sum of \$638 500 from the Consolidated Fund and to place it at the disposal of the Government to supplement the Estimates 1987-88, Part I, - Current as shown in the Supplementary Estimates 1987-88, No. 42.

A Bill to amend the Constitution of Barbados.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, the following was read a first time:

A Bill to amend the Constitution of Barbados.

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that the replies to Questions Nos. 31, 35, 81, and 40 are ready.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is now the instant order of the day.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, before we move on to Government Business, I move that Standing Orders

Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting.

Hon. B. M. TATTT: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that those several Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. B. M. TAITT, Mr. SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee of Supply, Mr. R. P. BYER in the Chair.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee of Supply. 12.25 p.m.

Order No. 1 was called - To move that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider the grant of sums of money for the service of the island.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1987-88
No. 38-\$153 914

HEAD 25 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND FISHERIES - \$153 914

Hon. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Chairman, these various supplementary requirements for the respective subheads can all be taken together, for the simple reason that the need to supplement the earlier allocations is identical. They all relate to personal emoluments, salaries, and wages.

As a result of the revision of salaries which became effective from April 1, 1986, it became necessary to supplement these respective subheads to provide payment for those persons who are engaged in the general administration of the Ministry, plant protection, the feed store, livestock development and the markets.

It has become necessary to supplement the subheads, too, because monies have had to be paid out when officers went on sick leave and substitutes took their places.

For these reasons, Sir, these respective subheads are to be supplemented, and I first move that Subhead 1 stand part.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I think we should take it as a whole rather than in separate parts, so you can move that Head 25 stand part.

Asides.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: I move, Sir, that Head 25 stand part.

Hon. B. M. TATTT: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that Head 25 stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 1987-88 No.
39-\$13 069 412

HEAD 25 - MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE,
FOOD AND FISHERIES - \$69 412

Hon. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Chairman, this Resolution is calling for supplementary requirements for the Ministry of Agriculture and for the Ministry of Transport and Works. I will be taking care of the part relating to the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: That is Head 25.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Right. Head 25 is the one I will be dealing with.

The amount of \$47 800 was provided in this year's Estimates. That amount has proved to be insufficient to meet all the requirements of this particular vote, and it is now estimated that a further \$32 212 is required for utilities. The reason is that, during this financial year, the Ministry has had to pay out of this vote arrears for water for two quarters. During this financial year, instead of paying for four quarters, in fact, we are paying for six, because there were two sets of arrears. The arrears are for the quarters ending in December 1986 and the quarter ending in March 1987.

In addition to that, Sir, there has been an increase, Sir, in consumption of water, because of the dry period between December 1986 and 1987, and, therefore, we are now estimating that \$25 350 will be required by the end of the financial year to pay for all the uses of water provided for by this vote.

It is also anticipated that electricity will require a further sum of \$10 192, and for the telephones, we require a further sum of \$350.

There is a balance of \$3 680 in the vote, and when all the arithmetic is taken into account, the net balance required to supplement this vote is \$32 212.

As regards supplies, the amount of \$2 000 is required to buy certain chemicals to make effective use of the Fruit Quality Laboratory that has been installed at the Soil Conservation Unit.

The final amount of \$35 200, is required under Plant, Equipment and Furniture. Originally, \$7 440 was voted, and this amount is required to purchase equipment for the same laboratory that I referred to earlier, Sir, the Fruit Quality Laboratory.

I move, Sir, that Head 25 stand part.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.
12.35p.m.

HEAD 42 -MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND
WORKS-\$13 000 000

SUBHEAD 8 -TRANSPORT BOARD

Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN (St. Michael East): Mr. Chairman, this is a request for a sum of \$13 million to assist in financing the operations of the Transport Board for the current financial year.

At the outset, let me say that debates on these questions are normally characterized by either monumental ignorance or amnesia, and therefore it is going to be necessary for you, Sir, to bear with me if I locate this >.quest against a background which sketches the salient developments that led to the present situation within the Transport Board.

I shall take as my point of departure the year 1977, when in accordance with a manifesto pledge of the Barbados Labour Party to nationalize that part of the bus transportation system that was operated by private concessionaires, with a view to giving better quality service, the Ministry of Transport and Works proceeded to execute that manifesto pledge, which, stated as it was, could not be faulted, but the implementation of which revealed, as nothing could reveal, the fundamental flaws which persistently appear in the thinking of the Barbados Labour Party at the level of policy conception and policy execution, which is, that any notion of theory is a waste of time, because nobody subscribes to the modern view of theory as explanation, and therefore questions which are intrinsic to theoretical concerns, questions of method, are therefore reduced to the cave man's view of method of common sense, sheer nonsense. That is the cave man's view of implementation which prevailed in this particular issue.

And so, when the then Minister, Mr. L. B. Brathwaite, was given the order, he proceeded to execute it with the innocence and sophistication of a three-year old child carrying out a parental instruction to buy sugar cakes. No particular survey, was done. The bureaucratic memory is that this Minister, with more zeal than intelligence, proceeded to confront the bus concessionaires and told them "give me the buses now, we want them, it is our policy."

That, Sir, is the genesis of the problem, the crisis within the Transport Board, from which this country has never recovered, and for which millions and millions of dollars have been lost. The specificities will now follow.

Mr. Chairman, when these buses were purchased in the manner aforesaid, it was discovered that most of them were not roadworthy, and faced with the problem in his own constituency of St. Andrew, where the bus concessionaires operated, and where extravagant promises had been made to the people living there, he proceeded in a state of desperation to pull buses out of St. Michael and put them in St. Andrew. Not content to fill the gap created by the absence of the buses that were plying those routes, buses owned by the private concessionaires, he proceeded to pull even more buses out, and proceeded to operate a service with the regularity of a service which was typical of the services in densely populated areas like St. Michael. In short, Sir, a veritable taxi service was given to the people of St. Andrew by using Transport Board buses, and it was not an unusual spectacle to see, in the middle of the day, buses labouring over the hills of St. Andrew with two passengers sitting grandly in the bus along with the driver and the conductor. With all due respect to the present representative of St. Andrew, I do not think we can afford the luxury of providing a taxi service with Transport Board buses for your constituency.

He was replaced, after he began the havoc, by another Minister, who, as time went on, became Minister only in name, since he lost complete control of the Transport Board. A well-known political hack became the *de facto* Minister of Transport, and Mr. Bolden, representing the parish of St. Joseph, not to be outdone by his neighbour and colleague, Mr. Brathwaite, started to pull even more buses out of St. Michael, on the short haul routes, and placed them in St. Joseph. He, too, adhered to the Brathwaite model by operating a taxi service with Transport Board buses in the parish of St. Joseph.

It is noted that this gave rise to the licensing of over 250 minibuses, so the failure of the Barbados Labour Party intelligensia to understand anything about method led to the paradoxical result of privatizing an even greater part of the public transport system than was originally intended. The policy, as executed in 1977, was designed to make the

public transport system wholly public. The effect, less than three years later, because of the ignorance of methodological considerations to offset the ignorance of sending a boy to do a man's job - I only use the term "boy" in a metaphorical sense in relation to competence - was completely opposite to that which was intended, which was to make the public bus transportation system wholly public.

But that is not all, Mr. Chairman. If the policy had resulted in nothing more than the re-establishment of the *status quo ante*, in financial terms, Barbadians would not necessarily have been worse off. In fact, what happened, is that the minibuses operators in Barbados were given the profit-bearing routes of the Transport Board, and thus began the days of deficit of the magnitude with which we are faced today. 12.45 p.m.

In June 1981, when I assumed responsibility for that Ministry, after some time I got to understand what was really going on. But efforts to reverse the fiasco of the 1977 nationalization proved to no avail, and they proved to no avail because of the proximity of the minibus lobby to the Cabinet of the Barbados Labour Party Government. The name "Tull" was prominent in minibus circles. The name "Tull" was prominent in the Cabinet of Barbados.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Is that a reference to the Senator in the other Chamber?

Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN: I am speaking, Sir, of what happened during the period June 1981 - January 1983. I do not know whether there was a Senator Tull in the Upper House at that time. I am only referring to that period.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Very well, Sir.

Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN: You would be in better possession of that information than me.

In spite of efforts to point out that it was useless to talk of making the Transport Board a viable financial entity if your profit-bearing routes were given away, the Cabinet of Barbados continued on its merry way to tolerate this situation. But worst still, it soon became manifest that the Barbados Labour Party had done a complete *vaux fas*, a complete about face, and were now attempting to privatise transport by stealth. I repeat it. There was an attempt on the part of the then Prime Minister Tom Adams to privatize the Transport Board by stealth. It was not a matter that he could have come to the people of Barbados with, and, therefore, it had to be done by stealth.

What is the evidence of this claim? The evidence for this claim is as follows. He wrote to the Chairman of the Transport Board, Glenroy Straughn, advising Glenroy