

RATTRAY, PATTERSON, RATTRAY

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25th November, 1981.

Mr. Peter Abrahams,
Radio Jamaica Ltd.,
32 Lyndhurst Road,
Kingston 5.

Carl Rattray
Private No 98320

Dear *Peter*,

Enclosed as promised a copy of the Revenue Board Act. I would be grateful for your early comments. The Bill comes before the Senate on Friday and I point out the following:

Clause 4 - Functions of the Board -

This includes "directing the activities of the Tax Commissioners" who are defined in Clause 2 to mean "The Collector General, Commissioner of Income Tax and Commissioner of Land Valuations" etc.

The effect of this is that the official Civil Service Departments dealing with tax matters will now be subject to direction and therefore control of a Revenue Board appointed by the Minister of Finance. (See paragraph 1 of the Schedule).

It is not unusual in recent time for Boards constituted by persons not part of the "Public Service" to perform functions traditionally performed by a Public Service Department. When however such a Statutory Board performs sensitive functions with respect to the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual, safeguards are normally built into the Legislation and such safeguards usually relate to the method of appointment to the Statutory Body and termination of these appointments for the purpose of protecting the independence of the persons appointed against political direction. (Examples are the Electoral Advisory Committee and the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman). The fundamental rights of the individual involved

Cont'd.....2/

Mr. Peter Abrahams
Radio Jamaica Ltd.

25th November, 1981.

in this Act is the right to privacy and to protection against invasion of privacy.

The public servant falls under the provisions of the Official Secrets Act and is protected in terms of his security of tenure in office by the provisions of the Constitution.

Clause 4(2) which gives the Tax Commissioner power to object to a direction of the Board, takes the matter to the Minister and does not provide how the Minister should act thereafter.

Clause 5(2) empowers the Minister to require any information as to the Board's activities and the Board must afford the Minister facilities for verifying the information. It does not even provide that the Minister's request should be in writing.

Clause 6(1) - Not only is the Board given the functions which it has but it can delegate these functions to anyone. Thus not only the Board but any of its delegates can direct the Tax Commissioners and have access to the records etc. of the individual.

Clause 15(1) empowers the Board to require the Tax Commissioner to furnish information and produce the tax documents and records of any tax payer.

Clause 15(2) takes away the protection of the Official Secrets Act to the tax payer in respect of the disclosure of information and records to the Board.

Clause 16 requires the Board and its officers to treat the information given as secret and sub-section 2 makes it an offence to disclose this information. However, when the disclosure is made to a person in respect of whom the Minister authorises him to disclose it, no offence is committed. The Minister can therefore authorise the Board or any employee thereof to give this information to anyone at all and no offence is then committed.

The Bill has quietly passed through the House of Representatives. The Revenue Board is not just a policy instrument for the advice of the Minister in which case no valid objection could be taken. It is a Body politically appointed and directed dealing with most sensitive matters affecting the individual and with no safeguards to prevent

Mr. Peter Abrahams,
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25th November, 1981.

it being used as an instrument for political oppression or blackmail. Paragraph 6 of the Schedule empowers the Minister to revoke any appointment to the Board if he thinks it expedient to do so.

In my view, it is constitutionally of doubtful validity but I am researching this aspect of it further before arriving at a conclusion.

Very best regards.

Yours sincerely,


R. CARL RATTRAY

Encl.
RCR/dh

THE REVENUE BOARD ACT, 1981

(Act of 1981)

ARRANGEMENT OF SECTIONS

Preliminary

1. Short title and commencement.
2. Interpretation.

The Revenue Board

3. Establishment and constitution of Board.
4. Functions of the Board.
5. Policy directions.
6. Power of Board to delegate functions.
7. Appointment of officers and servants.
8. Pensions, gratuities and other retiring benefits.
9. Protection of Board.
10. Protection of Commissioners and staff.
11. Remuneration of Commissioners.

Financial

12. Funds and resources of the Board.
13. Accounts and audit.
14. Annual report and estimates.

General

15. Board to be furnished with information, documents, etc.
16. Obligation for secrecy.
17. Exemptions from customs duty.
18. Exemption from income tax, stamp duties and transfer tax.
19. Regulations.

SCHEDULE.

A BILL

ENTITLED

AN ACT to Establish a Board to be known as the Revenue Board, to provide for the functions of that Board and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.

[]

BE IT ENACTED by The Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate and House of Representatives of Jamaica, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

Preliminary

1—This Act may be cited as the Revenue Board Act, 1981, and shall come into operation on a day to be appointed by the Minister by notice published in the *Gazette*.

Short title
and com-
mencement.

2—In this Act—

“Assistant Revenue Commissioners” means the Assistant Revenue Commissioners appointed under section 7;

Inter-
pretation.

- “the Board” means the Revenue Board established under section 3;
- “chairman” means the chairman of the Board;
- “Commissioners” means the Revenue Commissioners appointed under this Act;
- “functions” includes powers and duties;
- “Minister” means the Minister responsible for finance;
- “revenue” means all tolls, taxes, imposts, rates, duties, fees, levies, fines and other charges prescribed by or under any enactment;
- “Revenue Department” means the Land Valuation Division of the Ministry of Finance and Planning, the Income Tax and the Collector-General’s Departments and any other department of Government declared by the Minister, by notice, to be a Revenue Department;
- “Tax Commissioners” means the Collector-General, Commissioner of Income Tax and Commissioner of Valuations and any other officer concerned with the collection or administration of revenue declared by the Minister, by notice, to be a Tax Commissioner;
- “taxpayer” includes any person whose liability to make payment of revenue to a Revenue Department is in question whether or not, in the event, the payment is waived or remitted or no amount is found to be payable.

The Revenue Board

Establishment and constitution of Board.

3—(1) There is hereby established a body to be called the Revenue Board which shall be a body corporate to which the provisions of section 28 of the Interpretation Act shall apply.

Schedule.

(2) The provisions of the Schedule shall have effect as to the constitution of the Board and otherwise in relation thereto.

4—(1) The Board shall be responsible for directing, co-ordinating, inspecting and monitoring the activities of the Tax Commissioners in the performance of their respective functions under or by virtue of the laws relating to revenue.

Functions of
the Board.

(2) Where any Tax Commissioner objects to any direction of the Board he shall inform the Board and report the matter to the Minister within fourteen days of such objection.

(3) It shall be the duty of the Board to—

- (a) prepare or cause to be prepared plans for developing and maintaining an effective and efficient revenue collection system and ensure that such plans are implemented;
- (b) ensure that Jamaica's best interests are adequately safeguarded in the negotiation of international taxation agreements;
- (c) promote voluntary compliance with the relevant laws relating to revenue; and
- (d) advise the Minister on all matters relating to revenue.

(4) For the purpose of the discharge of its functions under this Act the Board may, subject to the provisions of this Act, do anything and enter into any transaction which, in the opinion of the Board, is necessary to ensure the proper performance of its functions and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, may—

- (a) provide for the inspection of accounting and security systems of the Revenue Departments;
- (b) develop and maintain systems, whether by computer or other means, for the collection, storage and retrieval of information;
- (c) establish and maintain legal services;
- (d) design and conduct training programmes for employees of the Revenue Departments;
- (e) establish and maintain public relations services.

Policy
directions.

5—(1) The Minister may, after consultation with the chairman, give to the Board such directions of a general character as to the policy to be followed by the Board in the discharge of its functions as appears to the Minister to be necessary in the public interest; and the Board shall give effect to any such directions.

(2) The Board shall furnish to the Minister such information as he may require with respect to the activities of the Board, and shall afford to him facilities for verifying such information in such manner and at such times as he may reasonably require.

Power of
Board to
delegate
functions.

6—(1) The Board may, by instrument in writing and subject to such conditions as may be specified in the instrument, delegate to any person any of the functions exercisable by the Board by virtue of the provisions of this Act.

(2) A delegation under this section shall be revocable by the Board and no delegation shall prevent the exercise by the Board of any of its functions.

(3) Any person to whom a delegation is made under this section shall furnish to the Board from time to time such information as the Board shall require with respect to the exercise of any of its functions so delegated.

Appointment
of officers
and
servants.

7—(1) Subject to subsection (3), the Board may appoint and employ at such remuneration and on such terms and conditions as it thinks fit, Assistant Revenue Commissioners and such other officers and servants as it thinks necessary for the proper carrying out of the provisions of this Act:

Provided that—

- (a) no salary in excess of the rate of fifteen thousand dollars per annum shall be assigned to any post without the prior approval of the Minister; and
- (b) no appointment shall be made to any post to which a salary in excess of the rate of fifteen

thousand dollars per annum is assigned without the prior approval of the Minister.

(2) The Governor-General may, subject to such conditions as he may impose, approve of the appointment of any officer in the service of the Government to any office with the Board and any officer so appointed shall, while so employed, in relation to any pension, gratuity or other allowance, and in relation to other rights as a public officer, be treated as continuing in the service of the Government.

(3) Nothing in subsection (1) shall be construed as conferring on the Board any power to make appointments to posts in the Revenue Departments.

8—It shall be lawful for the Board, with the approval of the Minister—

(a) to enter into arrangements respecting schemes, whether by way of insurance policies or not;

(b) to make regulations,

for pensions, gratuities and other retiring or disability or death benefits relating to members and employees of the Board and such arrangements or regulations may include provisions for the grant of benefits to the dependants and the legal personal representatives of such members or employees.

Pensions, gratuities and other retiring benefits.

9—No act done or proceeding taken under this Act shall be questioned on the ground—

(a) of the existence of any vacancy in the membership of, or any defect in the constitution of, the Board; or

(b) of any omission, defect or irregularity not affecting the merits of the case.

Protection of Board.

10—(1) No action, suit, prosecution or other proceedings shall be brought or instituted personally against any Commissioner in respect of any act done *bona fide* in the execution or intended execution of this Act.

Protection of Commissioners and staff.

(2) Where any Commissioner is exempt from liability by reason only of the provisions of this section the Board shall be liable to the extent that it would be if that Commissioner was a servant or agent of the Board.

Remuneration of Commissioners.

11—The Board shall pay to the chairman and each Commissioner such remuneration and allowances as the Minister may determine.

Financial

Funds and resources of the Board.

12—The funds and resources of the Board shall consist of—

- (a) such sums as may from time to time be appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of the Board; and
- (b) all other moneys and other property which may in any manner become payable to or vested in the Board in respect of any matter incidental to its functions.

Accounts and audit.

13—(1) The Board shall keep accounts and other records in relation to its business and shall prepare annually a statement of accounts in a form satisfactory to the Minister, being a form which shall conform with established accounting principles.

(2) The accounts of the Board shall be audited by the Auditor-General.

Annual report and estimates.

14—(1) The Board shall, within six months after the end of each financial year or within such longer period as the Minister may in special circumstances approve, cause to be made and transmit to the Minister a report dealing generally with the activities of the Board during the preceding financial year.

(2) The Minister shall cause a copy of the report together with the annual statements of accounts and the auditor's report thereon or on the accounts to be laid on

the Table of the House of Representatives and of the Senate.

(3) The Board shall, before a date specified by the Minister, submit to the Minister for his approval estimates of revenue and expenditure for the ensuing financial year.

General

15—(1) The Board may require a Tax Commissioner or any officer in a Revenue Department to furnish such information and produce such documents and records concerning any taxpayer as may be in the possession or under the control of that Tax Commissioner or officer.

Board to be furnished with information, documents, etc.

(2) Any obligation to maintain secrecy or any restriction on the disclosure of information or the production of any document or paper or thing imposed on any person by or under the Official Secrets Acts 1911 to 1939 (or any Act of the Parliament of Jamaica replacing the same in its application to Jamaica) or the Income Tax Act or, subject to the provisions of this Act, by any other law (including a rule of law) shall not apply in relation to the disclosure of information or the production of any document or thing by that person to the Board pursuant to a requirement under subsection (1); and accordingly, no person shall be liable to prosecution by reason only of his compliance with a requirement of the Board under this Act.

16—(1) Every person having any official duty or being employed in the administration of this Act shall regard and deal with as secret and confidential all documents, information and records obtained from a Tax Commissioner or any officer of a Revenue Department and relating to the income or items of the income of any person and shall make and subscribe a declaration to that effect before a Justice of the Peace.

Obligation for secrecy.

(2) Every such person as is referred to in subsection (1) having possession of or control over any such documents, information or records, who at any time communi-

cates or attempts to communicate such information or anything contained in such documents or records to any person—

(a) other than a person to whom he is authorized by the Minister to communicate it; or

(b) otherwise than for the purpose of this Act, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on summary conviction before a Resident Magistrate to a fine not exceeding five thousand dollars and in default of payment to imprisonment with or without hard labour for a term not exceeding six months.

Exemptions
from
customs
duty.

17—No customs duty or other similar impost shall be payable upon any article imported into Jamaica, or taken out of bond in Jamaica, by the Board and shown to the satisfaction of the Collector-General to be required for the use of the Board in the performance of its functions under this Act.

Exemption
from in-
come tax,
stamp
duties and
transfer
tax.

18—(1) The income of the Board shall be exempt from income tax.

(2) The Board shall be exempt from stamp duty on all instruments executed by it or on its behalf.

(3) There shall be exempt from taxation under the Transfer Tax Act any transfer by the Board of property belonging to it or of any right or interest created in, over or otherwise with respect to any such property.

Regulations.

19—The Board may, with the approval of the Minister, make regulations generally for the better carrying out of the provisions of this Act.

1. The Board shall consist of such number of Revenue Commissioners not being less than four nor more than seven as the Minister may from time to time appoint. **Constitution of Board.**
2. (1) The Commissioners shall be appointed by the Minister by instrument in writing from amongst persons appearing to him to be qualified as having had experience of, and shown capacity in, matters relating to revenue, finance, commerce, electronic data processing or administration, or in such other matters as the Minister considers appropriate for appointment under this paragraph. **Appointment of Commissioners.**
- (2) A Commissioner shall, subject to the provisions of this Schedule, hold office for such period not being less than three nor more than five years, as the Minister may direct in the instrument appointing the Commissioner and each Commissioner shall be eligible for re-appointment.
3. (1) The Minister shall appoint one of the Commissioners to be chairman of the Board. **Chairman.**
- (2) In the case of the absence or inability to act of the chairman, the Minister may appoint any other Commissioner to perform the function of the chairman.
4. The Minister may appoint any person appearing to him to have the qualifications necessary for appointment under the provisions of paragraph 2 (1) as a Commissioner to act temporarily in the place of any Commissioner in the case of the absence or inability to act of such Commissioner. **Acting appointments.**
5. (1) The chairman may at any time resign his office by instrument in writing addressed to the Minister and such resignation shall take effect as from the date of the receipt by the Minister of the instrument. **Resignations.**
- (2) Any Commissioner other than the chairman may at any time resign his office by instrument in writing addressed to the chairman who shall forthwith cause it to be forwarded to the Minister and upon the date of the receipt by the Minister of such instrument the Commissioner shall cease to hold office.
6. The Minister may at any time revoke the appointment of any Commissioner if he thinks it expedient to do so. **Revocation of appointments.**
7. The appointment, removal or resignation of any Commissioner shall be notified in the *Gazette*. **Gazetting of appointments.**
8. The Minister may, on the application of any Commissioner, grant leave of absence to such Commissioner. **Leave.**
9. (1) The seal of the Board shall be kept in the custody of the chairman or of any officer of the Board authorized by the Board in that behalf, and shall be affixed to instruments pursuant to a resolution of the Board, in the presence of the chairman or any other member of the Board authorized to act in that behalf, and the secretary thereof. **Seal and execution of documents.**

(2) The seal of the Board shall be authenticated by the signature of the secretary.

(3) All documents other than those required by law to be under seal, made by, and all decisions of, the Board may be signified under the hand of the chairman or any other member or officer of the Board authorized to act in that behalf.

Procedure
and
meetings.

10. (1) The Board shall meet as often as may be necessary or expedient for the transaction of its business and such meetings shall be held at such places and times and on such days as the Board may determine.

(2) The chairman may at any time call a special meeting of the Board, and shall call a special meeting to be held within seven days of a written request for that purpose addressed to him by any two members of the Board.

(3) The chairman shall preside at meetings of the Board, and if the chairman is absent from a meeting the members of the Board present shall elect one of their number to preside at the meeting.

(4) The quorum of the Board shall be three.

(5) The decisions of the Board shall be by a majority of votes, and in addition to an original vote the chairman or other member presiding at the meeting shall have a casting vote in any case in which the voting is equal.

Disclosure
of interest.

(6) Subject to the provisions of this Schedule the Board may regulate its own proceedings.

11. A member of the Board who is directly or indirectly interested in any matter which is being dealt with by the Board—

(a) shall disclose the nature of his interest at a meeting of the Board; and

(b) shall not take part in any deliberation or decision of the Board with respect to that matter.

Office of
chairman not
public office.

12. The office of chairman or Commissioner shall not be a public office for the purposes of Chapter V of the Constitution of Jamaica.

Passed in the House of Representatives with one amendment, this 10th day of November, 1981.

T. M. FORREST,
Speaker.

A BILL

ENTITLED

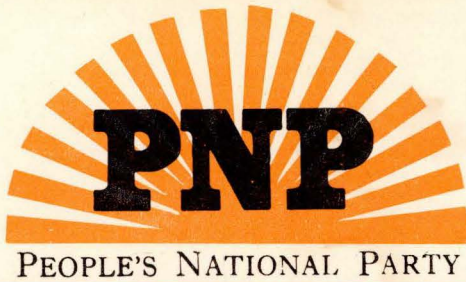
AN ACT to Establish a Board to be known as the Revenue Board, to provide for the functions of that Board and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.

As passed by the Jamaica House of Representatives

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JAMAICA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

to provide for the establishment of a Board to be known as the Revenue Board, to provide for the functions of that Board and for matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.



HEADQUARTERS
89 Old Hope Road
Kingston 6
92-77805

February 9, 1988

Mr. Peter Abrahams
c/o Radio Jamaica
32 Lyndhurst Road
Kingston 5

Dear Peter:

On behalf of the Officers and the Central Executive of the People's National Party, and also on behalf of the Party's 50th Anniversary Organising Committee, I wish to thank you for the very inspiring tribute you paid the PNP at our Religious Service on Sunday, January 31, 1988.

As a token of our appreciation I enclose a copy of a photograph which was taken during your address.

Yours sincerely,

(Paul Robertson)
GENERAL SECRETARY

XXXXXXXXXX
0944-2580

July 31, 1985

Rev. Dr. Hugh Sherlock
C/o Y.M.C.A.
Hope Road.

Dear Father Sherlock,

Please forgive the very long delay in keeping my promise to let you have the enclosed. I had to wait on London for a copy of THIS ISLAND NOW which we only received yesterday. Although it was published nearly twenty years ago I think you will find it a reasonably accurate reflection of Jamaica's situation today - with the swing being to the very far right rather than the very far left!

Peace and love



OFFICE OF THE

COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA

P.O. Box 125,
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

Our file: 11.9.7.8.

June 2, 1960.

Personal

Dear Mr. Abrahams:

RASTAFARI MOVEMENT

I am most grateful to you for your letter of May 20, giving us such an interesting summary of the Rastafari problem in Jamaica. I can well understand that a movement of this nature coming at this time has caused considerable consternation and inevitably, I suppose, the press are inclined to over-dramatise the situation. It is particularly useful for us to have the "sane" appreciation of the problem and I am much indebted to you for your courtesy and trouble in supplying us with the interesting summary.

Yours sincerely,

R.G.C. Smith,
Commissioner for Canada.

Mr. Peter Abrahams,
West Indian Economist,
164-6 Harbour Street,
Kingston, Jamaica, W.I.

20th May 1960.

Mr. R.G.C. Smith,
Office of the Commissioner
For Canada,
P.O. Box 125,
Port of Spain,
Trinidad.

Dear Mr. Smith;

Please forgive the delay in replying to your letter of May 6th. As you will have gathered by now, if you have received the two transcripts of my radio commentaries, in addition to everything else I now do a daily news commentary over Radio Jamaica. All this leaves very little time for coping with letters.

I am afraid our newspaper people have overplayed the rastafarian business a little more than somewhat. In essence it is a problem confined to a very small minority. Most of the violence, unfortunately, has been provoked by the panicky attitude of our police and the Time Magazine story twisted the sequence of two separate events so completely as to appear part of the same pattern. The rioting in which one person was killed outside the Coronation market took place at least two months before the rastafarian business hit the headlines. And even there violence might not have been set off if our police had not used-rough-house methods. In any case that incident was completely unrelated to the later incidents involving the arrest of Cladius Henry and his friends.

The "link with Cuba's Castro" was no more than the discovery by the police of two receipts that one or two of Henry's lieutenants had sent registered letters to Cuba. Certainly the "supply" of arms unearthed consisted of one pistol, some cartridges, some cutlasses sharpened on both sides, one or two crude attempts at homemade bombs and conch shells filled with cement. And the number of people who were involved were a pitifully small number with a following running at most to perhaps three to four hundred unfortunate people whose economic misery make them very susceptible to the rabble-rousing nonsense of demagogue like Henry. In my judgement this problem is not the terrifying spectre some of our highly imaginative newsmen have cooked up for the outside world.

But, having said all that, there is in Jamaica today a very serious problem created by the great economic inequalities which still exist. Too many people still exist on too

little. And I, for one, sincerely hope that the scare this business has caused will stimulate the government of Jamaica into trying to do something about these people who are economically the most depressed in our society. So far our great progress and development have mainly benefitted Jamaica's middleclasses. It is time the gravy was spread a little more evenly.

I hope this clears the picture a little for you.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Abrahams.

PA:ehk

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OFFICE OF THE

COMMISSIONER FOR CANADA

P.O. Box 125,
Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, W.I.

6th May, 1960

PERSONAL

Mr. Peter Abrahams,
c/o The West Indian Economist,
164-166 Harbour Street,
Kingston,
JAMAICA.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

I wonder if I can ask you to let me have your views concerning the seriousness or otherwise of the Ras Tafari troubles in Jamaica. The Press over here has reported the arrest and trial of the leaders and has suggested that the supply of arms which has been unearthed was linked to Castro. People coming from Jamaica have suggested that this movement could become quite serious and I have even heard one suggestion that it could develop into a sort of Mau Mau situation if it is not handled rightly. I must confess that when I read about this movement in the first place I did not take it too seriously, thinking that it was probably the outcropping of some irresponsible and unfortunate people but in the light of continuing reports of violence and of stories coming from people who recently visited Jamaica, I am naturally concerned lest I have been mistaken in not regarding this development more seriously.

Would you mind, then, dropping me a brief note giving me your own views on the situation for my own personal guidance? If this request in any way embarrasses you, then of course please do not feel under any obligation but I am anxious to have the benefit of some informed opinion on the situation and would therefore very much value your views if you can give them to me.

Yours sincerely,

R.G.C. Smith
Commissioner for Canada

RGCS: TG.

20/5/60.



BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION

Information Department

34 ~~32~~ Duke Street Kingston PO Box 410

Telephone ~~992-1990~~ 92-21603

Peter Abrahams Esq
c/o Radio Jamaica Ltd
32 Lyndhurst Road
Kingston 5

Your reference

Our reference

INF 302/1

Date

23 March 1976

Dear Peter

This may have the effect of teaching my grandmother to suck eggs, but I thought you might like to have a look at a COI-produced background brief on Namibia which sets out Britain's views fairly concisely and which can, if you wish it, be used either attributably or unattributably.

Yours sincerely

Robert S.

R L T SYKES

enc:

Namibia

Britain's position remains that the South African Government must allow the inhabitants of Namibia freely to determine their political and constitutional future, and that there must be a greater sense of urgency in bringing about self-determination and independence. Britain is keeping up the pressure, and loses no opportunity to impress upon the South African Government the need for early progress.

SWAPO

Britain regards SWAPO as an important element and is giving its members scholarships and other educational aids worth £35,000. But the UK has never accepted SWAPO's claim to be the "sole legitimate representative" of the people of Namibia. This is a matter for the Namibian people to decide.

UN Council for Namibia

Although the UK cooperates with the UN Council for Namibia where she can (for example by contributing to the UN Fund for Namibia which finances some of its activities), Britain's view of the legal position is such that she cannot accept the UN Council's claim to be the lawful administration of Namibia, since for important reasons extending beyond the ambit of the Namibia question she does not accept that the General Assembly was competent to confer this status upon it. It follows that Britain does not accept that the UN Council's decree against trade in the natural resources of Namibia as legally valid.

Windhoek constitutional talks

Britain accepts that the Windhoek talks may well be a helpful source of advice but they do not yet constitute self-determination. These talks cannot by themselves be definitive as a substitute for a proper test of public opinion by free election or referendum. These points were made clear by Mr David Ennals, Minister of State, FCO, to the delegates who visited London in October 1975.

Security Council

In January 1976 Britain voted in favour of Security Council Resolution 385 (aimed at keeping up the pressure on South Africa), which was passed unanimously. It was a constructive resolution and Britain has called on the South African Government to pay heed to it.

Financial support

In addition to the £35,000 for SWAPO Britain gives £70,000 annually to the UN Educational and Training Programme for Southern Africa (UNETPSA), which

provides scholarships for Namibians. Britain has also given £20,000 to a UNICEF project to help women and children refugees from Namibia, £10,000 to the UN Fund for Namibia and £5,000 to the UN Research Institute at Lusaka.

ENDS SOUTHERN AFRICA BACKGROUND BRIEF 02/76

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POPULAR BULLETIN NO. 1

NFW CHALLENGES FACE THE JAMAICAN POLITICAL PROCESS. ONE OF THESE CHALLENGES IS HOW TO ARRIVE AT AN ACCURATE AND REALISTIC ASSESSEMENT OF ISSUES.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE ?

THERE ARE TWO BASIC WEAKNESSES IN DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC ISSUES:

1. *The Partisan political approach - this starts from a defence of each Political Party (PNP/JLP/WPJ).*
2. *The 'above politics' approach - this has two main manifestations:*
 - a) *those fed up with the partisan political approach - i.e. to say "politics is dirty" OR those who say " a plague on both their houses".*
 - b) *those who would like to wish away conflict in society between the "Haves" and the "Have-nots" - (i.e. between the main social classes).*

This series of bulletins is an attempt to encourage a non-tribal political approach:

TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC ISSUES.

Popular Bulletin No. 1 deals with the question of "National Unity".

.....000.....000.....0000.....

Background:

Why a call for National Unity? This is not the first time in our modern Political History that this call has surfaced. The most recent calls were :

1. *Prime Minister, Michael Manley appealed for a Social Contract in 1978.*
2. *The PSOJ (representing the Private Sector) called for a Government of National Unity in 1979.*

Despite these calls the country went into a brutal tribal conflict which destroyed over 800 lives in 10 months. The same people who are today calling for National Unity called for General Elections in 1979/1980.

THESE WERE TIMES OF SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISES.

In addition, since 1980, a number of events have taken place:

ECONOMIC:

1. *Divestment and de-regulation are not solving the problems of the economy. Massive devaluations have led to :*
 - a) *depressing the real wage of the Jamaican workers - we are now the lowest paid workers in the world.*
 - b) *painful increases in the cost of living - food/clothing/utilities/rent and fuel prices.*
2. *Our foreign debt has increased from U.S.\$1.7b in 1980 to U.S.\$3.4b by mid 1984... more than the country's G.D.P. in 1981.*
3. *Foreign Firms like Bata, Reynolds, Alcoa have packed up and left. Numerous local businesses are closing and many more are facing bankruptcy.*

The Rockefeller Committee has not brought the foreign investment promised by Seaga/Reagan.

4. Thousands of workers have lost and continue to lose their jobs - in the Civil Service/KSAC/Factories. Unemployment remains at a staggering 25% with the levels of unemployment being highest amongst the youths.

SOCIAL

The \$52.00 per week minimum wage is equivalent to \$9.30 (US). No new legislation has been passed to protect the poor people of the country. In the case of the Minimum Wage - the increase is a decrease - \$9.38 (US) in 1985 as against \$14.00 (US) in 1976.

Food Stamps - which started out at \$2.50 (US) per month is now \$1.8 (US) per month.

Education - The School of Agriculture has been closed; Jose Marti threatened; the cost of going to school (books/shoes/uniforms/transportation). Thousands of children continue to remain outside of the school system.

Health - cost of drugs/medical services - beyond the reach of the average person.

Housing - owning a house has become a dream.

Drugs - the increasing use of hard drugs is sapping the viability of our youth.

POLITICAL:

1. attempts at democratisation in the society have been abandoned e.g. Community Councils/Student Councils.
2. traditional areas of democratic political life have been abandoned - e.g. dissolution of KSAC/taking away of responsibilities of Parish Councils.
3. for the first time, the country is faced with a one-party Parliament (elected without the participation of the overwhelming majority of the people).

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THESE EVENTS (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, POLITICAL) HAVE RESULTED IN A NUMBER OF RESPONSES AND CALLS FROM VARIOUS SECTORS AND INDIVIDUALS IN THE SOCIETY. WHAT ARE THESE?

Responses:

1. A significant outburst of community protest across the Island during 1984. (these protests covered a wide area of social and economic issues).
2. Islandwide militant response to announcement of increase in gas prices - January 15th and 16th.
3. Perceptible shift in the content in reggae music/dub poetry/drama and dance in favour of the current suffering of the masses.
4. The pain in the voices of the majority of callers of different social classes on the public call-in programmes on Radio.

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Calls

1. By the PNP and WPJ for "Elections Now"
2. (a) for national debates by Manley and Seaga
(b) for national dialogue between PNP/JLP (n.b. the WPJ has called for dialogue of all three Political Parties on the question of the IMF Agreement
(c) for removal of the leaders - Manley and Seaga
(d) for National Unity.

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Conclusion

1. The outbursts of community protests; the recent demonstrations; the cultural response and the obvious pain on "Public Eye" and "Hot Line" are the democratic responses of the working people. These have been in the main non-tribal.
2. The call for "Elections Now" by both the PNP and WPJ - in the absence of clearly stated economic and social programmes is partisan political/tribal.
3. The call for National Unity could easily become again the focus of national debate. This call must not be confused with a legitimate need for national debate and dialogue at the widest levels of the society inclusive of the Political Parties and its leader.s
4. This call for National Unity is an attempt to :
 - (a) obscure the need for the Political Parties to put forward their programmes to solve the economic and social crises
 - (b) stifle the democratic rights of the working people to demonstrate for their just and legitimate demands by comparing (for example) the democratic right of the people to demonstrate for their rights to the economic cost to the country. At the same time, forgetting that the majority of the people are the victims of the present economic conditions.

In other words, the call for National Unity has to be seen as an attempt (whether consciously or unconsciously) to make the working people feel like traitors and unpatriotic when they are forced to stand up for their rights.

These responses and calls, therefore, have to be seen within the framework of those who wish to preserve the status quo as against those who wish to broaden the rights of the working people. It should, therefore, be seen as part of a political struggle and not as an issue that is above politics.

THE ABOVE ARE SOME OF THE FACTORS THAT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND WHEN DISCUSSING NATIONAL UNITY. IN THIS WAY WE CAN PERHAPS BEGIN TO MOVE UNDERSTANDI A BETTER UNDERSTANDING".

Comments should be sent to :

"TOWARDS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING",
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