



ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

THRONE SPEECH

DELIVERED BY

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GOVERNOR GENERAL

TO A

JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT

ON

31 MAY 1984

Honourable President of the Senate,

Honourable Senators,

Honourable Speaker,

Honourable Members of the House of Representatives

I indicated earlier this year that we have emerged from a trying year for the Caribbean.

In the area of External Affairs, my Government will continue to pursue an interdependent foreign policy in the best interest of the people of Antigua and Barbuda. This policy of necessity takes into consideration the established fact that we foster close relationships with countries who adhere to the democratic process.

Nevertheless, we recognize that in a pluralistic world dialogue is a necessity, even if we do not share the same ideological positions with countries in the community of nations.

Our strength lies in our voice of moral suasion, and as such, we will continue to speak out forcefully on issues, which affect us directly in regard to human values. In this respect our geographical size will in no way act as a deterrent to our continued efforts to secure peace, equality and freedom among all peoples.

My government recognises the need for closer regional co-operation with the countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean and will continue to play an active role in achieving closer co-operation in regional the maintenance of democracy, equity, and social justice in international relations.

My Government will strengthen its relations with the commission of the European communities in an effort to identify areas of economic co-operation and to realise tangible benefits from such co-operation.

My Government is aware of the need and importance of a well-organised and well-managed information service. My Government will therefore establish a new and dynamic public information service. My Government is aware of the limited facilities and the scarcity of Trained and qualified personnel in Radio Broadcasting and Television. To overcome these problems, my Government will continue to reorganise the Radio, TV and information services with the expressed intention of improving the quality of the product and ensuring that wages in this service, as in all other Government departments and agencies, relate to productivity. Steps have already been taken by my Government to achieve this goal.

My Government during the current year to increase its effort for the development of the civil service for the benefit of the people of Antigua and Barbuda. Efforts have already been made to improve the conditions of service governing civil servants and for the removal of much that has been irksome in the service by the implementation of the anomalies report following the re-classification of the service and the introduction of a 5-day work week.

Work has also been done in respect of a Civil Service Act, for 'Inter Alia', regulations the relationship between government and the service. It is expected that arrangements will be made to have this measure finalised this year for the general improvement of the conditions of service and to ensure the improvement of discipline in the service.

My Government recognising its new status of independence will embark upon a course to commence a complete revision and consolidation of the laws of Antigua and Barbuda. This whole exercise is expected to continue over a period of at least three years.

My Government will seek as early as possible to provide proper accommodation for the magistrate courts and to increase the number of magistrates in order to avoid delays in the hearing of cases and to provide adequate facilities for the efficient and up to date processing of the courts,

My Government recognises that a stable industrial climate is the prerequisite of a second and expanding economy, my government will therefore endeavour to promote good industrial practice in Antigua and Barbuda and will review and amend the Industrial Court Act to provide the necessary permanent staff to enable the court to function more efficiently and to promote industrial peace and harmony.

My Government will seek to establish, equip, and maintain a National Law Library with proper facilities and staff for the courts of Antigua and Barbuda.

Being fully aware of the importance of tourism in the economy of the nation and in the light of the fact that it increased by 16% last year, my government is confident that such increases will be continued and is making every effort to improve its promotion in consultation with representatives of large and small hotels.

My government will pursue its policy of mortgage financing with particular reference to, persons in low-income brackets to enable such persons to be provided with their own homes on terms that they can afford.

This year marks the 150th Anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Antigua. My government has appointed a committee to plan appropriate events to mark the 150th Anniversary of this first step on the road to genuine freedom by the people of this country.

My government will pursue its policy of making education accessible to the children of this country as a whole with particular reference to broadening its scope in the light of the development of the country.

In the area of sport my government can point to the establishment of basketball courts across the country as an outlet for the energies of our youth. My government recognises the need for a stadium capable of accommodating a variety of indoor sports and this is a priority of our requirements for assistance from friendly countries. My government can be justly proud of its continued efforts in the improvements being made at the Antigua Recreation Grounds. In April we hosted the 4th test match in the recent West Indies – Australia series which was highly successful not only for the West Indies team as a whole but also for our local heroes on that team. This was an event for which our people can be justly proud.

My government being fully aware of the importance to the economy of a healthy and tranquil industrial climate will continue its present policy in industrial relations, namely, that of ensuring that the wheels of industry will continue to grind smoothly and continuously in the best interest of the economy of the nation.

My government intends to continue its efforts for the provision of health care for all people. Efforts are being made to improve the schools dental services with some equipment already purchased and steps will be taken to secure even more this year. Immunization will be maintained especially for the group up to 5 years of age. My government will continue its efforts at improving the health of certain deprived groups in the community by the distribution of essential foodstuffs such as milk, margarine and wheat-flour made available through the world food programme.

My government sees disaster preparedness as an increasingly important subject. Many countries have learnt by bitter experience the high price to be paid for the lack of preparedness. My government has therefore decided to ensure that there is continual planning and preparation for disasters and has decided to appoint a co-ordinator of disaster preparedness as from this year.

My government recognises the important role agriculture must play in the economic development of Antigua and Barbuda. Over the years agriculture has become a highly scientific field. My government is pleased to record that despite the continued adverse weather conditions, there was no noticeable decline in the levels of agricultural production. In spite of the dry weather conditions, the livestock subsection continues to show an increase in output. This performance indicates that with improvement in the weather conditions, sustained growth in the agricultural sector can be expected.

My government has secured funding from the organisation of American States to undertake an agricultural census and production survey during 1984. This activity will strengthen the data base of the agricultural sector and enhance the capability of planning, programming and evaluation of agricultural projects.

My government will provide agricultural extension officers with aid and equipment to improve their effectiveness in the delivery of services to farmers and to assist in transportation to improve the mobility of the field staff. Continued emphasis will be placed on the training of agricultural extension officers as well as farmers' training.

In the area of sugar production, my government is pleased with the results of the 1983 sugar crop which indicated that the factory is mechanically viable. It is expected that the reaping of the 1984 sugar crop would be accomplished with far less difficulty than in 1983.

My government will in 1984, finalise its comprehensive fisheries development plan this year; which is intended to help our fishermen to purchase materials at reasonable prices and to provide the foundation for the effective management of our fisheries resources. This would guarantee a local market for part of the fisherman's catch, and the provision of fish, which is an important source of protein to the community as a whole.

My government will strengthen the price control and consumer protection agency. The scope of the existing legislation will be broadened with a view to bringing a number of items, deemed essential within its ambit.

In further pursuit of efforts to protect the consumer, my government has initiated dialogue with various institutions regarding the establishment of a Standards Bureau. It is envisaged that, in the immediate future, efforts in this regard will bear fruit.

My government will continue its programme of road improvement in keeping with its policy that roads should be in acceptable condition for as long as possible. Work in the areas of improving and expanding the electricity and telephone services of the nation will be continued in order to provide adequate electrical services and instant and reliable communication.

With regard to water, the country continues to be in the grips of a severe dry spell. Last year's rainfall statistics indicated that some districts recorded only half of the average 43 inches normally registered in a year. This has created serious difficulties beyond the control of my government as the main reservoir at Potswort Dam was depleted.

My government has taken active steps to alleviate the situation by borrowing water from neighbouring friendly states. Financial assistance was obtained from the governments of the

United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom, France and organisations such as the United Nations Development Fund and the United Nations Disaster Relief Organisation.

These efforts have been co-ordinated by the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project based in Antigua.

My government wishes on behalf of the people of Antigua and Barbuda to publicly thank all our benefactors and hope for their continued assistance. The country wide water distribution project which is currently in progress is expected to be completed by the end of 1984; it will carry water to areas which never had, and improve distribution in others. Moreover, a programme of rehabilitation and ground water development will begin during the course of this year to significantly expand the water supply capacity of the island.

The meteorological service will continue to improve its services rendered to the public. To this end my government will continue to tap scholarship sources for training of its staff in fields such as weather forecasting, hydrology and electronics. The meteorological service will continue to actively participate in the work of the Pan Caribbean disaster preparedness Prevention Project in its awareness Programme in the 1984 hurricane season.

With the increase in aircraft movements at Coolidge Airport and the difficulty experienced with their manoeuvring on the existing parking apron, my government is actively pursuing plans to expand the existing ramp by a further seventy-seven thousand (77,000) square feet.

It is expected during 1984, the navigational aids at Coolidge Airport will be upgraded. My government will be introducing a paid public car park system during 1984 at Coolidge Airport. The revenue derived will go towards the general upkeep of the new air terminal building and its environs.

My government will carry out a proper study of the airport facilities in Barbuda to accommodate night flights at Codrington and in addition will enlarge the airstrip to facilitate twin auto aircrafts.

Farmers have demonstrated that Barbuda can still produce corn, peas, beans, lentils, groundnuts, and coconuts, which have been successful over the years and are now administered by the Barbuda Council. Government will give every encouragement to the development of agriculture in the island.

My government being mindful of its agreement at the constitutional conference will take the necessary steps to ensure the implementation of the Essex report particular with respect to electricity. My government will continue the process of involving Barbudans full in the sporting activities of Antigua and Barbuda.

My government in cooperation with the Barbuda Council will be taking a serious look at the necessity for developing a proper sports complex in Barbuda.

It is the firm resolve of my government to assist the island in becoming more autonomous and to do everything that will involve all the people in the development of their island.

My government pledges to keep the people informed from time to time of the progress of the socioeconomic development of this nation and will continue to pursue this year, its commitment to the democratic process, its policy of creating board based development and its determination to bring the greatest benefits possible to the people of this nation bearing in mind at all times our motto Each Endeavouring All Achieving.

Other measures will be laid before you.

Honourable President of the Senate, Honourable Senators, Honourable, Speaker, Honourable Members of the House of Representatives, I now declare this legislative session open and pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.