



**Achievements
of
The
Barbados Labour Party
(1938-1998)**

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ACHIEVEMENTS



BARBADOS LABOUR PARTY

(1938 - 1998)

FOREWORD

It is undoubted that the Barbados Labour Party has rendered distinguished service to the people of our nation during the sixty years of its existence.

The Executive Committee of the National Council considered it appropriate that we set out in one document some of the major achievements of the Party from 1938 (the year of formation) to 1998 (the Diamond Jubilee Year).

As Chairman of the Party I am delighted that we have been able to put together in this booklet some of those achievements to ensure that the historical record is available in permanent form for all to recall and evaluate the contribution of the Party to national development.

My profound gratitude is extended to Nigel Barrow, Victor Hinkson, Kimberley Haynes, Michael Rudder and Caswell Franklyn for their research assistance. I thank too, Prestige Printery, especially Trevor and Geoffrey Prescod, for their help in printing this booklet.

My fervent wish is that all who read this booklet will find its contents illuminating.

DAVID A.C. SIMMONS Q.C., M.P.
Chairman
October 1998

CHAPTER: 1

THE EARLY YEARS

This document does not purport to be a history of the Barbados Labour Party. It merely seeks to record in permanent form in the sixtieth year of the Barbados Labour Party (1998) SOME only of the achievements of the oldest political organisation in the English speaking Caribbean. It is intended to be an aide memoire and a reference point of some of the contributions of the Party to the growth and development of Barbados.

The Barbados Labour Party was born out of the poverty and distress of the 1930's - a period of grave political, social and economic oppression and inequality in Barbados and the Caribbean. In the West Indian territories hunger, deprivation, hardship and abject poverty were the lot of the working classes.

The average wage of an agricultural worker was 24 cents per day! It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine the social and economic conditions which gave rise to the disturbances that were an inevitable consequence of the times and which swept through the Caribbean in the 1930's. The disturbances that began on July 26, 1937 are a watershed in the history of Barbados.

Labour Party was formally launched as a political organisation on March 31, 1938. For a short time this organisation was subsequently renamed "The Barbados Progressive League" but, eventually, it resumed its original nomenclature. Grantley Adams (later Sir Grantley) was elected as its leader.

The Party was a broad-based political institution representing the interests of a wide section of the working class. Its early leadership was drawn from selfless members of the middle class, for example, Chrissie Brathwaite, a City merchant, who was its first Chairman, Edwy Talma (later Sir Edwy), a conveyancer, James A. Martineau, a businessman, Dr. Hugh Gordon Cummins, Wynter Crawford, journalist and Hope Stevens, a St. Kitts lawyer based in the U.S.A.

The broad aims and objectives of the Party were:

1. To provide political expression for the law-abiding inhabitants of the country, enabling them to participate in the development of democratic institutions, promote the social and economic development of its people and assist in the extension of all principles of good government.
2. To foster goodwill between employers and employees in industrial and commercial activities and to enlist the co-operation of all persons interested in the welfare and progress of the Island.
3. To stimulate on the part of the people an intelligent outlook on social, economic and political

for workers in the various branches of industry and commerce, so as to enable them to conduct themselves in their respective organisations in such a manner as to avoid all possibility of future action which may be subversive of law and order.

4. To endeavour to promote and co-operate in the formation of similar organisations in all parts of the British West Indies.

As a result of the disturbances which swept the Caribbean in 1937, the British Government which then had responsibility for the Colony of Barbados established a Royal Commission under Lord Moyne to investigate the causes and circumstances of the disturbances and to make recommendations.

As Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, Grantley Adams seized the opportunity to appear before the Commission and he spared no pains in articulating the concerns and plight of Barbadians. Adams' performance was a virtual tour de force and represented the Party's first major national triumph. In protesting the social, economic and political conditions of the time (1939) Adams made a number of outstanding and far-reaching submissions. Perhaps his two most telling submissions were proposals for radical change in the plantation system and the introduction of universal adult suffrage.

It was during this period that Hugh Worrell Springer (later Sir Hugh), lawyer and scholar, returned from England and joined Grantley Adams on the local political scene. From 1939 to 1947 Springer played a very significant

and a capacity for hard work. He and Adams promoted the causes of the working class with vigour and flair. They launched an assault on the position of the merchant-planter oligarchy.

The first taste of electoral success for the B.L.P. was in the General Elections of 1940. The Party won 5 seats in the House of Assembly. The successful candidates were: Grantley Adams, Hugh Springer, Dr. Cummins, Victor Vaughan and Graham Gittens.

The next strategy, having achieved a measure of political success, was to organise the working class. Thus, Adams and Springer immediately set about to establish a Trade Union through the formation of the Peasants' Association. Next they formed a Friendly society with the slogan: "Three Units, one aim: raising the living standards of the working classes." The third Unit was in fact the Barbados Workers' Union which was established as an affiliate of the Barbados Labour Party on October 4, 1941. Adams was the Union's first President and Springer its first Secretary.

The Barbados Workers' Union survives to this day as the premier Trade Union in Barbados, highly respected regionally and internationally.

The Party promoted such measures as:

- Workmen's Compensation legislation;
- A Wages Board and Labour Department;
- Reduction of the voting franchise from £50 to

- Universal adult suffrage.

By 1944 the Party was able to include in its Manifesto pledges the view that "every man and woman should have the right to stand for election to the House of Assembly whether they be rich or poor." In the 1944 General Elections, the Party increased its numerical strength in the House of Assembly to eight and it was able to agitate for:-

- increased old age pensions;
- improved conditions for shop assistants;
- penal reform;
- jobs for Barbadians in the U.S.A.;
- the organisation of the Police Force.

The Party was an undoubtedly effective political force in the 1940's. Its influence was island-wide and of such importance that it gained representation on the Governor's Executive Committee, the policy-making organ of the then Government of Barbados. Indeed, the Barbados Labour Party was the Party of Government after 1946 although for some time it was in a coalition with Congress Party.

After the 1946 election came the famous Bushe Experiment in which Grantley Adams was invited by Governor Sir Grattan Bushe to nominate members to the Executive Committee. The nominated members were: Adams, Springer, Wynter Crawford, and Hugh Blackman.

Hugh Springer who resigned from the House of Assembly and the Union to pursue a career in Education. Springer had been a Tutor at Codrington College and a member of the Committee whose recommendations led to the establishment of the University College of the West Indies. He left Barbados to take up the post of Registrar at the incipient University College of the West Indies in Jamaica. Adams felt the loss of his political lieutenant acutely but he soldiered on.

He regrouped his loyal forces and infused the Party with new blood. Frank Walcott (later Sir Frank), who had earlier been recruited by Springer to join the Party and the Union became General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union and served with great distinction for almost 40 years.

The B.L.P. formed its first Government on its own in 1948 - the year of its tenth anniversary as a political organisation.

But it scored its most resounding victory in the General Election of 1951. That Election was the first in which each and every Barbadian over the age of 21 became eligible to vote. One man, one vote, came to Barbados through the efforts of the Barbados Labour Party.

There were some notable victories in that Election. Returning with Adams to the House of Assembly were persons like Mencea Cox, Freddie Miller, Ronald Mapp, Dr. Cummins, Frank Walcott. Ermie Bourne (later Dame Ermie) was the first woman ever to enter the House of Assembly.

The B.L.P. won the elections of 1951 and 1956. Adams became the first Premier of Barbados on the attainment of full internal self-government and held that

Assembly to become the first and only Prime Minister of the Federation of the West Indies (1958-1962).

Cabinet and Ministerial Government came to Barbados for the first time in 1954 and Adams chose as his first Ministers Cox, Miller, Mapp and Cummins.

Some of the achievements of the B.L.P. Governments (1951-1961) were as follows:

- Introduction of Holidays with Pay for workers.
- Introduction of Free Secondary Education at the then Secondary Modern Schools of St. Leonard's, Parkinson, West St. Joseph, Princess Margaret.
- A basic school feeding programme of biscuits and milk in primary schools.
- Establishment of the Technical Institute, the forerunner of the Polytechnic, to teach the youth vocational skills.
- Establishment of Health Centres in strategic locations at Enmore, Six Cross Roads and Speightstown.
- Establishment of the Development Board as the forerunner of the Industrial Development Corporation to promote industrial development.
- Establishment of the Tourist Board to promote tourism and diversify the economy around tourism.

- Hotel Aids legislation to assist in developing the tourist industry.
- Promotion of family planning and birth control.
- Commencing the study for a National Insurance Scheme which was eventually implemented by the D.L.P. in 1967.
- Redevelopment of Seawell Airport as it was then called.
- The construction of the modern Bridgetown Port.
- Construction of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
- The construction of the massive Government Headquarters at Bay Street, providing facilities for the Government and Ministries.
- Construction of the first public housing units in St. Michael, Christ Church, St. Philip.
- Enactment of the PROTECTION of WAGES ACT.
- Construction of police stations and post offices.
- In 1955 the B.L.P. Government was the first West Indian Government to ban the importation of goods from South Africa.

- In the period 1951-61 black persons first gained employment in banks.
- Provision of Housing Loans for Public Officers.
- Introduction of Fisheries Legislation.
- Provision of loans for higher education.
- Enactment of Public Utilities legislation.
- Enactment of the Housing Act.
- Enactment of a Factories Act.

The year 1958 was one of great significance in the history of the B.L.P. It was the year of elections to the Federal Parliament of the West Indies. Several of the Labour Parties of the region combined to form the Federal Labour Party under the leadership of the great Jamaican patriot, Norman Washington Manley.

The Barbados Labour Party contested the Federal elections under Grantley Adams' leadership and won four of the five seats. Adams, who became Prime Minister of the Federation had with him, Victor Vaughan, Gilmore Rocheford and Deighton Ward. Florence Daysh, though not a member of the Federal Labour Party, won a seat in Barbados and steadfastly supported Adams in the Federal Parliament. Dr. Arnott Cato (later Sir Arnott) and Sir Archibald Cuke were Barbados' nominees to the Senate, presided over for sometime by Cato.

Adams' departure to the Federation left a vacuum in the leadership of the B.L.P. His charisma and public

Cummins succeeded Adams as Premier.

The Party suffered defeat in the General Elections of December 1961 when the Democratic Labour Party and the Conservatives coordinated their campaigns to ensure a D.L.P. victory. The B.L.P. remained in Opposition for 15 years until 1976 when it regained the reins of government under the leadership of Grantley Adams' son, the late Tom Adams.

During the wilderness years, the B.L.P. relentlessly rebuilt itself, recruited "new blood" but, always, kept faith with its supporters and its aims and objectives. In the period 1961-1976, the Party attracted a number of young, bright, idealistic, committed political personages who were to play major and outstanding roles in the service of their nation after 1976.

Some of these were: Tom Adams, Bernard St. John (later Sir Harold), Henry Forde, David Simmons, Richard Cheltenham, Louis Tull, Billie Miller, Lionel Craig, L.B. Brathwaite, Victor Johnson, Nigel Barrow.

CHAPTER:2

1976

To

1986

Just as it was Grantley Adams (In the words of Sir Hugh Springer "the people called him 'Moses') who led the people of Barbados out of the oppression and depression of the 1930's, so it was that in September 1976, Sir Grantley's son, John Michael Geoffrey Manningham Adams ("Tom"), rose up to lead Barbados out of the social and economic devastation visited on the country by the Democratic Labour Party which proved incapable of countering the difficulties engendered by the oil crisis of the early seventies.

The signs of ultimate success were first seen in a Bye-Election of February, 1976, when David Simmons won a famous victory in St. Philip North. The swing against the D.L.P. in that Bye-Election was 33%. In a second Bye-Election in the City of Bridgetown (May 1976), Billie Miller became only the second woman (and a B.L.P. candidate at that!) to win a seat in the House of Assembly.

In the General Election of September, the B.L.P. won 17 of the 24 seats. Tom Adams became Prime Minister, "Bree" St. John his Deputy and Billie Miller was appointed the first female Cabinet Minister. Members of the Cabinet included Lionel Craig, L.B. Brathwaite, Ronald Mapp (later Sir Ronald), Henry Forde Q.C., Louis Tull, Nigel

The B.L.P. parliamentary team of 1976 to 1981 was dubbed "The Great Combination", a nomenclature well-deserved when it is remembered that on the back-bench were men of the calibre of David Simmons, "Johnnie" Cheltenham, Vic Johnson.

The B.L.P. Governments of 1976-86 were reformist, socialist and visionary. They transformed the social and economic landscape at great pace but always applying sound management practices in the governance of Barbados.

True to their socialist philosophy, the Governments promoted the mixed economy, giving due incentives to the private sector to develop and grow while at the same time, seeking State intervention in key strategic areas of economic activity. Thus, for example, the B.L.P.:-

- created the Barbados National Bank;
- created the Insurance Corporation of Barbados;
- established the Export Promotion Corporation;
- established the National Petroleum Corporation;
- liberalised the lending policies of the Barbados Development Bank to assist small business and the entrepreneurial class;
- completed nationalisation of the public transport system;
- legalised minibus operations.

In every area of governmental activity, the B.L.P. Governments of 1976-86 left their indelible marks. Here are some other samples.

- Women's Affairs. The 1976 Manifesto proclaimed a "Charter for Women". The then Attorney-General, Henry Forde Q.C., established a National Commission on the Status of Women. It made 212 recommendations, most of which were implemented and have been the catalyst for the spectacular rise of women to prominence in Barbadian society in the ensuing 22 years.
- Extensive Social legislation was passed e.g. the Status of Children Reform Act outlawing the concept of illegitimacy, and the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, a revolutionary piece of legislation giving plantation tenants the right to purchase the plantation lots on which they lived for 10 cents per square foot. This legislation has greatly modernised housing in rural Barbados;
- A massive housing programme involving both public and private contractors saw 1 200 houses built per year. Public housing areas were developed at Ferniehurst, Rosemont, Wotton, Haynesville, Kensington Lodge, Oxnards, inter alia;
- Electricity services were installed island-wide

- Home ownership was promoted through a recapitalised Barbados Mortgage Finance Company and an expanded Housing Welfare Scheme and General Workers' Loan Scheme;
- The Tom Adams Highway was built and plans were drawn for a new Highway 2A;
- The Bridgetown Port was redeveloped and the new Grantley Adams International Airport opened;
- The Barbados Drug Service was established providing free medication for certain categories of patient;
- Polyclinics were constructed at the Glebe, St. George and Warrens to decentralise health services;
- Introduction of Home Help services for the poor and indigent;
- Workers laid off or made redundant became entitled to benefits through the Unemployment Benefit Scheme;
- Credit unions grew rapidly in both numbers and assets through creative taxation allowance policies;
- The qualifying age for receipt of old age pensions was reduced from 68 to 65 and had been

also undertook the payment of water rates and electricity charges for pensioners.

- 6000 new school places were created for primary school students;
- A National Training Board under the Chairmanship of Sir Hugh Springer was created to provide skills training and work experience for the youth.
- The National Sports Council was set up to organise and develop sport across the Island and many, many, pavilions and playing fields were built in every parish;
- In the Caribbean, the Tom Adams Government played a leading role in the Grenada Intervention of 1983;
- The U.S. base at Harrison's, St. Lucy was closed and the B.L.P. Government recognised the Peoples Republic of China ending the unenlightened "Two China" policy. The infamous HARP project, which allowed the testing of guns for use in South Africa was closed;
- A Financial Services sector was begun with statutory infrastructure such as the Offshore Banking Act and the Exempt Insurance Act and FOREIGN SALES CORPORATION ACT.
- A new and modern General Post Office was built

- A new Central Bank headquarters was constructed and is now appropriately named "The Tom Adams Financial Centre";
- The National Cultural Foundation was established;
- Several important pieces of legislation were enacted including the PROPERTY ACT, the ADMINISTRATIVE JUSTICE ACT, IMMIGRATION ACT, the OMBUDSMAN ACT, FAMILY LAW ACT, COMPANIES ACT.

Tom Adams unfortunately died of a heart attack on March 11, 1985. He was succeeded by Bernard St. John as Prime Minister. St. John had little time to settle into the position before the General Election of 1986. In that Election the B.L.P. suffered its worst electoral defeat winning only three seats - Henry Forde Q.C., Owen Arthur and David Simmons Q.C. Forde became Leader of the Opposition and served as Political Leader of the Party until he voluntarily resigned the position in 1993.

POST 1986

Henry Forde, Owen Arthur and David Simmons undertook the daunting task of keeping the B.L.P. alive and vibrant against the twenty-four parliamentarians D.L.P. Government of 24. They brought to their responsibilities great intellectual power, political know-how and tremendous energy to such an extent that their efforts contributed in no small measure to the Party's resurgence in the

CHAPTER: 3

1994

To

PRESENT TIME

DOn September 6, 1994, the Barbados Labour Party was returned to Government with victories in 19 out of the 28 constituencies. Success was foreshadowed in the passing of a No Confidence Motion brought by Owen Arthur, the then Leader of the Opposition B.L.P.

As the third B.L.P. Prime Minister of this century, Owen Arthur formed a Cabinet including Billie Miller, Deputy Prime Minister, David Simmons, George Payne, Rawle Eastmond, Rudolph Greenidge, Mia Mottley, Elizabeth Thompson, Philip Goddard, Glyne Murray and Reginald Farley.

The task of the new B.L.P. Government was to rebuild Barbados which had been devastated and thrown into deep recession during the years 1991 to 1994 under the D.L.P. It was mandatory that confidence be restored in Barbados and its government; that the economy be put on a sustainable path of growth; that the foreign reserves be replenished and fiscal discipline restored; that the people be put back to work. Poverty had to be alleviated and the working class needed empowerment.

In the four years since September 1994 the B.L.P.

- Confidence has been restored and there has been a consequential build up of Foreign Reserves to spectacular levels (\$650 million) from the nadir of \$13 million in January 1993.
- Each year under the B.L.P. the economy has registered growth. Growth in 1997 was 3%.
- Construction has been booming and contributed 7% to G.D.P. in 1997.
- Unemployment has been reduced from 26% under the D.L.P. to 12%.
- Tourism has grown annually registering 10% growth over the last two years.
- Manufacturing has grown annually.
- Offshore Financial Services have grown annually, and the Government has widened the types of offshore financial vehicle by the enactment of the SOCIETIES WITH RESTRICTED LIABILITY ACT and the INTERNATIONAL TRUSTS ACT. A MUTUAL FUNDS BILL is before Parliament. This sector employs approximately 9 000 persons.
- Non-sugar agriculture has grown by over 12% and sugar production has moved from 38 000 tonnes in 1994 to 64 000 in 1997.

- ration of over 1 400 lots.
- Sporting infrastructure is being expanded and a new Astro turf for field hockey has been constructed.
- Rural and Urban Development Commissions have been set up to upgrade facilities and amenities in rural and urban Barbados in order to build strong, modern communities, and to stimulate enterprise and create jobs.
- Poverty alleviation is being tackled in a systematic and co-ordinated way for the first time. In 1997 and 1998 Government has contributed \$10 million in support of this strategy.
- A Social Investment Fund of another \$10 million has also been legislated.
- An EDUTECH project expending \$300 million over the next seven years has begun with the aim and objective of making school children and teachers computer literate in the twenty-first century.
- Overall reported crime has declined by 39% between 1994 and October 1998.
- The Justice system, the Immigration Department, and the Police Force have been computerized.
- Legislation to support a new penal system

sentencing options of a non-custodial nature is ready for Parliament.

- Substantial road improvement projects are taking place in every constituency.
- The Value Added Tax legislation has introduced a new system of indirect taxation, replacing 11 former indirect taxes and reducing the prices of several items. Thousands have also been relieved of the burden of direct taxes.
- A new suite of Intellectual Property legislation was enacted in 1998 and comprises the COPY-RIGHT ACT, UNFAIR COMPETITION ACT, GEOGRAPHICAL INDICATIONS ACT, INTEGRATED CIRCUITS ACT;
- Constitutional Reform is taking place and the report of the CONSTITUTION REVIEW COMMISSION under the Chairmanship of Sir Henry Forde Q.C. will shortly be presented to the Governor-General.
- The existing Constitution was amended in 1995 to prevent a reduction in the salaries of public officers ever taking place again.
- The enactment of legislation to provide security of tenure for thousands of casual and temporary employees in the Public Service.
- National Heroes Day was celebrated for the

28, 1998. Four former B.L.P. politicians were honoured as National Heroes viz. Sir Grantley Adams, Sir Hugh Springer, Sir Frank Walcott and Mr. Errol Barrow.

- Emancipation Day was also celebrated for the first time on August 1, 1997.
- In its external relations, Barbados resisted the imposition of an acrimonious Shiprider Agreement with the U.S.A. and successfully negotiated a Maritime Co-operation Agreement which pays due regard to Barbados' sovereignty and independence.
- In regional and international fora, the various Ministers of the Government of Barbados have been playing leading and outstanding roles bringing great respect and credit to their country.
- Two Prices and Incomes Protocols between the Government, the Trade Unions and the Private Sector have been negotiated to underpin economic stability and improve Barbados' competitiveness.
- A Facilitation Unit for Returning Nationals has been established to encourage Barbadians overseas to return with their movable assets free of duties.

The Barbados Labour Party proudly celebrates two significant events in 1998. This year marks our sixtieth anniversary as a political organisation and it is also the centenary of the birth of Grantley Adams, our great leader who was born on April 28, 1898.

We believe that the formation of the Party was an historic necessity. Equally, we believe that in pursuance of our historic role, we have served Barbados and the Caribbean well.

We pledge
to continue our service
to our nation.