

BRITISH HONDURAS

No. 23 of 1962

I reserve this Bill for the signification of Her Majesty's Pleasure

P.H.G. STALLARD

Governor.

12th October, 1962

“Her Majesty's assent to this law has been signified by the Governor's proclamation published in the Gazette and dated the 30th day of November, 1962, on which date this law comes into operation.”

AN ORDINANCE to declare and define certain Powers, Privileges and Immunities of the Legislative Assembly and of the Members of such Assembly, to secure Freedom of Speech in the Legislative Assembly, to regulate admittance to the precincts of the Legislative Assembly, to give protection to persons employed in the Publication of the Reports and other papers of the Legislative Assembly and for purposes incidental to or connected with the matters aforesaid.

(Gazetted 29th December, 1962)

ENACTED by the Legislature of British Honduras as follows:-

PART I

Short Title and Interpretation

1. This Ordinance may be cited as the

Short Title

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (POWERS AND PRIVILEGES) ORDINANCE,
1962

In this Ordinance, unless the context otherwise requires:-

Interpretation

“Assembly” means the Legislative Assembly;

“Clerk” means the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly;

“Committee” means any standing, sessional, select or other committee of the Assembly;

“journals” means the minutes of the Assembly or the official record of the votes and proceedings thereof;

“member” means any member of the Assembly and includes the Speaker;

“officer of the Assembly” means the Clerk or any other officer or person acting within the precincts of the Assembly, other than when serving a summons under the provisions of subsection (3) of section 10, under the orders of the Speaker, and includes any police officer on duty within the precincts of the Assembly;

“precincts of the Assembly” means while the Assembly or a committee thereof is sitting, the chamber and offices of the Assembly and the galleries and places provided for the use or accommodation of strangers, members of the public and representatives of the press;

“section” means a section of this Ordinance;

“session” means the sitting of the Legislative Assembly commencing when the Assembly first meets after a prorogation or dissolution at any time, and terminating when the Assembly is prorogued or is dissolved without having been prorogued;

“Speaker” means the Speaker of the Assembly and includes any other member when such other member is presiding at a meeting of the Assembly;

“Standing Orders” means the Standing Orders of the Assembly for the time being in force;

“Stranger” means any person other than a member or an officer of the Assembly.

PART II

Privileges and Immunities

2. Subject to the provisions of section 20 of this Ordinance no civil or criminal proceedings may be instituted against any member for words spoken before, or written in a report to, the Assembly or to a committee, or, by reason of any vote, given by him, or any matter or thing brought by him therein by petition, Bill, resolution, motion or otherwise. **Immunity from legal proceedings**

 3. No member shall be liable to arrest:- **Freedom from arrest**
 - (a) for any civil debt, whilst going to, attending at, or returning from a sitting of the Assembly or any committee;
 - (b) within the precincts of the Assembly while the Assembly or a committee is sitting, for any criminal offence, without the consent of the Speaker.

 4. No process issued by any court in the exercise of its jurisdiction shall be served or executed within the precincts of the Assembly while the Assembly is sitting or through the Speaker, the Clerk or any officer of the Assembly. **Exercise of process**

 5. No stranger shall be entitled, as of right, to enter or to remain within the precincts of the Assembly. **Entry to Assembly**
- Regulation of admission to Assembly**

6. (1) The Speaker is hereby authorized to issue such orders as he may in his discretion deem necessary for the regulation of the admittance of strangers to the precincts of the Assembly.
- (2) Copies of orders made under this section shall be duly authenticated by the Clerk and exhibited in a conspicuous position in the precincts of the Assembly; and such copies when so authenticated and exhibited shall be deemed to be sufficient notice to all persons affected thereby.
7. The Speaker may at any time order any stranger to withdraw from the precincts of the Assembly and if he fails to obey such order he may be forcibly removed by any officer of the Assembly on the instructions of the Speaker.

**Order of
withdrawal from
Assembly**

PART III

Evidence

8. The Assembly or any committee may, subject to the provisions of section 14 and 16, order any person to attend before the Assembly or before such committee and to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document in the possession or under the control of such person.
9. (1) Any order to attend to give evidence or to produce documents before the Assembly or a Committee shall be notified to the person required to attend or to produce the documents by a summons, under the hand of the Clerk issued by the direction of the Speaker or, in the case of a committee, by the chairman and so described on the face of such summons. Every such summons, if purporting to bear the signature of the Clerk, shall be deemed **prima facie** to be lawful and to be issued by the direction of the Speaker or the Chairman as the case may be.
- (2) In every summons under subsection (1) there shall be stated the time when and the place where the person summoned is required to attend and the particular documents which he is required to produce and the summons shall be served on the person mentioned therein either by delivering to him a copy thereof or by leaving a copy thereof at his usual or last known place of abode in British Honduras, with some adult person; and there

**Power to order
attendance of
witnesses**

**Attendance to be
notified by
summons**

shall be paid or tendered to the person so summoned, if he does not reside within four miles of the place of attendance specified in the summons, such sum for his expenses as may be prescribed by Standing Orders.

- (3) A summons under this section may be served by an officer of the Assembly or by a police officer.
10. (1) If a person to whom a summons under section 10 is directed does not attend before the Assembly or the committee at the time and place mentioned therein, the Speaker may, upon being satisfied that the summons was duly served or that the person to whom the summons is directed willfully avoids service, direct the Clerk to issue a warrant, to apprehend him and bring him, at a time and place to be stated in the warrant, before the Assembly or committee.
- (2) A warrant issued under this section shall be executed by a police officer.
- (3) The Speaker, on directing the issue of a warrant under this section, may, if he thinks fit, by ordering an appropriate endorsement on the warrant, direct that the person named in the warrant be released after arrest on his entering into such a recognizance before a court for his appearance before the Assembly or committee as may be required in the endorsement.
- (4) Every warrant issued under the provisions of this section and every endorsement upon such warrant shall, if purporting to bear the signature of the Clerk, be deemed **prima facie** to be lawful and to be issued or made under the direction or order of the Speaker.
11. The Assembly or any committee empowered to order the attendance of witnesses may require that any facts, matters and things relating to the subject of inquiry before the Assembly or such committee be verified or otherwise ascertained by the oral examination of witnesses, and may cause any such witnesses to be examined upon oath, which the Clerk or the Chairman of the committee or other person specially appointed for that purpose by the Assembly or by such committee is hereby authorized to administer.
12. (1) Subject to the provisions of section 14, where any person ordered to attend to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before the Assembly refuses to answer any question that may be put to him or to produce any such paper, book, record or document, on the ground that the same is of a private nature and does not affect the subject of inquiry, the Speaker may excuse the answering of such question or the

**Power to issue
warrant to compel
attendance**

**Witnesses may be
examined on oath**

**Objection to
answer question
or to produce
papers**

- production of such paper, book, record or document, or may order the answering or production thereof.
- (2) Subject to the provisions of section 14, where any person ordered to attend or to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before any committee refuses to answer any question that may be put to him or to produce any such paper, book, record or document on the ground that the same is of a private nature and does not affect the subject of inquiry, the chairman of the committee may report such refusal to the Speaker with the reasons therefor; and the Speaker may thereupon excuse the answering of such question or the production of such paper, book, record or document or may order the answering or production thereof.
13. (1) Every person summoned to attend to give evidence or to produce any paper, book, record or document before the Assembly or a committee thereof shall be entitled, in respect of such evidence or the disclosure of any communication or the production of any such paper, book, record or document to the same right or privilege as before a court of law.
- (2) Except with the consent of the Governor, no person in the employment of the Government shall:-
- (a) produce before the Assembly or a committee any paper, book, record or document, or
 - (b) give before the Assembly or a committee any evidence, relating to the correspondence of any foreign affairs, internal security, naval, military or air force matter, and secondary evidence shall not be received by or produced before the Assembly or a committee of the contents of any paper, book, record or document.
- (3) Except when in the opinion of the Governor, it would be contrary to the public interest and the Governor so directs, no person in the employment of the Government shall refuse:-
- (a) to produce before the Assembly or a committee any paper, book, record or document; or
 - (b) to give before the Assembly or a committee any evidence,

Privileges of witnesses

relating to the correspondence of any civil department or to any matter affecting the public service; secondary evidence shall not be received by or produced before the Assembly or a committee of the contents of any such paper, book, record or document which the Governor, has directed shall not be produced.

- (4) An answer by a person to a question put by the Assembly or a committee shall not, except in the case of criminal proceedings under sections 280, 285, 289 and 294 of the Criminal Code or of an offence against this Ordinance, be in any proceedings, civil or criminal, admissible in evidence against him.
15. (1) Save as provided in this Ordinance, no member or officer of the Assembly and no person employed to take minutes of evidence before the Assembly or any committee shall give evidence elsewhere in respect of the contents of such minutes of evidence or of the contents of any document laid before the Assembly or such committee, as the case may be, or in respect of any proceedings or examination held before the Assembly or such committee, as the case may be, without the special leave of the Assembly first had and obtained.
- (2) The special leave referred to in subsection (1) may be given during a recess or adjournment by the Speaker, or, during any dissolution of the Assembly, by the Clerk, if there is no Speaker.
16. Where at any time any question arises in the Assembly or in a committee in regard to:-
- (a) the right or power of the Assembly or a committee to hear, admit or receive oral evidence; or
- (b) the right or power of the Assembly or a committee to peruse or examine any paper, book, record or document or to summon, direct or call upon any person to produce any paper, book, record or document before the Assembly or committee; or
- (c) the right or privilege of any person (including a member of the Assembly or committee) to refuse to produce any paper, book, record

**Ch. 21 R.E.
1958**

**Evidence of
proceedings in
Assembly or
committee not to
be given without
leave**

**Questions
relating to
evidence and
production of
document before
the Assembly or
committee to be
determined in
accordance with
usage of
Parliament**

or document, or to lay any paper, book, record or document before the Assembly or committee,

that question shall, subject to the preceding provisions of this Ordinance, and except in so far as express provision is made in those provisions for the determination of that question, be determined in accordance with the usage and practice of the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

PART IV

Offences and Penalties

17. Any proceedings before the Assembly or a committee thereof at which any person gives evidence or produces any paper, book, record, or document, shall be deemed to be judicial proceedings for the purpose of sections 280, 285, 289 and 294 of the Criminal Code.

**Proceedings to be deemed judicial proceedings for certain purposes
Ch. 21, R.E. 1958**

18. Any person who:-

- (a) being a stranger enters or attempts to enter the precincts of the Assembly in contravention of any order of the Speaker; or
- (b) being a stranger fails or refuses to withdraw from the precincts of the Assembly when ordered to withdraw therefrom by the Speaker; or
- (c) being a stranger contravenes any order made under the provisions of this Ordinance by the Speaker regulating the admittance of strangers to the precincts of the Assembly or any rule made by the Speaker under the Standing Orders; or
- (d) attends any sitting of the Assembly as the representative of any journal after the general permission granted under any order made under the provisions of this Ordinance or under the Standing Orders to the representative or representatives of that journal has been revoked,

Offences relating to admittance to the Assembly

shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on summary conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months, or to both such fine and imprisonment.

19. Any person who:-

- (a) disobeys any lawful order made by the Assembly or a committee for attendance or for production of papers, books, documents or records, unless such attendance or production be excused as hereinbefore provided; or
- (b) refuses to be examined before, or to answer any lawful and relevant question put by the Assembly or a committee, unless such refusal be excused as herein before provided; or
- (c) offers to any member or officer of the Assembly any bribe, in order to influence him in his conduct as such member or officer, or offers to any member or officer of the Assembly any fee, compensation, gift or reward for or in respect of the promotion of or opposition to any Bill or matter submitted to or intended to be submitted to the Assembly or any committee; or
- (d) assaults, obstructs, molests or insults any member coming to, being within, or going from the precincts of the Assembly, or endeavours to compel any member by force, insult or menace to declare himself in favour of or against any proposition or matter pending in or expected to be brought before the Assembly or any committee; or
- (e) assaults, molest, insults, resists or obstructs any officer of the Assembly while in the execution of his duty or while proceeding to or from the Assembly knowing or having reasonable grounds for believing him to be such an officer; or
- (f) creates or joins in any disturbance which interrupts or is likely to interrupt the proceedings of the Assembly or any committee while the Assembly or such committee is sitting; or
- (g) presents to the Assembly or a committee any false, untrue, fabricated or falsified document with intent to deceive the Assembly or such committee; or
- (h) utters or publishes any false or scandalous slander or libel on the Assembly or upon any member in his capacity as such; or
- (i) attempts directly or indirectly, by fraud, or by threats or intimidation of any kind, to influence a member in his vote, opinion, judgment or action, upon any question arising in the Assembly or in a committee,

**Other
offences**

or to induce him to absent himself from the Assembly or any committee; or

- (j) threatens, assaults or insults a member or an officer of the Assembly on account of his conduct as such member or officer; or
- (k) gives false evidence (in the case of witnesses not examined on oath), prevaricates or otherwise misconducts himself as a witness before the Assembly or a committee; or
- (l) destroys documents which have been ordered to be produced before the Assembly or a committee; or
- (m) endeavours, directly or indirectly, to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence before the Assembly or a committee; or
- (n) tampers with a witness in regard to evidence to be given by him before the Assembly or a committee; or
- (o) threatens or in any way punishes, damnifies or injures or attempts to punish, damnify or injure any person for having given evidence before the Assembly or a committee, or on account of the evidence which he has given before the Assembly or a committee; or
- (p) publishes any evidence taken by, or document presented to, a committee where such evidence has been taken with closed doors, or where its publication has been expressly prohibited by the Assembly or the committee,

shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on summary conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

20. Any member who accepts or agrees to accept or obtains or attempts to obtain for himself or for any other person any bribe, fee, compensation, reward or benefit of any kind for speaking, voting or acting as such member or for refraining from so speaking, voting or acting or an account of his having so spoken, voted or acted or having so refrained shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction on indictment to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.

**Acceptance of
bribes by
members**

PART V

Miscellaneous

21. Subject to the provisions of this Ordinance, a copy of the Journals of the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland printed or purporting to be printed by order or by the Printer of the Commons House aforesaid shall be received as **prima facie** evidence without proof of its being such copy upon any inquiry touching the privileges, immunities and powers of the Assembly or of any member thereof.
- Commons Journals to be prima facie evidence in inquiries touching privileges**
22. Upon any inquiry touching the privileges, immunities and powers of the Assembly or of any member, any copy of the journal printed or purporting to be printed by the Government Printer shall be admitted as prima facie evidence of such journals in all courts and places without any proof being given that such copy was so printed.
- Journals printed by the Government Printer to be admitted as evidence**
23. Any person who shall printed or cause to be printed a copy of any Ordinance now or hereafter in force, or a copy of any report, paper, minutes or votes and proceedings of the Assembly as purporting to have been printed by the Government Printer or by order or under the authority of the Assembly or by order or under the authority of the Speaker, and the same is not so printed, or shall tender in evidence any such copy as purporting to be so printed knowing that the same was not so printed, shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on summary conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.
- Penalty for printing false copy of Ordinance journal etc**
24. Any person, being a defendant in any civil or criminal proceedings instituted for or on account or in respect of the publication by such person or by his servant, by order or under the authority of the Assembly, of any reports, papers, minutes, votes and proceedings, may, on giving to the plaintiff or prosecutor, as the case may be, twenty-four hours written notice of his intention, bring before the court in which such civil or criminal proceedings are being held a certificate under the hand of the Speaker stating that the reports, papers, minutes, votes and proceedings in respect whereof such civil or criminal proceedings have been instituted were published by such persons or by his servant by order or under the authority of the Assembly together with an affidavit verifying such certificate, and such court shall thereupon immediately stay such civil or criminal proceedings and the same and every process issued therein shall be deemed to be finally determined.
- Protection of person responsible for publications authorized by the Assembly**
- Publication of proceedings without malice**

25. In any civil proceedings instituted for publishing any report or summary of or any extract from or abstract of any report, paper, minutes, votes and proceedings of the Assembly, if the court is satisfied that such report, summary, extract or abstract was published in good faith and without malice, judgement shall be entered for the defendant.
26. Neither the Speaker, nor any officer of the Assembly shall be subject to the jurisdiction of any court in respect of the exercise of any power conferred on or vested in the Speaker or such officer by or under this Ordinance. **Exercise of jurisdiction by courts**
27. Every officer of the Assembly, shall, for the purposes of this Ordinance and of the application of the provisions of the criminal laws in relation to this ordinance, have all the powers and enjoy all the privileges of a police officer. **Powers of Officers**
28. An officer of the Assembly may arrest without warrant:- **Power of arrest**
- (a) any person who commits any offence contrary to section 18 or 19 in his presence;
- (b) any person within the precincts of the Assembly whom he reasonably suspects of having committed, or being about to commit, an offence contrary to either of the said sections.
29. (1) Where the Speaker, under the provisions of the Standing Orders of the Assembly, rules any words used by a member to be out of order, the Speaker may, in his absolute discretion, order that such words, or any words out of which they arose or arising out of them, shall not be published in any manner. **Speaker may order words out of order not to be published**
- (2) Any person who publishes any words which are the subject of an order made under the provisions of subsection (1) shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on summary conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to both such fine and imprisonment.
30. No prosecution for an offence under the Ordinance shall be instituted except with the written sanction of the Director of Public Prosecutions. **Sanction for prosecutions No. 1/69**

PASSED the legislative Assembly this 28th day of September, 1962.

(S.E.HULSE)

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly