

BELIZE

No. HR 27/1/11

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 26th June 2015

10:20 AM.

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Members Present:

The Hon. Michael Peyrefitte, Speaker
The Hon. Dean O. Barrow (Queen's Square), Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
The Hon. Gaspar Vega (Orange Walk North), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture
The Hon. Michael Finnegan (Mesopotamia), Minister of Housing and Urban Development
The Hon. Patrick J. Faber (Collet), Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
The Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr. (Belize Rural South), Minister of Tourism and Culture
The Hon. Anthony Martinez (Port Loyola), Minister of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
The Hon. John Saldivar (Belmopan), Minister of National Security
The Hon. Wilfred P. Elrington (Pickstock), Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Pablo S. Marin (Corozal Bay), Minister of Health
The Hon. Rene Montero (Cayo Central), Minister of Works and Transport
The Hon. Edmond G. Castro (Belize Rural North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Deputy Speaker
The Hon. Santino Castillo (Caribbean Shores), Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
The Hon. Hugo Patt (Corozal North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture
The Hon. Mark King (Lake Independence), Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
The Hon. Dr. Omar Figueroa (Cayo North), Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
The Hon. Francis Fonseca (Freetown), Leader of the Opposition
The Rt. Hon. Said Musa (Fort George)
The Hon. John Briceño (Orange Walk Central)
The Hon. Michael Espat (Toledo East)
The Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia (Belize Rural Central)
The Hon. Rodwell Ferguson (Stann Creek West)
The Hon. Julius Espat (Cayo South)
The Hon. Oscar Requena (Toledo West)
The Hon. Marco Tulio Mendez (Orange Walk East)
The Hon. Jose Mai (Orange Walk South)
Vacant (Dangriga)

Members Absent:

The Hon. Erwin R. Contreras (Cayo West), Minister of Trade, Investment Promotion, Private Sector Development and Consumer Protection

The Hon. Herman Longworth (Albert), Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

The Hon. Elvin Penner (Cayo North East)

The Hon. Florencio Marin Jr. (Corozal South East)

The Hon. Ramiro Ramirez (Corozal South West)

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

PRAYERS by Pastor Conrad Arzu

PAPERS

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved:

No. HR265A/1/11 - Fisheries (Hol Chan Marine Reserve) Regulations, 2015.

No. HR266/1/11 - Fisheries (Hol Chan Marine Reserve) Order, 2015.

No. HR266A/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015.

No. HR266B/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

Sessional Papers No. 265/1/11 and 266/1/11 were ordered to lie on the Table, while Sessional Papers No. HR266A/1/11 and No. 266B/1/11 were referred to the Committee of Supply for examination, consideration and report.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEE

The Honourable Chairman of the Ombudsman Report Committee:

No. HR267/1/11 - Report from the Ombudsman Report Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

Report was ordered to lie on the Table.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

HON. M. ESPAT (Toledo East) asked:

“*1. Will the Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture say if negotiations are underway to sell the rice mill at

Big Falls, Toledo to a private group? If this is so, can he give the name of the group purchasing the mill and at what price?”

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture) answered:

“Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to this question raised by the Honourable Member for Toledo East is no. We are not negotiating the sale of the Big Falls Rice Mill with any private group. Mr. Speaker, on assumption of the agriculture portfolio, the need for the deep reform of the rice industry was clear, especially the southern production zone. What started out decades ago as a means to spur investments and sustainable growth in this sector never materialized, even during the time when the Honourable Member of Toledo East was responsible for it, as the Minister of Agriculture.

What we encountered was the failed system that was being heavily subsidized by taxpayers, yet producing uneconomic volumes and poor quality rice. The subsistence farmers, those used to justify maintenance of the system, were benefitting the least. Earlier on we had dialogued with the southern rice producers on a proposed shares issue to them to allow them to take over the mill. They accepted this as a possibility but we have been preoccupied with improving quality and sustainability of rice growing that the mill continues to be operated by the Belize Marketing and Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we have received several proposals from interested parties but none is being considered by the ministry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.”

HON. M. ESPAT (Toledo East) asked:

“*2. Will the Minister of Immigration and Nationality say how many Guatemalans have received Belizean Nationality between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014?”

HON. D. Barrow (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development) answered on behalf of the Minister of Immigration and Nationality:

“Mr. Speaker, the answer is 104 Guatemalans were sworn in and became Belizean citizens after renouncing their Guatemalan nationality and completing the necessary processes. Just for the sake of completeness, there were three swearing in ceremonies during that year and a total of 439 persons altogether, became Belizean citizens during that period.

The other nationalities are: Hondurans 61, Salvadorians 37, Chinese 34, Americans 30, Mexicans 8, Lebanese 5, Jamaicans 4, 1 person from Liechtensteine, 2 from the Philippines, 9 from Nicaragua, 9 from India, 14 from Nigeria, 3 British persons, 2 from Pakistan, 2 from Panama, 4 from Cuba, 3 from Colombia, 2 from Taiwan, 1 from Belarus, 1 from Canada, 1 from Syria, 1 from Trinidad and Tobago, and 3 Venezuelans.”

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development) made two statements as follows:

“Mr. Speaker, this week there has been the airing on national television of a very graphic and extremely disturbing images of a Creole Belizean, a black Belizean, Rupert Myles, tied hands and feet and imprisoned by Mayan Belizeans in the village of Santa Cruz. Additionally, we also saw footage of an earlier encounter between Cristina Coc of the Maya Leaders Alliance, and another ethnically mixed Belizean, Joe Estephan. Both what was said by Ms. Coc and what was done by the villagers of Santa Cruz raise some hinge issues that I feel I need to address.

The first thing I must do is to clarify the Caribbean Court of Justice’s (CCJ) consent judgment that was recently recorded in the Maya Land Rights Case. And I start by saying what the judgment did not do. It did not supersede the Constitution and laws of this country. (Applause) It did not transfer sovereignty over any part of national territory from the government to any particular ethnic group. (Applause)

It did not create a state within a state. (Applause) It did not set up a separate Maya nation in Belize. (Applause) And it did not give anyone the right to use force to vindicate any claim they might have to land.(Applause) What the judgment did do was to recognize and accept that Maya Belizeans have certain rights over certain land in the Toledo District. But, the judgment also made clear, the precise nature of those rights must be defined and legislated by government in partnership with the Mayas and after consultation with all Belizeans. (Applause)

A number of things are therefore clear. Under our laws anyone wishing to enforce land rights and remove persons in wrongful occupation, must obtain an eviction order from the courts. And it is only under a Court Order that Bailiffs, Marshals, agents of the court praying in aid the security forces, the police may use reasonable force to carry out that Court Order.

There was no court order in the Santa Cruz matter and, therefore, no one, and especially not civilians, had any right to use any force to dispossess Mr. Myles. Thus, the stance of the villagers, and of the (MLA) Mayan Leader Association was quite wrong. I repeat that no Alcalde System, no custom or practice, no cultural remit can supersede the law of this country. (Applause)What

is also clear is that no matter what form the Maya land rights in Toledo may eventually take, they will never amount to sovereignty. And they can never include vindication of those undoubted rights by private force of any sort, much less force against the person.

Having said that, though, I stress that all Belizeans must see government's acceptance of the Maya's entitlement to special rights as a great national advance. It is an opportunity to give a whole new dimension to a much vaunted multiracial harmony while legally and institutionally enshrining our respect for, and pride in our Maya heritage and legacy. Thus, the work to define and legislate the precise nature of Maya rights and remove confusion must move as quickly as possible with everyone embracing the process. But that work is epic in scope. It is the most consequential, social, political and demographic exercise, certainly, since Independence. And its execution will be problematic and tortuous in the extreme. Patience, understanding and abiding by the status quo until it is legally changed are, then, the minimum requirements for all of us. And confrontation and violence cannot be tolerated from any of us.

I, therefore call on Belizeans of every hue and stripe to begin to demonstrate, from now, the maturity, restraint and perseverance that will be necessary to see us through the long-haul resolution of this all-important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.” (Applause)

“Mr. Speaker, thank you for indulging me again and this second statement is to make much, I say that without apology, of that proud and far-reaching announcement made on the 16th day of this month when, for transparency purposes, the Ministry of Finance issued a short press release formulizing the results of the fiscal year 2014/2015 – Salary Increases for Teachers and Public Officers. (Applause) The public is aware that as a consequence of good faith negotiations between the teachers and the unions representing the public officers, the negotiating team set up by three unions, actually: the BNTU, PSU and the APSSM an accord was signed in February last year to share half, 50%, of the incremental increase in the current revenues during a three-year period. At the time, and in response to the request by the unions for a 30% salary adjustments over 3 years, we proposed and got them to accept instead, a partnership in which salary increases would come if and when public sector revenues increased.

Our government pledge to pursue progressive, social and economic policies that would advance revenue collections without raising taxes and asked of the unions' the collaboration of their members and, indeed, all public servants in this innovative approach. The serial cynic were unceasing in their attempts to misrepresent the propose framework. They said, "this thing is not going to work." Well, Mr. Speaker, today all the naysayers are vanquished. In this fiscal year, as in the last one, the results of UDP imagination, stewardship and stoutheartedness are on proud display, as our teachers and public servants, our police officers and soldiers, all 12,000 of them, will benefit from an 8% salary increase (Applause) and for most a 10.5% salary surge when the annual increments are taken into account. The value of this upward salary adjustment is estimated at an astonishing \$43 million for fiscal year 2015/2016. This \$43 million is 1½ times larger than the size of last years' salary increase and increment. In that fiscal year 2014/2015, teachers and public officers shared a bounty of \$29 million more in salaries and increments, representing at that time a 6% salary increase in addition to the 2.5 increment.

So then, in two fiscal years since the partnership was forge between government and the unions, this UDP Administration will deliver a cumulative 19% (Applause) salary and increment increase for teachers and public officers; the equivalent of \$72 million more (Applause) in the collective pockets of public servants. On average, that is an epoch making \$6,000 more per year for each public servants, each of \$6,000 more. (Applause) A \$72 million wage increase in two years for 12,000 Belizean workers has simply never happened before in this country; never ever. (Applause) There can be no question about the quantifiable effect, the real buying power of this historic dividend because when you remember, Mr. Speaker, inflation in 2014, was gauged by the Statistical Institute of Belize by just 1% and for 2015 through the end of April at minus 1%. So there is no question of inflation eating away. In other words, as of today with no foreseeable increase in inflation the purchasing power of 12,000 Belizean workers will leap by 19% in 2 years. The numbers are awesome, Mr. Speaker, there is little more I can say except to make this final point. It is a UDP article of faith that our teachers and public officers are the single most valuable element in the unceasing endeavour of UDP's nation building and government. (Applause) Yes, our administration envisioned and is undertaking a massive unprecedented

infrastructure renewal program to stimulate the economy, boost employment, and enhance the productive capacity of the nation. But our zeal for upgrading national infrastructure is surpassed by the value we ascribe to people, in this case our teachers and public officers. These momentous wages increases validate our partnership, with redeem UDP management, and urge us to build on our achievements.

Just in closing, for the sake of comparison we are almost at the 8th year of our two-terms. I want to go back to the 8th year of the People's United Party Administration, and I want to quote a little bit from a Channel 7 story on May 27, 2005. "GOB says no to IMF but yes to salary cuts." We are raising by \$72 million at their 8th year they were cutting salaries. First they said "we have to," three Ministers had a press briefing: the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Jose Coxe, and Mr. Godfrey Smith. They held that press briefing to explain government's so-called adjustment program. And the newscast said, as we found out, "Government's plan is modeled off the IMF recommendations and it includes major cuts in the Wage Bill, which will mean some government employees will lose their jobs". Who will get the axe, that's what we asked. I won't say anymore, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) The comparison is stark and that comparison makes us look good, very good, and makes them look bad, very bad." (Applause)

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture) made the following statement:

"Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to give a brief report on our sugar industry that is about to come to closure on the 7th of July. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comparisons for the past five years to show the growth that this industry has had. In the 2010/2011 crop, we delivered or we produced 98,482 metric tons of sugar. This year up to the 24th June, we have produced 130,069 metric tons of sugar. (Applause) It is an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 32% and is still hoping to be able to produce some 6,000 plus more tons of sugar by the time the full closure comes to an end.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that with all the challenges that this industry is having we are succeeding. Last year we milled 1,152,000 of sugarcane and produced 125,000 tons of sugar. It is clear that this year the cane farmers, the

entire industry is having a huge increase in productions of sugar. At the end of the day, we won't be able to deliver as much sugar cane as last year but by far we're producing much more sugar. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, last year in the 2010/11 crop, we delivered 843,786, metric tons and this year to the 24th June we have delivered 1,063,148 tons of sugarcane. We have fallen short of like almost 100,000 tons of sugarcane compared to last year. And that is, Mr. Speaker, simply because of the fact that the sugar crop was delayed by certain individuals for personal reasons and today the cane farmers, the entire industry is paying the price because, Mr. Speaker, the previous crop when it ended, they had agreed to start the crop on the 24th of November but prior to that date all stakeholders had gotten together and agreed on starting the crop on the 8th December. However, again, because of several individuals with their own agenda, they delayed the crop and it did not start until the 26th January, which was 49 days late. Mr. Speaker, this year the factory has been able to mill 311.72 tons of sugarcane per hour, which gives us 7,481 tons per day, and if you multiply that by 49 days it gives us 366,582 tons of sugarcane that we would have been able to deliver had the crop started when it was firstly agreed on. Mr. Speaker, I'm bringing this up so that cane farmers and all stakeholders realize that we have enough sugarcane for the factory and we must not play games anymore (Applause) to ensure that the industry maximizes on every opportunity possible.

Mr. Speaker, the crop this year is going to come to a closure one day prior to last years'. So we are not going to be able to blame the weather, its simply because of the lateness on the start of the crop. Mr. Speaker, this year why we've been able to produce so much more sugar with much less sugar cane is because of the quality and system of harvesting that been implemented by all stakeholders. I must take my hats off for the farmers to be able to invest so much in their fields, to be able to produce much better quality cane and also for being so responsible in their harvesting methods that they are using today. Also, I must say that one of the reasons is simply because of the efforts that all stakeholders are putting into the industry. The ACPC has done a tremendous job in enforcing that good quality is being delivered to the factory. This year we are having just over 85% of all the cane delivered to the factory tested for quality, while other years we used to have up to 37%, the maximum, in some years it was 37% of the cane being tested. So everyone is taking it very serious and I am certain that come next year the

mistakes that were committed this year will again make us break another record because, Mr. Speaker, this is the year and the first time that we are producing so much sugar in the history of this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to challenge all stakeholders in the industry to take it serious, to make sure that we put politics one side and we concentrate on the industry. Because for this season, we will have some cane farmers that we will be staying with hundreds and hundreds of tons of sugarcane standing in their fields because of the lateness that we had in starting the industry. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Belize, the Sugar Cane Farmers Association, the Corozal Cane Farmers Producers Association, the Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association and all cane farmers whom they represent, as well as the Belize Sugar Industry, ASR, in working together and demonstrating that once we work with one common goal we can achieve tremendous things that will make us break record year after year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.” (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker made the following announcement:

“Honourable Members, with the consent of the House, I propose to vary the order of the Sitting today to allow the Introduction of Bills at item 12 on the order paper to be taken after the Committee of Supply at item 14. This is to allow the introduction of the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015, and the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill 2015, which, according to Standing Orders 71 of the House, cannot be introduced until the proposals have been approved by the Committee of Supply and agreed to by the House.

I therefore propose that the House resolve into a Committee of Supply under item “Government Business”.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. Government Business

I COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Pursuant to Standing Order, the House resolved itself into a Committee of Supply and the Speaker ordered the withdrawal of strangers from the galleries.

Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

[In the Committee]

1. Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Economic Development moved:

That the Committee approves the proposals set out in Sessional Paper No. HR266A/1/11 referred to the Committee of Supply.

Question put and agreed to.

2. Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Economic Development moved:

That the Committee approves the proposals set out in Sessional Paper No. HR266B/1/11 referred to the Committee of Supply.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman left the Chair.

Meeting suspended at 10:51 A.M.

Meeting was resumed at 11:00 A.M.

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

II MOTIONS

1. Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Motion, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved:

THAT the Committee of Supply has met and approved the proposals set out in the Sessional Paper No. HR266A/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation

(No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015, and that the Honourable House agree with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply

Question put and agreed to.

2. **Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Motion, 2015.**

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved:

THAT the Committee of Supply has met and approved the proposals set out in the Sessional Paper No. HR266B/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016, and that the Honourable House agree with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply

Question put and agreed to.

3. **Adoption of the Report from the Ombudsman Report Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.**

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, with the permission of the Speaker not to repeat the recitals, moved:

THAT THIS HOUSE adopts the Report from the Ombudsman Report Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

Question put and agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1. **General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.**

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved:

Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Following the intervention of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition Members walked out.

After debate thereon, Bill read a first time and a second time.

2. **General Revenue Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.**

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic

Development moved:

Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending thirty-first day of March, two thousand and sixteen.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and a second time.

(Suspension of Introduction of Bills)

In accordance with Standing Order 12 (8), the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance moved that the proceedings on the matter on the Order Paper be entered upon and proceeded with at the Sitting at any hour though opposed.

Question put and agreed to.

(Resumption and continuation of Introduction of Bills.)

3. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development introduced the above-mentioned Bill:-

Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act (No.4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and ordered to be printed, and pursuant to Standing Orders, referred to the Finance and Economic Development Committee for examination, consideration and report.

In accordance with Standing Orders 49(1), the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

After the debate thereon, question put and agreed to.

4. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development introduced the above-mentioned Bill:-

Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and ordered to be printed, and pursuant to Standing Orders, referred to the Finance and Economic Development Committee for examination, consideration and report.

In accordance with Standing Orders 49(1), the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

Question put and agreed to.

5. National Protected Areas System Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development introduced the above-mentioned Bill:-

Bill for an Act to provide for the maintenance of a coordinated management of a system of protected areas that is representative of internationally agreed categories, effectively managed, ecologically based, consistent with international law, and based on best available scientific information and the principles of sustainable development for the economic, social and environmental benefit of present and future generations of Belize; to repeal the National Parks System Act, Chapter 215 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000; to amend the Fisheries Act, Chapter 210 and the Forests Act, Chapter 213 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and ordered to be printed, and pursuant to Standing Orders, referred to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report.

Question put and agreed to.

6. Protected Areas Conservation Trust (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development introduced the above-mentioned Bill:-

Bill for an Act to amend the Protected Areas Conservation Trust Act, Chapter 218 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000 – 2003, to provide for a new definition of “protected area” and a new composition of the Board of Directors; to expand the functions of the Trust; to provide for the appointment of a Finance and Audit Committee and other Committees by the Board of Directors; to further strengthen the provisions of the Act in order to enhance the operations of the Trust in achieving its mission of promoting the sustainable management of Belize’s protected areas; to make better provisions relating to the exemption from payment

of the conservation fee; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and ordered to be printed, and pursuant to Standing Orders, referred to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report.

Question put and agreed to.

7. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development introduced the above-mentioned Bill:-

Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Cabinet's recommendation signified by the Minister.

Bill read a first time and ordered to be printed, and pursuant to Standing Orders, referred to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report.

In accordance with Standing Orders 49(1), the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

Question put and agreed to.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that at its rising today, the House adjourn to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr. Speaker made the following announcement:

“Honourable Members, it has been agreed that the Following Bills, pass this day:

1. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015;
2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015; and
3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

As you are well aware, under Standing Order No. 74, all proposed Legislation, Messages, Petitions, Motions and other matters relating to the subject mentioned under the title of each Standing Committee shall be referred by the House to such Committee for examination, consideration and report to the House.

The only logical way for this to be done, other than by suspension of Standing Orders, is for me to suspend the Sitting to enable the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Natural Resources and Environment Committee to examine, consider and report to the House on those Bills.

Question put and agreed to.

The Sitting was therefore suspended until the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Natural Resources and Environment Committee concluded their business.

Sitting suspends at 12:16 P.M.

Sitting resumes at 12:58 P.M.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEE

The Honourable Chairman of the Finance and Economic Development Committee:-

No. HR268/1/11 - Report from the Finance and Economic Development Committee on the Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

No. HR269/1/11 - Report from the Finance and Economic Development Committee on the Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

Reports were ordered to lie on the Table.

The Honourable Chairman of the Natural Resources and Environment Committee:-

No. HR270/1/11 - Report from the Natural Resources and Environment Committee on the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

Report was ordered to lie on the Table.

III BILLS FOR SECOND READING

1. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the above-mentioned Bill be read a second time:

Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act (No.4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

After debate thereon question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly, read a second time and, pursuant to Standing Orders, committed to a Committee of the whole House.

2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the above-mentioned Bill be read a second time:

Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the purported imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly, read a second time and, pursuant to Standing Orders, committed to a Committee of the whole House.

3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the above-mentioned Bill be read a second time:

Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the

benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly, read a second time and, pursuant to Standing Orders, committed to a Committee of the whole House.

IV COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON BILLS

Pursuant to Standing Orders, the House, without question put, resolved itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bills that were read a second time and Mr. Speaker left the chair.

[In the Committee]

The Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the House without amendment.

2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

Long Title agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert before the words “imposition, collection” the word “purported”

Short Title agreed to with the following amendments:

Delete the words “and Validation”

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2 agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert the following definitions in the appropriate alphabetical order -

“cruise ship” means a passenger ship employed in the carriage of passengers primarily on international voyages;

“Fort Street Tourism Village” means the land designated by the Government as the official port of entry of cruise ship passengers to Belize District, under and by virtue of a contract with the Government of Belize and the Belize Tourism Board;

“Fort Street Tourism Village Limited” means the company duly formed and established under the laws of Belize that owns and operates the Fort Street Tourism Village;

“manifested taxable cruise ship passenger” means a cruise ship passenger whose name appears or would be entitled to appear on the passenger manifest for the voyage on which the passenger is carried, and who is not excluded from the payment of cruise ship passenger tax under section 4(5);

“passenger” means any person carried on a ship other than -

- (a) the master, an apprentice, a member of the crew or a person employed or engaged in any capacity on board the ship on the business of the ship;**
- (b) a child under one year of age; or**
- (c) a person carried on the ship in pursuance of the obligation laid upon the master to carry shipwrecked, distressed or other persons, or by reason of any circumstances which neither the master nor the owner nor the charterer (if any) could have prevented or forestalled;**

“passenger ship” means a ship carrying or capable of carrying more than twelve passengers;

“ship” includes every description of vessel used in navigation.

In Clause 2 in the Definition of “Resident Passenger” delete the word “Belizean” and substitute the words “citizen of Belize”.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 agreed to with the following amendments:

In Clause 4(1) Delete the words “cruise ship passenger tax” and substitute the words “tax to be known as the “cruise ship passenger tax” is hereby imposed, which”

Clause 5 agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert immediately after the words “Fort Street Tourism Village” the word “Limited”

Clause 6 agreed to with the following amendments:

Amend this Clause to read as follows:

“ 6. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions or any other law to the contrary, the purported imposition, and collection, in good faith and in the absence of statutory provision therefore, of a cruise ship passenger tax during the period commencing on the 20th day of December, 2000 and immediately preceding the commencement of this Act, and the distribution of the purported tax collected between the Fort Street Tourism Village or its predecessor and the Government of Belize or its nominee, are hereby validated and all such taxes levied or collected or purporting to have been levied or collected and distributed during that period are hereby declared to have been validly , properly and lawfully

levied or collected and distributed as if done lawfully and in accordance with this Act.”

Clause 7 agreed to with the following amendments:

Delete the words “take effect retrospectively” and substitute the words “have taken effect”.

Bill to be reported back to the House with amendments.

3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

Clauses 1 to 9 agreed to.

First and Second Schedule agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the House without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

House resumed at 2:09 P.M.

V BILLS FOR THIRD READING

1. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No. 2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015, be now read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

2. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015, be now read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

3. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic

Development reported that the Committee of the whole House has gone through the Bill, clause by clause, and directed him to report same without amendment.

Whereupon the Prime Minister moved that the Bill be read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

4. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development reported that the Committee of the whole House has gone through the Bill, clause by clause, and directed him to report same with amendments.

Whereupon the Prime Minister moved that the Bill be read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

5. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development reported that the Committee of the whole House has gone through the Bill, clause by clause, and directed him to report same without amendment.

Whereupon the Prime Minister moved that the Bill be read a third time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development moved that the House be adjourned.

Question put and agreed to.

The House adjourned at 2:15 PM. to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

Speaker.

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