



ANTIGUA and BARBUDA

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The Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister disclosed that Antigua and Barbuda had shared the position it negotiated with the OECD with its partners in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

Mr Bird added, "Both the targeted jurisdictions and the OECD can claim a victory for genuine international cooperation. We now look forward to growing our financial services industry without any shadows hanging over it".

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Opposition Members stage another walkout of Parliament over the Half Moon Bay issue

The Opposition representatives of the Lower House of Parliament, led by the Leader, Baldwin Spencer, staged a walkout on Tuesday 12th February during the debate on the Half Moon Bay Acquisition Resolution.



*Aerial View of the
Half Moon Bay Property*

Before walking out of the proceedings, Baldwin Spencer urged the Speaker of the House not to allow the debate to continue as the House, by discussing a matter twice in one session, was in breach of the Rules of Parliament.

"Our contention is that parcel numbers 55, 56 and 57 are one and the same as parcels 34 and 38. So on the face of it Madam Speaker, because it's the same block number and if it is substantially the same, it cannot be addressed in the same sitting of parliament and nobody in here could argue that we are not dealing with one and the same matter. It is the acquisition of the lands at Half Moon Bay. That is it, and it is the same thing we are doing here. Whether it comes by parcel, 56, 57, 58 or 34 and 38 we are dealing with the same thing. It is identical and we will not be a party to any illegality," the Opposition leader commented.

Prime Minister Bird explained that while the Government had moved and passed a resolution in the House to acquire the land originally registered as parcel 38, it had recently discovered that the registration numbers of the land had changed. Mrs Natalia Querard, the property owner, had sub-divided the land and re-registered it as parcels 55, 56 and 57. Therefore the acquisition of parcel 38 by the House was useless. Minister Bird also made it clear that "the Opposition can jump high and jump low and no matter how long it takes, the government will acquire the property.

The Speaker outlined that the resolution being debated in the House on the 12th February was not the same resolution debated in the House on the 10th of January 2002. It was at that point that the Opposition Leader took objection and stormed out of the Parliament followed by members of his party along with the representative for Barbuda.

During the last debate in the Upper House on the Half Moon Bay matter the Opposition Senators also staged a walkout. They claimed that the government was making a mistake in trying to acquire the property.

The Cabinet of Prime Minister Lester Bird considers that the acquisition is in the interest of the public. It plans to create a fresh environment for investment in the defunct hotel business at Half Moon Bay in order to facilitate the revival of the tourist industry and provide jobs for the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

The government revealed that despite numerous attempts to have the property reopened (by offering concessions to the owners of the hotel) the hotel remained closed since the passage of Hurricane Luis in 1995.

In spite of the Opposition walkout the resolution was moved and carried.

The St. John's High Court on 19th February forfeited the remainder of the bail from the sureties of Sybil Hamby, her mother Violet Dowe and sister Terry Walter, amounting to \$350,000. Hamby was charged with defrauding several would-be homeowners in a housing scheme that never materialised. The Court will now auction the family property at Five Islands.

Justice Ephraim Georges stated that there were many angry people awaiting restitution. A number of the individuals, he said, had filed civil suits and the money would go towards settling the suits.

Director of Public Prosecutions, Cosbert Cumberbatch, explained that the court has given the defendant and sureties sufficient time. They have been given an opportunity to show cause why the balance of the bail should not be forfeited. The court has no alternative but to make an order to sell the property or for the balance of the recognizance to be realised in cash.

Hamby was allowed to travel to England for medical attention, with the provision she returned to Antigua in time for her court case, present the court registrar with a contact number, a report on her medical situation, and the date of her return. She has violated all the conditions.

Her attorney, Dexter Wason, told the court that he had previously sought an adjournment in order to find another attorney to lead the defence, but was unable to come up with one.

Wason said he was unable to advise the court as to the date Hamby would return, and asked the court to have him withdrawn from the matter, however, Justice Georges denied his request.

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Errol Cort loses case against Government: Judge Georges says submissions are "Constitutional Heresy"

Justice Ephraim Georges on 20th February dismissed the case brought by former Attorney-General and Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs, Dr Errol Cort against the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, the Attorney-General, the Prime Minister and the findings of the Allen Joseph forensic audit report into the Medical Benefits Scheme.



Former Attorney-General, Dr Errol Cort

The Allen Joseph report claimed that Dr Cort had been paid over a million dollars by the medical benefits scheme without following due procedures.

In an hour-long judgement, in the High Court Justice Georges agreed that some of the submissions made on behalf of Dr Cort were "constitutional heresy".

The learned Judge said that the proceedings brought by Dr Cort were inappropriate in law, without merit and could not continue.

He also noted that the proceedings were brought under rules of the High Court which no longer exist.

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New political party launched in Antigua and Barbuda

Sporting "The People's Progress" as their mission,

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