

The London School of Economics and Political Science

**'This Island's Mine': Anglo-Bermudian power-sharing
and the politics of oligarchy, race and violence during late
British decolonisation, 1963-1977**

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A thesis submitted to the Department of International History
of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of
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Abstract

By 1991, Britain retained responsibility for 14 overseas dependent territories. A policy of accelerated decolonisation that took shape under British Governments between the early 1960s and the late 1970s had, by the early 1980s, given way to what Drower has called an 'era of colonial permanence'.¹ This was because territories such as Bermuda refused to take the hint and move towards independence. This thesis examines the way in which Britain appeared to lose control of the process of decolonisation. It will do this by studying power-sharing dynamics in Bermuda between 1963 and 1977. It is argued that Britain did not exercise full control in Bermuda in 1963; her role was characterised by London's dependence upon Governors who accommodated themselves to the dominant white minority both for pragmatic reasons and out of shared cultural and racial affinities. It was this dynamic that suffused three forums of Anglo-Bermudian collaboration: constitutional reform in 1963-1968; the internal security state in 1968-1973; and the colonial justice system in 1973-1977. This period saw a rapid diminution of British power in Bermuda, a process accelerated by proliferating constitutional ambiguities and metropolitan decline. In contrast, the power of Bermudian conservatives was entrenched via electoral advantages and enhanced local autonomy.

¹ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, x.

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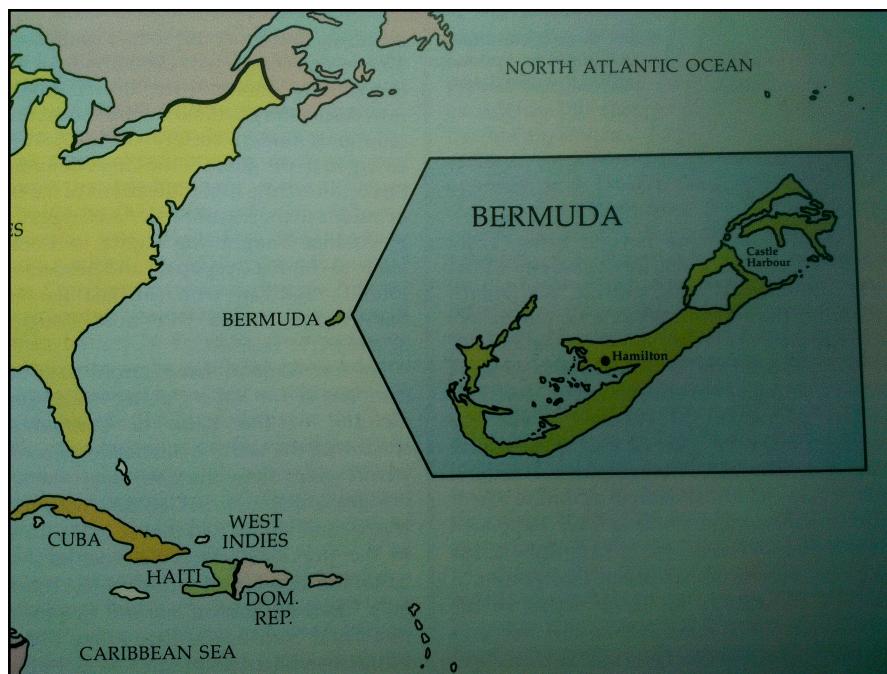


Figure 1: Map showing Bermuda's position in the North Atlantic,
© Gordon Phillips, *First, One Thousand Miles...: Bermudian Enterprise and the Bank of Bermuda*, (Cambridge, 1992).

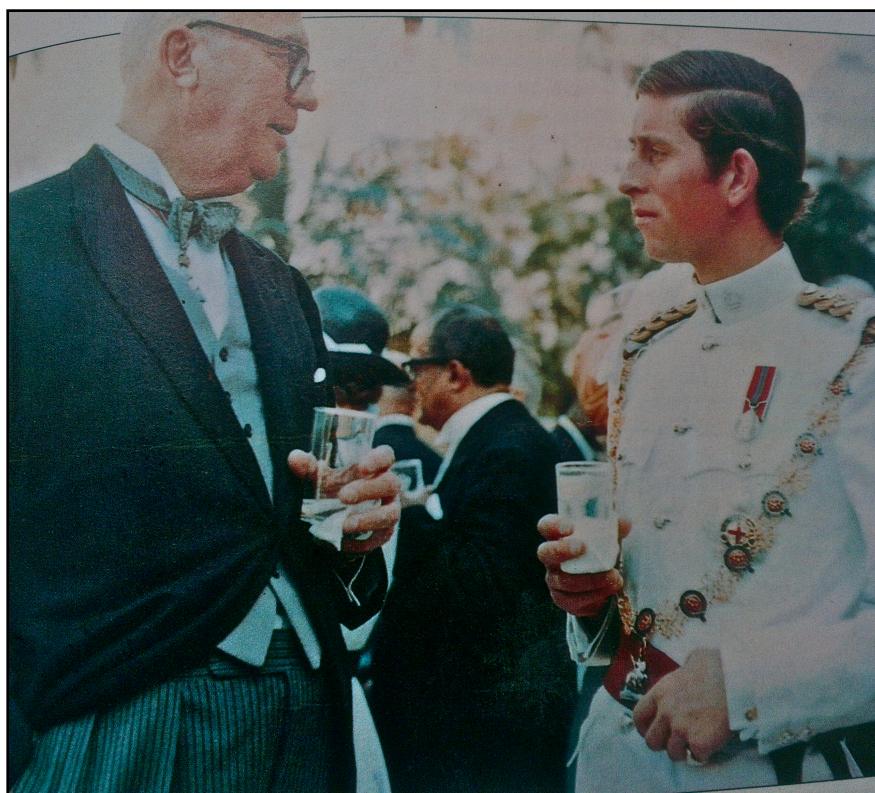


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List of Abbreviations

BBC	Black Beret Cadre
BDP	Bermuda Democratic Party
BIC	Bermuda Intelligence Committee
BIU	Bermuda Industrial Union
BPC	(First regional) Black Power Conference
CO	Colonial Office
CRO	Commonwealth Relations Office
CWO	Commonwealth Office
CUAS	Committee for Universal Adult Suffrage
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
IRD	Information Research Department
LIC	Local Intelligence Committee
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NKG	New Kenya Group
OLA	Overseas Labour Adviser
OPA	Overseas Police Adviser
PLP	Progressive Labour Party
SNOWI	Senior Naval Officer West Indies
UBP	United Bermuda Party

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The origins of this project are to be found in two places. Firstly, growing up in Bermuda and then working as a journalist there over the course of seven years filled me with fascination of processes of justice and government on the island. Secondly, more firm research roots were put down when Bermudian historians Suzanne Mayall and Ayo Johnson asked me in the summer of 2005, just after I had finished my undergraduate degree, to assist them in conducting some research into the assassinations of Sir Richard Sharples, Captain Hugh Sayers and George Duckett. This led to an eye-opening summer in the cool basement of the Bermuda National Archives; one of the best summers I've ever had. I want to thank them for passing on their enthusiasm to me.

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A note on terminology

Three points need to be made about the terms employed throughout this thesis. Firstly, the term *oligarchy* is ‘one of the most widely used yet poorly theorised concepts in the social sciences’.² It derives from the Greek word oligarkhia (government of the few), which is composed of *oligoi* (few) and *arkhein* (to rule).³ Leach defines oligarchy as the ‘concentration of entrenched illegitimate authority and/or influence in the hands of a minority’.⁴ Winter meanwhile suggests ‘oligarchy refers to the politics of wealth defense by materially endowed actors’.⁵ A second feature of this definition implies that oligarchical power ‘extends so widely across [a] space or community that exit is nearly impossible or prohibitively expensive’.⁶ Finally, a distinction must be made between *oligarchical* power, which is informal and individualistic, and *elite* power which is the use of power by actors who hold formal political office. The combination of these informal and formal forms of power is a prevalent feature of failed states.⁷ The study of how Bermuda’s oligarchy adapted during a period of local and global change provides an opportunity to test the idea that ‘oligarchy is generally thought to be overcome by electoral democracy’.⁸

Secondly, this thesis aims to understand how realities of racially-infused oligarchy interacted with ‘imperialism’ and ‘colonialism’. While *imperialism* ‘presupposes the will and the ability of an imperial centre to define as imperial its own national interests and enforce them worldwide’⁹, *colonialism* is defined by Osterhammel thus:

A relationship of domination between an indigenous society [or forcibly imported] majority and a minority of foreign invaders.

² Winters, *Oligarchy*, 1.

³ Indridason, *Oligarchy*, 36.

⁴ Leach, *Iron Law of What Again?*, 329

⁵ Winters, *Oligarchy*, 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, 15.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, 2.

⁹ Osterhammel, *Colonialism*, 21.

The fundamental decisions affecting the lives of colonised people are made and implemented by the colonial rulers... [who are] convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.¹⁰

Since Bermuda has a history of English and British hegemony and also a black majority descended from slavery, colonialism seems an apt term. Meanwhile, colonialism impinges on identities while imperialism focuses more on conceptions of interest. This thesis, suggests that differences between these concepts could be viewed during the process of decolonisation via different discourses of imperial disengagement.

Thirdly, the term Dependent Territory is used throughout to describe Bermuda. This thesis studies a period during which much of the nomenclature of the British imperial system was rapidly changing. A Colonial Office (CO) report submitted to Cabinet in June 1956 recommended that the use of the word 'Colony' be officially discontinued. From that year, 'the term "Dependent Territory"' was gradually brought into official usage'. However, as Drower points out, the term colony continued to be used until the closure of the Colonial Office in July 1966. Dependent Territories included Colonies, Protectorates, Protected States and Trust Territories. The term is therefore, the correct 'parent term' for all British overseas possessions during the period under study.¹¹ The term remained in use until a consultation by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), during the preparation of the 1999 White Paper, 'found there was support for a change of name to British Overseas Territories, or something similar'.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid, 16-17.

¹¹ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, xvii-xviii.

¹² FCO White Paper, *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*, 9.

Introduction

*Hail to Bermuda, my island in the sun.
Sing out in glory, to the nation we've become.
We've grown from heart to heart, and strength to strength, the
privilege is mine...
to sing long live Bermuda, because this island's mine!*

*Hail to Bermuda, my homeland dear to me.
This is my own land built on faith and unity.
We've grown from heart to heart, and strength to strength, for
loyalty is prime, so sing long live Bermuda, because this island's
mine.¹³*

The lyrics of Bermuda's National Song, written in the early 1980s, symbolise the climax of an inchoate process of political devolution that began in 1963. The period sits between two significant points in the history of late British decolonisation. First of all, Harold Macmillan's African Wind of Change tour in early 1960 was a 'synonym for the rapid pace of decolonisation' and for the 'disintegration of white solidarity across the empire'.¹⁴ However, the finality of such a process was called into question by another event, the Falklands War, in 1982. This was described by Conservative MP Alan Clark as a 'battle fought in obedience to a blood tie'. For, as soldiers who fought in the conflict reportedly told Clark, it was much better 'saving our own people' than 'mucking around in the Third World'.¹⁵ This conflict has, however, also been seen as a 'bizarre footnote to empire' and 'a marginal, atavistic gesture' that was nevertheless 'blustery and costly'.¹⁶

These two milestones, symbolising both pragmatic withdrawal and racially-infused irredentism, form parts of Bermuda's unfinished decolonisation story. In 1967, a Labour MP described how, while at a cocktail party in Bermuda, he had been accosted by a gaggle of local whites who told him that they were 'disgusted not only with us, but presumably with [the Conservatives] who

¹³ *Bermuda Sun* (henceforth *Sun*), July 3, 2011.

¹⁴ Ward, *Whirlwind, Hurricane, Howling Tempest*, 49-50.

¹⁵ Clark, *Into Politics*, 366 and 370.

¹⁶ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 329.

began the Wind of Change in Africa'.¹⁷ This sense of bitterness was bound up with a sense of 'betrayal' because Britain was straining to get rid of its last colonies in 1960s and 1970s, while turning away from the Commonwealth towards Europe and dismantling the Sterling Area. Following the Falklands War, however, Britain 'seemed resigned to keeping its remaining dependencies'.¹⁸ This period thus witnessed Britain losing control of the very process by which it was trying to divest itself of empire. Why and how did this happen?

This thesis takes this as its main research question and it will focus on Bermuda in attempting to provide part of the answer. It will do this with the help of two main themes. The first theme involves the process of constitutional evolution which saw a reform towards 'Responsible Government' in 1968. It is argued that this led to a tangible crisis of confusion in how Britain understood its role on the island.

The second theme focuses on the question of local political change. The period 1963-1977 witnessed the birth of Bermudian party politics. Within the context of constitutional change, this helped enshrine a form of contested legitimacy and institutionally-inflated power for conservatives in the ruling United Bermuda Party (UBP). This process of moderate liberalisation and modernisation may also, however, have closed off avenues of healing in the midst of bitter legacies of racial discrimination.

The period begins with the arrival of a new Governor, Lord Martonmere, to 'pomp and pageantry' at the harbour wharf in the capital city of Hamilton in June 1964.¹⁹ It takes a brutal intermission with the assassination of a different Governor, Sir Richard Sharples, as he walked his dog at Government House in

¹⁷ Robert Howarth MP, Debate on the Bermuda Constitution Bill, Hansard, *HC Deb June 14, 1967 vol 748 cc480-519*.

¹⁸ Aldrich, *The Last Colonies*, 30.

¹⁹ For photos and documentation pertaining to Martonmere's arrival ceremony on June 15, 1964, see CO 1031/4369, National Archives, London, UK (henceforth TNA).

March 1973.²⁰ And it ends with the deaths of four men and one woman in executions and rioting in December 1977.²¹

The juxtaposition of sun-drenched pageantry and violence underscores the fact that Bermuda, an English settlement and then Crown Colony from 1609 and 1684 respectively, was a divided island with a black majority that felt shut out of the political process by an entrenched white settler minority.²² This happened on an island in which, in 1968, about 35.7 per cent of Bermuda's population of 50,355 was white, while the other 64.3 per cent was of African, native-American or mixed descent.²³

A legacy of racialised brutality would be memorialised in 2009 with the erection of a statue of the slave Sally Bassett in front of Hamilton's Cabinet Office.²⁴ Bassett had been burned at the stake in the 1730s after being accused of attempting to poison the couple that claimed to own her as well as another slave.²⁵ The debates such divisions engendered invoked the institutional realities and symbolic power of a British colonial tradition rapidly losing confidence in itself as the number of British territories around the world shrank.

Between 1957 and 1964, Britain divested herself of 18 of colonies. From 1964 until 1970, 13 enclaves gained their sovereignty.²⁶ Then, between 1970 and 1983, 16 further territories, none of which had a population of more than 505,000, gained independence.²⁷ However, 'white settler opposition' to racial emancipation and British decolonisation from Central-Southern Africa could act as a 'brake on the process of imperial withdrawal'.²⁸ This meant that technically Rhodesia remained a responsibility of Britain until 1980 and a

²⁰ Letter from Acting Governor IAC Kinnear, May 1, 1973, FCO 63/1095, TNA. See also Ball, *Assassination Culture of Imperial Britain*, 244.

²¹ See especially files FCO 44/1463, 1464 and 1465, TNA. For work on the police investigation however, see MEPO 26/223/1, TNA, and for a first-hand account from one of the police officers involved in the investigation, see Darrell, *Acel'dama*.

²² Dunn, *Downfall of the Bermuda Company*, 487.

²³ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 181.

²⁴ *Gazette*, February 10, 2009.

²⁵ Burchall, *Freedom's Flames*. 23.

²⁶ Self, *Foreign and Defence Policy*, 58.

²⁷ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, xv.

²⁸ Self, *Foreign and Defence Policy*, 61.

Union Jack was kept (albeit in shrunken form) on the South African flag until 1994. According to Darwin, colonial remnants clung 'like barnacles to the old hull of Empire' during the 1970s, 80s and 90s. Of these, Rhodesia, the Falkland Islands and Hong Kong 'caused British governments no end of trouble'.²⁹



Figure 3: Statue of the executed slave Sally Bassett in the grounds of Hamilton's Cabinet office
© Repeating Islands Blog

The linkages between settlers in Kenya, Northern and Southern Rhodesia and British metropolitan political processes during late decolonisation have been documented thoroughly.³⁰ Attention has also rightly focused on the tortured negotiations and 'bitter divisions between Commonwealth states' that

²⁹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 380.

³⁰ See in particular, Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation and Howe, Anticolonialism in British Politics*, while Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, 63, for example, provides a leading politician's first-hand account of the response of the Labour Party to the issues of South African apartheid and the prospect of Rhodesian UDI from 1963 to 1967.

accompanied Britain's attempt to deal with the problem of Rhodesia following its Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965.³¹

Yet, some historians treat the colonies that remained under the British crown after, say, 1968 or 1970 with an air of dismissal.³² There appears to have been an assumption in literature about British foreign policy in the 1970s that the dominance of English-descended settlers in what were then called British Dependent Territories simply evaporated once the overarching global struts of imperial power had fallen away. Self suggests that by the late 1970s all that remained of the once mighty British Empire were a few 'limpet colonies...possessing tiny populations and even less political and economic significance'.³³

In an account that inadvertently lends support to this myth, Craton has detailed how the white minority in black-majority Bahamas clung onto power during a time of universal suffrage but with the aid of gerrymandering in a last-ditch holding-action from the late 1950s until 1967. By 1973, though, the Bahamas had become independent and the white minority's political vehicle, the United Bahamian Party, had been disbanded. The question was: would Bermuda's oligarchy fare any better in managing change on their terms?

One of the aims of this study is therefore to re-insert a story of settler resistance, and especially race, into the literature about British foreign policy and the remaining dependent territories in the 1970s. Drower perhaps underplays the effect that racial legacies of colonialism could have on the 'prevailing keenness' by the British to withdraw from colonies during this period.³⁴ This omission is part of a wider neglect of the idea that racism was 'fundamental to sustaining imperial power', highlighted by Bush and James.³⁵

³¹ Murphy, *By Invitation Only*, 249.

³² Self, *Foreign and Defence Policy*; Harrison, *Finding a Role*.

³³ Self, *Foreign and Defence Policy*, 70.

³⁴ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 31.

³⁵ Bush, *Imperialism, Race, and Resistance*, 18; James, 'What we put in black and white', 18-21.

This thesis also aims to re-invoke a sense of the global context that is missing from much of the scholarship that has appeared about Bermuda. This has been dominated by two trends. The first is an understandably partisan debate over Bermudian political history. On the one hand, Bermuda is cast as an example of how a racist oligarchy effectively stole power from the island's black majority.³⁶ Some of this work underplays the role of individual agency, accident and apathy in British colonialism, while it sees colonial relationships and nationalism in Manichean terms. This argument emphasises the ending of the British institutional connection at the expense of questions of governance. In this view, the British Government 'planned to double its military presence in the region' [in 1970] and Bermuda 'played a key role in Britain's plans for continued hegemony in the West Indies'.³⁷ Such assertions, however, fly in the face of evidence of Britain's desire in the period to end at least formal colonial relationships in the region.

On the other hand, conservative historians portray Bermuda as a stable and prosperous territory that moved into an era of democracy relatively peacefully.³⁸ The shortcomings of this approach are that they accept the claims that the British Empire was a 'liberal' exercise without offering any critique.³⁹ Such a liberal view of empire, in James' words, sees empire as 'a uniquely caring welfare project' that 'protected the weak and improved the lives of "backward" peoples through enlightened industrial, economic, social, and political practices'.⁴⁰

Bermuda needs scholarship that recognises the complex nature of different 'racial' communities and can view the British Empire as a unique, flawed and path-dependent world system. Meanwhile, the mere linkage implicit in the term 'liberal imperialism' should make one question the very meaning and use of the term 'liberal'. If the British Empire was liberal at times, this surely

³⁶ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*; Hodgson, *Second Class Citizens; First Class Men*; Brown, *Struggle for Reform*; Brown, *Race and party politics*, 103-126.

³⁷ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 56.

³⁸ See for example Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, Zuill, *Bermuda and her People*; Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, Williams, *Man of Stature*.

³⁹ Lewis. *The British Empire and world history*, 26-8.

⁴⁰ James, *What we put in black and white*, 21.

points to the compromising, rationalising use of language implicit in this ideology, similar to the ‘situational’ pragmatism implicit in the ideology of conservatism.⁴¹

This thesis argues that the very exercise of ‘liberal imperialism’ in Bermuda exposes how political language consists ‘largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness’.⁴² The story this thesis will tell suggests that the word ‘liberal’ has been irretrievably tainted. Because of this a new concept is needed to describe an ideology that affirms liberal principles but does not allow for the manipulation of language to explain away instances of the denial of meritocracy, equal opportunity and miscarriages of justice. As Orwell argues, ‘political language is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable’.⁴³ This thesis argues that liberalism as an ideology inherently presupposes the manipulation of language to explain away injustice. An alternative may be found amongst theories of Romantic left-libertarianism which recognise the importance of individual expression, self-actualisation and notions of justice in parallel with social solidarity.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, studies also need to place Bermudian political change within the framework of a fascinating period of fragmentation and reconfiguration in British history, during which resistance to non-white immigration meant ‘beleaguered whites in the colony came to serve as a means for comprehending the racial situation at home’.⁴⁵ This study aims to address these lacunae by focusing on the space where colony and metropole meet: the power-sharing dynamics of late colonial government in Bermuda. It will do so by bringing local manifestations of racial division, and the connections of these with latent sympathies, both in Government House and Whitehall, back into the discussion of British policymaking. Drower does acknowledge that Dependent Territories did not move to independence in part because they

⁴¹ Altermatt, *Conservatism in Switzerland*, 583.

⁴² Orwell, *Politics and the English Language*, 115.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 120.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Wilde, *Soul of Man under Socialism*.

⁴⁵ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 396-7.

perceived themselves as having ‘a direct and sentimental link’ with Britain.⁴⁶ It is important to analyse this and understand the content and relative force or weakness of this link, both in structuring political debate and also in setting the tone for how decisions on constitutional change were made.

This thesis will place this late imperial moment in the context of work studying the effects of ‘post-colonial globalisation’ and ‘new nationalism’ in the former British territories of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa.⁴⁷ This school of thought suggests that traditional accounts of decolonisation in Asia and Africa need to be complemented with a study of a ‘more subtle process [which] affected the cultural mindscape’ of the former Dominions. Here, it is argued, a ‘self-styled’ Britishness was naturally more pervasive and entrenched than in many African and Asian territories.⁴⁸ According to Hopkins, for instance, this was catalysed by a ‘novel synthesis’ of ‘post-colonial globalisation... [which] washed over and eventually eroded the boundaries that had marked out both Greater Britain and the colonial dependencies’.⁴⁹

Because of Bermuda’s divided nature, a study of the island will provide an insight into how different approaches to decolonisation interacted with individuals and institutions charged with making and influencing key decisions. The 1960s and 1970s saw ancient habits and codes in Bermuda confronted by both local and international pressures to ‘reinvent’ themselves ‘in the light of the fading certainties of the imperial world’.⁵⁰ This was linked to a Caribbean-regional phenomenon that ensured that, by the 1940s, ‘the intense nationalism and anti-colonialism which marked the African and Asian colonies had not developed’ as powerfully.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 62.

⁴⁷ See Davidson, *De-Dominionisation of Australia*; Ward, ‘Post-Imperial’ Australia; Hopkins, *Rethinking decolonisation*; Ward, *Echoes of Empire*; Østergaard Nielsen and Ward, *Cramped and restricted at home?*; see also the *Embers of Empire* project at the University of Copenhagen (<http://embersofempire.ku.dk/>) for new research being conducted in this area.

⁴⁸ Ward, *Post-Imperial Australia*, 1.

⁴⁹ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 216.

⁵⁰ Ward, *Post-Imperial Australia*, 1.

⁵¹ Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 617.

Parkinson argues, meanwhile that in the British West Indies, ‘the common law legal tradition was not viewed with distrust, as was the case in much of Africa, but was deemed to be the fount of justice’.⁵² This is grossly overstating the case, since the colonial justice system was also viewed by many as a racist institution, which, as in South Africa, ‘enabled white citizens to engage in high levels of private violence with little fear of punishment’.⁵³ However, the comparatively later and weaker growth of nationalism, combined with a more deeply-rooted British legal culture, may have coincided with demographic and institutional factors to weigh in favour of what the author calls affinity decolonisation - that is an approach dominated by racial and cultural attitudes. This may have reflected a ‘penchant for euphemism’ in articulating white supremacy through the coded use of words such as ‘stability’, ‘responsibility’, ‘efficiency’, ‘influence’ and ‘moderation’.⁵⁴

However, this thesis also argues that pragmatic decolonisation – relating to conceptions of strategic, economic or more general global interests - also had an influence in determining action. In attempting to unpack these concepts, it is important to acknowledge that ideas of shared heritage could be closely linked to ideas of shared interest. Meanwhile, both British and American strategic interests were at stake in Bermuda, while officials also believed Britain’s global prestige and reputation could be affected by what happened there.

This was a time of riots, in 1965, 1968, 1970 and 1977, executions, assassination and rising crime. The operation of the security state and of the systems of both colonial justice and mercy are a subject of focus, as 1976 saw two men tried for five murders and then hanged on December 1, 1977. That these hangings immediately sparked riots in which three people died suggests the new Responsible Government constitution of 1968, and the granting of universal suffrage in the 1960s, did not address the racial divisions that festered at the heart of the Bermudian polity.

⁵² Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation* (networked e-book).

⁵³ Evans, *Cultures of Violence*, 211.

⁵⁴ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 401.

This introduction will suggest that the dynamics affecting the process of decolonisation may have caused two key processes to occur. Firstly, the unique dynamics of oligarchical power in Bermuda, complemented by an inward-looking government in the metropole, may have led to British interests and responsibilities becoming marginalised vis-à-vis the still powerful white minority. In this context, British ministers and civil servants seem to have been unwilling to take the risks necessary to honour Britain's historically-accrued responsibilities on the island by addressing fundamental political iniquities. They also seem to have been inclined to escape blame for this failure through the use of legalistic defences and by pointing to ideas of decline and the exigencies of short-term political survival.

It is suggested in this thesis that the pursuit of 'good government' was an important objective of British civil servants and politicians. It involved something of a paradox, since by 1968 the British government had officially passed powers over most domestic matters, except internal security, to local ministers in Bermuda. However, the concern with promoting 'good government' seems to have remained through the 1970s and, if anything, has grown since the late 1990s. Under Labour governments, the more politically-correct term 'governance' tends to replace the term 'government'.⁵⁵

In *Black Power in Bermuda*, Swan refers to the type of cooperation that this confluence of interests and affinities may have produced as the 'Bermuda Triangle of Imperialism'. He details the way in which local manifestations of the Black Power movement were founded as part of an internationally-framed reaction to what was seen as institutional racism, political conservatism and symbolic displays of imperial power.⁵⁶ While not agreeing in every respect with Swan's argument, this thesis takes inspiration from his work, and aims to

⁵⁵ For instance, the FCO's 2012 White Paper on Overseas Territories suggested: "Territories must 'abide by the same basic standards of good government as in the UK'", FCO, *Security, Success and Sustainability*, quoted in Clegg, *UK and...Caribbean Overseas Territories*, 55; See also Clegg and Gold, *Decade of progress and prosperity?*, 15; for the reference to 'governance', see the FCO's 1997 White Paper, *Partners in Peace and Prosperity*, 30, which describes Britain's mission 'to support the good governance' of the Overseas Territories.

⁵⁶ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 53.

emphasise how two sets of evolving power-dynamics interacted and either reinforced or challenged one another.

This links to the second theme, in which ‘Britain’s final abandonment of empire forced settler societies to refashion their own self-images’.⁵⁷ This process seems to have occurred, moreover, as Britishness itself was being refashioned by narratives of international and economic decline twinned with the rise of a ‘new morality’ focusing on material possession, individual freedom and iconoclasm.⁵⁸ There was also wider global change in which ‘the flow of ideas [was] expanding in volume and increasing in speed, across national borders’, and ‘new concepts of universal human rights [were being] enshrined in the charter and resolutions’ of the United Nations (UN).⁵⁹ It will be argued that this period presented both a challenge and an opportunity to the Bermuda oligarchy to embark on a project of change on their terms; something that altered the nature of, but essentially protected, its hold on power.

This chapter will analyse relevant secondary literature on the politics of race, decolonisation and white settlers while setting out an overall argument. It will begin with an account of the centuries-old oligarchy that, in 1963, firmly retained control of the 343-year-old legislature, as well as the key segments of the economy. This introduction will then suggest political reform in Bermuda was occasioned by popular protest and elite adjustment in the context of population growth and growing prosperity. These three factors structured political debate during the period 1963-1977.

The final stage of the argument will suggest that conceptions of British responsibilities and interests (principle and pragmatic approaches) were overwhelmed in the process of decolonisation by affinity linkages that operated primarily through the office of the British Governor but also between colonial and metropolitan political actors and institutions. What Lester calls ‘imperial networks’ or ‘discourses’ were manifested in the form of collusion

⁵⁷ Ward paraphrased in Darian-Smith, Grimshaw and Macintyre, *Britishness abroad*, 10.

⁵⁸ Peter Mandler, *English National Character*, 215-6.

⁵⁹ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 233.

over the constitution, cooperation in the internal security state and shared understandings in the operation of processes of justice and mercy. Finally, there will be a discussion of methodology and structure.⁶⁰

1. Bermuda's Oligarchy and its minority complex: Racism, insecurity and the Anglo-Saxon connection

Five characteristics defined Bermuda's white minority in January 1963, the start of the period of study: insularity, institutionalised racial discrimination, insecurity, violence, and the British cultural connection. In the words of Sir Stephen Luke, 'the unplumbed, salt estranging sea' remained a powerful element dividing Bermuda from its Caribbean and American neighbours.⁶¹ The Atlantic Ocean, however, was also one of the island's key resources. Both white and black Bermudians primarily 'found economic survival, if not prosperity, in the mundane commodities of Atlantic trades' such as shipbuilding, privateering and salt-raking.⁶² Burchall argues that this may have created a 'silent, unspoken pact' that 'enabled black slave crews and white masters to go to sea, with each depending on the cooperation of the other'.⁶³

Because it was dependent largely on slavery, however, Brown has called Bermuda an example of 'racially-structured capitalism', involving paternalism, 'meshed with racism' which was 'the ideological apparatus implemented to justify the degradation of people of African dissent'.⁶⁴ Indentured servitude for blacks began in 1616, only seven years after the first settlers arrived. This quickly evolved into a barbaric system of chattel slavery whose victims were black.⁶⁵ By the early 19th century, blacks formed a majority in Bermuda. Despite the emancipation of slaves in 1834, segregation and discrimination in employment, leisure, housing, education and a restricted property franchise, continued to ensure deep divisions.

⁶⁰ Lester, *Imperial Networks*, 4.

⁶¹ Cox-Alomar, *Anglo-Barbadian Dialogue*, 672.

⁶² Mancke reviews Jarvis, *In the Eye of all Trade*, 672.

⁶³ Burchall, *Fine as Wine*, 112.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 9.

⁶⁵ Paquette, Review of Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda*, 479.

Racial division was the product of a dominant oligarchy that controlled Bermudian economic life and its legislative chamber, the House of Assembly. This was a Caribbean phenomenon in which 'intersecting ideologies of Empire and race...had long been internalised' and 'wealth was coterminous with whiteness'.⁶⁶ The oligarchy that this produced was also insecure. Writing about Europeans in Rhodesia, Kennedy suggests that the distinguishing feature of settler culture was to be found 'not in the cherished values of the settlers' heritage, but in the centripetal forces that distorted that heritage by securing it against all change'.⁶⁷ "To be white was to be privileged, but it was also to be conscious of the tenuous and exclusionary character of that privilege."⁶⁸ The insecurity of the Bermudian oligarchy was focused on both the facts of the island's remoteness and size, but also on demographics.⁶⁹ Fear, however, was based on irrational paranoia rather than experience. Unlike the United States or Jamaica, Bermuda experienced 'no recorded slave rebellions after 1761' although there were several alleged plots before this, for instance in 1656 and 1731.⁷⁰

Bermuda's demographics are fundamental to understanding the culture of her oligarchy and the dynamics of her race relations. Bermuda's white population was larger proportionally than other islands of similar or larger size in the Caribbean vicinity. By the 1670s, in the sugar colony of Barbados, the island with one of the largest white minorities, there were 44,000 backs to 21,000 whites. In Bermuda, there were 1,500 blacks and 4,500 whites.⁷¹

By 1731, whites made up about 57.2 per cent of the population,⁷² while in 1834, Bermuda's population of 10,000 had a white majority of about 5,200 to 4,800.⁷³ By 1968, just over 35 per cent of Bermuda's overall population was

⁶⁶ Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 597 and 599-600.

⁶⁷ Kennedy, *Islands of White*, 192.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 6.

⁶⁹ Bernhard, *Slaves and slaveholders in Bermuda*, 83.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*.

⁷¹ Op. cit, 66.

⁷² Op. cit, 216-217.

⁷³ Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 86.

white.⁷⁴ In contrast, in the Bahamas in 1953, people of Anglo-Saxon or European descent consisted of only 12.6 percent of the entire population.⁷⁵ The existence of a black majority in Bermuda from the early 19th century onwards led overtly racist oligarchs in the House of Assembly to ‘virtually double’ the property value qualifications for voting just before slaves were emancipated in August 1834.⁷⁶

Another feature characterised the culture of Bermuda’s white settlers: racially-infused Britishness that had a defensive air to it. It was linked to insecurity. There are parallels with elites in other British Caribbean territories. Guyana’s white minority, as the ‘principle bearers of British civilisation....in a ‘sea of blackness’ felt physically and culturally vulnerable’. As a result, they ‘harboured a psychological need to reassure themselves...that they were still British’.⁷⁷ Lester shows how this Britishness had a global dimension; it was formed not just locally but also in ‘trans-imperial discourse’ in response to a ‘critique elaborated by British humanitarians’.⁷⁸

Many white Bermudians took part, or expected their children to take part, in this identification. From 1905 until 1958, for example, celebrations of Empire Day, as in Malta, Gibraltar and Australia, were held in Bermuda’s schools.⁷⁹ According to Johnson, this was a Caribbean-wide phenomenon following the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, in which schools ‘continued the tradition of presenting British monarchs as ‘all-knowing and all-caring’.⁸⁰ There is evidence Bermuda was regarded, at least by her oligarchy and British expatriates, as having similarities with Britain’s settled colonies, on the same lines as Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

⁷⁴ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 181.

⁷⁵ Craton, *Bay Street, Black Power and the ‘Conchy Joes’*, 81.

⁷⁶ Smith, *Evolution of Bermuda’s Franchise*, 6.

⁷⁷ Moore, *Colonial Elites of 19th-century Guyana*, 111.

⁷⁸ Lester, *British Settler Discourse*, 25.

⁷⁹ Bloomfield, *Drill and dance as symbols of imperialism*, 76.

⁸⁰ Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 597.

2. Bermudian political reform in the midst of popular protest, growing prosperity and demographic change

In the 1950s, legal segregation permeated Bermuda. Burchall describes how at white-owned movie theatres blacks ‘were only allowed to sit downstairs’ and ‘down front and on the sides’, while the black-owned movie theatres ‘could only get old re-runs, and late runs and played-out movies’. Meanwhile, ‘almost all table service restaurants were closed to blacks’, as were most hotels. Schools were also segregated.⁸¹ Bermudian political change and the parameters of debate were structured by three key factors – protest, population growth and prosperity. Firstly, political change in this period would not have happened in the way it did without civil rights demonstrations, labour confrontations and lobbying in parliament. A protest movement amongst black Bermudians took inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement in the United States.

In June 1959, activists led by the Progressive Group stirred a successful boycott of white-owned theatres that led to their desegregation.⁸² Burchall, who took part in the boycott as a 17-year-old, notes that the demonstration ‘attracted much Police attention’ and ‘there was an exciting air of danger with a feeling of revolution’. In Burchall’s view the Progressive Group ‘galvanised black Bermudians and created a strong impetus and desire for change’.⁸³

Contextual factors also contributed to the atmosphere in which political changes were made and also became entrenched in political debate. Cox-Alomar argues that a similar ‘confluence’ of ‘powerful catalysts’, including a tourism boom, economic and social development and rising prosperity ‘led to constitutional reforms that enabled ‘Barbados to go it alone’.⁸⁴ Similar changes were occurring in Bermuda. Firstly, the island’s population more than

⁸¹ Burchall, *Fine as Wine*, 52.

⁸² Williams, *When Voices Rise* (film).

⁸³ Burchall, *Fine as Wine*, 51.

⁸⁴ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean*, 84.

doubled from 20,127⁸⁵ in 1931 to 52,610 in 1971.⁸⁶ Part of this population growth was linked to the government's active focus on European immigration in the post-war years.⁸⁷ As Brown argues, during the 1960s, the number of non-Bermudians on the island increased by about 66 percent. Of this increase, 83 per cent was of European descent.⁸⁸

However, this population boom was also connected with the boom in tourism that produced unequally distributed prosperity. Although the first signs of Bermuda becoming a prime tourist location were seen in the early 1880s, the tourism boom did not really begin until the 1920s.⁸⁹ In that decade, a community of about 400 black Bermudians, mainly farmers, fishermen and boat-builders living in Tucker's Town, 'were forced out to make way for the creation of an exclusive enclave for wealthy white American tourists'. Acts such as this [which] laid the foundation for Bermuda's success in tourism for most of the 20th Century', also laid the foundations for more discrimination, namely the 1930 Hotel Keepers Protection Act, which gave hotels the right to turn away black and Jewish guests.⁹⁰

Anxieties and opportunities associated with the growth in tourism would have the potential to tap into some of the most painful corners of Bermuda's racial divide. By the 1950s, conservative Members of the Colonial Parliament (MCPs) such as Sir Henry Tucker, who went on to head the UBP and served as Bermuda's first Government Leader between 1968 and 1971, were pointing to the prejudices of American tourists as justification for allowing the continuation of segregation in the island's hotels.⁹¹ Tucker's excuses were as craven and bigoted as they were inaccurate. After blacks won basic civil rights in the 1960s, the industry continued to grow at breakneck speed. The number

⁸⁵ Zuill, *Story of Bermuda*, 158.

⁸⁶ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 216.

⁸⁷ The maternal grandfather of the author of this thesis settled in Bermuda in the late 1940s after being posted there during the Second World War and then emigrating, along with his wife and daughter from Hawick in the borders of Scotland.

⁸⁸ Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 103.

⁸⁹ Burchall in *Sun*, December 21, 2011.

⁹⁰ "Reporting on Race" in *Sun*, July 2, 2013; see also Griffith, *Tourism in the Commonwealth Caribbean*, 223.

⁹¹ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 110.

of visitors to the island had risen from 71,000 in 1950 to 193,000 in 1962.⁹² Over the next ten years the figure more than doubled. To put this in regional perspective, the much larger island of Barbados welcomed 35,535 visitors in 1960, 64,418 in 1965 and 91,000 in 1967.⁹³ Bermuda's boom continued in the 1970s. Between 1972 and 1979, the period considered to be the most successful period of Bermudian tourism, arrivals jumped from 420,950 a year to a stunning 599,145 per annum.⁹⁴ By the time the tourism decline started in the 1980s, Bermuda had begun to carve out a new lucrative position as a centre of global reinsurance.

Thus, Bermudian political change took place in the context of rising yet unequally distributed prosperity. A Colonial Office report in June 1964: "The result [of the tourism boom] is a high national income, a high standard of living for all, high population densities and full employment."⁹⁵ According to Stewart, Bermuda's relative prosperity rested on the 'performance of the tourist industry and [from the early 1980s] international business'.⁹⁶ Both Bermuda's prosperity and artificially managed population growth through expatriate immigration became key components in conservative political discourse during the period 1963 and 1977. Demands for constitutional reform and anxieties over internal security were filtered through a lens that tied fear of racial emancipation to Bermuda's identity as a 'thriving tourist resort' and the island's perceived need for its 'steady and continuous' expansion.⁹⁷ In the view of King, 'civil disorder' was seen as having 'the potential to damage ...the tourism and international business on which Bermuda's economy entirely depend[ed].'⁹⁸

However, because prosperity was 'structurally dependent' on the importation of foreign workers, immigration also had the power to threaten the oligarchy's

⁹² *Bermuda and the United Nations*, June 4, 1964, CO 1027/610, TNA.

⁹³ Cox-Alomar, *Britain's withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean*, 83.

⁹⁴ Bermuda Government, *Bermuda Report 1972-9*, 87.

⁹⁵ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

⁹⁶ Stewart, *Economy of Bermuda*, 60.

⁹⁷ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

⁹⁸ King, *Policing during political transition*, 256.

hold on power.⁹⁹ This is because it formed a hinge point between questions of prosperity in an increasingly globalised and competitive economy¹⁰⁰ and cleavages of race, Britishness and other questions of identity. These tapped into issues of political disenfranchisement, labour relations and resentment towards the island's police force. Because this force was predominantly white, male and expatriate, it became 'an identifiable focus of pro-independence sentiment and resistance'.¹⁰¹ King and Sigler argue that, across the remnants of empire, police forces became 'symbols of colonial power', which made them attractive to some conservative officials who saw them as a pliable tool with which to manage security.¹⁰²

This thesis argues that prosperity and immigration became two sides of a same coin of Bermudian political debate. In 1963 and 1964, two political parties were founded to take shape this debate. The Progressive Labour Party (PLP) founded in February 1963 was set up by progressive activists in a bid to challenge conservative MCPs (Members of the Colonial Parliament), all independents at that point, at the polls in the May 1963 election. After the PLP won six of the nine seats it contested, the United Bermuda Party (UBP) was founded in August 1964 with Bank of Bermuda chairman Tucker as its leader.

After being founded in August 1964, the UBP went on to win eight successive elections between 1968 and 1998. The UBP's journey within this period also might be understood as part of the elaboration of an identity that depended on incumbency and oligarchical entrenchment, as well as on the colonial connection. Arguably, this was being attenuated by 'the destruction of the core concept of Britishness' that Hopkins argues occurred during this period.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ In 1999, expatriates held 24 per cent of all jobs on the island, *ibid*, 252.

¹⁰⁰ A good example of the UBP-centric justification of 'liberal immigration' in Bermuda can be found in Stewart, *Economy of Bermuda*, 100-101. Stewart argues that immigration 'raised Bermudian incomes and contributes to a dynamic, ever changing society' and that 'only with the participation of the best brains in the world would Bermuda become a leader in its chosen economic fields', 101.

¹⁰¹ King, *Separate but Equal*, 218 and 220.

¹⁰² Sigler and King, *Colonial policing*, 13-22.

¹⁰³ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 215.



Figure 4: Sir Henry Tucker, Government Leader of Bermuda (and leader of the United Bermuda Party), from May 1968 until December 1971.

© Gordon Phillips, *First, One Thousand Miles...: Bermudian Enterprise and the Bank of Bermuda*, (Cambridge, 1992).

As the debate over reforms to the Parliamentary Act 1945 had raged in the early 1960s, one member of the House of Assembly reminded fellow parliamentarians of the ‘almost dominion-like status’ that Bermuda had enjoyed over the previous 280 years.¹⁰⁴ Through constitutional means that entrenched the oligarchy’s hold on power, now with the benefit of a nominally democratic overcoat, the elite discourse that surrounded Bermuda’s political journey took on an air of ‘de-dominionisation’.¹⁰⁵ This entailed an ‘ambiguous emergence from the imperial era’, something of a ‘subtle process [which] had begun to alter the cultural mindscape of countries that had once identified with Empire and Britishness’.¹⁰⁶ However, because the island’s majority had every reason to reject this forced heritage, a clash was in the making.

¹⁰⁴ Hodgson, *Second Class Citizens; First Class Men*, 191.

¹⁰⁵ Jim Davidson quoted in Schreuder and Ward, *Australia’s Empire*, 396.

¹⁰⁶ Ward, ‘Post-Imperial’ Australia, 1-2.

It was in the 1960s and 1970s that Bermudian Britishness ostensibly began to slip in influence, even among the oligarchy. For example, there was the symbolic change in the name of the public holiday on May 24. As in the rest of the British Empire, Queen Victoria's birthday had from 1905 been celebrated as Empire Day. It was renamed Commonwealth Day in 1958. By 1979, however, this holiday had been renamed Bermuda Day, which is still celebrated on May 24 with a marathon and a float parade through the capital city of Hamilton.¹⁰⁷ The day ceased to be Commonwealth Day in the 1960s. Commonwealth Day moved again in the mid-1970s to the second Monday in March. On similar lines, Ward has pointed to how 'new nationalism' in the 1960s across territories such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand and even in Scotland, may have reacted to the decline of metropolitan Britain and of the Commonwealth with a focus on civic institution-building. These territories 'did not actively struggle for liberation from imperial rule' but 'exhibited profound nationalist tendencies that would transform their civic landscapes'.¹⁰⁸

It is uncertain whether Bermuda's ruling oligarchy was consciously influenced by the apparent need to 'move the idea of the nation beyond the bounds of Britishness'.¹⁰⁹ It may be difficult to argue that Bermuda exhibited 'profound nationalist tendencies', although the nominally pro-independence PLP did consistently win between 33 and 45 per cent of the vote in elections between 1968 and 1976. A referendum in August 1995, boycotted by the majority of PLP supporters, was 'clearly won' by opponents of independence by a majority of 74.1 per cent to 25.9 per cent, on a turnout of just under 59 per cent.¹¹⁰

The rejection of independence could have been as much about 'cost and benefit' assessments as it was about sentimental ties. "The British constitutional link was thought to underwrite the political stability which the

¹⁰⁷ Bermuda Government website, *Bermuda Day*; Hopkins says Empire Day had already been 'in decline' when its name was changed in 1958 to 'Commonwealth Day' which 'fared little better', *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 231.

¹⁰⁸ Ward, *Cramped and restricted at home?*, 17.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹⁰ Aldrich, *Last Colonies*, 273.

territory's economy was believed to need to flourish.”¹¹¹ Thus, the claim to prosperity and oligarchical incumbency may have been linked to the subconscious fallback on a buttress of Britishness. This supervening ideological context implied white supremacy in cultural terms if not overtly in a strict racial sense. Moreover, this linkage seems to have played a part in forming the complex bundle of attitudes with which key actors approached the prospect of British decolonisation.

3. Affinity-based, Pragmatic or Principled: Three discourses of decolonisation

This thesis sets out a typology of three discourses of decolonisation. All of these relate to differences in what the British Empire, and consequently the prospect of decolonisation, would have meant to individuals who made and influenced key decisions. One or a combination of them may have, in the words of Wiener, ‘exert[ed]...pressure’ on the way in which decisions were made.¹¹²

The first discourse of decolonisation is a normative one that may have seen the empire as a vast burden of duty and responsibility – a trust or a bundle of legacies. This decolonisation of principle relates to the notion of imperial trusteeship in which British decision-makers saw themselves as holding a moral responsibility to act for the welfare of the colonies. However, a normative approach could also signify the recognition of imperial legacies of racism that, it was suggested, entailed Britain taking a more, not less, interventionist stance in colonial affairs before decolonisation could be completed. As Howe argues, in lobbying to tackle the racist legacies of British imperialism, anticolonialist campaigners became ‘retrospective captives to an ideology of trusteeship which they had never accepted’.¹¹³

The second discourse of decolonisation is one that places emphasis on strategic, economic or more diffuse ‘global’ interests, and an appeal to

¹¹¹ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 201.

¹¹² Wiener, *Empire on Trial*, 6.

¹¹³ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 311.

national ego and prestige that it believed to be linked to such notions. This will be called pragmatic decolonisation. Colonial policy during the 1940s began to be ‘scrutinised from the broader perspectives of national interest’.¹¹⁴ Reference to national interests is common throughout the historiography of decolonisation. Gallagher and Robinson, for example, suggest that ‘throughout the Victorian period Responsible Government was withheld from colonies if it involved sacrificing or endangering British paramountcy or interests’.¹¹⁵ More recently, Clegg argues:

*If independence is not an option [in Overseas Territories], the UK government must gain reassurance that greater autonomy for the territories will not jeopardise its interests.*¹¹⁶

Interests could be political, cultural, economic or strategic but could also relate to more nebulous ideas such as prestige or ‘influence’. Hyam suggests that decolonisation accelerated during the 1960s because Labour ministers especially considered it was ‘now...threatening [Britain’s] prestige and reputation, and becoming a liability’.¹¹⁷ However, notions of influence could, but did not always, relate to affinity-based decolonisation in denoting shared cultural understandings.

The final discourse relates to feelings of affinity, or alternatively the alienation, that actors might feel in relation to common and contested identities of Britishness or race. Ward argues that the Wind of Change speech by Macmillan in February 1960 came at a ‘decisive moment in a long-standing dialogue about Britain’s obligations to “kith and kin” abroad’.¹¹⁸ Kith and Kin means ‘blood relatives or members of one’s own nation or race’.¹¹⁹ It is important to study how much influence such affinities, whether cultural, racial or both, could exert as orienting mechanisms in influencing decolonisation.

¹¹⁴ Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy*, 39.

¹¹⁵ Gallagher and Robinson, *Imperialism of Free Trade*, 4.

¹¹⁶ Clegg, *UK and...Caribbean Overseas Territories*, 63.

¹¹⁷ Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 409.

¹¹⁸ Ward, *Whirlwind, hurricane, howling tempest*, 50; For examples of academic scholarship that allude to the effect feelings of ‘kith and kin’ may have had on British government policy, see Watts, *Killing kith and kin*, 382-415

¹¹⁹ *Times of India*, November 13, 2004.

While constitutional reform and justice processes seem to have led to a critique of Bermudian decolonisation on anticolonialist, moral responsibility grounds, overarching policy seems to have been shaped more by an affinity-based approach, which emphasised linkages between Government House, UBP ministers and certain civil servants in Whitehall. This captured the pragmatic approach by cloaking itself in its language; in notions of metropolitan decline and reconfigured priorities. It had to express itself through this language, moreover, because the language of overt white solidarity was becoming rightly ostracised from elite discourse, as is evoked by Enoch Powell's removal from the Conservative shadow cabinet following his explosive 'Rivers of Blood' speech in April 1968.¹²⁰ The affinity-based approach was also bolstered by the decentralised, institutional realities of empire. As this introduction will go on to argue, a habitual, although by no means uniform, collusion between Governors, local politicians and certain London-based officials dominated the course of Bermudian 'de-dominionisation' more than any appeal to notions of wider British interest, international prestige or historical responsibility.

3.1 Principled decolonisation

The first type of decolonisation may have been more normative in emphasising espoused principle, over interest or affinity/alienation. This suggests decision-makers such as MPs, ministers and civil servants may have used as a guide for their actions the rhetoric that increasingly accompanied the operation of foreign and colonial policy from the 1950s onwards. This could include vocal commitments to democracy¹²¹, racial equality¹²² or to

¹²⁰ Schwarz argues that through this racist language, Powellism fought a 'sectional rearguard defence against the loss of empire', *White Man's World*, 385.

¹²¹ At the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in January 1971, for example, those attending were able to 'agree to a declaration of Commonwealth principles, which asserted the inalienable right of all citizens' within the organisation to 'participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which they live'. Judd, *Empire*, 388.

¹²² Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd told the UN General Assembly in 1957: "We reject the idea of any inherent superiority of one race over another. Our policy is therefore non-racial." September 17, 1957. McIntire, *Speeches in World History*, 436.

individual human rights¹²³. Such a view may also have stemmed from the view that ‘colonialism was an evil for British society as well as for the colonised’; it was something ‘morally corrupting’ and ‘inimical to the better self of British, or English, national identity’. Principled decolonisation was thus part of a ‘moral case for change’, part of a campaign ‘against hunger, poverty and racism’¹²⁴ and a belief in ‘basic human rights’.¹²⁵

This thesis will argue, however that such an appeal to ‘principle’ in decolonisation also entailed a recalibration of traditional understandings of anticolonialism. Decolonisation of principle was the object of Bermuda’s civil rights reformers who appealed to the better angels of Britain’s nature from at least 1946 onwards. It entailed an argument not for less intervention, but for *more* robust intervention on liberal lines to tackle ancient legacies of racism and the iniquities of settler capitalism. Hitchens tentatively labels the recognition of this ‘inheritance of responsibility’ as the ‘global man’s burden’.¹²⁶ Principled decolonisation in Bermuda would be characterised by a new ‘trusteeship’ of internationalism and by sensitivity both to the legacies of division wrought and exacerbated by Britain and the need to face down ‘attempts by... white settler communities, to retain one or other form of control’.¹²⁷ This thesis will argue, however, that decolonisation of principle was overwhelmed both by a real weakening and reorientation of where Britain considered its interests to be and by a decolonisation of affinity that could sometimes cloak itself in a discourse of pragmatism.

3.2 Pragmatic decolonisation and changing perceptions of British interests

A discourse of pragmatism was occasioned by major changes in Britain’s world role during the 1960s. These stemmed in part from international circumstances but also from problems with the country’s balance of payments.

¹²³ Foreign Secretary David Owen suggested that he came to office in the spring of 1977, he brought with him a particular emphasis on protecting human rights. Interview conducted by the author with Lord Owen in London, UK, on May 23, 2013.

¹²⁴ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 301-2.

¹²⁵ Fenner Brockway MP, quoted in *ibid*, 276.

¹²⁶ Hitchens, *Perils of Partition*, 492.

¹²⁷ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 302.

Focus on the potentials for embarrassment on a global dimension were increasingly played upon in the expanding UN.¹²⁸ Britain was also increasingly ‘ritually harangued’ by ‘anti-western rhetoric’ in the Commonwealth.¹²⁹ In this way, one set of interests, (strategic and economic national interests) were pitted against another set (estimations of global influence and prestige).

Secondly, Wilson’s government from 1964 until 1970 ‘squirmed and wriggled’¹³⁰ between conflicting commitments to maintain both full employment and the fixed value of Sterling at \$2.80, with a symbolic devaluation in November 1967. As a result, Britain took the decision in early 1968 to cut back on her strategic commitments East of Suez, a move that symbolised ‘the final collapse of the postwar campaign to remain a great power’.¹³¹ There was also a ‘sharp surge in the awareness of Britain’s relative economic decline’ and a shift in policy by Britain as she turned away from empire as a whole as her trade shifted towards Europe.¹³²

Yet these changes were refracted through three particular regional realities that characterised the challenges associated with decolonisation in the Caribbean. These three factors were: the proximity of the United States, occasional local reluctance to countenance independence and fragmentation, which encouraged policy incoherence and abortiveness.

Although, for example, £14.4 million worth of British goods were exported from Britain to Bermuda in 1976, Britain had no major commercial stake in Bermuda.¹³³ But Britain’s strategic role in Bermuda was more substantial, although it lessened after the Royal Naval Dockyard, which had been open since the early 19th century, shut down in the late 1950s. Interests were subsequently linked either to Britain’s use of Bermuda as an air-staging facility or to the presence of the United States Air Force and then Naval Base

¹²⁸ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 233-234.

¹²⁹ Murphy, *By Invitation Only*, 249 and 254.

¹³⁰ Darwin, *Empire Project*, 640.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Mandler, *English National Character*, 215.

¹³³ Notes of meeting between Bermuda Premier David Gibbons and David Owen, October 20, 1977. FCO 44/1456, TNA.

between 1941 and 1995. ‘Ground stations for controlling submarine listening devices were located in... Bermuda’ while ‘American aircraft which observed naval movements in the North Atlantic were allowed to operate from Bermuda’.¹³⁴

This American dimension was important. Britain was compelled to care how the Americans felt about the way in which she decolonised, particularly as the Cold War ‘change[d] political calculations’ so that ‘by the late 1950s an overriding concern was the need to manage transfers of power in the manner least likely to facilitate the spread of communism’.¹³⁵ As a result, American perceptions were influential in helping to speed up or slow down constitutional evolution in the Caribbean.¹³⁶

Secondly and thirdly, it must be noted that decolonisation policy in the Caribbean displayed two particular features of reactivity, exacerbated by fragmentation, and a local reluctance on the part of small islands to countenance independence. By 1991, Britain still had responsibility for 14 overseas territories, six of which were to be found in the Caribbean or North Atlantic region. It was between 1979 and 1982 that the ‘era of decolonisation’ ended and a ‘new era of colonial permanence’ began.¹³⁷ If true, this suggests Britain was far from being able to dictate the pace or shape of events during the period of late decolonisation.

The reluctance of colonies such as Bermuda to countenance independence in the face of Labour’s drive to disengage and refocus on domestic matters was met with a pragmatic response in the late 1960s. In the words of Commonwealth Secretary George Thomson: “The wishes of the people concerned must be the main guide to action.”¹³⁸ Although during the 1970s,

¹³⁴ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 12; for a fairly comprehensive account of especially the later years of the the United States military presence in Bermuda until 1995, see Grearson, *USS Bermuda*; for an account of the way in which the presence of the US base could affect both criminal court proceedings and race relations in Bermuda, see High, *Racial Politics of Criminal Jurisdiction*, 77-105.

¹³⁵ Stockwell, *British Empire*, 279.

¹³⁶ Cox-Alomar, *Anglo-Barbadian Dialogue*.

¹³⁷ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, xi.

¹³⁸ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 20 and xv.

Britain's 'wish to be rid of the dependent territories grew', Britain was also committed to not forcing colonies into independence if they did not wish it.

This reluctance helped to engender a series of ill-fated and disjointed policy solutions. The West Indies Federation had been seen as 'a method by which Britain's financial responsibility for the smaller, less-developed territories would be gradually shifted to the larger islands'.¹³⁹ With the collapse of this entity in May 1962, British policy was essentially fragmented, forced to deal with all of the islands, some of which did not want independence, as separate entities. Similarly, a new policy of creating more autonomous Associated States in the Eastern Caribbean from 1967 onwards floundered following the much-criticised British military intervention in Anguilla in March 1969.¹⁴⁰

Local reluctance and fragmentation combined to breed incoherent and rather ad hoc constitutional solutions. In 2000, former Governor of Montserrat David Taylor wrote a scathing critique of the constitutional model of Overseas Territories, claiming that the division of powers it encompassed effectively sabotaged Britain's ability to head off and manage potential crises while 'provid[ing] continuous opportunities for turf wars' between local ministers and Government House.¹⁴¹

As the later 1960s and especially the middle and later 1970s were a period during which Britain was keen on relinquishing its remaining colonial commitments, much would depend on how much weight Britain placed on its strategic interest in Bermuda vis-à-vis the embarrassment it could suffer in the UN as a result of oligarchical excesses. Yet this would also depend upon the remaining power of the various repositories of affinity located in imperial networks of Britishness.

This section has suggested that various conceptions of British interest, and of the relative importance of specific interests vis-à-vis perceptions of Britain's wider global role, could play a powerful part in shaping decolonisation

¹³⁹ Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 621.

¹⁴⁰ *Spectator*, March 29, 1969.

¹⁴¹ Taylor, *Insoluble dilemma*, 338-9.

approaches. The practice of choosing successors was encouraged by the United States, for instance during British decolonisation from British Guiana. But it could also lead to tensions at the international level because it could play, should such policies lead to ongoing and expanding security commitments, into a sense of strategic ‘overstretch’.¹⁴² Meanwhile, where it was believed British interests would be served by territories moving to independence, the FCO was faced with a dilemma of having to convince territories they could make in on their own.

It will be argued that, in the case of Bermuda, this desire helped Britain to agree to confidence-boosting constitutional engineering proposals for local governments that were incoherent. Disengagement of pragmatism provided the overriding institutional context in which decolonisation was justified and conceived. However, as the next sub-section will argue, while notions of British interest and pragmatic withdrawal were significant motives for action, in Bermuda’s case assessments of British interest could be overwhelmed by affinity-based decolonisation, in part because of the differences in interpretation of what interests meant across the different levels of the colonial state.

3.3 Affinity-based decolonisation

The language of pragmatism does not tell the whole or even most of the story of late British decolonisation in Bermuda because race was always lurking beneath the surface. James points to the way in which Darwin underplays ‘the racial implications of British imperial policy’ in his analysis of Seretse Khama’s exile from Bechuanaland.¹⁴³ However, Darwin does perceptively note the way in which archives could ‘turn their readers into captives’ through ‘the self-serving official minute [which was] insidiously transformed into historical narrative’.¹⁴⁴ A focus on interests may have been the received Whitehall discourse of decolonisation but it did not necessarily embody the source of motivations and sympathies. While the role of racism in both imperial

¹⁴² Murphy, Review of Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Imperial Endgame*, 158.

¹⁴³ James, *What we put in black and white*, 19.

¹⁴⁴ Darwin, *Decolonisation and the End of Empire*, 556.

expansion and disengagement has been theorised and contested,¹⁴⁵ the official record was cultivated to reflect an ‘image of orderliness’, while in places such as Northern Rhodesia ‘whites felt no Wind of Change’ and high-sounding rhetoric left ‘the issue of race to fester’.¹⁴⁶

Despite this there has been a resurgence in efforts to theorise an idea of whiteness as a political organising function in its own right.¹⁴⁷ For instance, racial attitudes ‘changed and hardened’ in conjunction with events such as the 1857 Indian Rebellion and the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica, meaning notions of coloniser and whiteness became intermingled.¹⁴⁸ Whites were deemed to be constituents of what was known as Greater Britain, ‘precisely because they were not natives’. As Schwarz suggests, ideas of rarefied white colonisers who were repositories of British cultural superiority, juxtaposed against a broad mass of ‘natives’, may have been a structural component in notions of imperial liberalism:

*The liberality of one, based on an imagined kinship, was a function of the illiberality of the other, based on an equally imaginary conception of inherent racial authority.*¹⁴⁹

The question of how this ‘imagined kinship’ affected decolonisation in Bermuda is fascinating because there ideas of indigeneity were not simple dichotomies. There were no native people in Bermuda and whites arrived a few years before blacks. As a result of the history of slavery and segregation, race relations were in some respects, therefore, more akin to those in the Caribbean where native populations had been largely decimated and descendants of African slaves formed a majority of the population.

However, as a result of Bermuda’s continued colonial status, the uprootedness and dissonance of a race relations characterised by slavery led to a

¹⁴⁵ See Johnson, *British Imperialism*; Bolt, *Race and the Victorians*; Brantlinger, *Rule of Darkness*; Schwarz, *White Man’s World*; Watts, *Killing Kith and Kin*; Murphy, *Intricate and distasteful subject*.

¹⁴⁶ Lewis, *White Man in the Woodpile*, 77 and 81.

¹⁴⁷ Steve Garner, *Whiteness*; Schwarz, *White Man’s World*.

¹⁴⁸ Bolt, *Race and the Victorians*, 127.

¹⁴⁹ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 66.

confrontation with transnational imperial identities of whiteness that gained strength from the idea of its international element. British-infused and legally formalised white power seems to have been consciously refashioned into an identity of repressed fragility and fear, expressed in the language of prosperity and order, as Britain seemed to evolve into a decidedly ‘irritated’ and ‘impatient’ imperial power.¹⁵⁰

By the 1960s, notions of bounded whiteness could still impact approaches to decolonisation. If racism did not play an active part here, it at least seemed as if some British civil servants were not averse to an idea of the Federation as a ‘white man’s country’ in which ‘Africans [would] never be likely to achieve full political equality in any foreseeable time’.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, Lewis argues that during his ostensible attempt to revive Britain’s ‘liberal image’ with the Wind of Change tour, Macmillan displayed little inclination to listen to African nationalists while visiting Northern Rhodesia.¹⁵² Visiting Bermuda in 1957, Macmillan summed his own insouciance when he noted: “I heard no complaints of treatment which bore unjustly on the colonial citizens of the Island.”¹⁵³

At least after 1960, however, there was very little open talk of ‘pride of race’ in discussions of the colonies of settlement.¹⁵⁴ This is not to say that progressive forces won out. Watts argues that at least a subconscious sympathy to ‘kith and kin’ may have been used by the Wilson government as a ‘convenient pretext to avoid the use of force’ against rebellious Europeans in Rhodesia in the mid-1960s.¹⁵⁵ It may be more accurate to argue this was a period in which changing perceptions of the utility of the Commonwealth for notions of British prestige were interacting with evolving perceptions of race in Britain as ‘the steady demise of Empire was instrumental in reconfiguring the multifarious meanings of Britishness’.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 27.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 60-1.

¹⁵² Lewis, *White Man in the Woodpile*, 79.

¹⁵³ Hodgson, *Second-Class Citizens; First-Class Men*, 119.

¹⁵⁴ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 228.

¹⁵⁵ Watts, *Rhodesia’s UDI*, 81.

¹⁵⁶ Ward, “Introduction” in idem, *British Culture and the End of Empire*, 16.

This study will not suggest that the racism implicit in the notion of affinity always operated as a conscious force. Such an attitude may have been as powerful for what it ruled out as it was for the actions it engendered. A particularly interesting parallel for Bermuda's case may have been the situation in Rhodesia. It has been argued that the white supremacist regime was something the British believed they could 'tolerate' in light of what it believed were the alternatives of 'instability and authoritarianism which rapidly began to characterise many post-independence African states'.¹⁵⁷ In this way, the use of force was ruled out because it was believed the British body politic and the higher echelons of the military could not countenance it. In September 1963, Labour MP Tony Benn suggested, with regards to Southern Rhodesia, that he could see in his party 'all the elements that led the French socialists astray on Algeria and it is rather frightening'.¹⁵⁸

It will be argued that in the case of Bermuda, legitimate grievances of the island's black majority, who had been shut out of the democratic process, were undervalued or dismissed by both London and Government House as a result of the continuing power of a transnational identity of whiteness. This impeded practical action precisely because the empire was decentralised and dependent upon the actions of Governors and locally-based officials more than on any centrally directed policy. It is towards the role of these white, English 'men on the spot' that this introduction now turns.

3.4 Governors looking down from Langton Hill: Evolving affinities, the pursuit of divergent interests and continuing responsibilities

Constitutional reform and 'post-colonial globalisation' may have formed a part of the complex views of the four men who filled the office of Governor during the period under study. Significantly, three of the men who occupied the office were former Conservative MPs (Lord Martonmere 1964-1972, Sir

¹⁵⁷ Murphy, *Intricate and Distasteful Subject*, 765, 747 and 772.

¹⁵⁸ Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, 64.

Richard Sharples 1972-3 and Sir Edwin Leather 1974-1977) while one of them, Sir Peter Ramsbotham (1977-1980), was the son of a Conservative MP but had been Britain's Ambassador to the United States before his precipitous demotion. It will be suggested during this thesis that the personalities of the different Governors profoundly affected their assessments of both British interests and responsibilities as well as more fluid feelings of cultural affinity or alienation. The role of Governors was defined by three characteristics of image, constitutional responsibilities, and the shaping power they could apply to Whitehall's perceptions of colonial realities.

Hyam evokes something of the elitist romance attached to residence in Bermuda's Government House when he describes the 'studied remoteness, vigorous presentation and demi-god aloofness' implicit in the imperial project.¹⁵⁹ In contrast, Stockwell suggests that Governors could be 'downright nasty'.¹⁶⁰ Yet the job of Governor in Bermuda increasingly demanded 'creative leadership', riddled as it was by contradictions that pitted a rhetoric of self-rule and autonomy against a desire by territories such as Bermuda to 'have their cake and eat it'.¹⁶¹



Figure 5: Ariel shot of Bermuda's Government House, Pembroke Parish. © Gordon Hireson, *Kiwanis Club of Bermuda pictorial tribute to Sir Richard Sharples: Governor and Commander-in-Chief (Bermuda, 1973)*.

¹⁵⁹ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 308.

¹⁶⁰ Stockwell, *The British Empire*, 271.

¹⁶¹ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 28.

In this battle of wills, Governors were on the front line. From the early 17th century until the 1960s, the Governor had, as in the Bahamas and other colonies, exercised full executive power at the head of an Executive Council, from which he and other members could initiate most legislation. Both the Executive Council (based on a previous and powerful Governor's Council) and an upper legislative chamber called the Legislative Council were created by Letters Patent in the 1880s.

Williams notes that a survey of Governors conducted by the Colonial Office in the 19th century revealed that many sounded 'exhausted, beleaguered and ill'.¹⁶² Although Ramsbotham suggested to his successor that the job provided a good opportunity for hobbies such as bird-watching¹⁶³, for most of its history, Bermuda was no holiday for those posted there. In the late 17th century, one Governor had described the island as a 'pittyfull place ...that none but an indigent man is fitt for'.¹⁶⁴ Bermuda governors were assaulted by settlers on more than one occasion.¹⁶⁵ In the 1970s, despite perceptions of Bermuda as a 'peaceful paradise', the job would get more dangerous, not less.

Apart from a phlegmatic manner in the face of peril, much would depend on how these men, three of whom were English and one Canadian, interpreted their continually evolving constitutional responsibilities, as it would depend on a mixed atmosphere of siege and tranquility. Indeed, as islands gained more self-government in the 1960s and 1970s, the position of a once influential, if not all-powerful, Governor could be weakened. Governors could 'sometimes become isolated and unaware'.¹⁶⁶ However, a more important question regards how Governors were able to exercise their mix of public and private roles alongside the requirement of promoting their territory whilst also defending British interests.

¹⁶² Williams, *Running the Show*, 4.

¹⁶³ Posnett, *Scent of Eucalyptus*, 176.

¹⁶⁴ Dunn, *Downfall of the Bermuda Company*, 509-511.

¹⁶⁵ In the early 1680s, Governor Richard Coney was 'assaulted by a gang who tripped him up, stamped on him, and broke a sword over his body'. *Ibid*, 511 and 508.

¹⁶⁶ Hintjens and Hodge, *Governing Unruliness*, 195.

Finally, even though their powers were curtailed as decolonisation progressed, Governors remained important. These diplomats were not just ‘tea-sipping, zoo-going, map-gazing, armchair proconsuls’.¹⁶⁷ Even if they did struggle to balance British and local interests, London officials still ‘hung on the advice of the Governor’, who was, in spite of the close contact established by plane and phone between Colonial Office and Government House, ‘still in an unrivalled position to strike bargains with nationalist politicians’.¹⁶⁸ A key source of information was the Governor’s Annual Report, usually sent at the end of January or beginning of February each year. Sometimes Whitehall was able to break through this quasi-dependency, with direct meetings with local ministers. Indeed, this practice was to occur more frequently during the period under study. However, by far the largest amount of communications traffic would be between Government House and Whitehall.

This chapter will suggest that Bermuda’s Governor began the period under study in an influential, although not all-powerful, position from which he was able to reinforce or refract impulses and directives from London, while he also acted as a cipher through which local elites communicated with the metropole. This was evoked in three forums of British-Bermudian collusion: constitutional reform, the internal security state and through the processes of justice and mercy. Even as the Governor’s power was attenuated and lost coherence during the period in question, legacies of affinity retained the power to structure decolonisation beneath the surface. This process was overlain, meanwhile by the evolution of party politics in Bermuda itself and the embodiment of a new yet imperfect and contested form of legitimised local leadership in the form of the UBP.

4. Methodology

To explore these issues, the author has chosen to pursue three different research methods. Firstly, the greatest use has been made by the author of

¹⁶⁷ Ward, *Echoes of Empire*, 269.

¹⁶⁸ Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy*, 43.

sources in historical archives, both in the United Kingdom and in Bermuda. The Bermuda Archives are a comfortable, air-conditioned set of rooms in the basement of the Government Administration Building in Hamilton. The crucial records examined in these subterranean vaults were mainly the memoranda of Executive Council meetings between 1968 and 1976. The Bermuda Archives also yielded two valuable microfilms of records from the British Government dating from 1970 to 1973.

At the National Archives in London, meanwhile, the author examined 41 files of correspondence between London and Bermuda and internal office communications written between 1963 and 1977. Most of these were Colonial (CO) or Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) records but some were from 10 Downing Street or from Metropolitan Police files. Records were rarely complete and were often filed arbitrarily. Many appeared to leave key details left out, requiring detective work on the part of the researcher, and sometimes records and documents were not dated or ascribed to any particular author. Finally, records were sometimes clearly slanted, both with regards to individual authors but also from an institutional point of view; an embodiment of what Benn calls the 'inner Civil Service network' which is adept at 'protecting itself'.¹⁶⁹

The second type of source relied on in this study are newspaper accounts. Records were accessed either at the British Newspaper Library in Colindale, London or at the Bermuda National Library, in Hamilton. In total, eight newspapers in the UK were studied (*The Times*, *The Guardian*, *the Daily Mail*), and four newspapers in Bermuda were accessed. Of the latter, *The Royal Gazette* was the daily newspaper at the time and has the most extensive, if highly biased, quotidian account of events. *The Royal Gazette*'s slant is not remedied by reliance on the the weekly *Bermuda Sun*, which during the mid-1970s was edited by someone who later became a UBP MP. However, the *Bermuda Sun* does seem to make more of an effort to provide a balanced account of events, both in its framing of news stories and in its

¹⁶⁹ Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, 182.

comment section. The author also researched the archives of the black-owned *Bermuda Recorder*.

A great deal of caution must be exercised in using press accounts. As well as a conscious slant to reporting, framing and editorialising, unintentional biases can creep into newspaper accounts. Quotes can often be misheard and events poorly recorded. Despite this, newspapers can provide a cumulative portrait of an age, not just an account of events as they happened, but also a commentary on these events. As long as the potential for bias is taken into account, newspapers are an extensive, detailed source that cannot be ignored as a day-to-day record of events.

The third method of research used by the author was the use of interviews with former politicians, journalists, civil servants and soldiers, both in Bermuda and in the United Kingdom. In total this involved 23 separate interviews with 19 subjects, since three subjects were interviewed on two separate occasions. One interview was conducted in the United Kingdom. Of the Bermuda subjects, 13 were former parliamentarians (either Members of the House of Assembly or Members of the Legislative Council), while two were journalists active in the period of study, one was a former senior ranking officer in the Bermuda Regiment, while two were civilians (one a former teacher and historian; the other a former bank clerk). Four interview subjects served as Premier of Bermuda at one time or another and one interview subject was a former British Cabinet Minister.

The author believes interviews are invaluable for providing a personal, context-laden glimpse into a period. The background provided by each interviewee also provided immeasurable contextual information that added to the author's general understanding and feel for the period. In this way, it is believed interviews provide an authentic, personal dimension to historical events that cannot be completely replicated by documentary audio-visual records. However, the author also believes that interviews need to be supplemented with documentary evidence so that events can be understood from different dimensions, with a gradual attenuation of the effect of bias on

the part of the author and interview subjects. It is also hoped that the cross-referencing of three different research methods will provide a way of filtering out inaccuracies.

5. Structure

Two overriding themes will be intertwined throughout this thesis. Chapters one, three and five will look at the connected process by which Governors and the metropole increasingly lost the ability to set agendas in the Bermuda political arena via constitutional evolution and the onset of internal security crises. Chapters two and four will look at how a system of party politics evolved following electoral reforms in 1963 and 1966, under a new constitution in 1968 and a new office of Premier from 1973. Finally, a sixth chapter will examine how a mix of affinity and uncertainty on the part of Governors induced a distracted and inward-focused metropole, with the help of party political exigencies, to permit the last hangings on British soil to take place in Bermuda in December 1977.

Chapter one examines the British perspective on Bermuda between 1963 and 1968 during the last year of the Governorship of Sir Julian Gascoigne and first four years of Lord Martonmere's eight years as Governor until May 1968. Firstly, the chapter suggests that both Government House and Whitehall were overtly biased towards Tucker's UBP and gave them a dominating role in producing proposals for a new constitution via the forum of a Constitutional Conference in November 1966. This support also bolstered the UBP's ability to entrench gerrymandered constituencies in their favour. This chapter climaxes with the enactment of Bermuda's new written constitution in 1968.

Chapter two will look at the domestic politics of Bermuda during the period from 1963 until 1971. The period begins with the passing of a major election law reform in January 1963 and ends with the stepping down of Tucker as Government Leader in December 1971. This chapter will suggest that the creation of the UBP in August 1964 symbolised an establishment reaction to

local grassroots demands for civil rights reforms, party political developments and international shifts towards racial equality that were being refracted through Government House. The UBP was both a departure from Bermudian conservatives' individualistic culture and an embodiment of oligarchical paternalism. Finally, it repressed discussion of racial legacies in favour of its quixotic 'United' branding and rationalised this with reference to Bermuda's burgeoning tourism industry.

The third chapter will engage in a study of reactions by both local politicians and British officials to security issues and violence between 1968 and 1973. The period begins in the aftermath of the riots of April 1968 and ends with the assassination of Police Commissioner George Duckett in September 1972 and Governor Sir Richard Sharples in March 1973. It argues that the oligarchy, in the form of the UBP, responded to security challenges by pursuing a 'stability' agenda, endorsed by London, that assaulted two key civil liberties – the right to freedom of expression and the right to a fair trial - only recently protected in a new bill of rights attached to the 1968 constitution.

The fourth chapter will take the changeover of leadership from Tucker to Sir Edward Richards in December 1971 as its starting point in analysing the maturing of a new political system emphasising incumbency, secret negotiations and leadership but in which the party's key branding claim of 'unity' was undermined by personal animosities and an attempt at internal party lobbying by a UBP Black Caucus. As a result of these and other pressures, Premier Jack Sharpe, who had taken over from Richards in December 1975, was ousted from the job by his own party in August 1977.

The fifth chapter will focus on the same time period, from December 1971 to the summer of 1977, but this time on the British perspective on events. Contradictions in the role of 'man on the spot' became more difficult to manage but also were exposed to the light during the incumbency of one of Bermuda's more flamboyant and controversial Governors, Sir Edwin Leather (1973-1977). This was also a period during which Britain became more forthright about its policy of accelerated decolonisation. Finally, the chapter

critically examines the tortuous process by which Leather's successor was chosen.

The sixth chapter will focus on the process of colonial justice as it was exercised in the cases of Larry Tacklyn and Erskine Burrows in 1977. Both men had been tried, convicted and sentenced to death following five murders between September 1972 and April 1973. The chapter attempts to answer the question of why the men's death sentences were not commuted. It is important to find this out for three reasons. Firstly, as there had not been an execution in Bermuda since 1943, hanging was an unusual occurrence in Bermuda. Secondly, the hangings in December 1977 would spark riots and lead to the deaths of two men and one woman in a fire. Thirdly, the practice of hanging had been discontinued in Britain in 1965 and banned permanently in 1969. Why did the British government allow executions to occur in this case, when they had effectively been discontinued in territories such as Hong Kong?

It will be suggested that legacies of affinity, institutional racism and metropolitan political fragility all played a part in ensuring that this period of 'new nationalism' in Bermuda climaxed with a mixture of state-sanctioned and civil violence. This was a period of contradictions; in which racial discrimination was addressed but then discussion of race was suppressed with appeals to prosperity. It also saw Britain disengaging from her colonies yet covertly supporting a calcified oligarchy in its assault on civil liberties. The story highlights the image of quotidian orderliness of late British decolonisation and also its recurrent lapse into crisis, reaction and retrenchment. Finally, Bermuda shows that even a place with one of the highest standards of living in the world could not escape unscathed from its colonial legacies.

Chapter One

British influence and debates over Bermudian constitutional reform, January 1963 - May 1968

1. Introduction

Three themes form the backbone of Chapter One. First it details the process by which Bermuda's constitution was transformed from one that embodied the 'oldest remaining example of governance in the pre-revolutionary American colonies' into a Westminster-style 'Responsible Government' democracy where the executive became partially responsible to Bermuda's House of Assembly.¹

This was part of a process that had seen several generations of Caribbean leaders inducted into the Westminster model and its adaptation to different island theatres throughout the 1950s and 1960s.² Whilst constitutional reform in the UK has been 'evolutionary' and organic, however, Bermudian constitutional change was rather deliberate and vertiginous.³ Codification of Bermuda's constitution proceeded as Britain's constitution remained unwritten, abstruse and virtually impenetrable. The process moreover was propelled and shaped by a context of collapsing imperial scenery.

Secondly, this chapter is about the interaction of party political affiliations in both the UK and in Bermuda with Gubernatorial power. Records from the UK National Archives will be used to show how Bermuda's Governor, who retained full executive power in Bermuda until 1968, worked with the FCO to help Tucker become the island's first Government Leader. It will show how Bermuda Governor Lord Martonmere, who served from 1964 until 1972, arranged the 1966 Constitutional Conference to support his and Tucker's shared conservative vision of constitutional change.

¹ Report of the Bermuda Constitutional Conference, November 22, 1966, DO 118/365, TNA.

² Anthony Payne, *Westminster Adapted*, 59; Bishop, *Slaying the 'Westmonster?*, 420-437.

³ UCL Constitutional Unit Blog.

This chapter is also about the UK political debates that accompanied the process of decolonisation both within Whitehall's changing colonial bureaucracy and in the halls of Westminster. It uses Hansard and FCO records to analyse how Ministers and MPs debated the dilemmas thrown up by issues of entrenched oligarchical power and race in Bermuda. Howe argues that 'anticolonialism' is defined by five characteristics: the right to national self-determination, the interdependence of global struggles for such a goal, the belief in the equality of European and non-European cultures, the commitment to opposing the colonialism of one's own nation and the belief that colonialism is a 'necessary consequence of modern capitalism'.⁴

However, as Porter argues, "The exploitation and extermination that are often attributed to British imperialism could be said rather to be the results of a lack of imperial control."⁵ To this 'lack of control' may be added apathy, 'ignorance and complacency' with regard to intervention.⁶ This chapter suggests Howe's definition should be supplemented by the suggestion that, in some contexts, such as Rhodesia and Bermuda, 'anticolonialism' in the later 1960s sometimes involved a commitment to more, nor less, intervention, as part of the need to tackle the legacies of Britain's past indulgent or complicit approach to rapacious white minorities.

Although, there have been several narrative histories of this period, which rely largely on press accounts and on interviews, no in-depth analysis of documentation and correspondence between London's FCO and Bermuda during the period of constitutional reform has ever been done. It is important that this lacuna is addressed. However, it should be remembered that around 1.2 million of the most sensitive files relating to the British Empire either remain 'unlawfully' concealed at the Government's communications centre at Hanslope Park or have been 'simply destroyed – sometimes shredded, occasional dumped at sea, but usually incinerated'.⁷ While they may not tell

⁴ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 1-2.

⁵ Porter, *Absent-minded imperialists*, 14.

⁶ James argues that 'popular ignorance and complacency' were one of the key mechanisms by which metropolitan racism operated throughout the British Empire, *What We Put in Black and White*, 20.

⁷ *Guardian*, April 18, 2012 and October 18, 2013.

the entire story, however, the files that have been released about Bermuda provide new insights into the interaction of decolonisation processes with political change.

Bermuda's constitution became the subject of political dispute in the field of party politics that it helped to enshrine as soon as it came into effect in June 1968. Constitutional change in favour of what had been known as 'Responsible Government' was sold by its champions in the conservative UBP as a reform which would 'safeguard individual rights in a bi-racial society'⁸, as a 'giant stride forward politically'⁹, and as a reform that would lead to a 'more streamlined and efficient government'.¹⁰

Such claims were contested at the time and remain so. Brown, for instance, argues that the new constitution of 1968 placed conservatives 'in a strong position to replicate their hegemony in the new democratic order'.¹¹ Swan takes this line of argument further, suggesting that the new constitution was foisted upon Bermuda by London's Privy Council to 'keep the natives in check'.¹² Even conservative historians, such as Harries Hunter, concede constitutional reform was an act of pragmatism aimed at satisfying 'the desires of the white Bermuda for security' while going far enough towards 'alleviating the grievances of the coloured people so as to check the revolutionary feeling in the air'.¹³

The controversy that raged over the constitution until at least 2009, has focused on two issues: the Governor's continued role in exercising executive authority over matters such as internal security, external affairs and defence¹⁴ and, until this situation was altered in 2003, the way in which electoral boundary changes were constitutionally-bound to remain delimited within the boundaries of Bermuda's nine parishes. These parishes were drawn up by, and

⁸ ET Richards quoted in Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 174.

⁹ Dr John Stubbs, quoted in *Gazette*, April 4, 1968.

¹⁰ Sir Henry Tucker, quoted in *ibid*, April 20, 1968.

¹¹ Brown, *Struggle for Reform*, 118.

¹² Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 109.

¹³ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 165.

¹⁴ *Guardian*, June 12, 2009.

eight were named after, the shareholders in the Bermuda Company that governed the island following its settlement in the early 17th century until the British crown took over in 1684 (see map below). This chapter (and this thesis) will help shed light on these ongoing debates.

Along with attempting to get to grips with the political controversy in which it has been claimed by critics that the constitution was ‘foisted on us in England’,¹⁵ it is important to examine how issues of democracy, sovereignty and race were taken up in metropolitan debates about decolonisation during a period when the ‘run-down of the formal Empire had already passed the point of no return’ and when ‘the British government was coming to terms with the full complexity of the legacy of empire’.¹⁶

The late 1960s were the moment when a ‘sectional rearguard defence against the loss of Empire’ in parts of Britain’s Conservative Party mutated into a populist reaction against non-white immigration in the form of Powellism.¹⁷ Meanwhile, Britain’s Labour government from October 1964 until June 1970 was increasingly subject to ‘bitter recriminations and denunciations from the left’¹⁸, in part because of the way in which Rhodesia’s UDI had revealed an ‘embarrassing impotence’ on the part of metropolitan power.¹⁹ Bermudian constitutional reform offers a glimpse of how colonial legacies collided with metropolitan politics as the British Empire rapidly ‘trimmed its sails’.²⁰

The story of Bermudian constitutional reform between 1963 and 1968 is the starting point for the overall argument of this thesis, which is put forward in two broad themes. One of these relates to the growing freedom of action enjoyed by the UBP vis-à-vis Government House and London during a period of party politics begun in 1964 that it dominated first informally via an unofficial legislative majority and then, from 1968, electorally. The second theme relates to the manner in which, due to constitutional shifts, the British

¹⁵ *Gazette*, May 13, 1972.

¹⁶ Young, Review of Ashton and Louis, *British Documents on the End of Empire*, 646-7.

¹⁷ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 385.

¹⁸ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, 308.

¹⁹ Darwin, *Empire Project*, 646.

²⁰ Dubow, *Macmillan, Verwoerd and the... Wind of Change speech*, 41.

Government gradually lost its already admittedly circumscribed ability to set agendas in Bermuda, while retaining a significant degree of increasingly unwelcome responsibility.

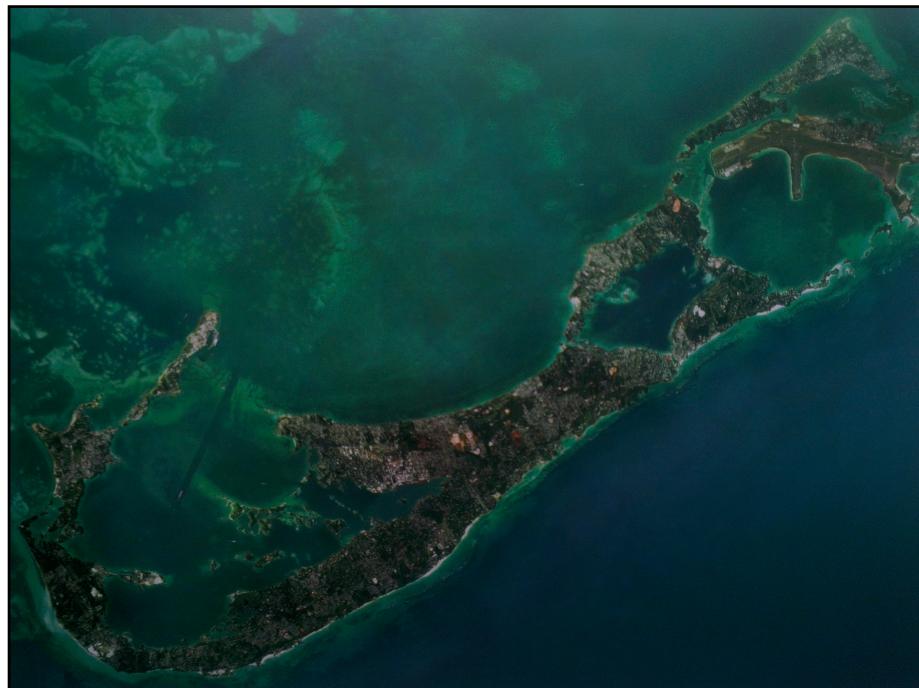


Figure 6: Satellite image of Bermuda.

© Times Group and Bermuda Government, *Bermuda: 400 Years of Commerce*, (Bermuda, 2009).



Figure 7: Map of Bermuda showing parish boundaries.

© Keith Archibald Forbes, *Bermuda Parishes and Municipalities*, bermuda-online.org/bermudaparishes.htm

This chapter will focus on the second of these themes. It will be argued that Britain willingly channeled constitutional reform in a way amenable to the UBP for two reasons. Firstly, this bias was a result of racial, cultural and political affinity on the part of Bermuda's Governor between 1964 and 1972, Lord Martonmere. Secondly, it was a part of a stability-emphasising approach London took towards imperial disengagement from colonies occasioned by Cold War sensitivities, the Special Relationship with the US and a paternalistic view that amalgamated racism and fears of subversion into a fear of what Martonmere would call 'extreme black elements'. This, however, was paralleled by an ambivalence within Britain's governing Labour Party about the nature and implications of decolonisation in societies where Anglicised minorities still maintained 'a firm political and economic grip on the island's major industries and institutions... to the exclusion of blacks'.²¹

This introduction will start by examining three of the contexts in which reform took place from November 1963 onwards. Firstly, the triptych of pre-reform colonial power-sharing was balanced on one side by a powerful settler elite with a base in 'the second oldest parliament in the Western Hemisphere', which first met in the town of St George's in 1620.²² Secondly, this strength was offset by British imperial power that was undergoing a process of steep transition in the mid-1960s. Finally, these two parts were mediated through a third element, the office of Governor.

1.1 The operation of legislative power in Bermuda, January 1963-May 1968

Control of Bermuda's legislature by its ruling oligarchy may have helped create the 'channel' through which demands for change were controlled 'like the cascade in an eighteenth-century *jardin sauvage*'.²³ 'Effective government' between 1963 and 1968 depended on the 'cooperation' of the Governor with

²¹ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 6.

²² Horton, *Speech to Hamilton Rotary Club*, 5.

²³ Porter and Stockwell, *British Imperial Policy*, 49.

the Bermuda House of Assembly. As UK Minister of State Judith Hart noted in June 1967, this was because ‘the Legislature is supreme in the field of legislation, and because all expenditure needs the approval of the elected House of Assembly’.²⁴ Indeed, Governors could often fall ‘under the sway’ of the House of Assembly.²⁵

It should be remembered that Britain had overseen the implementation of universal suffrage in Jamaica as early as 1944, at least in part due to demands by nationalist politicians.²⁶ Through the late 1940s and 1950s, even as places such as Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, the Leeward and Windward Islands, British Guiana and British Honduras were gaining universal suffrage²⁷, oligarchical control of Bermuda’s House of Assembly, and the failure or lack of desire on the part of British Governors to effectively challenge this, meant demands for such change by disenfranchised citizens were resisted through the 1940s and 1950s.

This was demonstrated when on November 1, 1946, the leader of the Bermuda Workers’ Association, the Trinidadian-born Dr Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon, ‘the hero of the working classes’²⁸, hand-delivered a petition on behalf of ‘the great majority of the underprivileged and suffering inhabitants of Bermuda’ to Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones in London. The petition demanded investigation into ‘a litany of grievances relating to Bermuda, including the restricted franchise, segregation and limited occupational opportunities’ for Bermudians.²⁹

In the petition it was estimated that ‘only 12 per cent of the voting age population was eligible to vote’. Although the number of black voters outweighed the number of white voters in 1946, the practice of plural voting

²⁴ Debate on the Bermuda Constitution Bill, Hansard, *HC Deb June 14 1967 vol 748 cc480-519*.

²⁵ Wiener, *Empire on Trial*, 109.

²⁶ Howard Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 615.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Williams, *Lois*, 44.

²⁹ Smith, *Evolution of Bermuda’s Franchise*, 11; see also oral answers to questions on the Bermuda Workers’ Petition by Arthur Creech-Jones, Hansard, *HC Deb April 16, 1947 vol 436 cc180-1*.

‘which allowed an individual to vote in each parish he or she met the land qualification’ in gave whites a greater electoral strength - 1,352 votes for blacks and 1,634 votes for whites. Petitioners said they believed ‘almost all of the political, economic and social disabilities’ suffered by the inhabitants of ‘this ancient and loyal Colony’ had ‘their foundation in the fact that the Parliamentary franchise is extremely limited’.³⁰ They added: “This state of affairs permits the vested interests or monied classes to have a distinct and definite control over the election results.”³¹

Creech Jones’ response to the BWA petition provides a fitting example of the emerging gap between espoused principles and the unwillingness to lobby for them that would also pervade much of Whitehall’s dealings with Bermuda in the period 1964 to 1977. This is prefaced by Creech Jones’ missive to Governor Sir Ralph Leatham, in which he politely invited ‘the Legislature of Bermuda to take [the BWA’s petition] into consideration’.³²

Creech Jones’s official response was contained in a ‘strongly-worded’ document (labelled Command Paper 7093) arguing that the House of Assembly should examine the problems alluded to ‘with a view to making positive and progressive revisions’ to Bermuda’s electoral system.³³ By January 1948, a joint committee of members of the Legislative Council and of the House of Assembly had been appointed to report on the problems. The White Paper that resulted recommended...

*...the gradual extension of the franchise, the eventual elimination of plural voting and the measured expansion of employment opportunities in the Public Service for the black population.*³⁴

Despite the fine words, however, segregation was not ended and no major reforms were made to the electoral system until the early 1960s.

³⁰ Hansard, *June 19, 1967*.

³¹ Brown, *Race and Party politics*, 104.

³² Hansard, *April 16, 1947*.

³³ Smith, *Evolution of Bermuda’s Franchise*, 11

³⁴ Arthur Creech-Jones, Bermuda (Workers’ Association Petition), Hansard, *HC Deb*, *January 28, 1948 vol 446 cc998-9*.

Following on from the peaceful and successful Theatre Boycott of 1959, it had been a joint effort, between a series of public meetings held by the Committee for Universal Adult Suffrage (CUAS) and parliamentary lobbying by black MCPs such as EF Gordon, ET Richards and WL Tucker, that brought about shift in the political landscape with the Parliamentary Elections Act of 1963.³⁵ This ‘effectively increase[d] the electorate from approximately 5,500 landlords to about 22,000 potential voters’, by ending property restrictions and giving every Bermudian above the age of 25 the right to vote.³⁶ Despite this progress, property owners were also granted a single extra ‘plus’ vote.³⁷ These changes were built upon with a change in the law in 1966 that ended the ‘plus vote’ and lowered the voting age to 21, whilst retaining the vote for Commonwealth subjects who had been on the island for three years or more.³⁸

These changes led to the ‘emergence of the modern party system’.³⁹ In February 1963, Bermuda’s first political party, the PLP was founded by a group of seven men meeting in a garage on the outskirts of Hamilton – Walter Robinson, Dilton Cann, Austin Wilson, Edward deJean, Albert Smith and Wilfred Allen.⁴⁰ The party’s founding platform included ‘talks with Britain regarding full responsible government’ as part of a host of political and constitutional reforms.⁴¹ At a General Election in May this new force won six of the nine seats it contested.⁴² This event acted as a wake-up call that nevertheless led leading white MCPs to co-opt demands for change.

It is impossible to understand Bermudian constitutional change between 1963 and 1968 without first understanding that oligarchical power was institutionalised at the legislative level as a result of iniquitous electoral arrangements. The House of Assembly that drove the reform process had been elected in the May 1963 election, during which 6,662 people had ‘claimed an

³⁵ Hodgson, *Second class Citizens; First Class Men*, 140.

³⁶ *Bermuda-Island.net*, “Government”.

³⁷ Hart, *Hansard*, June 14, 1967.

³⁸ James E Smith, *Evolution of Bermuda’s Franchise*, 15.

³⁹ Brown, *Race and party politics in Bermuda*, 103.

⁴⁰ Williams, *Lois*, 57.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 63.

⁴² Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 106.

additional vote as property owners'.⁴³ As a result, this was an assembly that only had eleven black members (out of a total membership of 36) in a majority black country.⁴⁴ It also contained only two women.⁴⁵ A Colonial Office memorandum perhaps overstated the case in 1964 when it noted that 'real power rests with the House of Assembly, which has full control over finance and [which is] where legislation is normally initiated'.⁴⁶ However, entrenched institutional inertia meant oligarchs possessed an advantage in any potential power-struggle over constitutional reform.

1.2 International and domestic dimensions on British decolonisation policy, 1963 - 1968

Between 1963 and 1968, policymakers undertook a reassessment of Britain's global role following the Suez Crisis of 1956, which 'exposed as a sham [Prime Minister Anthony] Eden's vision of Britain as a major and fully independent player on the world stage'.⁴⁷ As Britain decolonised from territories such as Malaya, Cyprus, Nigeria and Kenya, and as this 'acceleration of the decolonisation process brought a decisive change in the character of the Commonwealth',⁴⁸ the 'twin issues of Rhodesia and immigration encouraged a right-wing backlash against the Commonwealth in the UK'.⁴⁹ Attitudes towards decolonisation were a function of international pressures, racial anxieties and a 'specific notion of decline' which, 'in the late 1950s and early 1960s...was widely propagated and accepted in Britain'.⁵⁰

The idea that the 'transfer of power' involved in decolonisation was achieved 'smoothly' and 'with sentiments of mutual regard' has been described as 'fatuous' by Howe.⁵¹ While the first part of the 13-year period of Conservative rule between 1951 and 1964 saw 'a number of events which seemed to

⁴³ Cover note by Bermuda Special Branch, April 10, 1963, 1031/4766.

⁴⁴ Special Branch report for May 1963, June 3, 1963, *ibid*.

⁴⁵ Election results, May 1963, Bermuda Parliamentary Registry.

⁴⁶ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, CO 1027/610, TNA.

⁴⁷ Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation*, (networked e-book).

⁴⁸ *Ibid*.

⁴⁹ Murphy, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 271.

⁵⁰ Tomlinson, *Politics of Decline*, 9.

⁵¹ Morgan, *Official History of Colonial Development*, 343-4; Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, 8.

demonstrate Britain's continued capacity to play a constructive and decisive role in world events',⁵² as the 1960s approached, 'glimmers of triumph were succeeded by crises and failures'.⁵³

Three conditioning aspects of Britain's approach to reform in Bermuda could be identified. Firstly, international institutions such as the UN were exerting an ever-growing influence on decision-making. Conversely, especially in the Caribbean, Britain remained highly sensitive to the demands of the US within the paradigm of the global superpower confrontation. Finally, growing British domestic 'material weakness' was increasingly making the continued assertion of a world role difficult.⁵⁴

As constitution-making became something of a systematic practice in the process of decolonisation, the use of bills of rights in the constitutions of newly independent countries proliferated during the 1950s and 1960s. The first of these enacted in advance of independence in a territory under British control appeared in 1953, while in 1962, the CO released a policy mandating bills of rights for new constitutions. As a result, bills of rights were inserted into 13 constitutions and, after sustained debate, rejected in two territories.⁵⁵

AW Brian Simpson argues that the British government supported these international human rights guarantees as an instrument of foreign policy. In part this was influenced by Britain's signing up to the European Convention on Human Rights in 1950.⁵⁶ However, bills of rights also came to be used in the Caribbean to 'minimise...political uncertainty after independence' in the context of the Cold War and anxieties about race. For instance, the first bill of rights instituted during British decolonisation in the Caribbean, in British Guiana in 1961, was partly viewed by the Governor, Sir Patrick Renison, as a protection 'against the dangers of communism and racialism'.⁵⁷ British Guiana thus set helped set the precedent for non-independent territories being

⁵² Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation*, (networked e-book).

⁵³ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 377.

⁵⁴ Ward, *Whirlwind, Hurricane, Howling Tempest*, 55.

⁵⁵ Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, (networked e-book).

⁵⁶ Simpson, *Human Rights and... End of Empire*, 873.

⁵⁷ Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*, (networked e-book).

granted a Bill of Rights. This was because of the country's history of unrest and the British suspension of its constitution following the election of the left-wing People's Progress Party in 1953.⁵⁸

Because of a close American-Anglo relationship in the context of the superpower confrontation, the US 'was the critical determinant of British policy' in British Guiana and in the Caribbean region.⁵⁹ This territory was seen as posing 'a serious strategic risk to the US mainland' and was 'ideal as a location for Russian missiles'.⁶⁰ Although colonial rule 'came to be seen as a liability by the 1960s', this did not ease American sensitivities about radical regimes on what it considered to be its doorstep.⁶¹ As the Wilson government was a firm believer in the Anglo-American alliance, this had the potential to profoundly affect how Britain viewed the prospects of Bermudian decolonisation too. In 1966, US policy towards the island included protecting the rights to its two bases and also 'ensuring that Bermuda had a moderate and friendly-disposed government'.⁶²

An ostensible commitment to liberal constitutional machinery combined with a tendency towards 'stability' was encouraged by the Cold War and the alliance with the US. But this belief in 'stability' was also a product of British habits. As Hyam argues, such concerns in post-colonial Swaziland trumped any commitment Britain had to ensuring democracy. This was demonstrated when Britain handed power over to an 'unreconstructed' monarchy in 1968. The Labour Government had 'conceded to a ruler widely regarded as "reactionary" what their Conservative predecessors had steadily refused'.⁶³

That decolonisation could be a hurried and unprincipled affair was illustrated by the rush to independence in Barbados in 1966, where the pace of the transfer of power to the government of Errol Barrow was guided more by the fact that the British 'wanted out' than by whether Barrow's government had a

⁵⁸ Ashton and Killingray, *West Indies*, lvi.

⁵⁹ Fraser, 'New Frontier' of Empire, 610.

⁶⁰ Hyam and Louis, *British Documents on the End of Empire*, Ixx.

⁶¹ Hopkins, *Rethinking decolonisation*, 244.

⁶² Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 54.

⁶³ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 378.

sufficient electoral mandate.⁶⁴ A similar process later occurred in Grenada in the early 1970s, planting the seeds for a communist coup in 1979.⁶⁵

Yet such an emphasis on ‘stability’ vis-à-vis democracy was also linked to a ‘shared memory of whiteness in the metropole’.⁶⁶ This mindset may have encouraged senior politicians such as Colonial Secretary Alan Lennox-Boyd into ‘backing the wrong horse...from the doomed Central African Federation to the leaders of the “multi-racial” parties in East Africa’.⁶⁷

It seems also to have had a direct effect on Bermuda. Conservative backbench MP Roland Robinson, who would take office in 1964 as Bermuda’s Governor, saw parties such as Sir Michael Blundell’s New Kenya Group (NKG) as key to ‘the building-up of a multi-racial Kenya’ in which no culture was ‘submerged in a mere sea of numbers’.⁶⁸ This platitudinous language hid the fact that ‘multiracialism’ was a euphemism; another way of describing a form of government that artificially inflated the power of Europeans in a black-majority country with a population ratio of 93 Africans to 1 European.⁶⁹

The new Labour government, from October 1964, displayed ambivalence on decolonisation. On the one hand, as demonstrated by the presence of 60,000 British personnel in South East Asia in early 1965⁷⁰, it ‘clung to the military trappings of imperialism’.⁷¹ However, the suggestion in the 1964 Labour Manifesto that ‘the first responsibility of a British Government’ was ‘to the Commonwealth’⁷² was counterbalanced by a ‘growing national weakness and insecurity’ that also ‘provided the conditioning context for decolonisation’.⁷³ ‘Devaluation in 1967 hastened the lingering death of the Sterling Area’⁷⁴ and a sense of economic and cultural decline was increasingly palpable in literature,

⁶⁴ Cox-Alomar, *Anglo-Barbadian dialogue*, 683.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Keeping a Line Open*, 481.

⁶⁶ Lewis, *White man in a woodpile*, 77.

⁶⁷ Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, 258.

⁶⁸ Hansard, *HC Deb 22 April 1959 vol 604 cc555-68*; See also Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, 226.

⁶⁹ Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 156.

⁷⁰ Subritzky, *Britain, Konfrontasi, and... End of Empire*, 209.

⁷¹ Lapping, *Labour Government, 1964-1970*, 60.

⁷² Labour Party, *The New Britain*, Manifesto, October 1964.

⁷³ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 15.

⁷⁴ Murphy, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 272.

for instance in Arthur Koestler's 1964 suggestion that 'we are at the moment dying by the mind'.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the 'absorption of the Commonwealth Relations Office (CRO) by the Foreign Office [in 1968] silenced the one voice in Cabinet' charged with championing the Commonwealth.⁷⁶ Whitehall responsibility for Bermuda came under the Colonial Office (CO) until 1966 when it was closed; an event that served as a 'reflection and a symbol of imperial demission'.⁷⁷ Then the CO became part of the Commonwealth Office (CWO) from August 1966 to October 1968. On October 17, 1968 the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices were merged to form the FCO.⁷⁸

The issue of Bermudian constitutional reform was rarely the responsibility of any one Cabinet minister for more than a year. Winston Churchill's son-in-law Duncan Sandys, who 'had notoriously little patience for the processes of parliamentary debate or Cabinet discussion'⁷⁹, was Colonial Secretary from July 1962 until the General Election of October 1964. Sandys was replaced by a former Royal Air Force intelligence officer, Labour's Anthony Greenwood, until December 1965. Then the Colonial Office (CO) was headed by the eccentric and homophobic penal reform campaigner Frank Pakenham, the Earl of Longford, until April 1966. Former Mancunian engineer Fred Lee, from April 1966 until January 1967, oversaw the transition from CO to Commonwealth Office (CWO). The first Secretary of State for Commonwealth Affairs, who officially took over in August 1966, was Herbert Bowden. He was replaced in August 1967 by the Dundonian former journalist George Thomson until October 1968.

This astonishing administrative turnover cannot have helped provide coherence to policy during a period in which Britain was undergoing a 'lengthy, tortuous and muddled reappraisal' of her world role.⁸⁰ Greenwood,

⁷⁵ Quoted in Tomlinson, *Politics of Decline*, 23.

⁷⁶ Murphy, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 272.

⁷⁷ Kirk-Greene, *On Crown Service*, 85.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 89-90.

⁷⁹ Murphy, *Party Politics and Decolonisation*, (networked e-book).

⁸⁰ Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire*, 388.

for instance, was both a Cabinet minister who had been told by Wilson to ‘work himself out of a job’⁸¹ and a leading member of the anti-colonial Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF).⁸² The political debates engendered by the issues raised by decolonisation can help show how empire could filter into the politics of decline, in which the Wilson government, on issues such as Rhodesia and Vietnam, ‘appeared to compromise, to vacillate, and sometimes to be less than honest and honourable’.⁸³

Political confrontations over decolonisation could be neutralised by what Schwarz has called a ‘passive revolution’, which involved the official ‘shunting-off [of] awkward issues to an appropriate sidings until the situation quietened’.⁸⁴ However, as Ward argues, the strains of imperial decline ‘were not safely constrained within the realm of high politics’.⁸⁵ Just as disputes over Rhodesia and immigration could split the right during this period, the left was riven by the onset of post-colonial realities. Brownell suggests the MCF came under pressure to distance itself from the Communist Party of Great Britain as Wilson ‘was anxious to prove Labour’s dependability as a party in power’.⁸⁶ As Howe suggests, some of the ‘deepest divisions’ over decolonisation in Britain were ‘within rather than between parties’.

The MCF was ‘among the most important post-war British political pressure groups’ and ‘from 1955 to 1964, between 30 and 40 per cent of all Labour MPs were MCF sponsors at any one time’.⁸⁷ The issue of Bermudian constitutional reform will provide a portrait of how opinion in the Parliamentary Labour Party diverged during the late 1960s as a ‘radical-liberal’ strain of the MCF focused the movement on recalcitrant ‘white settler communities’ and ‘racial antagonisms which were seen as the legacies of colonialism’.⁸⁸ This study will also discuss the way in which a broad consensus of parliamentarians from all

⁸¹ Ibid, 346.

⁸² Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 308.

⁸³ Judd, *Empire*, 376.

⁸⁴ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 385-6.

⁸⁵ Ward, *British Culture and the End of Empire*, 6.

⁸⁶ Brownell, *Taint of Communism*, 235.

⁸⁷ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 19, 231 and 249.

⁸⁸ Op. cit, 300-1.

three main parties allowed to go through ‘on the nod’ the grant of autonomy to a white minority-regime bolstered in power by gerrymandering.⁸⁹

As the next subsection will suggest, both the domestic context described in sub-section 1.1 and British decolonisation policy and debates had to be filtered through a powerful mediating figure who remained influential in Bermuda in 1963-1968, the occupant of Government House.

1.3 The mediator: Bermuda’s governor and the exercise of executive power

According to Hyam, transfers of power depended on a ‘conjunction of interest’ between metropole and colony that was ‘not difficult to achieve when there was mediation by a proconsul “on the spot” trusted by both sides’.⁹⁰ The way in which Bermuda’s oligarchy responded to demands for change in the 1960s was filtered through and partly depended on Government House.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Governors had traditionally had a greater degree of freedom of action in Bermuda vis-à-vis settler interests, as a result of their role running a ‘strategically important outpost’.⁹¹ However, the island’s Royal Naval Dockyard shut down operations in 1951 and the British Army garrison was finally withdrawn in 1957, ending a 256-year connection.⁹² Party politics created a new dynamic in a situation where the Governor’s power had rested on a fine balance of theoretical absolute powers tempered by the need to manage the white-dominated Legislature. However, ‘almost all legislation emanated from Executive Council’, chaired by the Governor and on which sat three unofficial members, appointed by him, and three official members. The latter included the island’s Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer and the Attorney General.⁹³ With this buttress of expatriate, official

⁸⁹ Porter, *Britannia’s Burden*, 124.

⁹⁰ Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 403.

⁹¹ Chris Grocott, *Good Soldier but Malignant Governor*, 421.

⁹² Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 197.

⁹³ Plowman, *Sir John Plowman*, 191; Bermuda Government, *Bermuda’s Constitutional Development*, 2.

support, Governors were leading figures and wielded theoretical absolute power.

In 1963, moreover, Bermuda had a Governor who was at least nudging the oligarchy towards modernisation of its ancient system of government. Whilst the more pervasive context in which change was spurred was popular, political and international, Government House was instrumental in setting the context in which these reforms occurred. Governor Julian Gascoigne (1959-1964) for example, suggested the replacement of Bermuda's 'unusual system of Government Boards with an Executive Council which was responsible to Parliament. The Board system meant that 'some Government departments [were] controlled by statutory executive Boards whose members were not officials but [were] nominated by the Governor'. Boards had no connection with the legislature, although often members of the legislature were also appointed to them.⁹⁴

As early as January 1961, two years before the creation of the PLP, Gascoigne proposed modernising this system. He decried the fact that 'no central policy over...major questions exists at all' and proposed that the Boards be replaced in their role of policy initiation by an Executive Council made up of elected members of the legislature.⁹⁵ In January 1964, only a few months after a legislative select committee headed by Tucker had begun to meet in the House of Assembly, Gascoigne would attempt to influence that process. Bermuda had 'to plan to organise to become a modern state'.⁹⁶

In June 1964, Gascoigne's successor would be someone with strong political views but also with multifarious connections across Whitehall, Westminster and the Commonwealth. Schoolchildren 'in their brightest holiday garb...perched in the trees' as they observed John Roland Robinson, ennobled as Baron Martonmere, disembark from a launch at Hamilton's wharf on June 15. Born in 1907, Martonmere had studied law at Cambridge and became a

⁹⁴ *Bermuda and the United Nations*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

⁹⁵ *Gazette*, January 13, 1964; see also Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 125.

⁹⁶ *Gazette*, January 9, 1964.

wing commander in the RAF during World War Two.⁹⁷ He was also Conservative MP for Widnes and then Blackpool from 1931 until 1964 and chairman of the Conservative Commonwealth Affairs Committee from 1954 to 1964. At his arrival ceremony, he pledged that he now 'belonged to no party'.⁹⁸ However, this chapter will show that Martonmere would become biased in his allegiances when it came to Bermudian politics. This evolution was couched in what a senior civil servant would later describe as Martonmere's 'broad humanist, but specifically paternalistic approach to the problems of Bermuda'.⁹⁹



Figure 8: Bermuda Governor Lord Martonmere, June 14, 1964.
© *The Royal Gazette* Newspaper

As the first part of this chapter will show, both Martonmere's and the CO's bias would prove significant as the creation of the UBP and party politics became bound up in the process of constitutional reform. This began when a joint select committee of the legislature (containing members of both the House of Assembly and members of the Legislative or Executive Councils)

⁹⁷ *New York Times*, May 5, 1989.

⁹⁸ *Gazette*, June 16, 1964, clipping found in CO 1031/4369.

⁹⁹ DA Scott to RN Posnett, April 23, 1971, 823.

started considering change from November 1963 onwards.¹⁰⁰ The second part of this chapter will tell the story of the Bermuda Constitutional Conference held in London in November 1966. Finally, it will analyse debates at Westminster over the Bermuda Constitution Bill.

2. ‘A cautious but sensible conclusion in their own good time’: A hands-off approach to constitutional reform

The Colonial Office seemed rather wary of upsetting Bermuda’s ruling oligarchy. A June 1964 note suggested that, though Britain was ‘ready to help’ with driving political reform, she was also ‘careful to avoid offending a self-reliant community’.¹⁰¹ This attitude was reflected again in February 1965, when the Assistant Secretary at the Colonial Office and head of the West Indian Department ‘B’, RW Piper, argued in a note to assistant under-secretary of state with superintending responsibility for the West Indies, WIJ Wallace, that while ‘Bermuda is very conservative and treats any proposals for progress with great care and caution, it has... tended to keep just ahead of popular pressure’. Piper added:

*The Bermudians... are independent by nature and any attempt to push them faster on constitutional change would probably at this stage be counter-productive. They are likely to reach a cautious but sensible conclusion in their own good time.*¹⁰²

In part this reticence to get too involved in London stemmed from the belief that Bermuda was ‘no ordinary territory’. Unlike other small islands in the Caribbean region, Bermuda was understood to be ‘prosperous’, ‘economically independent’ and ‘autonomous’.¹⁰³ Boyd had noted to Macmillan in 1958 that there could be ‘no question of independence for the West Indies until they are viable both financially and in other respects’.¹⁰⁴ As the next section of this chapter argues, because Bermuda was seen as a good candidate for independence on ‘viability’ grounds, with the implication that the oligarchy was a suitable successor elite regardless of their racial proclivities, the CO

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *Lois*, 91.

¹⁰¹ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

¹⁰² RW Piper to WIJ Wallace, February 25, 1965, CO 1031/4391, TNA.

¹⁰³ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

¹⁰⁴ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s Withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean*, 76.

largely deferred to Tucker. Both Government House and the Colonial Office were only to provide gentle hints for how the process should proceed.

2.1 ‘Starting from scratch’?: The global and local contexts of Bermudian constitutional reform, June 1963 – August 1964

The early stages of the House of Assembly’s deliberations on constitutional reform were affected by two events: the introduction of party politics to Bermuda in early 1963 and the enactment of a new constitution in the Bahamas in January 1964. At the General Election in May 1963, the new PLP won six of the nine seats it contested.¹⁰⁵ This result seemed to put fear into the heart of Tucker, then an independent representative in the House of Assembly for Paget. The following month, Tucker met with Piper. According to a record of the meeting:

[Tucker] recognised that... the formation of the PLP would make it necessary for those who had hitherto preferred to stand as Independents to band themselves together in a party.... He expected too that constitutional change would have to be considered.¹⁰⁶

This hint of Tucker’s state of mind immediately after the shock of the election concurs with other evidence.¹⁰⁷ For instance, Sir John Swan, who served as Tucker’s successor as representative in Paget parish and later as Premier of Bermuda between 1982 and 1995, noted his belief that constitutional reform had been largely reactive on the part of Tucker. In his view: “The Progressive Labour Party was calling for a constitutional conference, the UBP acquiesced to the conference.”¹⁰⁸

Tucker was therefore, responding to nudges from both the Governor and the new block vote of the PLP. With 16 per cent of members in a legislature where all 30 opposing MCPs were fragmented as independents (the UBP was not

¹⁰⁵ Election Results, May 1963, Bermuda Parliamentary Registry.

¹⁰⁶ AR Thomas to Piper, 19th June 1963, 1031/4391.

¹⁰⁷ Bermuda PLP website, *Our rich history*.

¹⁰⁸ Sir John Swan interview, September 8, 2011.

created until August 1964) the six PLP MCPs could go a ‘long way towards deciding whether certain policies would be adopted or rejected’.¹⁰⁹

The joint select committee was appointed following a vote in the House of Assembly on November 13, 1963.¹¹⁰ Members from the Legislative Council included VO King, Edmund Gibbons and Sir Harry Butterfield, while members from the House of Assembly included Tucker (who chaired it), Sir Bayard Dill, Sir Henry Vesey and Arnold Francis of the PLP.¹¹¹ This committee was heavily biased towards a conservative viewpoint. It was advised by Attorney General John Summerfield, who consulted closely with the CO in devising its report. It would not submit a majority report until the summer of 1965, which was then passed through both legislative chambers in December that year.

Bermudian constitutional reform was also shaped by the wider process of decolonisation. Tucker pointed to the fact of change ‘elsewhere’ including the fact that the CO ‘must be in its last days’. While the Colonial Service had rendered ‘satisfactory’ service to Bermuda, he added that he was ‘sure the duty of the CO would be transferred to some other authority’ and it was important to ‘take account’ of this.¹¹²

In recognition of this global context, constitutional evolution in the Bahamas was evident as an influence on Bermuda’s debate. On the announcement of the select committee, Francis championed the ‘possibility of Bermuda’s copying the Bahamas and installing a Cabinet system of Government’.¹¹³ There may have been more behind the strong resonance of the Bahamian events than just timing. Bermuda and the Bahamas shared some similar characteristics. The two colonies’ histories of slavery and oligarchical control had endendered similar political events in the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹⁴ Although the Bahamas’ white minority was proportionally much smaller, its

¹⁰⁹ Brown, *Race and politics in Bermuda*, 107.

¹¹⁰ Williams, *Lois*, 91.

¹¹¹ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 165.

¹¹² *Gazette*, November 14, 1963.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Gail Saunders, *Racial Discrimination in The Bahamas*, 169-170.

constitution came into force after the almost completely white United Bahamian Party ‘rode the economic boom and the black people’s lack of self-confidence (especially that of newly enfranchised women) to win a stunning victory in the May 2, 1962 General Election campaign’.¹¹⁵

Gerrymandering, which saw the number of seats in what were then known as Out Islands exceed the number of seats in New Providence where the majority of the population lived, meant that, even though the local Progressive Liberal Party won the most votes, the UBP won the most seats, in the first election in the Bahamas on the basis of universal suffrage.

It seemed that officials in London were gently nudging Tucker towards using the new Bahamas scheme as a blueprint. In one early conversation regarding how to offer ‘helpful advice’ to Tucker in his task as joint select committee chairman in Bermuda, assistant undersecretary of state with superintending responsibility for the West Indies AR Thomas opined: “The Bahamas White Paper will of course also be relevant ... the new Bahamas constitution offers the best pattern for Bermuda to study.”¹¹⁶ And regarding his work on the select committee, Tucker told British officials that ‘he was very much starting from scratch and that in Bermuda they had very little to go on, although he had had sight of the Bahamas scheme’.¹¹⁷

However, it is also clear that the CO was rather sceptical of Tucker’s ‘moderate’ credentials. The question was: what sort of political force would Tucker lead when he finally got around to setting up a political party? Gascoigne advised CO staff shortly after leaving Bermuda that London’s response to Tucker’s report should ‘presumably turn on what sort of party it was [that Tucker set up] and the general political picture’.¹¹⁸

Thus, constitutional reform was spurred in part by political developments on the ground, including the formation and relative success of the PLP in early

¹¹⁵ Craton, *Bay Street, Black Power and the ‘Conchy Joes’*, 82.

¹¹⁶ Thomas to Piper, 8 January 1964, 1031/4391.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Gascoigne, to IH Cruchley, July 10, 1964. *op. cit.*

1963. It was also the result of pressure from Gascoigne, who had been arguing for ‘modernisation’ of Bermuda’s political system since 1961 if not earlier, and of constitutional reform in the Bahamas.

2.2. ‘The most able and influential of the far-sighted’: Growing Colonial Office bias towards Sir Henry Tucker

After a period of initial scepticism, the CO identified Tucker as a collaborator in a process of ‘passive revolution’ that was ingrained in the habits of senior CO decision-makers and Martonmere but also made to seem more urgent by an industrial dispute that turned violent in February 1965.¹¹⁹ This pivotal event seems to have been the catalyst in both spurring the fledgling UBP to concede to the abolition of the ‘plus’ vote for property owners and accept unadulterated universal suffrage, whilst also ending official sanction for segregation in schools. This in turn may have allowed the CO, now under a Labour government, to rally its support behind Tucker, from around February 1965 onwards.

Born on March 13, 1903 at Villa Mont Clare in Flatts Village, Bermuda, Tucker was the son of a sporting goods shop owner and the grandson of an Archdeacon, who was the local overseer of the Church of England in Bermuda.¹²⁰ In 1920, he was sent away to school at Sherborne in Dorset, England. In 1923, he headed for the oil fields of Oklahoma where he spent several months as a labourer. ‘After nine months of poor wages and no quick fortune’, he returned home to Bermuda.¹²¹ Then, following a period working in at banks in New York’s Wall Street for a decade or so, during which Tucker witnessed suicides from skyscrapers following the Wall Street Crash of 1929, he returned home again to work for the Bank of Bermuda, and he became its manager in 1938. That year he was also elected as one of four representatives for Paget parish in the House of Assembly and was appointed to the Finance Committee.

¹¹⁹ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 385-6.

¹²⁰ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 5.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 12.

Over the next twenty years, Tucker established a reputation as a leading figure in Bermudian legislative politics but also a key figure not just at the head of Bermuda's most successful bank. He also sat on the broadcasting commission and was a director of the Bermuda Telephone Company. In November 1942, Tucker was appointed to the Executive Council, where he was able to start building relationships with successive Governors.¹²² Through the 1950s, he consolidated his position as the most powerful legislator on the island, while resisting campaigns by fellow MCPs for the ending of segregation and universal suffrage. He was knighted in June 1961.¹²³

Tucker's hero was Winston Churchill, with whom he had negotiated over lend-lease issues in the 1940s.¹²⁴ Yet he also had senior contacts within the CO during the 1950s. He had attended Sherborne School with Boyd as a child. Boyd would tell a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meeting in the mid-1960s: "Whatever I could do, Jack Tucker could always do better. It did not matter if it was games or academe."¹²⁵ Although this clearly did not mean they agreed on all matters, it was also true that Martonmere, who Tucker developed a strong relationship with, indicated his own support for Boyd's project of 'multi-racial social-engineering'.

As a backbencher, Martonmere had supported Boyd's parliamentary championing of Sir Michael Blundell's NKG when it was founded in April 1959, suggesting the party represented an opportunity to 'consolidate moderate opinion in Kenya on a multi-racial basis'.¹²⁶ Perhaps these connections are circumstantial, yet the formation of 24 black and white MCPs into the UBP in August 1964 is reminiscent of the way in which the white-dominated yet multi-cultural NKG had materialised following agreement

¹²² Op. cit, 74.

¹²³ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 103.

¹²⁴ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 156.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 10.

¹²⁶ Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, 224-6.

between 21 nominated members of Kenya's legislative council under Blundell.¹²⁷

However, it was not until a strike by workers at the Bermuda Electric Light Company (BELCO) in February 1965 that London really took notice of how precarious the situation was in Bermuda. Seventeen police officers were injured in the violence, one seriously. The riot had been sparked on January 19 by the refusal of the company to recognise the Bermuda Industrial Union (BIU) as the main representative of linesmen and garage employees of the company, which was the island's monopoly electricity provider. On February 1 and 2, the BELCO workers were joined by sympathy strikers. Police officers were attacked when they attempted to 'break the picket line and ...to pick up makeshift weapons hoarded by the strikers'.¹²⁸

The governor's security advisers worried about what the strike meant for Bermudian race relations. Government House's Local Intelligence Committee (LIC), which depended on information collected by Bermuda's Special Branch, noted: "The most disturbing factor in the strike was the way in which it developed on racial line."¹²⁹

This was the expression of a fear that Bermuda's economic divisions were fusing with racial divisions to form a powder keg, waiting to explode into communal violence. Martonmere's security committee, made up of Police and officials such as the Attorney General, had seen the BELCO strike as a 'struggle by organised labour to challenge the paternalism of Front Street [a derogatory name for the oligarchy], for long the citadel of economic and political power'.¹³⁰ They were also concerned by the increase in strength of the BIU, whose membership had more than doubled in less than a year, from 517 in April 1964 to 1079 at end of February 1965.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid, 225; on the founding of the NKG also see Butler, *Britain and Empire*, 157; Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 252.

¹²⁸ Local intelligence committee (LIC) report covering February 1965, March 3, 1965, 1031/4766.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Op. cit.

¹³¹ LIC report for March 1965, op. cit.

On the other hand, the CO believed there to be a threat from the extreme right, as the strike had prompted ‘the desire of some sections of the white population to form “vigilante” groups.’¹³² In July 1965, after several of those who had been prosecuted for leading the strike and for attacking police officers were acquitted by juries, Martonmere noted that there were ‘now murmurings among the white reactionaries that the Jury system should be abolished’.¹³³

The previous Conservative government had revealed its sensitivity about Bermuda’s racial situation in June 1964 when it briefed the UK mission to the UN on how to handle an expected petition to the Committee of 24 by Bermudian WG Brown, who had been ‘conducting a one-man campaign at the UN for the decolonisation of Bermuda’.¹³⁴ The briefing listed Brown’s personal history, which representatives were expected to use to smear Brown if his name was ‘quoted as authority on conditions in Bermuda’.¹³⁵

It was not until after the violence occasioned by the strike that the UBP began advocating the abolition of the contentious ‘plus’ vote.¹³⁶ These developments turned apparent British scepticism about Tucker into support. British Attorney General Lord Elwyn-Jones arrived in March with a parliamentary delegation for talks with American legislators on a separate matter. While there he met Tucker. In the record of the meeting, by Piper, Tucker was described as ‘an outstanding Bermudan [sic] leader’. Another civil servant suggested: “The most able and influential of the far-sighted is Sir Henry Tucker, a banker by profession.”¹³⁷

In June 1965, Greenwood met Tucker in London. Tucker’s committee had completed an interim report that recommended voting reforms. Greenwood

¹³² LIC report for February 1965, March 3, 1965, op. cit.

¹³³ Martonmere to CO, July 3, 1965 to London, op. cit.

¹³⁴ LIC report for September 1964, October 5, 1964, op. cit.

¹³⁵ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027/610.

¹³⁶ LIC report for March 1965, undated, 1031/4766.

¹³⁷ Memo by unknown civil servant to Poynton and Greenwood, March 1, 1965, 1031/4391.

came away thinking that this was ‘a good document which should represent a satisfactory basis for constitutional reform’.¹³⁸

There is evidence, moreover, that the CO saw in Tucker a way of holding to a moderate course of change that would avoid the prospect of further violence and would find a middle ground between the extremes of radical change under the PLP and the more reactionary whites beginning a rearguard action. In the aftermath of Rhodesia’s UDI, the fear of white minority backlash is palpable in the CO files. In March 1966, a CO study reported that there was ‘no real alternative to the present moderately conservative government except an ultra conservative one’. It added:

*Any attempt to accelerate the pace of constitutional change ... is likely to be counterproductive and lead to a sharpening of racial divisions.*¹³⁹

A report written in late 1966 suggested: “Any threat to political stability would come from the right wing rather than the left.”¹⁴⁰ Despite this, there is no evidence that Bermuda’s ultra-conservatives, such as Cox, ever even aimed to organise in pursuit of their reactionary vision because many were also individualists who were strongly against political parties.

A few months after the strike in Bermuda, Wallace was telling the CO’s conservative permanent under-secretary of state Sir Hilton Poynton: “It is not too much to say that successful constitutional change in Bermuda depends on Sir Henry Tucker in particular and on a few others like him.”¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, Colonial Secretary Anthony Greenwood was being told by AR Rushford: “There is little doubt that if all goes well Sir Henry will be the first Premier of Bermuda.”¹⁴²

Tucker’s constitutional committee majority report was introduced in the House of Assembly on November 12, 1965 by the chair and by ET Richards, AD

¹³⁸ Unknown to Wallace, late 1965, *ibid*.

¹³⁹ ‘Questionnaire on Bermuda’, Colonial Office, March 1966, CO 1041/5067, TNA.

¹⁴⁰ Memorandum by ER Allott, December 1966, FO 95/277, TNA.

¹⁴¹ Memo from Wallace to Poynton, May 12, 1965, 1031/4391; For evidence of Poynton’s conservatism, see Louis, *Public Enemy Number One*, 187.

¹⁴² Rushford to Greenwood, May 12, 1965, 1031/4391.

Spurling and NHP Vesey.¹⁴³ It proposed the abolition of the ‘plus vote’, reduction in the voting age to 21, and a ‘fully responsible party system of government’. Under this, the Governor would still preside over the Executive Council but this body was to have no ex-officio members, while the chairman of each executive board was to be an Executive Council member.

Finally, the Legislative Council was to have eleven members, all appointed by the Governor. Four of these were to be appointed on the recommendation of the Government Leader, two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and the remaining five at the discretion of the Governor.¹⁴⁴ On presenting the report, Tucker, who had previously been an ardent opponent of political parties¹⁴⁵, announced: “The surest way to avoid a dictatorship is to have a healthy party system. It is only when all the parties have been suppressed that dictatorship arises.”¹⁴⁶ The report passed in the House of Assembly in August 1965 but was rejected in the Legislative Council by six votes to four. The majority report was then finally approved in both houses by December 1965.

This was a part of the process of ‘passive revolution’ that underplayed backgrounds of racism in a bid to find pragmatic solutions on decolonisation. Tucker and the UBP had moved towards acceptance of the principle of universal suffrage just after the BELCO strike. Because of this concession, the CO did not undergo the process of ‘uncoupling from kith and kin’ that it had embarked on in Central Africa in 1960 with the Wind of Change tour.¹⁴⁷ Working with Tucker was part of the process of finding ‘local representatives with whom business could be done’.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ Report of the Bermuda House of Assembly, November 12, 1965, op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 167.

¹⁴⁵ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 44, 65 and 109-10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 166.

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, *Wind of Change*, 84.

¹⁴⁸ Schwarz, *White Man’s World*, 385-6.

2.3 ‘Without... reform of constituency boundaries [the UBP] could stay in power forever’: Greenwood’s rush to decolonise and his unease over gerrymandering

Through the crucial period of 1965, Greenwood seemed to have conflicted feelings about Bermuda. On one hand he expressed frustration that the process was not moving fast enough. Tucker’s committee met 22 times and took two years to introduce its majority report to the legislature.¹⁴⁹ Greenwood, who was one of Wilson’s ‘trusted left wingers’¹⁵⁰ and one of the MCF sponsors in Cabinet,¹⁵¹ expressed his impatience with the speed, asking his officials whether it would be possible to set a date for ‘final status’ for Bermuda ‘before 1970’.¹⁵² His officials warned him off such ‘prodding’. After all, in Poynton’s words, Bermuda had ‘the oldest parliament in the Commonwealth outside of this country and are inordinately proud of it and of their ability to manage their own affairs’.¹⁵³ There is a sense that that civil servants such as Poynton and Wallace rather than Greenwood were calling the shots, and that they favoured gradualist reforms on Tucker’s terms.

Discussions over the contentious issue of constituency boundaries reveals unease on the part of Greenwood about the UBP’s conservative vision. The subject of potential gerrymandering was understood by London to be at ‘the heart of Bermuda’s constitutional problem’.¹⁵⁴ The 1962 boundary reform had ensured a white majority electorate in eight out of eighteen districts. Harries Hunter describes gerrymandering bizarrely as ‘a way of drawing electoral boundaries to protect minority interests’.¹⁵⁵ It is true that, demographically at least, whites were in a minority, but they had maintained an enforced dominance over Bermuda’s political, economic and judicial systems since the early 17th century.

¹⁴⁹ Report of the Bermuda House of Assembly, November 12, 1965, 1031/4391.

¹⁵⁰ Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 375.

¹⁵¹ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, 308.

¹⁵² Poynton to Wallace, May 12, 1965, 1031/4391.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ JW Stacpoole to Cruchley and Piper, August 21, 1964, *ibid*; Report of the Bermuda Constitutional Conference, November 22, 1966, 118/365.

¹⁵⁵ Hunter Harries, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 109.

Despite Greenwood's desire to nudge Bermuda towards 'final status', he also expressed opposition to Tucker's desire, encouraged by previous CO officials, to bring in a Bahamas-style Boundaries Commission, containing five people and chaired by the Speaker of the House of Assembly. Wallace suggested to Martonmere that, based on a trip to the Bahamas, where he had heard about the 'difficulties' experienced there, Greenwood would 'be very unhappy about seeing the Bahamas model adopted for Bermuda'.¹⁵⁶ Instead, officials suggested a three-member commission. Despite this, the Boundaries Commission that was eventually implemented in Bermuda in 1967 contained five members, although the chair would now be a judge from abroad instead of the Speaker. Greenwood's opposition was blunted by a compromise that still saw the UBP dominate the committee, with two places for its nominees against only one for the PLP.

The UBP's resistance on the question of reforming constituency boundaries was the one area where the Colonial Office expressed unease. The Governor's security committee predicted that the fact that 'the party sees no need for any further change in the franchise' would be 'bitterly contested' by the PLP and added: "Without the reform of constituency boundaries [the UBP] could stay in power forever."¹⁵⁷

However, on this issue, Tucker and his colleagues appeared to have the full support of Martonmere. The Governor had written to Wallace in January 1966, noting that Tucker 'feels it is very important that there should be a limit to the number of seats per parish'.¹⁵⁸ Martonmere believed the UBP had 'undoubtedly taken a calculated risk' in abolishing the plural vote and reducing the voting age in 1966. He said: "I doubt if it would be practical for them to make more concessions and they must inevitably dig in their toes on the boundary issue."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Wallace to Martonmere, December 17, 1965, 1031/4391.

¹⁵⁷ LIC report for August 1964, September 4, 1964, 1031/4766

¹⁵⁸ Martonmere to Wallace, January 3, 1966, 1031/5067.

¹⁵⁹ Martonmere to Wallace, February 10, 1966. CO 1031/5235, TNA.

Five years later, he was even more explicit about rejecting the need to create more equal constituencies whose frontiers could be drawn outside parish lines. He noted with concern that such change could ‘lead in due course to power falling into the hands of more extreme black elements’.¹⁶⁰ Although Martonmere would claim that his role was ‘to maintain complete neutrality in political matters’,¹⁶¹ he was clearly not as ‘middle-of-the-road’ as a Conservative MP would later suggest.¹⁶²

Therefore, throughout its oversight of the process of drawing up of Bermuda’s constitutional reform majority report, the CO was reluctant to confront Bermuda’s ruling oligarchy to express Greenwood’s misgivings over following the Bahamas model, preferring to take a hands-off approach. Just as in 1947, it tip-toed around the oligarchy, channelling requests through a Governor who was on the side of white settlers, whilst deferring to local institutions such as the heavily-biased House of Assembly.

3. ‘Loading the dice’ in the UBP’s favour: The November 1966 Constitutional Conference

Two points need to be made about the run-up to the organisation of the Bermuda Constitutional Conference at Marlborough House in London in November 1966. Firstly, this was a very busy period of transition for the CO, which was overseeing ‘a long list’ of constitutional conferences including those for the Leeward and Windward Islands and for the Bahamas through the ‘whole of the spring’ of 1966.¹⁶³ This meant Bermuda’s conference was suggested for either June or October but, eventually, was not scheduled to begin until early November. It also occurred during a period of transition for the CO, which had officially closed in August 1966. Bermuda matters were moved over to the Commonwealth Office. However, Colonial Secretary Fred

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Martonmere to Thomson, May 1968, FCO 16/91.

¹⁶² Nigel Fisher MP, in Hansard, June 17, 1967.

¹⁶³ Wallace to Martonmere, December 17, 1965, 1031/4391.

Lee stayed on during a period of transition¹⁶⁴ and he presided over the Bermuda Conference.¹⁶⁵

Secondly, the British Government should be ascribed full responsibility for the way in which constitutional reform panned out. The change was to be made by an Order-in-Council. Such orders are signed off by the Monarch at a meeting with, and on the advice of the Privy Council, a body ‘shrouded in mystery’ dating back to the 12th or 13th centuries, whose orders ‘bypass Parliament but have the same force as democratically passed legislation’.¹⁶⁶ This meant that there would be no binding vote at the Conference and its role would only be ‘advisory’ for the Colonial Secretary.¹⁶⁷ Whilst the build-up to the process of change through 1963-1965 had been farmed-out to the UBP leaders in the legislature, there was no way the British Government could wash its hands of its responsibility for what occurred.

3.1 Membership and delegation

*The conference was dominated by people from the majority party elected on the old unjust boundaries.*¹⁶⁸

As the quote above suggests, the process by which attendees were selected for the conference was open to question. As a result of the conference’s advisory role, a CO memorandum noted that ‘it was not necessary to have each group represented in strict numerical proportion to its strength’. As a result, Bermuda’s Chief Secretary JW Skykes seemed to pluck a number out of the air in suggesting a delegation size of between 12 and 15.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the PLP challenged the legitimacy of holding a constitutional conference such as this before more electoral reform and a general election. It insisted that the delegation drawn from the present legislature was ‘not competent’ to discuss constituency changes because the existing constituencies from which

¹⁶⁴ Smallman, *Story of St Helena*, 158.

¹⁶⁵ Frederic Bennett, Hansard, June 14, 1967.

¹⁶⁶ O’Connor, *Constitutional Role of the Privy Council*, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Unknown to Wallace, late 1965, 1031/4391.

¹⁶⁸ Tom Driberg, Hansard, June 14, 1967.

¹⁶⁹ Unknown to Wallace, late 1965, 1031/4391.

members had been elected ‘had been drawn in a way which must be changed’.¹⁷⁰ This objection was ignored.

Since both parties broadly agreed on the change in the constitution that would bring about Responsible Government, the most crucial of the issues to be decided at the conference was the question of the extent to which electoral boundaries would be redrawn. However, it was also important that Whitehall officials decided, in consultation with Martonmere and Tucker, the makeup of the delegation. As Martonmere reminisced: “I remember at the time I was asked to bring the delegation from here to London and they let me choose them”.¹⁷¹

In the summer of 1966, there were debates across the Atlantic by telegram and in the Bermudian press about who should make up the delegation. Martonmere’s description of the people he had selected to take part revealed his own chauvinistic and racial biases clearly. Tucker, for example was described ‘as the most able and influential political figure in Bermuda’. Another white UBP politician Bayard Dill was ‘broad-minded and judicious’ and Dudley Spurling was ‘widely respected for his stability and integrity’. Finally, UBP co-founder Sir Henry Vesey was ‘very able and industrious’.

In contrast the PLP delegates were described as ‘venomous’ (Lois Browne-Evans), ‘racially conscious’ (Walter Robinson) and ‘quite irresponsible and impractical’ (Dorothy Thompson).¹⁷² The proposed group of 18 included eight UBP MPs, three PLP MPs, four independent MPs, two of whom were black and two of whom were white, and three members of the Legislative Council, all of whom sympathised with the UBP. Twelve out of 18 members of the proposed delegation were white.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ *Constitutional Conference Majority Report*, November 22, 1966, 118/365.

¹⁷¹ Williams, *Man of Stature*, p. 167.

¹⁷² Sykes to Piper, August 11, 1966, *ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

3.2 The conference reports

The delegation essentially included three different factions. The UBP group, supported by a host of independents; a more right-wing faction of two independents led by the reactionary Speaker of the House, Cox; and a faction of three PLP MPs. The PLP delegation were being assisted by former Labour MP, Geoffrey Bing, a Queens Counsel and member of the MCF who had recently served as Attorney General to Kwame Nkrumah's government in Ghana. While in Africa, Nkrumah had found Bing's 'legal brilliance invaluable' because he was 'adept at finding legal ways to "use" the law'. According to London's *Observer*, Bing had 'worked out a constitutional way for Nkrumah to remove his Chief Justice'.¹⁷⁴ As a result, according to Browne-Evans he was 'blamed for everything that was radical and dictatorial in Ghana'.¹⁷⁵ Bing's advocacy on the part of the PLP was seen as effective by CO official TM Jenkins, who noted in January 1967 that his intervention 'enabled the PLP to make out a much more forceful case at the conference than they would otherwise have done'.¹⁷⁶

Before going in to the conference, the UBP faction had been warned by Conservative MP Nigel Fisher 'to accept a compromise which went further than they had wanted to go', because, in Fisher's view, Lee 'could not possibly propose any settlement which was not a compromise'. As Fisher would later say, 'that is how it worked out'.¹⁷⁷ As the next section will show this compromise slightly improved on the inequalities of constituency size inherent in the 1962 boundaries but kept boundaries delimited within parishes. However, the PLP delegation won a concession in the creation of two extra constituencies (with two MCPs each) in the most populous parish of Pembroke, increasing the number of seats in the House of Assembly from 36 to 40. However, the distortions implicit in the fact that boundaries were forced to remain within parish lines, meant, as the FCO noted:

¹⁷⁴ *Gazette*, October 5, 1966.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, *Lois*, 126.

¹⁷⁶ Jenkins to Allott, January 20, 1967, 95/277.

¹⁷⁷ Hansard, June 14, 1967.

*Three of the nine parishes which contain the bulk of the population will only return sixteen out of the 40 proposed MPs (sic), while the other six representing the wealthier area but containing a minority of the population will return 24 members.*¹⁷⁸

Lee would later defend this compromise in the House of Commons by arguing that, despite the inequalities, it had ‘brought about a situation in which there will be far and away greater equality in voting than there has ever been before’.¹⁷⁹ Lee suggested on the closing day of the conference that Bermuda could be a ‘shining example to the world of two races living together and enjoying peace and prosperity’. He tempted fate by adding: “If with these conditions, you in Bermuda cannot make a success of race relations, I don’t know who can.”¹⁸⁰

This majority report, which the PLP group rejected, essentially formalised the link between executive and legislature, creating a type of quasi-parliamentary sovereignty in which the chairmen and women of boards now sat on an Executive Council (a Cabinet in all but name) also appointed from the majority group in the House of Assembly. This was in contrast to the situation before, in which, ‘in theory’ the Governor’s powers were ‘virtually unlimited and the elected House of the Legislature [had] no say in executive government’.¹⁸¹

An empowered House of Assembly would be supplemented by a nominated Legislative Council which would then have the power to delay taxation bills (whereas before it could veto them). Another important part of the proposed constitution was a bill of rights, similar to that already in effect in the Bahamas following the constitutional change of January 1964.¹⁸²

The move towards a version of parliamentary sovereignty however was held in check by reserved powers for the Governor. Under section 62, the Governor retained responsibility for internal security, the police, external affairs and

¹⁷⁸ Memorandum by Allott, December 1966, 95/277.

¹⁷⁹ Lee quoted by Frederic Bennett, June 19, 1967, Hansard.

¹⁸⁰ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 179.

¹⁸¹ Hart, Hansard, June 14, 1967.

¹⁸² *Constitutional Conference Majority Report*, November 22, 1966, 118/365.

defence.¹⁸³ For looking after these areas, the Governor was allowed to withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund ‘acting in his discretion’ and without the need for parliamentary approval.¹⁸⁴ The Governor also retained the right, under section 14, to declare a state of emergency. Thus he had discretion to do anything ‘reasonably justifiable . . . for the purpose of dealing with a security situation’.¹⁸⁵ As will be shown in later chapters, the splitting up of executive power in this way may have created a situation in which the coherence of governance was undermined.

The conference majority report was accompanied by two minority reports. One, by white reactionaries Cox and Henry Watlington, advocated direct democracy that would have put Bills rejected by the House of Assembly to a public vote in a referendum.¹⁸⁶ The PLP put forward more wide-ranging objections to the majority report. In particular, the PLP attacked the fact that constituency boundaries put in place in 1962 had been decided on a ‘racial basis’ and were being essentially left unchanged, apart from the creation of new seats in heavily populated Pembroke Parish. As a result, the PLP believed the majority report was ‘unsatisfactory’ as they would ‘almost certainly to lead to the election of a House of Assembly not representative of the electorate’. The party also disagreed with the provision that allowed the upper chamber to delay tax bills and suggested that the Governor should be ‘elected’ and should also not be able to withdraw money without the legislature’s agreement.¹⁸⁷

The PLP also attacked the proposals for being based on the Bahamas model. The minority report argued that the ‘experience, to date, in the working of the Bahamas constitution is not such as to justify a similar constitution being enacted for Bermuda’.¹⁸⁸ The knowledge of how a white-led government in the Bahamas had clung on to power through gerrymandering was fresh in the mind. The suggestion by PLP leader Walter Robinson that Bermuda risked becoming a ‘second Rhodesia with largely white business and property

¹⁸³ William Cox, *Bermuda Constitutional Documents*, 118.

¹⁸⁴ Bermuda Constitution Order, 1968, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ Section 14(2), Bermuda Constitution Order 1968, *op. cit.*

¹⁸⁶ Minority report by Cox and Watlington, 118/365.

¹⁸⁷ *PLP Minority Report*, November 22, 1966, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*

interests maintaining minority rule by gerrymandering' may have been an exaggeration but it also had a grain of truth to it.¹⁸⁹

The PLP, meanwhile, had been busy making use of Bing's MCF network in London. On November 3, three PLP MCPs met with the Labour Party's Commonwealth and Colonies Parliamentary Group.¹⁹⁰ In solidarity with their Bermudian comrades, 35 Labour MPs 'signed a parliamentary motion of protest' because of the unequal proportions of the constituencies.¹⁹¹ The majority report also only made minor concessions to PLP anxieties about gerrymandering, with the creation of two new seats in Pembroke. As the next section will show, there was a mix of support for and opposition to the majority report in the House of Commons and the House of Lords in June and July 1967.

4. A passive metropole: Debates at Westminster over Bermudian constitutional reform

Britain's role in Bermudian constitutional reform exposed a metropolitan political posture of affinity towards kith and kin. However, this was contested by a small block of MPs on the left of the Labour Party. The MCF had become the UK's key anticolonialist pressure group since it had been formed in April 1954. However, by the 1960s, its *raison d'être* seemed to have been sapped by the rapid acceleration of decolonisation. The key 'explosive' issue of constituency boundaries in Bermuda, taken up by MCF member Bing, and passed on to other MPs such as Tom Driberg, however, afforded a new glimpse of the group taking on colonial legacies from a left-libertarian perspective.¹⁹²

This faction found inspiration in the journal *The New Reasoner*, which combined stories about colonial issues with the espousal of 'the liberal and radical traditions'. It also emphasised moral battles, such as the fight for racial

¹⁸⁹ *The Morning Star*, November 8, 1966.

¹⁹⁰ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 176.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, 179-180.

¹⁹² Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, 248.

equality, over economic arguments against colonialism.¹⁹³ The response, on the part of Conservative, Labour and Liberal representatives, to these suggestions of racial iniquity is instructive in exposing the combination of apathy and delusion on such questions of racist colonial legacies in the political centre and on the right.

4.1 Cross-party indifference and irrationality on issues of racism

The key battles in the constitutional conference and during the Westminster debate that followed centered on the question of whether Bermuda's constitutional reforms were enshrining a fair form of democracy or not. Courageous lobbying by the PLP faction, aided by Bing, led to a key concession over representation in Pembroke. This was 'the one parish with an outstandingly large electorate' which included the capital city of Hamilton and its predominantly black northern and north-eastern suburbs. Representation here would be 'doubled' from two seats (and four MCPs) to four seats (and eight MCPs).¹⁹⁴

However, a more crucial UBP victory at the conference, despite the increase in the number of the MPs, was the fact that it was decided, with the PLP dissenting, 'that the constituency Boundaries Commission should consider only boundary divisions within' Bermuda's nine parishes.¹⁹⁵ Hence, disparities were 'written into the constitution' and could 'only be rectified by a constitutional amendment'.¹⁹⁶ The denial of 'unrestricted' terms of reference for potential boundary changes, as in fact the CO had 'sought to introduce in other colonies before independence', meant...

There is a wide disparity between the value of a vote in the mainly white rural areas and the mainly black urban areas of Pembroke.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ *Ibid*, 300.

¹⁹⁴ *PLP Minority Report*, November 22, 1966, 118/365.

¹⁹⁵ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

¹⁹⁶ Posnett to Scott, April 20, 1971, *Ibid*.

¹⁹⁷ *Op. cit.*

More specifically, the PLP argued that their calculations indicated that the three most populous parishes in terms of black Bermudians – Pembroke, Devonshire and Sandys – which contained a majority of inhabitants on the island, or 23,672 people out of 42,640 in total (according to the most recent 1960 census) - would return only 16 out of the 40 members of the House of Assembly, while ‘the remaining six parishes ‘containing a minority of the population’ – 18,968 – would return 24 members.

Despite these objections, the majority report had passed through both Bermudian houses of parliament by February 7, 1967. Because of the UBP’s huge caucus of 23 out of a total of 36 MCPs, passage of the bill was ‘a foregone conclusion’.¹⁹⁸ Browne-Evans later charged that Speaker Cox, an independent who had signed the majority report despite producing his own minority report, ‘admitted’ that the parish boundaries had been drawn on ‘racial lines’, while she added: “What they did in London...was to entrench it into the written constitution, making it hard to change.”¹⁹⁹

Another little-noticed part of the package meant that ‘the eight-year period that resident foreigners had to wait before applying for Bermudian status’ was decreased to five years.²⁰⁰ This package, which effectively inflated white votes and British input, was passed in the midst of coded rhetoric on the part of Tucker, who had suggested in May 1966:

*If we ever...allow the government of these islands to get into hands which do not have the experience to promote trade, to expand and maintain it, then we are in for a bad time.*²⁰¹

The new Boundaries Commission, meanwhile, began its work during April and in May its report had been accepted in Bermuda House of Assembly by a vote of 17 votes to nine. However, the report was only signed by four out of five members of the commission. The PLP’s Walter Robinson refused to sign it as he believed the two constituencies of Devonshire had been divided ‘along

¹⁹⁸Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 182.

¹⁹⁹ Williams, *Lois*, 132.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹*Gazette*, May 6, 1966.

racial lines'.²⁰² This suggests that even though constituencies were limited to within parish lines, the Boundaries Commission still had limited potential to make them fairer or not. In 1967, the creation of the safe PLP seat of Devonshire North and the safe UBP seat of Devonshire South suggested it was not interested in allowing the creative destruction of democracy to do its work.

Minister of State Judith Hart introduced the Bermuda Constitution Bill to the House of Commons on June 14, 1967, arguing that the Bill would replace Bermuda's 'frankly archaic' constitution with a 'modern form of Government'.²⁰³ MPs Tom Driberg, James Johnson, Gerry Fitt, Hugh Jenkins and Joan Lestor rallied against it, suggesting 'the constituency boundaries will continue in many cases to be rigged'; 'unequal on a racial basis'. Whereas before 'a coloured man's vote' had been worth 'one-ninth of the vote of a white man, now it would be worth one-third' and 'coloured' constituencies were 'almost four times the size of wealthy and white ones'. As a result, the UBP was placed in a 'privileged position' and the 'dice' was 'loaded against the Opposition party ever winning'.²⁰⁴

The defence of the Bermuda Constitution Bill, and of the new boundaries, by Labour, Conservative and Liberal parliamentarians included the argument, mainly put by moderate Labour MPs such as Christopher Rowland, that the constitution was a compromise brokered by a 'neutral' Colonial Secretary, and had to be accepted as a 'cautious advance'.²⁰⁵

Yet, there was also a veiled reference to the politics of affinity, put most pungently by Bermuda property-owner and Conservative MP Sir Frederic Bennett, who had been a member of the Primrose League, was a regular attendee of Bilderburg Group Conferences and had served as an Advocate on the High Court in Southern Rhodesia in the 1940s. Bennett's view, apparently supported by Minister of State Judith Hart, was that an increase in black representation might lead to 'racialism' and confrontation that could hurt the

²⁰²Williams, *Lois*, 136.

²⁰³Hansard, June 14, 1967.

²⁰⁴Johnson, *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵Op. cit.

island's economy, dependent on the US base and on tourism. As he put it: "One must be very careful not to damage, for the sake of a political theory, a structure which is of great value to the island." This argument seemed founded in the idea that racial tension was not home-grown but 'a reflection of the race troubles in the United States'.²⁰⁶

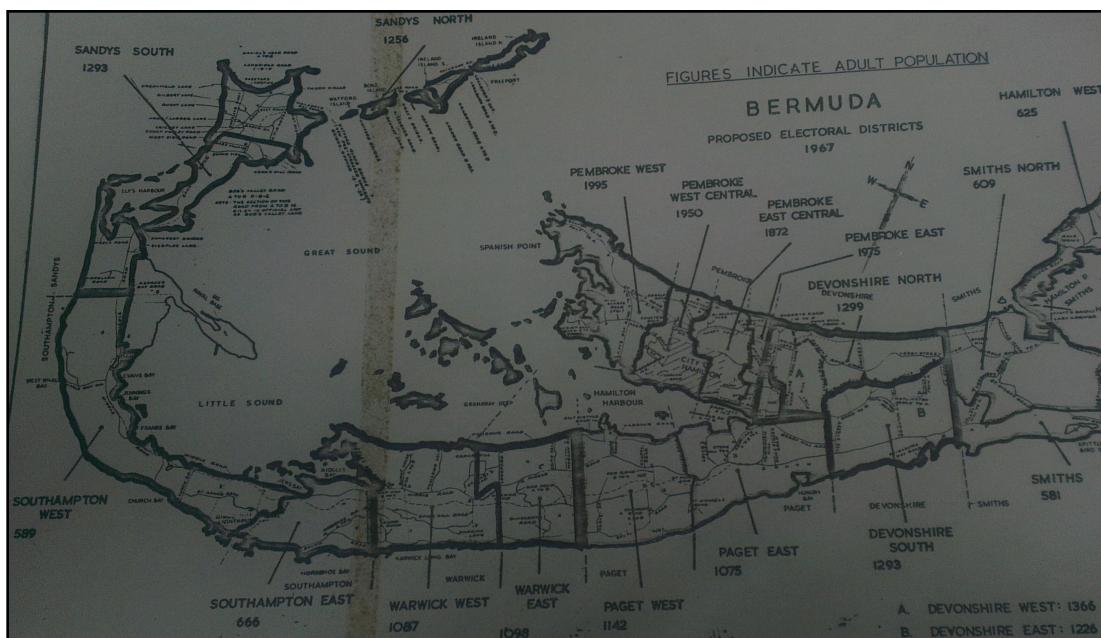
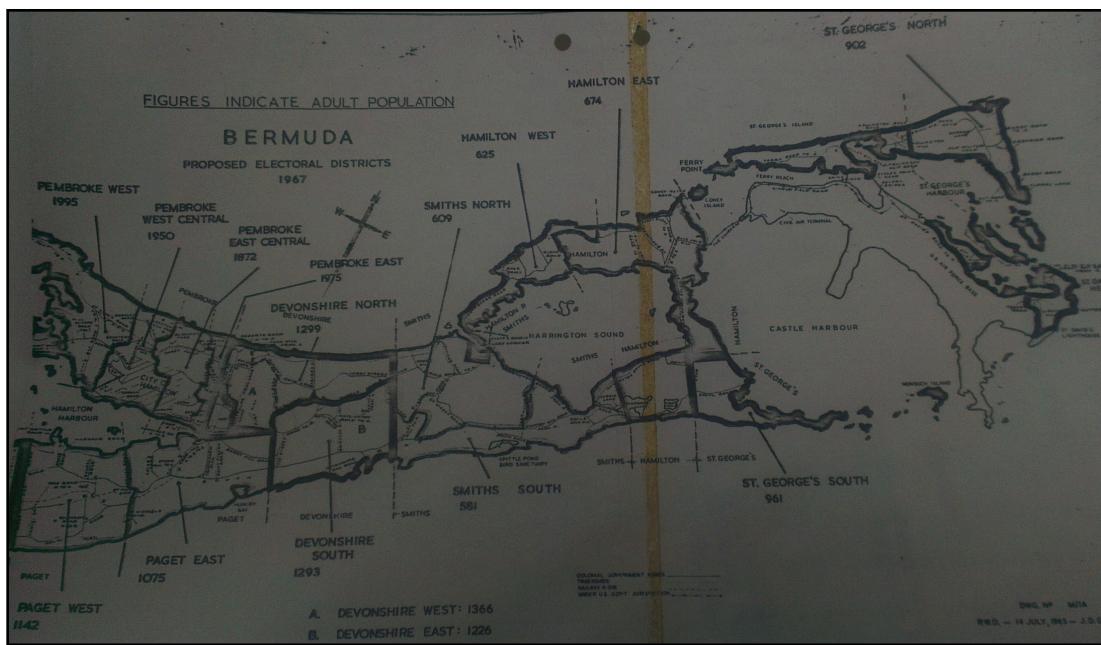
The language is evocative of Tucker's language. Although the UBP claimed they had 'refrained from seeking the assistance of lobbies or pressure groups' in building parliamentary support for this bill, 16 Conservative MPs tabled a motion congratulating Bermuda's parliament on 'establishing a multiracial society untrammelled by poverty or direct taxation'.²⁰⁷ Bennett represented a key champion of the reform at Westminster.²⁰⁸ As the owner of a home on St David's Island, he revealed that he had been approached to stand as a candidate for the UBP in the upcoming General Election. Thus, whilst PLP lobbying occurred in the open, UBP lobbying occurred more behind the scenes. Like other supporters of the bill, he spoke in veiled terms of anxiety, trying to downplay 'racial differences' but employing the ridiculous argument that tackling deep racist legacies through institutional reform might shatter the island's fragile tourist economy.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Hansard, June 14, 1967.

²⁰⁷ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 171.

²⁰⁸ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 177.

²⁰⁹ Hansard, June 14, 1967.



Figures 9 and 10: Constituency boundaries proposed by Boundaries Commission and accepted by the House of Assembly, 1967.

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4.2 'The only means we have left': Bermuda as an 'English market town'

British politicians from all three parties who argued in favour of the Bermuda Constitution Bill seemed to have been convinced that Bermuda was a cross between an idyllic paradise and what Liberal Peer Lord Ogmore called an

‘English market town’. These arguments did not focus on the merit of the reforms themselves since it was conceded even by supporters that these were ‘elaborate’ and that they enshrined unequally-sized constituencies. However it was countered by the argument that such disparities were even more stark in Britain.²¹⁰ Proponents of this view were forgetting, however, that Britain’s majority population, had not been subjected to slavery and segregation by a narrowly-based oligarchy. As Benn would note in 1963: “Race is an explosive issue and cannot be pushed under the carpet.”²¹¹

The moderate and Conservative argument in favour of the Bill depended on an emphasis on Bermuda’s relative prosperity, hopeful arguments that the UBP’s ‘liberal wing’ would win out, and a strange concession that Britain no longer had the means to impose a solution. Hart had discussed Bermuda’s prosperity in vivid terms on introducing the Bill. It was noted that ‘96 per cent of all households have a refrigerator, 82 per cent have radio and 66 per cent have television’ while Bermuda had ‘one of the highest standards of living in the world, and the prosperity extends throughout the community’.²¹² These facts were deployed as if they were relevant to a discussion about new constitutional or electoral machinery.

The notion of prosperity also fed into a ‘declinist’ ideology which had specific roots in the British politics of the late 1950s and 1960s’.²¹³ Bermuda’s prosperity starkly contrasted with anxieties about British weakness. Bennett noted that Bermuda had a ‘North American’ standard of living, while she was also ‘a very valuable and significant contributor to the hard currency reserves of the Sterling Area’.²¹⁴ Because of this the ‘boot’ was ‘on the other foot’. Britain was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the oligarchy because, economically, Bermuda was ‘completely secure and independent’.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Nigel Fisher, Hansard, June 19, 1967.

²¹¹ Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, 64.

²¹² Hansard, June 14, 1967.

²¹³ Tomlinson, *Politics of Decline*, 6.

²¹⁴ Hansard, June 19, 1967.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Secondly, there was an attempt to displace the decision by championing Bermuda's white oligarchy vis-a-vis other white minorities throughout the world to make them seem 'moderate'. Bermudian oligarchs were depicted, even by Driberg, as much more 'civilised, gentle people' than the Rhodesia Front 'savages'.²¹⁶ Rowland, who had been 'kicked, punched and had a jug of water poured over him' by supporters of Ian Smith during a visit to Rhodesia in January 1966, also suggested Bermuda posed a less intractable problem than that posed in Central and Southern Africa.²¹⁷ Yet Bermuda, he added, was also 'not a Kenyan situation where the white minority was so small...that its interest could be rolled over by the British government of the day'.²¹⁸ Thus, a compromise was in order.

A similar exercise was attempted on behalf of Martonmere. During the Westminster debate, Conservative MP Nigel Fisher had praised the 'tact and good sense' of Martonmere, who was also held up as a 'sheet anchor of stability'.²¹⁹ In the Lords, the praise was even more fulsome, and Martonmere's 'wisdom and assiduity' and 'political sagacity' were lauded.²²⁰ With a person of this caliber overseeing reform, how could it possibly go wrong?

Finally, the argument for the Bill obliquely alluded to Britain's changing place in the world. Firstly, it expressed something of an increasing disillusion with the Commonwealth as independent countries became one-party states and jettisoned their British links. This engendered something of a prejudice against the PLP's resistance to the reform because of Bing's work in authoritarian Ghana. As Robert Howarth noted: "I was staggered by their choice of constitutional adviser. His role in Africa...makes him very suspect."²²¹

²¹⁶ Op. cit.

²¹⁷ BBC News, *On this day*, January 12, 1966.

²¹⁸ Hansard, June 14, 1967.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Earl Jellicoe and Lord Beswick, Hansard, *HL Deb*, July 17, 1967 vol 285 cc46-56.

²²¹ Hansard, June 14, 1967.

Secondly, abdication of Britain's responsibility towards black Bermudians was rationalised by an evocation of Britain's weakness and the fact that she had abandoned 'the pretence of being a great imperial power'. In this context, Bennett suggested softer understandings of 'influence' and vague 'hopes' were all that remained of British power in the context of Bermuda:

To talk of imposing a settlement is wholly unreal. While one hopes to see further advances, they can only be made by ties of mutual confidence and friendship between us and Bermuda, because these are the only means that we have left.²²²

Thus the idea of imposing a settlement on 'kith and kin' was as unrealistic or ludicrous, in Clark's words, as Jeremy Thorpe's 'celebrated suggestion that V-bombers should be used to devastate the Rhodesia railway system'.²²³

The reverse of this debate identified something of a contradiction within the Labour Party's approach to radicalism in the context of imperial legacies, which was anti-colonial at the same time as advocating liberal intervention. Since decolonisation was now a cross-party orthodoxy, the argument of MCF members such as Driberg and Bing would have to take on a new language in which it was not afraid to suggest a less timid association with the English tradition of liberty. As Hart put it:

Those who argue...that the British House of Commons should legislate to change [electoral iniquities] are the first people to argue for self-government for dependent territories. They cannot have it both ways.²²⁴

The Bill received its second reading in the House of Commons in late June. It passed through its second and third readings in the House of Lords, with little dissent, on July 21. The Bermuda Constitutional Order was passed as a statutory Order in Council in London on February 14, 1968, and the first election based upon the new electoral arrangements and recommendations of the new Boundaries Commission took place on May 22.²²⁵ The rest of the constitution came into effect in June, after the UBP had won a landslide

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Clark, *Into Politics*, 287.

²²⁴ Hansard, June 19, 1967.

²²⁵ Cox, *Bermuda Constitutional Documents*, 78.

victory over the PLP in the election, taking 30 of the 40 seats in the House of Assembly.²²⁶

Conclusion

During the process of Bermudian constitutional reform, liberal influences such as Greenwood seemed impotent in the face of the combined efforts of Martonmere, Tucker, officials such as Poynton and a cross-party consensus of 'decolonising' MPs and Peers. This highlights how a decolonisation of affinity loosely cloaked in a rhetoric of 'decline' and compromise could be used to rationalise the abdication of British responsibilities towards Bermuda's majority. These duties had been imposed not by some sacred, divine or racial trust. Rather they were accrued by Britain's history of using Bermuda as a strategic outpost and her regular bolstering of the white minority in power, for instance via Governor Sir Ralph Leatham's tacit acquiescence in Bermudian iniquities in 1946-8.

With support from Whitehall officials, Martonmere took the lead in organising the Constitutional Conference in November 1966. The make-up of the delegation needed to be approved by the Secretary of State himself. He showed his power when he created a delegation dominated by conservative, white men. As Schwarz notes, often communications between imperial actors 'resided in the undertone or in what was left unsaid, or in a shrug of the shoulder largely lost to the historical record'.²²⁷ Along these lines, it seems the make-up of the delegation was the product of a gentleman's agreement between Tucker and Martonmere, with support from officials in London such as Poynton.

On top of this, Martonmere actively encouraged Tucker in his resistance to progressive demands that constituencies be redrawn so they were able to cross parish lines. This helped undermine the legitimacy of the new democracy from its inception. An increasingly close relationship between Tucker and

²²⁶ *Sun*, June 8, 1972.

²²⁷ Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 349.

Martonmere, who was viewed with respect across party lines in Britain, led to a situation in which the British government was supporting what they viewed as the ‘moderate’ and ‘sensible’ government of Bermuda. This policy, rarely explicitly acknowledged, nevertheless came to be justified by officials in terms of ‘stability’ and the need for ‘racial harmony’, despite knowledge that racial violence in 1965 had been founded in a reaction against economic iniquities perpetuated by the oligarchy.

Hopeful and emollient suggestions in Westminster that ‘riots’ and ‘racial strife’ were ‘unthinkable in the Bermuda of today’ came only two years after a strike in which seventeen Police officers and unknown others had been injured. This blindness to reality suggests that the mix of affinity and pragmatic approaches suggested by the Conservative, moderate Labour and Liberal view were based upon a false image of Bermuda; one where ‘harmony’ had prevailed until the island started becoming infected by ‘race troubles’ from the United States. This mythical view could only be founded in approaches to decolonisation that placed interest, influence, ‘mutual confidence’ and ‘friendship’ between London and kith and kin in Bermuda ahead of any supposed commitment to democracy.

While the UBP may have consciously or unconsciously played upon this linkage between ‘kith and kin’, there was also an appeal to the better angels of Britain’s nature. The BWA petition and response to it by Creech Jones in 1946 suggests the oligarchy was so entrenched in Bermudian life by that point that Bermuda’s working class felt the only option was to appeal over their heads to London. This was a demand for principled decolonisation, which incorporated an appeal for more intervention by Britain along liberal and progressive lines before finally pulling out.

Indeed, Bermuda’s black community may have been more threatened by the local oligarchy when the progressive face of a Janus-like Britain came down on the side of not confronting Bermuda’s deeply entrenched iniquities. 1967-8 was the moment, therefore, that the ability to set agendas in Bermuda began to slip from Britain’s fingers. This may have happened in part because politics

in Britain were beginning in the 1960s to be dominated by some of the same questions of race that had been endemic in Bermuda's fabric for centuries.

What Tony Benn called a 'colour bar' existed in Britain, for instance in Bristol, until 1963.²²⁸ Throughout the mid-1960s, Labour attempted to tackle racism with two Race Relations Acts.²²⁹ These attempts were characterised however by 'lurchings and stumblings, contradictions and the abandonment of principles'.²³⁰ The extent of populist racism to non-white immigration was revealed following a speech by Conservative MP Enoch Powell in April 1968.²³¹ White solidarity was an undercurrent, officially denounced by political elites, but retaining a striking, often unspoken, power.

The response of radicals to the combination of white solidarity and 'declinist' rationalisation, however, was revealed to be inadequate because they were divided between an old economic interpretation of anticolonialism and a new discourse of liberties and rights. On the one hand, there was a generic, largely bi-partisan drift towards 'liquidating colonialism'. This had been most symbolically enshrined in 1947-8 by the hasty and chaotic withdrawals from India and Palestine, and would soon be replicated with Britain's ejection from Aden in November 1967.²³² This was the anti-colonialism of pragmatism, because it also played into a vision that emphasised a more inward-focused British posture; the decolonisation of the little Englander.

However, the anti-colonialist movement was also pervaded by an undercurrent of liberal radicalism. As espoused by MPs such as Driborg and Fenner Brockway, it was characterised by a view of the 'danger' of 'white settler communities'. This necessitated 'intense efforts to overcome the racial antagonisms which were seen as legacies of colonialism'. Bermuda, meanwhile, was a testing ground for a form of rhetoric 'in which colonial questions were increasingly articulated in the language of race'. It provided an

²²⁸ Benn, *Out of the Wilderness*, 15.

²²⁹ Cabinet Memorandum by Home Secretary, February 17, 1965, C. (65) 23, TNA.

²³⁰ Lapping, *Labour Government*, 109.

²³¹ BBC News, *Ten Key Moments in Race Relations*.

²³² Lapping, *Labour Government*, 59.

opportunity for the anticolonialist left to emphasise ‘radical-liberal humanitarian appeals’ founded ‘in traditions symbolised’ by John Stuart Mill.²³³ As a symbol of this evolution, it was no accident that the MCF would be re-named Liberation in 1970.²³⁴

²³³ Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, 300, 301 and 325.

²³⁴ Nelson Mandela Foundation website.

Chapter Two

The pragmatic conversion of Sir Henry Tucker, oligarchical paternalism and the denial of racial legacies, 1963 –1971

Racial harmony is closer and better today than it had been in my recollection....We have a solid basis of understanding today, which means we can dismiss this problem in the future.

- Sir Henry Tucker, May 3, 1963 ¹

The same government has been in power since black people have been slaves.

- The words of an unidentified teenager during riots in Hamilton, December 1977 ²

1. Introduction

Tucker's words above, spoken to 200 people at an election meeting in the leafy surroundings in his family's former land in the constituency of Paget, suggested either willful blindness or striking ignorance about Bermuda's historical legacies. What Tucker seemed to be ignoring was that, in the words of James Baldwin: "People are trapped in history and history is trapped in them."³ The other quote above, and the context in which it was said, suggests that by 1977, the UBP had failed, after 13 years of effective legislative power, to convince many Bermudians it was a genuinely 'multi-racial' entity with an interest in building a modern and progressive Bermuda.

Despite Tucker's hope of 'dismissing this problem', race relations in the period 1963 until 1971 progressively deteriorated. The 1960s was something of a false dawn for racial emancipation that ended with 'a thorough pacification' of blacks in the early 1970s.⁴ Between the passing of the Parliamentary Elections Act in January 1963 and Tucker's retirement as Government Leader in December 1971, British troops were called to Bermuda three times by Governor Lord Martonmere, while riots engulfed the island in February 1965,

¹ *Gazette*, May 3, 1963

² *The Times*, December 4, 1977.

³ Lambert and Lester, *Imperial Spaces, Imperial Subjects*, 16.

⁴ Reed, 'Black Revolution', 62.

April 1968 and October 1970.⁵ Although parts of the historiography seem to underplay or even forget the 1968 riots⁶, they were not limited to the City of Hamilton, but spread right through the island.⁷ Finally, in 1977-1978, a new set of riots would occasion the report of a Royal Commission under Lord Pitt of Hampstead. It identified a host of economic and social iniquities and governance problems festering under the surface of what seemed to be, to the island's many tourists at least, a tranquil and prosperous island.⁸

The purpose of the first two chapters of this thesis is the adumbration of two key themes that characterised Anglo-Bermudian power-sharing. Firstly, the process of laissez-faire constitutional devolution through which a rationalising British elite gave comfort to a frightened yet controlling oligarchy. This process also further diminished the metropole's ability to set agendas, while confusing responsibilities and accountability in Britain's remaining territories up to the present day.⁹

The second theme is the birth of a Bermudian party politics tempered by UBP incumbency between 1964 and 1977. This theme focuses on the manner in which the party presented itself as a mixture of a break from the past but also as the protector of prosperity and stability. In the process, however, it repackaged a repressed racial politics of confrontation for a new democratic age. The process of party creation and growth detailed in this chapter was part of the legitimisation of the oligarchy's incumbency, through elections and via the creation of new trappings of power and symbols of local autonomy.

The previous chapter showed how the process of constitutional reform was tarnished by the historical iniquities that it hardwired into the electoral landscape. This chapter will focus on the same period, 1963-1968, placing the spotlight on the origins of Bermuda's second political party, the UBP. These

⁵ E Vadre to JAN Graham, June 23, 1969, PREM 13/2885, TNA.

⁶ The 1968 riots are not even mentioned in Zuill, *Story of Bermuda and her People*.

⁷ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda Civil Disorders*, 21.

⁸ Pitt et al., *Report...into the 1977 Disturbances*.

⁹ Taylor, *British Colonial Policy in the Caribbean*; political squabbles between the two halves of the Bermuda executive branch still occur, for instance, over appointments to the Department of Public Prosecutions. *Gazette*, January 11, 2014.

two chapters will show how UBP politicians were set on a path that helped to marginalise the black Bermudian majority, at the same time as helping to spur a period of atrophy and reassessment of British power in Bermuda.

This chapter will first argue that the party was part of a wider elite response to local and global currents of change. The party was founded in the context of a reassessment of race at the level of Government House. Some writing about Bermudian political history in this period fails to take account of the colonial context in discussion of the causation of events.¹⁰ It is essential, however, to view this period in the context of the wider process of decolonisation.

Government support for segregation in schools ended in 1965, as did the integration of the (black) Bermuda Militia Artillery and the (white) Bermuda Rifles into the Bermuda Regiment and the top ranks of the civil service.¹¹ This chapter will not suggest that the UBP was a product of British design, simply that different processes of change, at the grassroots, legislative, executive and high political levels, occurred simultaneously.

Segregation was already under pressure as a result of Cold War paradigms which saw the West under pressure internationally over the gap between its rhetoric of freedom and the reality of Jim Crow.¹² In Bermuda, it was also an elite response to popular protest and rising racial tension, filtered through confrontations over labour relations in 1964 and 1965.¹³ Former PLP strategist Calvin Smith describes how Martonmere's fears of 'racial war' following the 1965 BELCO strike, during which 17 police officers were injured, was instrumental in bringing about a pragmatic shift in government policies on race.¹⁴

Secondly, the UBP was also something of a painful, pragmatic departure from Bermuda's individualist political culture by an oligarchy that was aware of its

¹⁰ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 105.

¹¹ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 183 and 227; Burchall, *Fine as Wine*, 46.

¹² Dudziak, *Desegregation as a Cold War Imperative*, 61-120.

¹³ Dr Eva Hodgson interview with the author on December 16, 2011 in Hamilton Parish, Bermuda.

¹⁴ Calvin Smith interview, April 3, 2012.

need to adapt in order to survive. ‘Conservatism’, after all, ‘is the most flexible political philosophy’.¹⁵ According to an aide to David Cameron, the UK Conservative Party’s mission should be ‘preserving what is good, being radical where we need to be and pragmatic where we must be’.¹⁶ Because of such pragmatism, Tucker and other UBP founders such as Henry Vesey, who had been opposed to integration during the 1950s, embarked on a host of reforms, including the desegregation of schools, the creation of a Race Relations Board to tackle discrimination, investment in education and healthcare, the passing of a Workmen’s Compensation Act and the beginning of old age pensions and a land tax.¹⁷

Tucker’s ‘national unity’ message was ‘conciliatory, pragmatic - and vote-getting’¹⁸. However, this chapter argues that this broad-church was not one rooted in principle but one founded in perceived necessity. The UBP’s small island lineage and its history of racial cleavages may have combined with the relative homogeneity of Bermuda’s white community to structure the new politics. Swan is correct to note the insignificance in Bermuda of a ‘liberal White left’ of the kind that expressed support in the US for the Black Panthers.¹⁹ Because of this, the 1960s may have been a period in which a new gradualist politics was enshrined, with diversity only at the margins, reflecting the fact that ‘the gains of the Sixties’ (ie the ending of formal segregation and the onset of universal suffrage) ‘only removed a fetter blocking the possibility of emancipation’ and did not constitute emancipation itself.²⁰

This agglomeration was no more diverse than the UK Conservative Party. It may have encompassed religious conservatives and moderate liberals while aiming also to *appear* multi-racial. Yet, like its British counterpart, both the UBP’s caucus and the membership were generally white, male and ‘posh’.²¹ In the creation of this loose coalition, it will be argued that the founders of the

¹⁵ *Huffington Post* blog, February 5, 2012.

¹⁶ *The Spectator*, December 11, 2010.

¹⁷ UBP election manifesto, May 1968.

¹⁸ Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 107.

¹⁹ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 114.

²⁰ Reed, ‘*Black Revolution*’, 63.

²¹ Totnes Conservative MP Sarah Woolaston describes how she feels her party is ‘far too posh, male, and white’, *South Devon Herald Express*, March 12, 2013.

UBP were both inspired and warned by the experience of the white-minority's United Bahamian Party, which held power from the late 1950s until 1967 when it lost power. Like the Bahamas, Bermuda should be seen as part of the wider north Atlantic story of 'European conquest, slavery and colonialism' that shaped the Caribbean.²²

Because of the tight control exerted by Front Street, the party was always in danger of being identified with the oligarchy rather than with popular or grassroots demands. It will be argued that, partly because of this, Tucker and his colleagues colluded to deceive the public. The claim was that a party cooked up over drinks at the then whites-only Royal Bermuda Yacht Club and at the Royal Hamilton Amateur Dinghy Club had been founded as a result of popular grassroots pressure for a non-racial conservative movement.²³

Another old habit included a belief in white and British tutelage of blacks in political 'responsibility' and the use of the levers of power. With regards to the first of these, Tucker's conservative stance in the face of demands for reform had for two decades and more been based on the idea that the universal franchise may be appropriate for Bermuda at some point 'but not' as he argued in 1947, 'for between 25 and 50 years'.²⁴ As he elaborated six years later, suffrage for all would 'only work when our population as a whole is sufficiently educated and disciplined to cast a vote properly and not for the demagogue'.²⁵ This belief in paternalistic gradualism had a long lineage throughout the British Empire. In the mid-19th century, Colonial Secretary James Stephen suggested white racists in colonies could count on the acquiescence of the British Government in this practice:

There may be a more general convenience and safety in allowance of the actual supremacy of the whites for a while, to

²² Saunders, *Racial Discrimination in The Bahamas*, 169; Lewis, *Growth of the Modern West Indies*, 324-347.

²³ Manning, *Bermudian Politics in Transition*; Elsie (Rick) Marson describes how she was not allowed to go to the Yacht Club because she was a woman (interview, April 9, 2012); Dr David Saul points out that while the Yacht Club was reserved for the social elite, while the Dinghy Club was reserved for the economic elite (interview, April 4, 2012); see also Brown, *Bermuda and the struggle for reform*, 95.

²⁴ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 96.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 109-10.

*the legal extinction of it; and so to depart from it by degrees than to reach the same end, by a more abrupt method.*²⁶

This chapter will argue that this belief in gradualism had to find a new language to express itself in a time of democratic participation and ‘post-colonial globalisation’.²⁷ The UBP found it in the accusation that the PLP were ‘inexperienced’ and so could not be trusted with power.²⁸

Thirdly, however, it will be argued that the Bermudian party succeeded where the Bahamian conservatives failed in recruiting some black candidates to its ranks, in part because of the power of oligarchical paternalism and, in part, because Bermuda’s relative prosperity had created a larger black middle-class on which the UBP could draw. It is not quite accurate to say that the UBP became a party ‘that black people of many different backgrounds could support’.²⁹ More persuasively, black UBP candidates were usually, but not always, middle class men who were, as in Crown Colonies of the Caribbean, ‘not necessarily spokesmen for the black majority’.³⁰

Some members of the black middle class, which in the first half of the 20th century had formed into Parish Political Associations to maximise their strength in the era of restricted franchise, ‘wanted not so much to open up the system to all but rather to secure for themselves an equal footing with the white ruling class’. To do this, they had to play ‘by the rules of the game’.³¹ Yet, owing to Bermuda’s precariously balanced racial demographics, the UBP would depend on a crucial sliver of the black vote to maintain it in power.³² As a result, black members of the UBP would become ‘the pivotal group in the partisan confrontation’.³³

The final section of this chapter will examine how the UBP’s multi-racial image was a precarious manifestation of old habit by which, since the early

²⁶ Quoted in Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 10.

²⁷ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 216.

²⁸ UBP parliamentary candidate Lancelot Swan, quoted in *Gazette*, April 4, 1968.

²⁹ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 135.

³⁰ Johnson, *British Caribbean*, 608.

³¹ Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 105.

³² Manning, *Bermudian Politics in Transition*, 199.

³³ Ibid, 208.

1880s at least, a particular de-racialised vision of Bermuda was being cultivated to appeal to tourists.³⁴ Issues of race and tourism-based prosperity were intimately linked because of the oligarchy's success at creating a process of 'meticulous social engineering' in which black tourists were 'discouraged' and 'economic and social injustice' was exacerbated.³⁵ The perceived need to protect prosperity, despite its unevenly concentrated nature, was used as a rationalisation for the failure to tackle racial legacies.

By the late 1970s, the old simplicity of elite-managed tourism' had disappeared.³⁶ The 1960s thus provide an opportunity for a study of the way in which conservative political rhetoric, race and the fetishisation of prosperity all fused together to establish the UBP's early identity and rhetoric, while also helping to stymie Bermudian democracy as it theoretically came of age.

2. The oligarchy's hesitant response to colonial and local pressures, 1963-1965

As Chapter One suggested, the creation of the UBP came at a particular moment when world and local events were nudging both Government House and the oligarchy to feel that their long hold on power was being threatened. World and colonial trends were inducing the end of formal racial discrimination in the US and Britain. The 'ideological battle with the Soviet Union' was a 'powerful' incentive for Britain and the US to 'reduce the gap between the rhetoric of freedom and the reality of continuing subordination'.³⁷ Meanwhile, by 1959, the British government was also under international, local political and media pressure following the Hola Massacre in Kenya and the Devlin report on British repression in Nyasaland.³⁸

³⁴ For a brilliant evocation of the cultivation of this image, see Williams, *When Voices Rise* (film).

³⁵ Wilkinson, review of MacDowall, 246.

³⁶ MacDowall, *Another World*, 227 and 213.

³⁷ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 244-7.

³⁸ Lewis, *Daddy wouldn't buy me a Mau Mau*, 227-250.

In that year, Major General Sir Julian Gascoigne was, ‘sent to Bermuda from London to get things moving on the racial front’.³⁹ Gascoigne, a career military man, had been educated at Eton and Sandhurst and commissioned into the Grenadier Guards in 1922.⁴⁰ After taking over from Sir John Woodall, he served as governor until the summer of 1964. Gascoigne was a paternalistic liberal who challenged the oligarchy on the status quo of racial segregation, both in his personal example and his rhetoric. Reporter Bryan Darby, who began working at *The Royal Gazette* in the early 1960s, described how this ‘archetypal colonial governor with a big monocle...horrified Front Street’ by regularly going to Swinging Doors, a bar in the northern section of Hamilton.⁴¹

Despite this, it should be remembered that since Gascoigne exercised full executive power he could have begun appointing blacks to senior positions in the civil service immediately if he chose. This did not happen during his tenure. In 1963, he called for an end to segregation in schools which seemed to lead to moves by the Board of Education, with UK government support, to bring about such changes.⁴² However, his commitment to racial equality was also somewhat cold and rationalistic. He noted that bringing blacks into the civil service was necessary, partly because the ‘employment of expatriates [who by 1963 formed one fifth of the island’s total workforce] was extremely expensive’.⁴³

Change would have to wait until after Martonmere took over in June 1964. “There was one high ranking black registrar general but there was nobody black in central government.”⁴⁴ Reform was pushed by events. In February 1965, the BELCO riot was sparked by a mix of longstanding industrial and racial grievances. Historian Eva Hodgson, teaching at a school near the site of the strike at the time, recalled that she was ‘far more aware of the racial

³⁹ Ebbin, *Bermuda Biographies*.

⁴⁰ Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, *Major General Sir Julian Gascoigne*.

⁴¹ Bryan Darby interview, April 7, 2012.

⁴² January 8, 1963, quoted in *Gazette*, January 16, 1964; *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964, 1027, 610.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Smith interview, April 3, 2012.

divide during the strike' and pointed to its significance in the Bermuda Government's approach to race relations.⁴⁵

That strike became not just about labour but also about race... After that they began to hold conversations between blacks and whites.⁴⁶

Evidence suggests that this riot caused a shift in strategy by Martonmere. Although noises on these lines had been made by Gascoigne, from this time Martonmere began the process of appointing blacks to a few senior positions in the civil service. According to Calvin Smith, who was hired by Martonmere to the top ranks of the civil service a few months later:

The BELCO riot was the thing that gave him the impetus to bring me in. Martonmere said this has to stop. Every time we have a dispute it erupts into a racial war and we've got to change this.⁴⁷

Smith was working in Canada as a statistician when he had applied for the post of Chief Statistician on a dare from a PLP politician friend of his. He recalled how he applied and 'the next thing I hear' he was offered an interview with Lord Martonmere at the Governor's son-in-law's home in the upmarket Toronto neighbourhood of Forest Hills. After being greeted at the door of the mansion by the butler, Smith was met by Martonmere who told him that it was not actually an interview, because he had already decided to offer Smith the job. Smith said he thought the fact he had been working in Canada for three years made him especially attractive as a candidate for the job because:

He wants to integrate the higher ranks of the civil servants and he is in a racist society. You can't just put in a black person who had no contact with white people at all.⁴⁸

Smith also remembered that Martonmere told him in the 'interview'.

'I'm here to persuade you to return home, and really to help us to change Bermuda. I want blacks to have equal opportunity to everyone else.'⁴⁹

⁴⁵ (Eva) Hodgson interview, December 16, 2011.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Smith interview, April 3, 2012.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Op. Cit.

Smith noted that the move was met with much resistance by conservative whites in Bermuda. "They were taking a big risk in terms of the attitude of white Bermudians."⁵⁰

Meanwhile, the PLP's success in 1963 had created the circumstances in which independent and individualistic conservative politicians began to view the prospect of a new conservative party as conducive, rather than inimical, to their interests. The passage of the Parliamentary Elections Act of January 1963, which abolished the property qualification requirement for voting (but still gave freeholders a single extra plus vote) led in February to the creation of the PLP and its winning six seats during a General Election in May.⁵¹

According to former UBP politician David Saul, who also worked as a senior civil servant in the Department of Education in the early 1970s, part of Tucker's task was to 'drag (conservatives) kicking and screaming into the latter part of the 20th century'.⁵² It may have been true that Tucker was a crucial bridge between the conservative and slightly more paternalistically liberal factions of the white community and between blacks and whites within the party itself.

But the UBP was not founded as a result of any grand political vision, nor was it spurred on by a set of political grievances or aims. The party was a pragmatic albeit conservative response to events on the ground. The party's early philosophy was clearly influenced by the political pedigree of founding members such as John Plowman, who had at the age of 23 become the 'youngest Borough councillor in England' after standing on a Conservative, 'anti-socialist' ticket in London's Ealing in November 1931. After moving to Bermuda, Plowman would become one of the first members of the UBP appointed to the Legislative Council in June 1966.⁵³

⁵⁰ Op. Cit.

⁵¹ Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 211.

⁵² Saul interview, April 4, 2012.

⁵³ Plowman, *Sir John Plowman*, 35-37 and 221.

However, Plowman also noted the UBP was formed partly as ‘a matter of survival’.⁵⁴ The PLP’s creation and success in 1963 pushed the leading members of Bermuda’s oligarchy to make a mental leap and organise collectively. However, their reactions were strangely sluggish (it was only after eight-months of discussion and planning behind the scenes that the party was actually founded) while they were also constrained by the Bermudian heritage of individualism, which led some conservative MCPs to oppose the innovation of party politics altogether.⁵⁵

The first of the events to which conservatives reacted was the organisation of the first meeting of the PLP on February 14, 1963.⁵⁶ On February 20, Bermuda’s Special Branch, in a report for the Colonial Secretary in London, documented the first meeting of a ‘semi-political party known as the Bermuda Voters Association’. This meeting was held at Hamilton’s Chamber of Commerce. The Hamilton merchant and champion of the tourist industry Henry Vesey, elected to the legislature in 1938, was chair and its only speaker was Tucker. The meeting attracted 125 people. Other founders of the Association were reported to be Tucker, Speaker of the House John Cox, described by Bermuda’s Chief Secretary as ‘independent to the point of being reactionary’ and affluent businessman MA Gibbons.⁵⁷

Significantly, this new organisation was ostensibly in favour of basic desegregation, for instance in government-funded schools. It also pledged itself to ‘sound and conservative financial administration’. This organisation should be seen as the prototype of the UBP. It committed itself to ‘remedial action’ on ‘any matters which remain as points of difference between the races’, ‘religious, social and economic freedom’ for ‘everyone in Bermuda, regardless of race, creed or colour’, to the improvement of education, the encouragement of a ‘satisfactory relationship between employer and employee’ and to ‘expand the economy along proper, prudent and intelligent

⁵⁴ Ibid, 213.

⁵⁵ Roper, *Conceiving Carolina*, 10.

⁵⁶ Plowman, *Sir John Plowman*, 213.

⁵⁷ Special Branch report for February 1963, March 1, 1963, 1031/4766; the quote by Sykes comes from a biographical notes of prospective delegates to the 1966 Constitutional Conference, August 11, 1966, 1031/5235.

lines'.⁵⁸ Tucker said the organisation was trying to attract the 'middle of the road' type; the 'sound, conservative, stable people' of Bermuda.⁵⁹

The presence of Cox amongst the founding members was not a propitious sign for this 'semi-political party'. As Speaker of the House of Assembly, Cox was the most powerful MCP in Bermuda. However, Cox was a well-known opponent of party politics. On January 8, 1964 he told MCPs: "As an individualist I incline to the philosophy that, at any age, to belong only to a group is to be less than a complete person."⁶⁰ Despite this, the group insisted it was not a political party because 'they do not intend to nominate candidates to stand as members of the Association'.⁶¹ Plowman, who was a founder of the Voters' Association noted that this attempt at creating a non-party organisation was 'unsuccessful'.⁶² In April, Special Branch was reporting that the 'traditional Bermudian rugged individualism' was re-asserting itself as candidates withdrew from both the Voters Association and the PLP.⁶³

The 'outstanding' success of the PLP at the May election, however, seems to have shocked the conservative political establishment. Special Branch reported that the party's success was 'indicative of a high degree of organisation' and suggested that 'if it can avoid internal differences, it will no doubt emerge as a force to be reckoned with'.⁶⁴ An editorial in *The Royal Gazette* struck a note of panic for conservatives:

*The PLP was far better organised than most Bermudians had imagined. If other groups in future elections are to compete, they too must organise – and organise now instead of waiting until the next general election is upon them.*⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Tucker, quoted in *Gazette*, February 26, 1963

⁶⁰ Ibid, January 9, 1964.

⁶¹ Special Branch report for February 1963, March 1, 1963, 1031/4766.

⁶² Plowman, *John Plowman*, 214.

⁶³ Cover note, April 10, 1963, attached to Special Branch report for March 1963, April 3, 1963, *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Special Branch monthly intelligence report for May 1963, June 3, 1963, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Editorial, *The Royal Gazette*, May 19, 1963.

Yet it was also the advent of a Responsible Government constitution in the Bahamas in January 1964 that spurred these ‘rugged individualists’ to organise properly.

It was not until February 1964, however, that Special Branch reported the stirrings of a new political party in Bermuda to turn the Voters’ Association into something more cohesive. Plowman noted that those lobbying for the creation of this new group included centrists such as Kit Astwood, former Liberal Party of Canada activist Dr John Stubbs and dentist Dr Stanley Ratteray, who then gained the public support of leading members of the oligarchy.⁶⁶ The founders of this shadowy ‘new party’, which was not expected to ‘materialise for about a year or so’ were listed as Tucker, (Henry) Vesey and James Pearman, although other research suggests there were other founders, including Dudley Spurling and Ernest Vesey.⁶⁷ Meanwhile, on the central committee were Astwood, (Ernest) Vesey, John MS Patton and Gilbert Cooper. Special Branch noted that the leaders of the new party were ‘greatly impressed by the structure, operation, and success of the United Bahamian Party’.

Despite this, in many of its policies the new party’s ‘embryo’ constitution ‘closely followed’ that of the PLP in stressing integration and a focus on education.⁶⁸ In Tucker’s view, there would be ‘little difference’ between the UBP and PLP except the UBP wanted to achieve the same objectives ‘without jeopardising the economy’ while ‘he felt it was safer for Bermuda to trust its future to experienced people’.⁶⁹ This was the coded language of gradualism. While the parties agreed on some social policy issues, key divisions would emerge over the issues of constitutional and electoral reform and especially in the rhetoric of the two parties.

⁶⁶ Plowman, *Sir John Plowman*, 214.

⁶⁷ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 154.

⁶⁸ Special Branch monthly intelligence report for February 1964, March 4, 1964, CO 1031/4766.

⁶⁹ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 155.

In summary, the incubation of the UBP was in part a response to nudging by London towards moves to end segregation in education, the Bermuda Regiment and the civil service, which was given greater urgency after the 1965 BELCO strike and riot. The party was also the manifestation of the desires of key members of the oligarchy to counteract the effect of the PLP, which, following the May 1963 election, had found itself in a position to 'present a united front' and, which it was thought 'may possibly use its block vote for bargaining purposes'.⁷⁰ The PLP supported integration in education, the revision of trade union legislation, rent control, health and dental care for everyone, the 'introduction of direct taxation', tighter immigration and constitutional reform.⁷¹

After the UBP's founding in August 1964, when 24 previously independent members of the legislature (22 whites and 2 blacks) would flock to its banner, the party would go on to adopt variants of these policies, for instance constitutional and educational reform and the implementation of a new land tax, which by April 1968 would account for 'approximately seven per cent of Bermuda's annual revenue'.⁷² This was an indication not of how progressive the UBP was but of how socially conservative, in comparison to other 'revolutionary and socialist' parties, the PLP was in many respects.⁷³ The key differences between the parties would not be over social policy but over issues such as immigration, questions of constitutional and electoral reform and the different modes of discussing (or denying) race.

3. Old habits die hard: A party cooked up in social clubs aided by incumbency, links with Martonmere and the reappearance of paternalism

As this section will show, the UBP's cultivated 'broad church' image was something of an illusion. This was because the party had been dreamed up not

⁷⁰ Special Branch report for May 1963, June 3, 1963, 1031/4766.

⁷¹ Williams, *Lois*, 63.

⁷² *Gazette*, April 4, 1968.

⁷³ Brown suggests that the view the PLP was 'revolutionary and socialist' is devoid of any 'substantiation', *Race and Party Politics*, 111.

on the picket line or in protest marches but in the stuffy rooms of social clubs, business boardrooms and in the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. In its earliest days, the party was less than candid about its true origins whilst also depending on old habits of paternalism and patronage. The evidence also suggests that the UBP benefitted during its period of legislative majority between 1964 and 1968 in two ways. Firstly, it had the tacit support of Governor Lord Martonmere. Secondly, it was able to take credit for the growing, tourism-based prosperity.

Paternalism could operate through systems of racial difference. In the latter variant, the end of slavery in Bermuda had seen paternalism become the manner by which a white elite exercised a degree of control over former slaves. In this situation, ‘a black [Bermudian was] likely to be indebted to a white because the white’s family bequeathed property to his parents or grandparents, gave a loan to his uncle [or] provided a job for his father-in-law’.⁷⁴ Paternalism also had a political variant, called patronage. This phenomenon has been defined as ‘negotiations whereby political support is offered in return for political positions and resources’.⁷⁵

This chapter will uncover how the ‘opening up of the voting system’⁷⁶ and the creation of party politics resulting from the Parliamentary Elections Act 1963, led to the development of the system of party-political patronage. This occurred in parallel with the creation of the UBP party machine, which drew strength from existing habits of race-based paternalism and from unofficial incumbency. Patronage in the UBP was primarily exerted by Tucker. As well as being the leader of the UBP and the chairman of Bermuda’s largest bank in 1967, he was also director of the Bermuda Electric Light Company and of the Bermuda Telephone Company, and chairman of the Bermuda Broadcasting Company.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid, 21.

⁷⁵ Back and Solomos, *Race, Politics and Social Change*, 144.

⁷⁶ Brown, *Race and party politics*, 103.

⁷⁷ Joan Lestor, Hansard, June 19, 1967.

This is not to suggest the UBP's non-white members were blackmailed into joining the UBP. It merely argues that the power dynamic created by the nature of the oligarchy and the totemic leadership figure of Tucker may have played a significant role alongside the motivations of belief and conviction in decisions over whether to participate. The racial dynamic of paternalism mingled with political patronage was key since the UBP's political survival, and its hold on and consolidation of power, depended upon the recruitment of black candidates.

The UBP was forced to engage in a battle to cover up the fact that it was not a grassroots movement. Evidence from Government House suggests the UBP strenuously attempted to 'give the impression' of being something it was not. This was true in two senses. As the next two sub-sections will show, the party subscribed to an old idea of paternalistic gradualism, in which whites tutored blacks in the habits of power. This was something that the leaders of the party could not admit to believing in. Meanwhile, it also aimed to be perceived as the result of a spontaneous demand for 'another party' by citizens in constituencies across the island.

3.1 The reappearance of gradualism and the oligarchical exercise of power behind the scenes

By Martonmere's arrival in June 1964, there is evidence of an attempt to deceive the public even before the new party had been created. According to a Special Branch report, the aforementioned founding members were not to be officially involved initially. Instead, it was proposed 'that selected persons in the various parishes...will be approached and requested to call small integrated meetings in their homes'. This was to be done 'with a view to forming another party and approaching the MCPs to take action':

Apparently the whole idea is to give the impression that the people want another Political Party and the MCPs can then follow through as if they were acting in the best interests of their constituents.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Special Branch report for June 1964, July 1, 1963, op. cit.

It is unclear if this operation met with any success. By June, however, discussions were under way ‘with regard to setting up a permanent campaign office for the party with the possible introduction from abroad of a party organiser’. It was not until August 1964, however, that the new group, now called the United Bermuda Party, was finally announced. Twenty-four MCPs signed the UBP’s new statement of general intent. It advocated reform of the constitution to Responsible Government and the lowering of the voting age from 25 to 21’ but ‘saw no need for any further change in the franchise’.⁷⁹ By October, Tucker had been elected leader of the parliamentary group, while it was not until mid-1965 that the party expressed any intent towards the abolition of the ‘plus’ vote which gave a single extra ballot to property owners.

How successful was the UBP at recruiting members in its first few months? It seems the PLP was drawing larger crowds than the UBP. PLP meetings in February 1963 attracted between 150-190 people and in April 1964 there were joint PLP-BIU meetings that attracted between 300 and 120 people respectively. These were followed by what the Joint Intelligence Committee believed to be ‘the largest political meeting ever held in Bermuda’ organised by the PLP at the Devonshire Recreational Club on April 23, with an attendance of approximately 1,000. These meetings, however, were linked to specific industrial disputes at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital and BELCO which may have inflated the numbers. Yet, in October 1964, 500 people attended a PLP meeting following the founding of the UBP. In contrast, the first meetings of the UBP between August and November 1964 were only attracting between 80 and 120 people.⁸⁰ However, by October 1965, the UBP had 1,000 paid-up members.⁸¹

The evidence also suggests that the UBP benefited from the fact of its unofficial incumbency between 1964 and 1968 in two ways. Firstly, it was able to take credit for the growing tourist-based prosperity, to be discussed in more detail below. Because of this, the party claimed that the PLP was a

⁷⁹ Special Branch report for August 1964, September 4, op. cit.

⁸⁰ LIC reports between February 1963 and January 1965, op. cit.

⁸¹ Plowman, *Sir John Plowman*, 215.

threat to this prosperity should it get into power. Secondly, it had the tacit support of Martonmere. The attitude of the Governor to the founding of the UBP in August 1964 can be gauged by the way in which he rejected PLP requests for the dissolution of parliament and for new elections. Because of this, PLP MCP Lois Browne-Evans later claimed that 'Roland Robinson the politician asserted himself over Lord Martonmere'.⁸² PLP Leader Walter Robinson believed Martonmere was an 'old Tory who had a great deal to do with getting those fellows to form a party. They were constantly in consultations at Government House'.⁸³

This remains the view of the PLP today. They argue that the UBP 'was formed with the sanction' of Lord Martonmere.⁸⁴ Asked to respond to this allegation shortly before his death in 1989, Martonmere said: "I don't think I would claim that. I knew what was going on though... [Tucker and I] both knew how the other was thinking."⁸⁵ Martonmere's close relationship with Tucker was further brought to light when he said of the 1966 Constitutional Conference that he was 'in complete agreement' with Tucker and 'wanted to see Bermudians as Bermudians, not white Bermudians or black Bermudians'. He added of Tucker:

*He had the attributes of leadership. He had the ability to make wise and thoughtful decisions. We found out that we had the general interests of Bermuda at heart – racial harmony and the Government putting into effect commonsense policies.*⁸⁶

The mention of 'racial harmony' alludes to the UBP language of non-racialism and the denial of deep tensions between black and white. This very slogan would come to be a part of the UBP's political rhetoric during elections in the mid-1970s.

Significantly, throughout most of his parliamentary career between 1938 and 1958, Tucker had been arguing vehemently against universal suffrage and

⁸² *Gazette*, May 6, 1972.

⁸³ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 164.

⁸⁴ PLP website, *Our rich history*.

⁸⁵ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 164

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 168.

desegregation of hotels, restaurants and even tennis clubs. In May 1938, the year he was first elected for Paget, he argued against women's suffrage because he was 'afraid it will lead to universal suffrage which I feel will be detrimental to Bermuda'. A few years later he called himself a 'self-confessed reactionary and an unashamed conservative'. His rhetoric revealed him to be an unabashed racist too. 'It is not really undemocratic', he burbled, 'to recognise that the world is divided into superior and inferior people'.⁸⁷

Tucker's history as a racist was simply too long for him to have jettisoned all of such beliefs overnight. As a result, the multi-racial approach of the UBP was something of a pragmatic conversion and also resonant of the 'multi-racialism' of Blundell's NKG, in which it was tacitly accepted that only 'responsible' people 'of all races' would be granted the right to vote.⁸⁸ Tucker and Martonmere formed an alliance to create a 'multi-racialism' for particular circumstances in Bermuda, where members of a black middle-class interested in stability were ready to take up the UBP cudgel, during a period when 'principles of human rights' had 'undermined established notions of racial superiority'.⁸⁹

3.2 The key role of Sir Edward Trenton (ET) Richards

*Sir Henry was smart enough to know a man with brains, and he kept ET close to him.*⁹⁰

Born in the city of Berbice in British Guiana on October 4, 1908, Edward Trenton Richards had moved to Bermuda to work as a teacher at age 28.⁹¹ After training as a barrister, he was then elected to parliament for Warwick Parish in 1948 and had worked on key select committees on race relations in the early 1950s. He and other black MCPs such as WL Tucker, Dr Eustace Cann, Hilton G Hill and Russell Pearman successfully lobbied for the ending of segregation in hotels and restaurants, which was achieved through a change

⁸⁷ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 110.

⁸⁸ Murphy, *Lennox-Boyd*, 224.

⁸⁹ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 241.

⁹⁰ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 154-55.

⁹¹ Richards interview, April 10, 2012; see also Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 3;

in the law in 1960, and for universal suffrage, a form of which was enacted in 1963 with the Parliamentary Elections Act.⁹²

The period 1964-1965 saw the UBP win a major coup in its recruitment of Richards to its cause. This chapter suggests that Richards was attracted to the UBP in part because it was associated with the hierarchy. However, this chapter also aims to bring the idea of personal agency back into discussion about Bermudian politics. Though one of Bermuda's foremost civil rights campaigners, Richards was also a conservative and an Anglophile. As a result, his individual philosophy was in tune with the UBP.

The career of Richards provides a new case-study of the operation of black conservatism in white hegemonic political environments. The portrayal of earlier black conservatives in the US, including William Hannibal, Edward Brooke and Booker Washington, saw them as 'depoliticising their struggle', accommodating to 'white cultural power and racism' and embodying values such as 'thrift, patience, hard work and moral rectitude' in their careers.⁹³ Ondaatje argues that later black conservative intellectuals embraced 'self-help and the "gospel of business success"' during the 1970s and 1980s, in a context which saw racism as 'an unfortunate blemish on an otherwise perfect past'.⁹⁴

A jarring new discourse of racial legacies was inconvenient for conservatives who had to play into a white denial of history for political ends. Richards' career provides a glimpse of black conservatism at work in a majority black country that was nevertheless overlain by British cultural hegemony. Blacks who also identified as conservative had to walk a difficult tightrope in such circumstances. As television ownership on the island increased, this was a period in which image mattered more than ever in politics.⁹⁵ Steinhorn and Diggs-Brown argue that television gave 'white Americans the sensation of having meaningful repeated contact with blacks without actually having it'.⁹⁶

⁹² Hodgson, *Second Class Citizens, First Class Men*, 116; Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 75.

⁹³ Ondaatje, *Black Conservative Intellectuals*, 2-5.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 7.

⁹⁵ Judith Hart, Hansard, June 14, 1967.

⁹⁶ Steinhorn and Digg-Brown, *By the Color of Our Skin*.

The symbolic resonance of prominent black Bermudians such as Richards joining the UBP distorted the truth of white oligarchical power behind the scenes.

August 21, 1964 was the birthday of the UBP. In the new UBP parliamentary caucus of 24, the only two blacks were Richards and George Ratteray. Richards' participation was certainly a coup for the UBP as he had chaired the joint select committee in the House of Assembly that wrote the bill outlawing segregation in restaurants and hotels in 1960 (The Innkeepers' Act). Richards explained that he decided to 'go to the right to keep the right as left as possible'.⁹⁷

Born in 1909, Richards had moved to Bermuda after, in the same manner as the first English settlers⁹⁸, his aunt had been shipwrecked on the island and lost everything. She decided to stay and teach, and he decided to follow her. While in Bermuda he won a scholarship to study law at Middle Temple in London. After surviving near misses with German bombs during the Blitz, he returned to start his own law practice. 'Dragooned into politics' by the head of the BIU Martin Wilson, he became an MCP in 1948.⁹⁹ Calvin Smith, who was taught by Richards in the black secondary school Berkeley Institute, described what he thought were Richards' motives in taking the more conservative road to reform. He said his teacher 'was no submissive person':

*He was a Guyanese who had witnessed the bloodshed between the Indians and the Blacks. He is characterised as the supreme Uncle Tom. He was none of that. He was a very brave, bold man.*¹⁰⁰

Richards' son Bob, who is currently Bermuda's Finance Minister, said his father was cricket-obsessed, and had formed his impressions of Britain when studying to be a lawyer there during the Blitz of 1940. Richards noted: "He

⁹⁷ Harries Hunter, *Beyond the Crossroads*, 135.

⁹⁸ The manner of the first settlers' arrival in 1609 led to the adoption by Bermuda in October 1910 of the motto, *Quo Fata Ferunt*, or 'Whither the fates lead us', from Virgil's *Aeneid*. Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 136.

⁹⁹ Richards interview, April 10, 2012.

¹⁰⁰ Smith interview, April 3, 2012.

thought Britain was the greatest thing since sliced bread.”¹⁰¹ He also said he saw politics in terms analogous to those of cricket:

*[Cricket] was the avenue where descendants of slaves and descendants of slave masters got to see who was who on the field of play instead of looking down the barrel of a gun.*¹⁰²

Following the deaths of EF Gordon in 1955 and WL Tucker in 1960, Richards became, along with the older Cann and Hill, one of the most prominent black politicians of the period. At Berkeley, he had taught many black Bermudians who had been elected to parliament in the late 1950s and in the 1963 general election. Ironically he later faced many of them down in debate across the House of Assembly. He was at the heart, however, a conservative. As described by his son:

*He was a traditionalist and he wasn’t going to support anything that he considered to be radical. The PLP had a socialistic agenda, a throw out the white man agenda. They were looking for retribution.*¹⁰³

In a less kind analysis, fellow barrister Arnold Francis remembered:

*Edward was a traditionalist and would not simply overturn the system. I think upon analysis that he is so traditional that it appears he would support any given hierarchy.*¹⁰⁴

Understandably more partial, Richards notes that his father ‘wanted to be part of a movement that brought races together’.¹⁰⁵ The irony was that race riots would lead to the declaration of a state of emergency during the general election campaign in 1968, only four years after the UBP had been formed as the majority group in the House of Assembly. Finally, Richards suggests his father was influenced by his pragmatism above all.

He saw the UBP as a practical way of moving Bermuda forward together. He understood there was no way we could move

¹⁰¹ Richards interview, April 10, 2012.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Op. cit.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 169.

¹⁰⁵ Richards interview, April 10, 2012.

*Bermuda forward and burn down Front Street [the centre of oligarchical business power] at the same time.*¹⁰⁶

Richards' biographer J Randolph Williams suggests that Richards 'lost several friends and was berated, jeered and hated by certain blacks' because of his decision to join the UBP. "Out of the condemnation sprang derogatory nicknames: Uncle Tom, Oreo, and the black man with the white heart."¹⁰⁷

Hill offered a nuanced answer to the question of whether he believed Richards was an 'uncle Tom'.

*We are trained in white lifestyles and in all of us there is a bit of an Uncle Tom.... We'd never know if it was true... I think he knew what was going on. Blacks were being manipulated by Front Street to allow them to hold a semblance of control.*¹⁰⁸

Hill's analysis is prescient, although the claim of 'manipulation' perhaps downgrades the role of personal agency in decision-making. The very fact that many people chose to abjure the UBP's entreaties to become candidates attests to the power of free will in this dynamic, even if power relations and the prospect of advancement may have exerted a pressure on decision-making.

3.3 "If the country does well, you will do well": Black Bermudians decide whether to campaign for the UBP, 1964-71

*Coloured Bermudians who support the UBP are often attacked as Uncle Toms. It is claimed by the drivers of the hate-train that we are being used.*¹⁰⁹

The suggestion above that blacks who joined the UBP were 'being used' is too simplistic an explanation on its own for why blacks such as Richards, George and Stanley Ratteray and Russell Pearman joined the UBP. Black Bermudians joined the UBP for a variety of reasons, ranging from conservative convictions, and a belief in integration, to personal admiration of Tucker. It is also argued however, that in the background, the exercise of

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 169.

¹⁰⁹ James, *Am I being used?*, October 11, 1967.

power and influence by the oligarchy and the incumbency of the UBP were significant contextual factors. The party was, in part because of the attacks referred to by James above, conscious of the need to show that politicians such as Richards were not merely an embodiment of a ‘token’ black presence.

The UBP knew that it would have to fight the next general election, which did not have to be held until 1968, as an ‘integrated’ party. Tucker seems to have personally led the task of recruitment. He met with moderate although not comprehensive success. The author of this project spoke to several people who were politically passionate and ambitious yet who rejected the overtures of the UBP to get involved. Others were more persuadable. The case studies of three people who joined the party in the 1963-1972 period will be examined, as will two of those who refused.

Devout Presbyterian Quinton Edness joined the UBP out of a mixture of personal convictions and a friendship with and admiration for Tucker.¹¹⁰ As managing director of ZBM, in the mid 1960s, Edness was a successful executive. He attended the party’s very first meeting in 1964, which was well attended but at which there were only two other black people, ET Richards and (later party chairman) Stanley Ratteray. “I went to the meeting. I didn’t know I was actually going to go and join up.”¹¹¹ Edness said he was profoundly affected by the way in which Tucker spoke just before the meeting began.

Tucker said, ‘If there is anybody in this room who thinks we are starting a party just for the white people then I want them to leave now, because it is the black people who have been suppressed’. No one left.¹¹²

Clearly Tucker’s leadership qualities and eloquence were a factor affecting whether some candidates decided to pledge support. Edness explained at a meeting a couple of months later in his home parish of Warwick that Tucker’s

¹¹⁰ Edness regularly attended church with the author’s grandparents at Christ Church, Warwick.

¹¹¹ Quinton Edness interview, September 14, 2011.

¹¹² Ibid.

speech ‘brought tears to my eyes’. “Afterwards I went up and said I was going to join”.¹¹³

Edness said the party’s commitment to integration (‘we started out being an integrated party from the get go’) was an important part of the decision for him to join. Thus, for Edness, it was more the party’s purported social role of unification that appealed to him more than its ‘economic philosophy’. At that point, however, Edness had not agreed to become a candidate. Tucker appealed to Edness to change his mind. Despite this, Edness demurred, repeating that he ‘did not want to be in frontline politics’.¹¹⁴ Tucker would not take no for an answer however and this is key. Edness announced his candidacy for a seat in Warwick the next day. He was elected in 1968 and by 1970 he was a member of the Cabinet.

Thus it seems likely that Edness was profoundly moved to sign up as a candidate, in large part by his personal connection and respect for Henry Tucker. Edness described how he viewed Tucker:

*He was my idol. He was an authoritative type guy and he had a personality that you didn’t argue with. He would listen and then he would make a decision and when he said his conclusion that was it.*¹¹⁵

This style could have been understood as arrogance or as disregard of someone else’s opinion. In another view, it was an admirable, confident kind of charming, cajoling and arm-twisting charisma on the model of Lyndon Baines Johnson. However, it was paralleled by Tucker’s personal position of power in the Bank of Bermuda and as chair of the Board of Governors of ZBM, Edness’s place of work.

Tucker had intervened in Edness’s life on two occasions. Firstly he had helped him to get a bridging loan to finish the construction of his Warwick house when he had otherwise been refused by personnel at the Bank of Bermuda. Secondly, Tucker had intervened to prevent Edness being fired from his job

¹¹³ Op. cit.

¹¹⁴ Op. cit.

¹¹⁵ Op. cit.

when other bosses had tried to have him dismissed.¹¹⁶ The connection between Tucker and Edness was one of personal regard but also must be seen in the context of Bermuda's system of paternalism, with Tucker as a doyen of various enterprises with a great deal of influence. While Edness already supported the party due to its commitment to integration, Edness's decision to stand for the UBP was a result of connections which were not just based upon personal affinity and admiration but also utilitarian, as well as Tucker's high-handed style.

By the following election in June 1972, ET Richards had taken over from Tucker as Government Leader (then Premier). Then PLP senator Arthur Hodgson said the appointment of Richards as party leader in 1971 was recognised 'at the time as being proof of UBP desire for integration'.¹¹⁷ In the run-up to the 1972 election, Tucker announced plans to stand down from his seat in Paget East. To fill his spot, he turned to John W Swan, a black real estate entrepreneur, who was then, according to him, building about 40 percent of the houses on the island and who also managed a 'substantial' saving and loan company.

Swan said his relationship with Tucker began before politics entered the conversation, when he convinced him as head of the Bank of Bermuda to support him in constructing his first building in the City of Hamilton. According to Swan: "I said to Tucker that you need a symbol of black progress and he supported my loan position."¹¹⁸ Although Swan probably already supported the party, the decision to stand as a candidate was therefore arrived at in the context of a personal, business-related interaction with Tucker. The 36-year-old Swan went on to top the poll in the primary for the UBP stronghold of Paget East prior to the election in June 1972.¹¹⁹ After being selected, his election there was a foregone conclusion. He later served as Minister for Home Affairs and then Premier of Bermuda from 1982 until 1995.

¹¹⁶ Op. cit.

¹¹⁷ Arthur Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

¹¹⁸ Swan interview, September 8, 2011.

¹¹⁹ *Gazette*, May 3 1972,

Personal beliefs and ideology were significant orienting mechanisms in decisions about whether to join and to stand for the UBP. The party's ostensible commitment to racial 'integration', which meant blacks gaining some of the rewards of the unbalanced Bermudian economy, was a *sine qua non* for some who joined and ran as candidates.

But another important reason for candidates agreeing to stand was personal considerations, interests and connections with Tucker. There was also a belief that, since the UBP had taken on the mantle of the incumbent government, both before the 1968 and afterwards, then blacks who wanted to make effective change needed to be a part of it. Mother, housewife and former teacher Helene Brown, who along with her sister Gloria McPhee, stood and won seats for the UBP in the June 1972 election, noted that she was actually 'PLP-inclined' in terms of her beliefs. However, in choosing which party to stand for she suggested she was using 'my thinking brain and not my feeling brain'. As she explained: "A black person joining the party in power can accomplish more for black people."¹²⁰ The UBP, therefore, gained a great deal from its position of incumbency, which, as the previous chapter argued, was partly thanks to its tacit support from Martonmere and Whitehall, and the dominant hold of its key leaders on the legislature and over key economic institutions and employers, such as the Bank of Bermuda.

¹²⁰ *Bermuda Recorder* (henceforth *Recorder*), May 27, 1972.



Figure 11: UBP MCP and Member for Education Gloria McPhee.
© Bermuda National Archives, from Barbara Harries Hunter, *The People of Bermuda: Beyond the Crossroads*, (Toronto, 1993).

It is also important to examine the reasons some people have given for their active decision not to join the party. In the 1950s and early 1960s, more and more black Bermudians gained the opportunity of going away to college in the United States, Canada and Britain. When they returned home, several people described how they faced pressure to nail their colours to a party mast and join the fray.

One such person was Alex Scott. Scott's great grandfather John HT Jackson had been Bermuda's second black Member of Parliament. His uncle Albert Jackson became the independent president of the Senate and his aunt Louise Jackson was a UBP member and later MP. Arriving to study fine arts and design in Philadelphia in 1960, Scott's college roommate was from Northern Rhodesia (which was in 1964 to become independent as Zambia). Scott said he had been embarrassed that his African friend had been able to tell him more about the colonial governance structures at work in Bermuda than he could. "The winds of change were blowing through Africa. But our political

passage was far more conservative.”¹²¹ But he said that due to this experience, he ‘began to appreciate and to put into context where we were in Bermuda and where we should be in the future’.¹²² On returning to Bermuda, Scott faced some pressure to join the UBP. The future chair of the party, and Scott’s dentist, (Stanley) Ratteray, and Stubbs attempted to recruit him.

Despite his UBP supporting aunt, Scott refused: “I resisted the notion of continuing in any way what was. Henry Tucker was advocating change but it was on his terms.”¹²³ However, this was ‘not a wise business move’ for his nascent advertising agency. Despite this, Scott explained that he joined the PLP because ‘they were the ones pushing for social change and economic fairness. They were leading the way.’¹²⁴ In 1993, he became a PLP MP, served as Works and Engineering Minister and, between 2003 and 2006, served as Bermuda’s Premier.

Another person who rejected the UBP advances when he returned from his education abroad was Arthur Hodgson. After studying for a first degree in economics at college in Michigan, Hodgson was offered a Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford, which he took up in 1964. When he returned from Oxford, Hodgson said he ‘got an invitation to go and have a chat with Tucker’. But he explained: “I didn’t go. I wasn’t interested.”¹²⁵ Asked why he thought the UBP had been successful in recruiting some blacks, Hodgson said the attitude for many blacks, including one of his aunts at that time, was that ‘black people couldn’t run the country. You had black people who didn’t think there was any other option than to join the UBP’.¹²⁶ He added: “You could always peel off about 20 percent of blacks who gravitated towards what they felt was superior culture, a dominant culture.”¹²⁷

¹²¹ Alex Scott interview, December 20, 2011.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Op. cit.

¹²⁴ Op. cit.

¹²⁵ (Arthur) Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Op. cit.

Hodgson suggested that he thought many blacks had joined the UBP when they came home because they were being ‘flattered’. “They found it flattering. Some of them were just flattered into joining the UBP.” Yet he added: “For the most part, the black people who joined the UBP were people who didn’t have a philosophy other than they saw that it was a personal opportunity.”¹²⁸ Thus, joining the UBP in his view was understood as a chance for self-advancement.

It is worth noting that Tucker’s position as a domineering figure could act as a turnoff in identifying the UBP too much with the legacy of the oligarchy. However, Tucker’s personal charisma and new stance on ‘integration’ seemed to attract centrists such as Edness. Political stances, such as those of Richards or Brown, who noted that she was ‘a little more conservative in my approach as I mellow with age’, were also significant. It is also suggested that Tucker’s economic and political influence helped him convince some candidates such as Swan to nail their colours to the UBP mast. Meanwhile, the party’s position of incumbency, in a Westminster system that gave leaders and parties the chance of staying power ‘over many decades’, also helped convince black candidates such as Brown to join up.¹²⁹

4. The UBP claims the credit for prosperity in the 1968 election: Incumbency, tourism and the denial of race

Unofficial incumbency allowed the UBP to claim Bermuda’s burgeoning prosperity as its mantle. Yet its linkage to the tourism industry led to it attempting to shape the way in which race was discussed in Bermuda. The party argued that its removal from power might threaten the burgeoning tourist boom that was occurring throughout the decade. This tightly linked connection between certain ideas of tourists, the realities of prosperity and the fear that even the discussion of racial legacies would wreck that fragility says something about the reluctant conservative discourse of race in 1960s Bermuda. However, the emphasis on tourism was an excuse not to discuss

¹²⁸ Op. cit.

¹²⁹ Bishop, *Slaying the ‘Westmonster’?*, 431.

race, and a poor rationalisation for further recalcitrance over electoral reform, rather than a valid argument against its acknowledgement.

Bermuda's tourism-based prosperity was vertiginous in its scale but also fleeting and fragile. This was related to the fact that the island's prosperity derived from its status as a settler economy, which had been 'developed to reflect internal economic interests rather than being structured to benefit external powers'. Over the centuries, Bermuda's function was as an 'economic innovator – living off the wealth created by others', whether this was through salt-raking, privateering or tourism. This placed the island 'in a prosperous position in terms of its economic relations with the dominant colonial and imperialist powers'.¹³⁰

Meanwhile, from the beginning of the 1960s, 'the advent of cheaper airfares, and the growth of cruise-ship tourism in a leisure era... caused tourism to expand in volume'.¹³¹ Between 1950 and 1970 there was a 446 per cent increase in the number of tourist arrivals. The period 1960 to 1970 saw an increase in tourist bedspaces from 4,444 to 6,840. Meanwhile, between 47 and 51 per cent of the workforce was employed in the 'personal service' field catering to visitors.¹³² The fact that tourism was 'the primary stimulant of economic growth' meanwhile, was seen as dependent on a particular language of race.¹³³ Brown describes how during the 1980s, the UBP government made strenuous efforts 'to hide Bermuda's pervasive racial tensions in deliberately misleading tourist advertisements'.¹³⁴ According to MacDowall, a paternalistic elite 'consciously developed [Bermuda's] role as the trend-setting island resort' in which 'carriage-trade tourism' was its unique selling point and a retrograde image of the island was cultivated. As one advert in the 1970s noted: "You liked Bermuda the way it was'. So that's the way it is."¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Brown, *Race and party politics*, 4.

¹³¹ Aldrich, *The Last Colonies*, 78-81.

¹³² Bermuda Government, *Bermuda Development Plan 1974*, BNA.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, p. 123.

¹³⁵ MacDowall, *Another World*, 4-5.

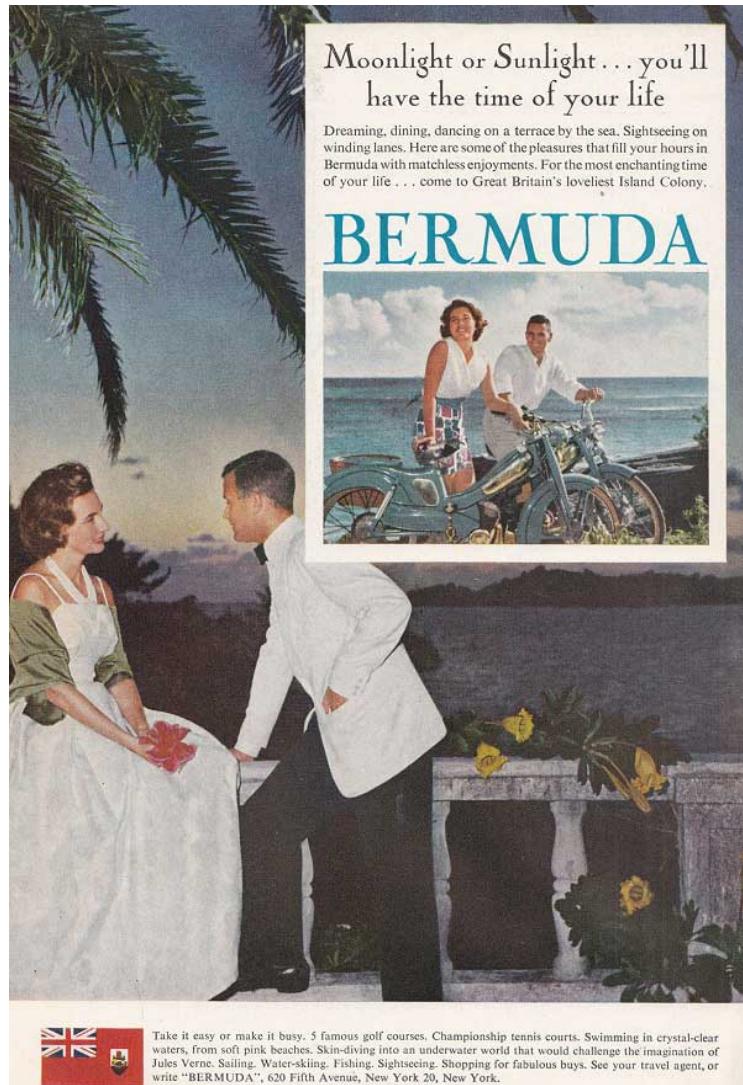


Figure 12: Bermuda Tourism advertisement aimed at the US market, 1960s
 © Bernews website
<http://bernews.com/2013/09/photos-bermuda-tourism-ads-from-the-1960s/>

While also pointing to the social reforms it had enacted, the UBP platform noted that 'the jobs created by Bermuda's steady tourist development have given us virtually full employment.'¹³⁶ As UBP candidate Lancelot Swan argued on April 4, 1968: "The UBP gets things done... We have a stable

¹³⁶ UBP election manifesto 1968.

government; we are financially solvent and we have one of the highest standards of living in the world.”¹³⁷ The converse of this was an attack on the PLP that suggested ‘they would ‘induce the voters into socialism’ which would ‘be very bad for the colony because it would drive away foreign capital’.¹³⁸

However, a focus on prosperity, in particular on the burgeoning tourism industry, led to use of the rhetoric of denial on race relations that may have unhealthily repressed problems and led to social upheavals later on. Richards implored in December 1968: “Stop this talk of race and of black and of white - but tell of being Bermudian.”¹³⁹ The trouble was that Bermuda was riven by very different ideas of what it meant to be Bermudian, a fact that had its very roots in a trenchant racial schism that had been reinforced by colonialism.

Deracialised rhetoric may have been linked to other factors. Firstly, the UBP knew that if a purely racial politics developed in Bermuda they would lose out, since their base vote of whites were a minority of the population. As Arthur Hodgson put it, the UBP took lessons from the Bahamas and ‘realised that if this black party [the PLP] went on they would eventually be displaced’.¹⁴⁰ Secondly, however, the denial of race as an issue was linked to the strange excuse that Bermuda’s economy was seen as potentially fragile and tourists and ‘foreign capital’ would easily be scared away. The UBP presented an idea of ‘racial harmony’ as a key theme partly because it claimed it believed ‘[integration was] right and just’.¹⁴¹ However, the party also argued that Bermuda’s ‘general prosperity’ depended on it: “Bermudians know that an expanding tourist trade can be built only with a sound government and with people living in harmony.”¹⁴²

This belief was buttressed by research which had been commissioned in 1963 in a private capacity by Tucker and Harry Butterfield, who were both heads of Bermuda’s two largest banks. This report, by economist professor J Henry

¹³⁷ *Gazette*, April 4, 1968.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* April 6, 1968.

¹³⁹ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 178.

¹⁴⁰ (Arthur) Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

¹⁴¹ UBP election manifesto 1968.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

Richardson, argued that ‘without a prosperous tourism industry, Bermuda’s economy could fall to one half or even one third of its present level’. It added: “Tourists are very sensitive and many of them are deterred from visiting places where there is tension for political or social reasons.”¹⁴³ There was not much separating this and Tucker’s suggestion in the 1950s that changing Bermuda’s segregation laws ‘ahead of opinion in the US...would be the surest way to starvation that we know’.¹⁴⁴ Prosperity, thus, acted as a key rationalisation for continuing both formal segregation and then informal and paternalistic gradualism in Bermudian politics.

It is also important to note that Bermuda’s tourism industry also depended on a particular type of higher-end clientele. A report by English town and country planner Thornley Dyer had advised the Government in spring of 1963 that it should, ‘become more exclusive. Keep up the price but give value for money. Dyer added: “Bermuda should cater for the sophisticated, and by that I mean sophisticated the fuller sense.” He went on:

Above all stay Bermudian in the traditional meaning of that word. Press...the charm and beauty of the islands, the courtesy and kindness of the inhabitants, the dignity and tidiness of public institutions, from the Governor inspecting a guard of honour at the opening of parliament to a Boy Scout church parade.

Even more provocative than this coded language was the suggestion from Dyer that Bermuda build ‘another Tucker’s Town development closer to Hamilton to cater to the very wealthy who like getting away from it all’.¹⁴⁵ Tucker’s Town, located on a peninsula at the island’s south-east end, was a particular source of racial grievance because blacks living there in the 1920s had been forcibly removed from the area so that an exclusive enclave for wealthy tourists could be carved out.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ *Gazette*, May 20, 1963.

¹⁴⁴ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 110.

¹⁴⁵ *Gazette*, May 5, 1963.

¹⁴⁶ MacDowall, *Trading Places*, 18-29; MacDowall, *Another World*; see also Rosemary Jones, 165.

Thus, UBP unofficial incumbency at a time of a tourism boom placed it in a unique position to argue for its own political victory at the 1968 election. Tourism encapsulated the two things that summed up the UBP well. Firstly, the party was founded on the denial of the social legacies of racial discrimination. It gained power from the fact that in the 1970s ‘certain strata of the black community’ did benefit from the reforms of the 1960s as a result of ‘the interplay of the civil rights movement’ and ‘the integrative logic of administrative capitalism’.¹⁴⁷ This meant a few black middle-class candidates felt free to welcome the march towards the sunny uplands of burgeoning prosperity, which saw Bermuda’s economy growing at a rate of eight per cent between 1967 and 1971.¹⁴⁸ As UBP candidate Vincent Bridgewater would put it in May 1976: “Basically I am a capitalist pig. The more I get, the more I want.”¹⁴⁹

The tourism boom, therefore, also reinforced the UBP’s identity as, in the words of one internal party memorandum from May 1974, a ‘businessman’s party’.¹⁵⁰ In elaborating this identity, however, it perpetuated a particular idea of British-infused Bermuda. The unspoken suggestion was that tourists were white and the people who waited on them were black. Elite engagement with issues of race and the economy was tied up with their political success. As the next chapter will show, this political attempt to control discussion may have led to a reaction, in the form of a home-grown Black Power movement, from mid-1969 onwards.

Conclusion

The history of the first years of the UBP is a useful illustration of the idea that, although ‘the number of blacks elected or appointed to high office’ rose ‘by leaps and bounds’ between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s, that increase did not ‘demonstrably’ improve ‘life in the black community’.¹⁵¹ By

¹⁴⁷ Reed, *Black Revolution*, 64.

¹⁴⁸ Pitt et al., *Report...into the 1977 Disturbances*, 1.

¹⁴⁹ *Gazette*, May 5 or 6, 1976.

¹⁵⁰ Attachment to Bermuda Cabinet memorandum 249/75, May 3, 1974, BNA.

¹⁵¹ Reed, ‘*Black Revolution*’, 64.

1964-5, British representatives in Bermuda and the UBP were moving in tandem in pursuit of a tacitly shared goal: that of marshalling change in a ‘responsible’ direction. As Alex Scott put it in his description of Tucker: “If you are being run out of town get in front of the group and make it look like a parade.”¹⁵² The UBP and Government House were essentially working together to advocate ‘integration’, which presupposed a white majority where there was none. Such an idea was buttressed by the colonial British hegemony.

By the 1960s, decolonisation, retrenchment and the desire to ward off embarrassment on the international scene became overriding British objectives. Until the late 1950s, the white Bermudian establishment was resisting pressure towards democratisation and liberalisation that had been heralded by London, in Bermuda’s case, as early as 1948. There was a moment of slight dissonance, represented by Gascoigne’s ruffling of conservative Bermudian feathers from 1959 onwards, and then recalibration in the early 1960s.

As the previous chapter argued, the UBP was the result of that recalibration of relations – in which a status quo of white supremacy, both in terms of electoral laws, discriminatory practices and stark economic inequality, was being shifted so that new forms of the first two covered up the preservation of the third. The UBP was not just a political idea or the product of a desire for a particular policy outcome, but an embodiment of a holistic fear of the loss of a certain idea of Bermuda.

This vision of Bermuda was believed to be conducive to the tourism industry as well as for British strategic anxieties. The key communication point between the British representatives and Bermudian leaders was Tucker, who was seen as a kind of enigma; someone who could tap into and influence two distinct sets of leaders – right-wing white business leaders such as himself and the conservative and moderate black middle class; professionals, business-leaders and executives such as Richards, Edness and Swan.

¹⁵² Alex Scott interview, December 20, 2011.

In this sense, the UBP version of integration, both espoused and embodied by the party in 1964-1971, should perhaps be seen as more of a pragmatic means to an end than as an end in itself. The international context was the passing of the Civil Rights Act in the US in 1964 following the outpouring caused by the assassination of President John F Kennedy. It was overlain by the victory of a Labour Government in October 1964, and the 1965 Race Relations Act in the UK. Yet, at the same time as attempting to end segregation, Tucker tried to neutralise race as an issue, meaning that even in the moment of first acknowledgement, there was an attempt to deny.

Perhaps it is obvious to state that a commitment to ‘integration’ was a *sine qua non* for some budding black UBP candidates. However, the testimony of those who were recruited indicates that personal interests and status were at least amongst their motivations for joining the party, as was the UBP’s position of incumbency. In short, white Bermudian racism was so bound up with class and inequality that those who were doing well in the current system did not see the need for any radical change. Indeed, some blacks such as Richards viewed the PLP as a threat, not just to prosperity, but also to ideas of stability and order.

Finally, this chapter has argued that the very fact and nature of Bermudian prosperity, with its connection between certain British-infused images of Bermuda and racial discrimination, may have helped encourage an already powerful tendency to freeze out discussions of race in conservative political rhetoric. As the next chapter will show, this repression may have helped encourage campaigns of both violence and civil disobedience at the extra-parliamentary level.

Chapter Three

‘The furthest to fall’: Violence and the approach of the UBP, Government House and Whitehall to Bermuda’s internal security, April 1968 - July 1973

1. Introduction

The first chapter showed how Britain colluded in the oligarchy’s structurally entrenched domination of Bermuda’s constitutional reform process in 1963-1968. This undermined Britain’s already fragile ability to set agendas in Bermuda. It also helped the UBP to carve out a semi-legitimised space for the oligarchy’s traditionally privileged position. The second chapter demonstrated how the first four years of the UBP’s existence played upon patterns of this dominance, while evolving a new language of racial denial.

This third chapter will detail the way in which these two processes came together both to help fuel a violent challenge to the social and political order and to shape the colonial-settler state’s response. The overarching argument of this thesis is that, by failing to challenge, and frequently aiding the UBP, Whitehall actually exacerbated a situation in which the task of setting agendas on the ground became more difficult as the security situation deteriorated.

In January 1967, shortly after the Constitutional Conference in which the UBP had largely got its way on constituency boundaries questions, a Colonial Office civil servant, TM Jenkins, suggested to a Foreign Office counterpart that he saw ‘no real risk of internal disorder in the immediate future’ in Bermuda.¹ Yet, in April 1968, three days of rioting began in Hamilton and spread into the parishes of Devonshire and Warwick.² The period from summer 1969 until 1972 saw the creation of a Bermudian branch of the international Black Power

¹ Jenkins to Allott, January 20, 1967, 95/220.

² Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*.

movement, called the Black Beret Cadre (BBC).³ This group was linked, at least in the official mind, with a series of protests and demonstrations but also attacks on property through 1970. From 1971, the BBC increasingly went underground. In September 1972, Police Commissioner George Duckett was murdered at his home in Devonshire. In March 1973, Governor Sir Richard Sharples and his Aide-de-Camp Captain Hugh Sayers were shot and killed at Government House.

This chapter will argue that the power-sharing arrangement enshrined in the new constitution of June 1968 meant two conceptions of the idea of 'internal security' reigned supreme. On one hand, as we saw in chapter two, the UBP leadership saw challenges to orthodox conceptions of law and order largely through an economic prism, understanding insecurity to be a threat to Bermuda's fragile tourism economy. An Executive Council Memorandum in January 1973 by the member for tourism DeForest Trimingham noted tourists' 'increasing ...sensitivity and demand for a crime-free, unpolluted environment'.⁴

On the other hand, evidence shows certain elements within the UBP aimed to use the threat of violence to pursue other agendas. As Kalusa argues, conservative white settlers in Ndola, Northern Rhodesia used the murder of European housewife Lillian Burton in May 1960 to 'intensify their crusade to crush African nationalism'. In Bermuda, attacks on key symbols of authority, such as arson and bomb attacks on colonial monuments, may have been seen by some as an excuse to advance conservative demands to abolish jury trials. While violent acts may have increased the determination of conservatives to 're-constitute and reinforce their own power', in Bermuda these calls were kept behind a carefully-cultivated front of moderation and usually made behind closed doors through unaccountable bodies.⁵ This may have given

³ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*; For a wider Caribbean perspective, Ryan, *Black Power Revolution of 1970*; meanwhile for a US angle on the roots of Black Power, see Tyson, *Roots of the African American Freedom Struggle*.

⁴ Executive Council (henceforth ExCo) memorandum 19/73, January 5, 1973, BNA.

⁵ Kalusa, *Killing of Lilian Margaret Burton*, 71-2.

conservative reactions to violence a more repressed dimension than the official record suggests.

It should be remembered however that, even after June 1968 changes that increased the power of the House of Assembly, Government House retained responsibility for internal security, the Police and Bermuda's armed forces under section 62(1) of the Bermuda Constitution, while until April 1973 the Governor also chaired the Executive Council (thereafter to be called the Cabinet).⁶ This chapter will focus primarily on the way in which Government House set the agenda for dealing with issues of security in concert with Whitehall. But the colonial state increasingly drew local ministers into the process of dealing with security problems, whilst security issues became the ground on which they elaborated their conservative image of Bermuda.

Three local and colonial contexts set the mood for how Governors Lord Martonmere (1964-1972) and Sir Richard Sharples (1972-3) dealt with the threat and reality of violence. Firstly, there was the historical-institutional context in which the Governor was able to declare a state of emergency at any time he felt the security situation was getting out of control.⁷ While 1963 saw unprecedented political reform, that year also saw the passing of three laws which were 'designed to curb any mass activity': the Prohibited Publications Act, which enabled the Governor to ban any publication from entering Bermuda; the Public Order Act, requiring permission for the holding of any public procession, and the Emergency Powers Act, which gave the Governor 'absolute power in the event of his declaring a state of emergency'.⁸

The ways in which states of emergency were used by British personnel in British Guiana as part of 'a strategy... designed to oust' radical political leaders such as Cheddi Jagan have been detailed by Ashton and Killingray.⁹ It will be suggested that fears of unrest had the power to create crises of confidence and

⁶ *Bermuda Constitution Order 1968*, Section 62(1) (b, c and d).

⁷ See 16/91, TNA for documentation on how Martonmere used demonstrations of power, including a frigate, to deter rioting during the General Election Campaign of April-May 1968.

⁸ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 67.

⁹ Ashton and Killingray, *West Indies*, lxxvii.

political disputes within the construct of British-Bermudian power-sharing over two institutions that had traditionally been used to keep order: the Bermuda Police Force and Bermuda Regiment.

To start with, Bermuda's Police Force was a symbol of mutual understanding between the 'assertive yet fearful' class of whites that ran Bermuda and a racist, paternalistic and security-obsessed Government House.¹⁰ Brown has shown how Bermuda Governor Major General James Willcocks (1917-1922) encouraged moves by the House of Assembly to transform Bermuda's then largely-black police force into a body staffed by white Englishmen. As Willcocks noted:

The presence in the Colony of European troops and sailors who must be supervised by the Police as well as the yearly influx (of tourists) renders it most desirable that white Police should be available in sufficient numbers.¹¹

This chapter argues that, by the late 1960s, the Police Force was a factor in worsening racial tensions and the increase in violence, while it also became a vulnerable symbol of colonial power. In June 1969, the Bermuda Police Force was '266 strong, of whom about 170 are from the UK'.¹² As in other parts of the British colonial sphere, this European-dominated body, in a majority black country, may have exacerbated racial tensions. This also occurred in Hong Kong, Fiji, British Guiana and Malaya. And it led to instances of widespread 'racial prejudice' in European police inspectors serving in Africa and Palestine.¹³

However, as Killingray and Anderson argue, during the 1950s and 1960s, a process began whereby colonial police forces underwent an 'uneasy political transition' from a role as the 'principal agency of colonial control' into 'an institution at the service of a new independent government'. This saw police forces expanded in the context of decolonisation. Forces also came under new

¹⁰ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 4.

¹¹ Ibid, 15-16.

¹² NLR Bristow to Secretary, Joint Intelligence Committees, June 12, 1969, 13/2885.

¹³ Killingray and Anderson, *Policing and Decolonisation*, 13-14.

pressures as their image as ‘the feared alien, a man who could be relied upon to carry out the instructions of his colonial masters’ was increasingly contested in political debate. Meanwhile, increased powers granted to the Police during states of emergency ‘inevitably meant that policing operations were being conducted in a hostile and therefore more difficult environment’.¹⁴ This chapter argues that the use of curfews during states of emergency in 1968 and 1973 may have exacerbated racial tensions that led to further violence.

Two other local institutional traditions contributed to a knee jerk reaction of involving British military forces when it was deemed order was under threat. Despite the closure of the Royal Naval Dockyard in the late 1950s, Bermuda served as the headquarters of the Senior Naval Officer of the West Indies (SNOWI). This officer, who in 1970 was Commodore Martin Lucey¹⁵, acted as Island Commander of Bermuda in the NATO chain of command, reporting to the Commander-in-Chief of the Western Atlantic under the Supreme Allied Commander of the Atlantic, based in Norfolk, Virginia.

In November 1971, SNOWI exercised operational control over two frigates in the Caribbean from his headquarters, which also included administrative facilities, secretarial functions, stores, transport and a small intelligence staff.¹⁶ Significantly, an army intelligence officer, attached to SNOWI’s staff, sat on the Bermuda Intelligence Committee (BIC), an expatriate-run body of eight members, chaired by the Chief Secretary (from April 1973, known as Deputy Governor), that tied Bermuda’s Police, military and intelligence functions together. This group was, at least until 1973, nearly delinked from any form of local political accountability.¹⁷ It is argued that SNOWI’s presence in Bermuda, and his presence on the BIC, made it easier and more tempting for Government House to call on frigates in times of perceived need. This probably had the effect of exacerbating colonial shows of power between 1968 and 1973.

¹⁴ Ibid, 10, 8 and 17.

¹⁵ Summary of meeting at Government House, April 14, 1970, FCO 44/408, TNA; *Gazette*, June 14, 1969.

¹⁶ Arthur G Rucker to Brian Watkins, November 8, 1971, 824, BNA.

¹⁷ IAC Kinnear to FCO, November 1, 1973, FCO 63/1099, TNA.

Government House reactions to perceived threats and realities of violence may have also exacerbated race relations because they were conditioned by fears of ‘disloyalty’ within Bermuda’s armed forces. The Bermuda Regiment consisted of ‘a part-time infantry unit of about 400 (headquarters and two companies)’. In June 1969, it was ‘80 per cent’ black [and] could raise 250 men for duty at short notice. From these two platoons (each 35 strong) would be available for riot control duties’.¹⁸

However, fears were raised over whether the British authorities could rely on this body in situations of disorder because of the influence of the BBC, which became active in July 1969. Swan shows how 60 soldiers were discharged from the body in October 1970 due to fears of ‘insubordination’ and ‘high anti-white feeling’ linked with sympathies to Bermuda’s Black Power movement.¹⁹ This thesis builds upon Swan’s argument that these events led both Government House and the FCO to question the function of the Regiment. This may have created conditions for an over-dependence on the perceived necessity to have UK troops ready to fly to Bermuda.

Thirdly, a UBP commitment to law, order and ‘stability’²⁰ dovetailed nicely with Government House’s approach to security. This was founded in imperial ideas of stoicism in the face of challenge. Even after he arrived in Malaya following the murder of High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney in October 1951, Colonial Secretary Oliver Lyttelton viewed security measures, in which he was surrounded by a ‘human wall of uniformed police’, as ‘harmful’ to his dignity and ‘lowering for British political prestige in Malaya’. These attitudes were ‘still prevalent’ in the 1970s and part of the British ritual that ‘stressed the art of forgetting’.²¹

This chapter will argue that because of a mix of naivety and denial about the nature and scale of Bermuda’s social problems, important precautions for

¹⁸ Bristow, June 12, 1969, 13/2885.

¹⁹ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 147.

²⁰ Richards, quoted in *Gazette*, June 2, 1972.

²¹ Ball, *Assassination Culture of Imperial Britain*, 249.

safety were not taken following the murder of Police Commissioner George Duckett in September 1972, while the provocative effect of the trappings that came with the office of Governor was acknowledged in London yet ignored due to political sensitivities.

Along with this combination of institutional issues, traditions, and complacency in Bermuda, there were three wider global trends impacting the way in which London approached Bermuda's internal security between 1968 and 1973. Firstly, issues of internal security were bound up with wider British foreign policy approaches to tackling the perceived threat of Soviet Communism. Walton has argued that intelligence is the missing dimension in the historiography of British decolonisation.²² Not much was documented about the FCO's 'secret propaganda unit'²³, the Information Research Department (IRD), until it was closed down by Foreign Secretaries Tony Crosland and David Owen in the late 1970s. Founded in 1948, the unit was 'a secret organisation', founded at the beginning of the Cold War 'to gather confidential information about Communism and produce factually-based anti-Communist propaganda'.²⁴

However, as leadership of the anti-communist movement passed to the Americans in the 1950s, IRD's 'sights' settled on any targets deemed to be 'anti-British', becoming active in the Middle East, Malaysia, Indonesia and Northern Ireland in the early 1970s.²⁵ Swan's revelation of how the IRD became active in Bermuda in 1970 is an important contribution to the historiography. However, he does not explain what the IRD was nor does he place the unit's operations within any international context.²⁶ This chapter argues that the IRD and the BIC were part of a wider British approach to issues of disorder during this period, about which most Bermudian Cabinet Ministers, let alone the public, were not told. The unit also became involved not just in propaganda but also in helping to both formulate and 'project'

²² Walton, *Empire of Secrets*.

²³ Murphy, *Intricate and Distasteful subject*, 766.

²⁴ Hugh Wilford, *Information Research Department*, 353; Lyn Smith, *Covert British Propaganda*, 67-83; Lashmar and James, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War*, 83-93.

²⁵ *Guardian*, January 27, 1978.

²⁶ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 130-4.

government policy for the UBP as it came under attack from Black Power activists.

Secondly, Britain's approach to the issue of security was bound up with the way in which it was believed that the country could be 'embarrassed' on the international stage. For instance, senior FCO official AJ Fairclough suggested to Bermuda's Chief Secretary JW Sykes that the Wooding Commission report, ordered by Martonmere following the 1968 riots, might contain 'awkward or embarrassing' passages for the UK.²⁷ This was a period during which Britain was increasingly being scrutinised for its actions by the United Nations (UN) and by bodies such as Amnesty International, which were 'willing to condemn British brutality'.²⁸ The beginning of the 1960s saw 'rebellion at the periphery... supercharged by international politics' as the UN took a more forceful role in lobbying for decolonisation.²⁹ Especially between 1955 and 1960, the UN had grown exponentially and, following Suez, in the eyes of some British policymakers, had changed 'into Frankenstein's monster'.³⁰ By 1967, 60 nations 'smaller than Scotland' had 'gained freedom and a seat' in the organisation.³¹ and, from 1960, the body's Committee of 24 had begun relentlessly lobbying for immediate decolonisation and sponsored visiting missions to remaining colonial territories.³²

From 1963 when the body took up the issue of the tortured endgame of the British presence in Aden³³, the Committee of 24 became 'a political factor of importance in all delicate colonial situations'.³⁴ By the late 1960s, the Labour Government was conflicted about its presence on the Committee of 24, yet ministers remained highly sensitive to proceedings in the body. This changed, however, when the UK, under a new Conservative administration, withdrew from the Committee on January 11, 1971.³⁵

²⁷ Fairclough to Sykes, November 22, 1968, FCO 58/333, TNA.

²⁸ Ball, *Assassination culture of Imperial Britain*, 250.

²⁹ Darwin, *Empire Project*, 117.

³⁰ Louis, *Public Enemy Number One*, 186.

³¹ Nielsen and Ward, *Cramped and restricted at Home?*, 11.

³² Louis, *Public Enemy Number One*; Drower, *Britain's Dependent Territories*, 44.

³³ Ashton, *Keeping Change within Bounds*, 49.

³⁴ Louis, *Public Enemy Number One*, 200.

³⁵ Ibid, 198-206.

Issues of politics, race and colonialism collided as an international Black Power movement interacted with locally entrenched communal divisions. Indeed, the 1960s was a decade that experienced the ‘interaction of global and local politics’, leading to a wave of civil unrest across Europe, the US and the Caribbean in the period 1968-1970.³⁶ In part, the Black Power movement was a result of the fact ‘that the ideals of freedom and dignity’ in the Civil Rights movement ‘had not been realised’.³⁷

It will be argued in this chapter that the conditions for violence were inflamed partly by a political reaction to racial grievances and economic inequality in Bermuda, for it was believed by leftist activists that UN scrutiny could have a chastening effect on British actions. This strategy could have both positive and negative consequences for the forces of reform. On the one hand, Britain was rightly being held to account at a global level for its actions in colonies for the first time. On the other hand, the prospect of UN intervention in Bermuda may have led to cosmetic constitutional solutions to problems.

UN influence was linked to the third contextual factor affecting perceptions of security: that of British policy in the Caribbean. This was because the sending by Britain of 300 paratroops, at the cost of £250,000, to restore order in Anguilla in March 1969³⁸ exposed the shortcomings of the constitutional status of Associated Statehood, created in 1967 for six Eastern Caribbean islands.³⁹ Under this model, based upon the UN model of Free Association, states theoretically gained control over their own internal security, while Britain retained responsibility for defence and external affairs. Since, ‘the boundary separating internal from external affairs usually tend[ed] to be blurred’ however, ‘the non-colonial nature of this so-called partnership’ was ‘highly compromised’.⁴⁰

³⁶ Prince, *Global Revolt of 1968*, 851; see also Ryan, *Black Power Revolution of 1970*.

³⁷ Reed, ‘Black revolution’, 63.

³⁸ *Draft Statement of Defence Estimates*, January 27, 1970, CAB/128/47, TNA; for a first-hand account of the aftermath of the Anguilla ‘emergency’, see Posnett, *Scent of Eucalyptus*, 128-131.

³⁹ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 14.

⁴⁰ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean*, 74-106.

From 1969 onwards, Britain moved towards a more uncompromising stance when it came to the protection of Governors' reserved powers over internal affairs. The Anguilla experience 'ended the experiment in devolving internal security responsibilities to islands that were still under its dominion'.⁴¹ By 1969, 'British governments recognised that Associated Statehood had neither fulfilled its local objectives nor satisfied the critics at the UN'.⁴² 'Caribbean dissatisfaction and London's frustration...resulted in successive British governments expediting the independence of the Associated States', while further use of the constitutional model itself was abandoned.⁴³

However, Associated Statehood continued to be seen throughout the 1970s by UBP ministers such as John Sharpe as the ideal model of a constitutional relationship embodying both freedom and the resort to what Tucker called a 'big brother' if security deteriorated.⁴⁴ This chapter will argue that the British Government bolstered its resistance to UBP efforts to lobby for control over internal security in part because of the accession of a Conservative Government in June 1970, which jettisoned the Associated Statehood policy. It was also impacted by a severe breakdown in law and order in Northern Ireland during 1969 and the stationing of British troops there.⁴⁵ Sensitivity to issues of security in the House of Commons increased as a series of sectarian attacks on the British mainland was initiated with a bomb exploded in London's Post Office tower in October 1971.⁴⁶ However, this chapter will also suggest that, caught between UBP reluctance to entertain independence and a desire to cut back on commitments, London largely gave in on the substance of Associated Statehood, as the FCO was gradually convinced to weaken its own control over security in constitutional reforms that took effect in April 1973.

⁴¹ Ashton and Killingray, lxxx.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Williams, *Keeping a Line Open*, 480.

⁴⁴ *Gazette*, October 18, 1973 and August 2, 1977.

⁴⁵ Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, 226.

⁴⁶ BBC News, *On this day*, October 31, 1971.

This chapter will tackle the issue of security in two main parts. The first section will address the root causes of violence, examining the way in which grievances against the police, and alienation founded in materialism and economic inequality helped lead to riots in April 1968. It will also suggest that political provocation was aimed at an international audience.

The second section will address how the colonial-settler state reacted to the onset of insurgent-style attacks on colonial symbols between 1970 and 1973. The response came in the form of IRD intervention and also constitutional tinkering.

Finally, it will be suggested that the FCO and UBP refused to make adequate security changes in the midst of threats against the Governor and Police Commissioner. In addition, following the murders, there was an unwillingness to consider scaling back on the Governor's living arrangements, in spite of an appeal from Sharples' widow to Prime Minister Edward Heath that the flummery associated with the job of Governor like a 'red rag to a bull' for Black Power activists.⁴⁷

1. The local origins and the global context of civil disobedience and violence

In February 1971, head of the FCO's West Indies department Richard Posnett visited Bermuda on a fact-finding mission shortly before taking up his new job as Governor of British Honduras (soon to be renamed Belize).⁴⁸ After submitting a report in which he advocated reform of Police community relations, the inauguration of a new Ministerial Code of Conduct and, crucially, a change in constituency boundaries to make them more equal, Posnett noted:

Of all the territories I visited in my recent trip in the West Indies, Bermuda was the one where I thought we might have furthest to

⁴⁷ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

⁴⁸ Posnett describes his trip around the Caribbean in *Scent of Eucalyptus*, 132-3.

*fall and where perhaps there might be the widest gap in communications between the establishment and black dissenters.*⁴⁹

The contours of this gap had emerged the previous year as dissent, protest and then violence gripped the island between 1968 and 1973. First an international Black Power conference held on the island in July 1969 helped inspire two years or so of civil disobedience by the BBC. This paramilitary body's first public meeting was held in November. Its leaders were Dionne Bassett, Ben Aaharon and Jerome Perinchief. By April 1970 it was believed by Government House to have 40 members but 'perhaps 4-5,000 supporters' (or more than ten percent out of a population of 48,000).⁵⁰

By the beginning of that year, the BBC was organising events such as the Memorial to Malcolm X in Victoria Park on February 26, a march through Tucker's Town, and a boycott of the Berkeley School Sports' Day with the demand that black studies be taught in Government high schools.⁵¹ On August 8, 1970, activists burned a Union flag at Hamilton City Hall to express 'indignation at the [British Government's] benign response to the Sharpeville incident' and the lack of Bermudian condemnation of the Heath government's decision to end a hiatus on the sale of British arms to apartheid South Africa.⁵²

⁴⁹ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

⁵⁰ Summary of meeting at Government House, April 14, 1970, 44/408; Memorandum by Allott, December 16, 1966, 95/277.

⁵¹ The uncertain reaction of authorities to how to deal with action such as this can be seen in a quote in the same document: "Police feel sure if they have to intervene to preserve law and order violence will ensue but reaction of bulk of coloured Bermudian population to this is not known." SNOWI to Ministry of Defence, London, March 25, 1970. FCO 44/406, TNA.

⁵² Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*, 139.



Figure 13: Hamilton's City Hall, where the BBC burned the Union flag in August 1970 in protest at the resumption of British arms sales to South Africa.

© Benedict Greening, January 2013.

The period 1968-1970 also saw rioting. Violence began on the evening of April 25, 1968 in part due to tensions between younger, black Bermudians and police following confrontations at a fair held by a group called the Committee of 25, to raise funds for handicapped children.

On the evening of the fair, on a day which also saw the island's annual Floral Pageant in the afternoon and a PLP meeting at which the party launched its election manifesto, teenager Kenneth Galloway was told to leave the fair by a white ex-policeman, Paul Butterworth, after he had been let in by a black police constable, PC Foggo. Following Galloway's arrest after he swore at Butterworth, an angry crowd gathered outside the Police Station.⁵³ As the night went on, rioters attacked shops, breaking windows and starting fires. Damage was estimated at £30,000 to 40,000. The night after, Martonmere described how gangs 'roamed streets, smashing windows, throwing stones and petrol bombs and erecting road blocks'.⁵⁴ Order was restored after the

⁵³ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 17.

⁵⁴ Martonmere to FCO, April 27, 1968, 16/91.

imposition of a curfew, a short-term ban on meetings and the arrival of a company of Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from Britain.⁵⁵

On October 2, 1970, a protest by about 300 people outside Hamilton City Hall descended into a riot in which businesses and public buildings were smashed or burned. The rioting led to arrests for 25 cases of attempted arson, 13 cases of malicious damage, two for shooting and two for malicious telephone calls.⁵⁶ A feared attack on Bermuda's Police Operations Centre, which prompted '12-hour shifts and more men on the ground', did not occur.⁵⁷

As the assassinations of 1972 and 1973 will testify, this was also a period of targeted yet unattributed acts of violence directed at symbols of colonial power and British heritage.⁵⁸ On March 22, 1970 there was an arson attack on Hamilton's Sessions House, a building that dated back to the 1820s.⁵⁹ Then, on Easter Sunday, 1970, a bomb blast wrecked the 350-year-old Devonshire Church.⁶⁰ In the summer of 1970, there were indications that activities were becoming more targeted. On September 5, 1970, the Police received a letter, written on air-mail notepaper, which had been sent to Tucker. The note read:

Hatred for you is a constant topic amongst the blacks of this island. It is a fact that you are largely responsible for much of the discontentment & mental confusion that they experience. It is a fact that you must die.⁶¹

The letter added: "We predict your death before the summer has ended." It went on to spell out a Death List: "1) You...Sir Henry Tucker 2) George Duckett 3) Lord Martonmere 4) Optional." It was signed: "Your Enemy...The

⁵⁵ Cabinet conclusions, CC(68), 28th conclusions, May 2, 1968, 10, TNA; Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 25.

⁵⁶ Martonmere to FCO, October 9, 1970, 44/406.

⁵⁷ Martonmere to FCO, October 7, 1970, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Martonmere to FCO, March 25, 1970, *op. cit.*

⁵⁹ SNOWI to Defence Ministry, March 25, 1970, *op. cit.*

⁶⁰ Martonmere noted his belief that this incident 'if proven against [the] cadre, indicates a new phase of bolder, more determined attacks against authority and confirms belief that the [BBC] is a serious danger to security', Martonmere to FCO, March 30, 1970, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Statement of witness, Detective Chief Inspector Clive Donald, Bermuda Police Headquarters, November 25, 1975, MEPO 26/223/1, TNA.

Black Ghost".⁶² It will be suggested that the gravity of this note was not quite realised at the time of its receipt.

It will also be argued that violence and disorder were partly the result of an organic response to the heavy-handedness of the predominantly white Police force during the 1960s. However, the campaign of civil disobedience and violence that germinated in 1969 was also part of a local political response to both local economic and racial divisions and events occurring in a global context, supercharged by UN scrutiny and an international Black Power movement.

1.1. 'Instruments for maintaining white supremacy?': The problem of colonial policing on a divided island, 1968-73

In the immediate aftermath of riots in Hamilton and throughout parts of Pembroke, Devonshire and Warwick parishes between April 25 and 27, 1968, Martonmere had announced a Commission of Inquiry into their cause in the hope that this news would 'take the heat out of present situation'.⁶³ This Commission was headed by Chief justice of Trinidad Sir Hugh Wooding, Dr Hugh Springer of the Commonwealth Secretariat and LPR Browning, who was a former police commissioner in Jamaica. The Commission met in Bermuda between August 26 and October 2 and published their report in early 1969.⁶⁴ The violence resulted partly from 'the implications plainly deducible of an assumption by Butterworth of white superiority and of PC Foggo's subservience to it'. "All this inevitably led to an eruption which when it began there was no holding back."⁶⁵

The report also noted that the riots themselves may have been prolonged because of grievances against Police brutality that were being stoked as the riots progressed. Young people interviewed later alleged that, on April 28, a Policeman...

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Martonmere to FCO, April 28, 1968, 16/91.

⁶⁴ Unknown to AM Palliser, January 13, 1969, 13/2501.

⁶⁵ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 28.

...accosted and ordered [a boy who was waiting for a bus] to move on and that when he did not....the police beat him with sticks and flung him into a Police truck.⁶⁶

Other instances of ‘summary Police harshness’, related to the enforcement of a curfew between 7pm and 6am and a ban on meetings of five or more people.⁶⁷ Members of the Commission believed the enforcement of the curfew in Warwick against people who had no knowledge of its imposition led to arson attacks in the Dunscombe Road area.

The report stated that the disorders were the result of ‘not just events which occurred’ on the first night but ‘a build up of resentment resulting from events with the Police over a long period of time’. Meanwhile, one of the targets of the rioting had been a Hamilton furniture shop, the management of which was ‘regarded as exploiting the working people’ by ‘offering them unusually attractive terms for the hire purchase of household furniture’ which led them to ‘undertake commitments which many were unable to meet’.⁶⁸

This was an unsettling aspect of a landscape ‘transformed by consumerism and social mobility’⁶⁹ and ‘rapidly increasing affluence’,⁷⁰ characterised by the fetishisation of material goods. There was also stark disparity between the economic positions of blacks and whites. According to a 1974/75 Consumer Expenditure Survey, black Bermudian households earned on average \$2,300 less than white households.⁷¹

The commission suggested one of the causes of the riots was the harsh way in which certain Police officers enforced motorcycle laws in force since 1949. More crucially, the Police’s ‘wide interpretation’ of a March 1966 change in the 1936 drugs law, which allowed officers ‘to stop and search without warrant

⁶⁶ Ibid, 29.

⁶⁷ Op. cit, 29-30; January 13, 1969, FCO brief for Michael Stewart, April 30, 1968, 13/2501.

⁶⁸ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 31.

⁶⁹ Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, 13.

⁷⁰ Pitt et al., *Report...into the 1977 Disturbances*, 10.

⁷¹ Ibid, 23.

any person reasonably suspected of having in his possession any narcotic drug'.⁷²

Tellingly, in the 16-week period leading up to the riots, while 103 people were searched under this law, a 'mere' 11 were found in possession of any narcotic drugs. Finally, the report noted the fact that the riots were 'exacerbated by the fact that the Police force is largely alien'. Because of this, officers were 'identified with the power structure' and seen as 'instruments for maintaining white supremacy'.⁷³

These poor relations help set the context for the murder of Duckett more than four years later. On February 16, 1971, intelligence indicated that Duckett was being described by BBC activists as 'a mercenary and a killer who has virtually a free hand in suppressing black people'.⁷⁴ Duckett was murdered at his home in Devonshire Parish on September 9, 1972. He was reaching up to fix a security light on the porch at about 9pm when he was shot in the back with a .22 revolver. His 17-year-old daughter Marcia, who had been watching television at the time, was also shot in the chest but survived. The forty-one-year-old Duckett, from Widnes in Lancashire⁷⁵, had served in the Welsh Regiment as a National Serviceman and in the Royal Army Educational Corps as a sergeant instructor. From November 1952 until December 1966, he had worked as Assistant Superintendent of Police in Nigeria. He had arrived in Bermuda to become Commissioner in December 1969.⁷⁶

⁷² Wooding, Spring Browning, *Bermuda Civil Disorders*, 41.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 40 and 44.

⁷⁴ *Mid-Ocean News, Inside the Black Beret Cadre*, 2003.

⁷⁵ This was Martonmere's former constituency when he served as an MP from 1931 until 1964. It is possible that Martonmere personally recruited Duckett as Police Commissioner as the result of knowing each other in the UK.

⁷⁶ CID Report, February 11, 1973, 201/72/209, MEPO 26/187/1, TNA.

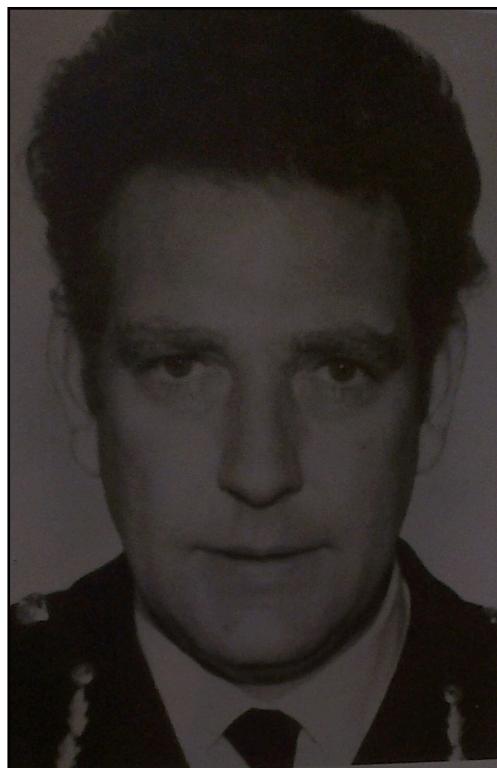


Figure 14: Police Commissioner George Duckett, who was shot and killed in his home in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda on the night of September 9, 1972.
© Rosemary Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, (Bermuda, 2004).

Metropolitan Police CID voiced suspicions that the BBC was involved in Duckett's murder, noting that activists were heard to suggest at a meeting where they discussed fomenting revolution: "We must get Duckett first." Even the CID report admitted that Duckett was 'not popular' with a large section of the community. The report speculated that this was 'perhaps as a result of his leadership and forceful approach to would-be rioters and political demonstrations by extremist organisations'.⁷⁷ His murder was certainly welcomed by some. Arthur Hodgson, then a leading activist in the PLP, said:

I remember there was a party going on and somebody announced the news that Duckett had been killed and everyone cheered and turned the music up louder. It was sort of like at last we are taking a stand; you see a victim being bullied and he hits back for once.⁷⁸

Thus, the riots of April 1968 revealed a gap between authorities and black Bermudians that was to widen into a chasm by 1972. Although the murder of

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ (Arthur) Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

Duckett was wrenching for the authorities, its apparently isolated nature allowed it to be swept under the carpet as simply any other crime. As a result racial grievances remained unaddressed as the 1970s wore on.

1.2. ‘Considerations other than purely local’: The United Nations, Black Power and the international politics of protest

Harold Wilson noted in 1964:

We cannot maintain a world role by military strength alone. Acceptance of the British role depends on the image we present in our relations with foreign and Commonwealth countries.⁷⁹

This attitude was part of a recognition that Britain’s world role was changing in the context of the international institutions of a ‘new world order’.⁸⁰

The UN was to assist the rise of new states, themselves the result of decolonisation, which in their turn became involved in the international diplomacy of subsequent decolonisation.⁸¹

This section will argue that civil disorder in Bermuda was part of a local political response to the new international arena in which decolonisation played out. The Black Power and PLP activists who shaped this response, such as PLP MCP Pauulu Kamarakafego (also known as Roosevelt Brown) and Hodgson, also aimed to use the new realm of global scrutiny to bypass the traditional colonial asymmetry of local legislatures, Government House and Whitehall. Gordon’s 1946 appeal to Creech Jones led to ostensible hand-wringing in London but had failed to achieve anything due to the political collusion of Government House with the oligarchy. It was time now for a new approach.

⁷⁹ Hyam, *Britain’s Declining Empire*, 332.

⁸⁰ White, *Decolonisation: The British Experience*, 63.

⁸¹ Henry S Wilson, *African Decolonisation*, 69.

(i) PLP acknowledgement of the power of violence and the international context

Violence, protest and countervailing repression and pre-emption lurked perennially beneath the surface of discussion about race in Bermuda. It cannot be denied that PLP politicians had come close to advocating insurrection in their speeches between 1964 and 1968 election. As PLP MCP Browne-Evans was described telling a party meeting on October 20, 1964:

She got so angry over the whole state of affairs that sometimes she would like to use the sheer weight of the Negro majority against the people. This would be a real massacre, but the coloured people didn't do this.⁸²

On the night of the riots, April 25, 1968, PLP candidate Austin Thomas had said at the party's manifesto launch: "It's going to get real hot this summer and its going to be PLP heat."⁸³ The Wooding Commission report argued that the PLP's 'positively racial' campaign rhetoric 'cannot have failed to have a major influence on those who participated in the disorders'.⁸⁴

Politicians were attempting to articulate the fact that young black Bermudians felt themselves to be on a 'bandwagon of the powerless' who were 'only able to make an impression on this society...through violence'.⁸⁵ It also points to the feeling that the democratic inheritance of a black majority seemed to have been stymied by 'constitutional' means, while 'a sense of solidarity'⁸⁶ that had been found during segregation was being affected by a wider trend of 'fragmentation' among oppositional movements.⁸⁷

Bermuda had begun to be 'considered' in the third of the three sub-committees set up by the UN's Committee of 24 for the examination of dependent territories in late 1964. Bermuda was investigated as part of a

⁸² According to LIC report for October 1964, November 7, 1964. 1031/4766.

⁸³ *Gazette*, April 26, 1968.

⁸⁴ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 85.

⁸⁵ Pitt et al, *Report into...the 1977 Disturbances*, 24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 8.

⁸⁷ Quintana, *Emergence of a Quintana Aesthetic*, 237.

group that included British Honduras, the Falklands, the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos, Cayman Islands, Leeward and Windward Islands, Barbados, Grenada and the British Virgin Islands. The membership of the sub-committee investigating the island included Bulgaria, Iran, Italy, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Uruguay and Venezuela.⁸⁸ Through 1964, activists such as WG Brown and BIU president Dr Barbara Ball attempted to attract attention to social and political demands for reform in Bermuda.⁸⁹

It seemed to have been understood that potential violence might play a role in attracting the attention of the UN to Bermuda. As Browne-Evans was alleged to have lamented in October 1964: "Although the PLP did not preach violence the British are not inclined to take action unless there seems to be violence".⁹⁰ This view elided into the reported view of PLP activist Hodgson in October 1968 that:

*The UN will do very little unless it can be shown that Bermuda is in a state of unrest...Unless unrest can be provoked, no action will be taken by the UN.*⁹¹

By November 1968, officials in Government House were worrying that rioting in April and what it viewed as the potential for more violence in the summer of 1969 would show Britain in a negative light on the world stage. This was chastened by a context in which Martonmere believed, that 'having suffered a defeat at the polls ...the PLP had 'decided to appeal for support' in the UN 'in the hope that international opinion will bring pressure to bear on the British government to agree to another constitutional conference'.⁹²

On December 14, it was reported that a draft resolution sponsored by twelve African and Asian countries reaffirmed 'the inalienable right of the peoples of these territories to self-determination and independence' and called for the UN to render all help to the peoples of these territories in their efforts freely to

⁸⁸ FO to Her Majesty's Representatives, April 8, 1964, 1027/610.

⁸⁹ *Bermuda and the UN*, June 4, 1964; for the reference to Ball see also Local intelligence committee report for September 1964, October 5, 1964, 1031/4766.

⁹⁰ November 7, 1964, *ibid*.

⁹¹ Bermuda Intelligence Committee (BIC) Report, October 1968, 58/333.

⁹² Martonmere to Stewart, November 7, 1968, *ibid*.

decide their future status'.⁹³ With the Committee of 24 due to resume its proceedings in February, FCO official Len S Price wrote to Scott that the PLP were 'looking for any opportunity to make trouble' by 'having Bermuda discussed'.⁹⁴

(ii) The First Regional Black Power Conference, June-July 1969

By June 1969, the FCO was worrying about how it should respond to plans by Kamarakafego to hold the First Regional International Black Power Conference (BPC) in Bermuda from July 10 to July 13, 1969. The question was whether to allow the conference to proceed, with British troops present as a 'deterrent' to potential disorder, or whether the conference should be banned through a change in local legislation. These discussions were conducted with the UN very much in mind. The UK's mission at the UN told the FCO on June 10 that because there were 'Bermudan (sic) petitioners in New York....if the decision is made to send troops to Bermuda, we must reckon on a debate in the Committee of 24'.⁹⁵

An allusion to the international politics of decolonisation, is instructive here. Britain worried about the effect that the stationing of troops in Bermuda might have on the combustible border dispute between Guyana, independent since 1966, and Venezuela. In early January, Venezuela had backed the abortive Rapununi uprising in the disputed area.⁹⁶ As Bristow noted, such a 'movement of troops' might lead the Venezuelans, who were members of the UN sub-committee 'to suggest parallels which would be awkward for the Guyanese'.⁹⁷

The considerations about whether to intervene militarily, providing troops 'to maintain law and order' during the conference, went to the very highest level, with Prime Minister Harold Wilson briefed and involved in the final decision

⁹³ Draft UN resolution, reported by FCO, December 14, 1968, 58/335.

⁹⁴ Handwritten note from LS Price to (Eileen) Scott, January 30, 1969, 58/333.

⁹⁵ UK mission in New York to FCO, June 10, 1969, *ibid*.

⁹⁶ *Stabroek News, Rapununi Rebellion*.

⁹⁷ UK mission in New York to FCO, June 10, 69, 58/335.

to send in troops.⁹⁸ Defence Secretary Denis Healey worried ‘there is a very real danger that the commitment will become a continuing one’.⁹⁹ However, Foreign Secretary Michael Stewart decided sending in troops should accompany a decision not to ban the conference. In a note to Wilson, Burke Trend, the Cabinet Secretary, summed up the plan to send in 85 officers and men of 45 Marine Commando Unit to reinforce the marines stationed on the two frigates *Arethusa* and *Mohawk*.¹⁰⁰ The Bermuda Government also denied the presence of many would-be attendees through ‘comprehensive immigration controls’ and a Stop List.¹⁰¹

The BPC, officially sponsored by the PLP, attracted 1,500 registrations and passed off without incident. A keynote speaker was the Trinidadian historian and respected activist CLR James, who was a mentor of Kamarakafego.¹⁰² James stated on the opening night that the US and other imperialist nations were ‘in full retreat before the tremendous forces unleashed by revolutions in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Caribbean’.¹⁰³ The presence of troops on the island was a reflection of the views of one delegate who said that ‘as soon as Black people began to speak about their problems, colonial forces reacted with slogans of law and order’.

What were the consequences of the BPC? According to Swan, the conference had ‘ramifications for Black Power globally’ as well as leading to the emergence of the BBC, as activists who were ‘the angry children of Malcolm X and Sally Bassett’¹⁰⁴...embraced ‘the major tenets of the BPC resolutions and attempted to put them into action’. In Martonmere’s view the BPC left ‘scars’ in Bermuda.¹⁰⁵ As the next section will show, the BBC would be responsible for awakening white Bermudians and British colonial officials to legacies of injustice and for doing that in a bloody and brutal manner.

⁹⁸ Memorandum (secret) from Denis Healey to Michael Stewart, June 23, 1969. 13/2885.

⁹⁹ Ibid,

¹⁰⁰ Memorandum from Trend to Wilson, June 23, 1969, op. cit.

¹⁰¹ NRL Bristow to Secretary, Joint Intelligence Committees, June 12, 1969, 13/2885; Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*, 88.

¹⁰² Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 78; James, Grimshaw and Hart, *American Civilization*.

¹⁰³ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 88.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 92.

¹⁰⁵ Op. cit, 88 and 92.

2. Pulling the strings: The response of the Colonial State to issues of internal security, April 1970-1973

The symbolic and even romantic resonance of activists from all over the world coming together for the BPC to express black pride was tarnished and traduced by a campaign of bombings, threats, and assassinations that took place in Bermuda between 1970 and 1973. The way in which the FCO in London and Government House and Tucker's UBP government responded to these events is instructive.

Firstly, this period showed how accustomed the UBP was to Government House dealing with security problems through grand displays of military power rather than through social remedies. Moreover, intervention by the IRD at the behest of a secret local security committee bolstered the UBP in its circumvention of constitutionally-guaranteed civil liberties. Secondly, the UBP then reacted to the campaign of violence with plans for constitutional reform that the FCO resisted at first and then partially acquiesced to. There was also a failure to take basic security precautions in advance of the crimes, while, finally, the reaction of both the UBP and Government House to violence showed a mix of panic and a reluctance to minimise the degree of imperial trappings enjoyed by the Governor.

2.1 'Improving the projection of government policies': The covert Anglo-Bermudian response to the challenge of Black Power

Bermuda's new constitution meant that Government House and London increasingly faced pressure to recalibrate how they organised intervention in Bermudian affairs. Governors resorted to calling in frigates, with or without troops aboard, time and again. The riots of 1968 led to Martonmere having *HMS Leopard* docked in Hamilton Harbour even as people voted in the island's first election under an unadulterated universal franchise. Martonmere believed this was a 'deterrent' to violence, yet it may have been more akin to a

provocation.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, in March and April 1970, *HMS Mohawk*, *HMS Jupiter* and *HMS Sirius* all spent time in Bermuda as the BBC planned a protest at City Hall.¹⁰⁷ In March 1973, both before and after Sharples' assassination, *Sirius*, carrying Royal Marines, and *HMS Minerva* were in the area of Bermuda.¹⁰⁸

British troops also paid periodic visits to the island. The arrival of the 'company of 45 Commando Royal Marines and the Royal Marine detachment of *HMS Mohawk*' and their reinforcement by 'Wessex helicopters of 72 Squadron Royal Air Force' in July 1969 was not as unusual as it seemed.¹⁰⁹ For instance, on the night the Governor was killed, there was already 'a 180-strong force of the 1st Parachute regiment' conducting exercises on the island.¹¹⁰

Martonmere's dependence on British troops may have resulted from his fears that the citizen-staffed Bermuda Regiment was compromised by Black Power sympathies and that this would lead to 'insubordination'.¹¹¹ He wrote to London on January 3, 1969:

*[The Bermuda Regiment Commanding Officer] could not be absolutely sure of the allegiance of his troops should they be faced with a riotous mob containing their relatives. He could only 'hope and believe' they would remain loyal.*¹¹²

Martonmere coupled this with the view of the Commissioner of Police that 'Bermudianisation should not be allowed to impair the efficiency of the police force'.¹¹³ Worries about the Regiment were raised time and again, and as Swan shows, a feared insubordination during a visit by Prince Charles, in October 1970, days after widespread rioting, led to the discharge of 60 men.¹¹⁴ This fear led to Royal Marine guards being deployed at Government House

¹⁰⁶ Martonmere to London, May 14, 1968, 16/91.

¹⁰⁷ Price to Fairclough, March 26, 1970, 44/406; *Gazette*, March 30, 1970; Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*, 119.

¹⁰⁸ SNOWI to Defence Ministry, March 11, 1973, FCO 63/1102, TNA.

¹⁰⁹ *Defence Estimates*, January 27, 1970, 128/47.

¹¹⁰ Briefing for Home, March 12, 1973, 63/1102.

¹¹¹ Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*, 147.

¹¹² Martonmere to Stewart, January 3, 1969, 58/333.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Martonmere to FCO, October 14, 1970, 44/406; Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 147.

during the Prince's visit.¹¹⁵ This overreliance on the British military led to an emphasis on the deployment of colonial symbols in response to violence.

By March 1970, however, Government House was ready to spearhead a new covert approach to bolster the UBP Government. On March 25, SNOWI was reporting to the Ministry of Defence that the BBC had provoked disorders in two school sports fields and carried out a sit-down in Mid-Ocean Golf Club while there had also been an 'arson attempt on House of Assembly'. SNOWI worried that 'violence' would 'ensue' if Police intervened to restore law and order.¹¹⁶ The same day, Martonmere wrote to London that the BBC was 'rapidly becoming a serious threat to security' while he added that the organisation now had 'effective leadership and rapidly increasing support among young, black people'.¹¹⁷

This same telegram revealed something else. Martonmere said the BIC had 'recommended' to the UBP government that 'assistance be sought from IRD' and that 'a request may be made shortly for a representative to visit Bermuda... with a view to mounting a propaganda campaign against [the BBC].'¹¹⁸ This moment represents the confluence of two covert bodies charged with security in both Bermuda and London. The BIC had a membership of eight, including the Deputy Governor as chair, the Attorney General, the Cabinet Secretary, the Police Commissioner, the head of Special Branch, the Labour Relations Officer, the adjutant to the Bermuda Regiment and an army intelligence officer attached to SNOWI's staff. One of the purposes of the monthly reports were 'to keep the Secretary of State informed of developments which could affect public order'.¹¹⁹ The most crucial of its five terms of reference was:

To keep the security situation in Bermuda under review, including threats to public order and stability, subversion, sabotage and espionage, and to prepare a monthly intelligence appreciation of

¹¹⁵ Martonmere to FCO, October 15, 1970, 44/406.

¹¹⁶ SNOWI to Ministry of Defence, March 25, 1970, *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Martonmere to FCO, March 25, 1970, *op. cit.*

¹¹⁸ *Op. cit.*

¹¹⁹ Report by Kinnear on the BIC, November 7, 1973, FCO 63/1099, TNA.

*the situation for the Governor, members of the Governor's Council and the Secretary of State.*¹²⁰

Twelve copies of these were circulated to the Foreign Secretary, the Security Liaison Officer in Washington, who was a representative of the Security Service and advised the FCO on 'matters of intelligence and protective security policy', [SNOWI], the Commander-in-Chief of the Fleet and the head of the UK's mission at the UN in New York.

Until late 1973 at the earliest, this part of the Bermuda national security state seems to have been completely disconnected from the elected part of it, with very little coordination between the two. One copy of the report was presented to the Government Leader but via the means of the Cabinet Secretary. Meanwhile, in November 1973, Deputy Governor Ian Kinnear suggested that 'there would be merit in adding someone, preferably a Bermudian, who could speak on educational matters'. However, he added that 'it was accepted' that the committee 'could only function effectively if the members had the complete trust of Special Branch and that this would inevitably limit the field'.¹²¹

It was an unnamed member of the BIC who had first suggested the IRD be invited to help the Bermuda Government. On April 2, this was discussed at an inter-departmental meeting in London. Between then and April 9, the FCO warned Martonmere that the potential impact of the IRD's help should not be overestimated 'since the particular manifestation of the Black Berets ... seems to us part of the world-wide problem of youth and race, to which there is no single or easy answer'.¹²² On April 9, the FCO responded to fears on the part of IRD personnel that its cover had been blown, noting:

*All members of [the BIC] including the person referring to IRD in the first place have been warned never to use the term again and to be highly circumspect in their knowledge of it.*¹²³

¹²⁰ Terms of reference of the BIC, November 7, 1973, *ibid*.

¹²¹ Report by Kinnear on the BIC, November 7, 1973, *op cit*.

¹²² FCO to Martonmere, date unclear (between April 2 and 9, 1970), 44/408.

¹²³ Jack A Clewley to Allott, April 9, 1970, *ibid*.

By April 14, however, a representative from IRD, John Rayner, AJ Fairclough and the OPA MJ Macoun were on the island. That day, two meetings were held at Government House. The first and longest, between 10am and 3pm, involved Martonmere, Fairclough, Macoun, Rayner, Sykes, SNOWI, Duckett and the diplomatic service officer, Jack W Clewley. They discussed ideas for 'improved immigration control – if this were necessary to operate an expanded Stop List'. But 'no conclusions were reached'.¹²⁴ At the second meeting that day, the group was joined by Tucker, Attorney General John Summerfield and Executive Council Secretary WW Wallace. Fairclough suggested a 'two-pronged' approach in which the Government would take 'steps - with guidance from a FCO information [IRD] expert – to damage the image of the [BBC]'. An important part of this would be 'stressing Government achievements in coordinated promotional speeches by politicians, and could include subjects such as low-cost housing, increased salaries [and] improvements in education'. Tucker agreed with this 'in principle'.¹²⁵

The IRD's Rayner then outlined the 'possible forms of a counter-propaganda campaign' with a 'coordination between the positive, overt activities' and 'more indirect propaganda...[with] attempts...made to influence the news media' and, possibly 'exposure of the enemy'. The meeting also discussed changes to the law, including 'provisions to control public meetings' or the takeover of buildings, the 'possible prohibition on wearing of uniforms under the Public Order Act' and 'the inadequacies of the jury system'.¹²⁶

On August 15, Tucker made a speech in the House of Assembly in which he argued that 'racist organisations' were trying to 'disrupt society...to effect by force changes which should properly be achieved by democratic, parliamentary process'.¹²⁷ The next day, a memorandum written to accompany a meeting at the FCO laid out the different measures it was thought the UBP government should take to deal with the BBC 'threat'. These included:

¹²⁴ Summary of meetings at Government House, April 14, 1970, op. cit.

¹²⁵ Op. cit.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Speech by Tucker, August 15, 1970, op. cit.

- 1) *Legislation to discourage the portrayal of violence on television and films*
- 2) *Increased use of powers of deportation and of the Stop List in relation to non-Bermudians*
- 3) *Tightening up of anti-discrimination legislation*
- 4) *Examination of the possibility of redefining in legislation certain offences (e.g. incitement of violence, citation etc) in such a way as to make it more difficult for individuals to encourage others by indirect means to contemplate violent action without bringing themselves up against the law*
- 5) *Arranging visits to Bermuda by suitable moderate and outstanding blacks*
- 6) *Arranging more subtle briefing of local news media*
- 7) *Maintain(ing) an unattributable anti-black power propaganda campaign.*

Added in handwriting at the bottom of the memorandum were headings including ‘youth and welfare’, ‘education’, ‘trade union field’ and ‘churches’.¹²⁸ What is striking is the comprehensiveness of ideas, covering domestic areas such as education and labour relations only recently delegated to a ‘responsible’ government in the much-heralded 1968 constitution. What this really revealed was that it was very hard to disaggregate ‘internal security’ matters from internal affairs issues such as education or labour relations. As official J Morgan noted, ‘many of the aspects [of the plan] concern[ed] the internal affairs of Bermuda for which we are not directly responsible’.¹²⁹

The line between foreign and domestic affairs was blurred in IRD work relating to wider conflagrations of disorder on British soil. The British Government was soon employing some of the IRD personnel who had worked in Bermuda in Northern Ireland. Former Reuters and BBC journalist Hugh Mooney helped with UBP ‘propaganda’ during a ‘six-week assignment’ as part of the Special Editorial Unit in April 1970. This section ‘produced articles for order’. “One of the functions of the unit was to secure clearance of intelligence reports for exploitation in the press and elsewhere.”

¹²⁸ Memorandum, author unknown, April 16, 1970, op. cit.

¹²⁹ J Morgan to HSH Stanley, op. cit.

Mooney later gave evidence to an inquiry about how he was sent to ‘apply IRD techniques to indirect propaganda’ in Northern Ireland in 1971, despite the fact that the FCO and the IRD were ‘reluctant to get involved in the United Kingdom’.¹³⁰ He described how he helped army personnel with news management in ‘a last-minute, improvised, damage-limitation exercise’ following the Bloody Sunday massacre, during which 14 civilians were killed by British troops in Derry, Northern Ireland in January 1972.¹³¹ This shows how security in Bermuda was being dealt with by a network of personnel who operated in a subfusc part of the imperial twilight. Just as counterinsurgency techniques were ‘copied and adapted’ from one part of the British-dominated world to another through the 1950s, propaganda techniques honed against Black Power activists in Bermuda were adapted for use in the deteriorating security situation in the UK itself.¹³²

One segment of the UBP implementation of IRD proposals brought the hammer down on freedom of expression. The government passed the Offensive Behaviour Act in July 1970 and the Printed Publications Act in May 1971. The first piece of legislation was aimed at giving the authorities a tool to keep BBC activists off the streets. This was achieved in late October 1970 when Bassett and Perinchief were arrested after they burned a Union flag. The second piece of legislation specifically ‘intended to restrict the propaganda activities of the BBC’ by forcing the registration of publications such as the BBC’s newspaper *Liberator*.¹³³ According to Swan’s research, by August 1971 BBC meetings had been reduced from three to one a week. By the summer of 1972, the BBC was barely referred to in BIC meetings.¹³⁴

Ironically, the effect of these Bills was that, while squeezing the BBC out of the public eye, they encouraged BBC links with Bermuda’s criminal underworld, particularly its penal population. While ‘repression contributed significantly to the extermination of opposition’, it did not finish the job.¹³⁵ On January 11,

¹³⁰ Bloody Sunday Inquiry website, *KM6 – Statement of Hugh Mooney*, 5-6.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³² Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Further Thoughts on the Imperial Endgame*, 505.

¹³³ Swan, ‘Black power in Bermuda’, 157.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹³⁵ Reed, ‘Black Revolution’, 61.

1971 Bassett, Aaharon and Perinchief were sent to jail for ‘offensive behaviour’ or handling ‘seditious literature’. While in prison, they made contact in prison with Burrows, who would, in mid-1976, go on to confess to the killings of Duckett, Sayers and Sharples.¹³⁶

The other impact of the confluence of IRD advice and UBP illiberality was a crackdown on the rights of defendants in jury trials. This highlights the effect the IRD seemed to have had in emboldening the UBP to act on its repressive instincts. In 1971, defendants’ counsel and the Crown had the right of five peremptory challenges of prospective jurors in advance of criminal trials. Strains of conservative opinion had expressed unhappiness with this arrangement since the late 1960s. A 1969 report by the Bermuda Police Association noted that ‘guilty men’ were ‘being allowed to go free’ because of such measures. This report proposed the abolition of the rights of defence lawyers to challenge any juror ‘except for cause’. The Wooding Commission report dismissed this, noting that some officers seemed prejudiced against black Bermudians.¹³⁷

However, following its discussions with IRD, the UBP flew in the face of the Wooding Report. In October 1971, in discussions in advance of passing a Jurors Act, it proposed reducing the number of challenges available. On this occasion, it backed off after the Bermuda Bar Association ‘strenuously and unanimously opposed’ the attempt.¹³⁸ However, following the murders of Sharples and Sayers in March 1973, there were ‘rumblings’ amongst UBP cabinet ministers that ‘the jury system should be abolished’ because it was believed it would be ‘impossible to empanel a jury [to try the suspected murderers] which is either unbiased or free from intimidation’.

At the time however Richards, a barrister, noted that he was ‘against any precipitate move in this direction’.¹³⁹ However, he ominously noted, without explanation, that ‘there are one or two possible steps...which would help

¹³⁶ Darrell, *Acel'dama*; Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*, 151.

¹³⁷ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 49-50.

¹³⁸ ExCo Memorandum 606/71, October 29, 1971, BNA.

¹³⁹ Cabinet memorandum 40/73, May 4, 1973, *ibid.*

alleviate the fears which [had] been expressed'.¹⁴⁰ By April 1974, however, the UBP would feel emboldened to go ahead and pass an amendment to the Criminal Code that reduced the number of available peremptory challenges to three.¹⁴¹

However, with the 1971 Jurors Act that eventually passed, the UBP was more successful in following through on the worries expressed regarding the 'inadequacies of the jury system' in the meeting with the IRD. The 'one or two steps' that Richards mentioned above included the 'broadening' of the use of Special Juries in March 1974.¹⁴² These devices had been reintroduced by the UBP in 1971 after having been abolished in the UK for criminal cases in 1949 and in Bermuda during the 1950s. The law allowed a mysterious Revising Tribunal to restrict the pool of available jurors to 'fit and proper persons' who were assessed on the basis of 'education, qualifications, occupation or experience'.¹⁴³ As Kawaley argues, this retrograde law 'sought to turn back the political clock' and was 'in violation of the letter and spirit of section six of the [Bermuda] Constitution and the right to a fair and impartial trial by jury'.¹⁴⁴

The work of the IRD represents perhaps the clearest evidence of direct British intervention, behind the scenes and at the level of high politics, in matters of local 'internal affairs'. This saw the FCO intervening in 'internal affairs' on an extra-constitutional level. It was done in a covert and ill-defined way, on the basis of an emphasis on short-term stability rather than on tackling endemic colonial and racial legacies through social reform. Because of this there was a focus on censorship, incarceration and the erosion of the basic rights of criminal defendants that had been supposedly protected only three years before in the 1968 Constitution. As the next section will show, these actions were paralleled by an attempt at politically-inspired constitutional engineering designed to enhance the 'prestige' of the UBP government.

¹⁴⁰ Op. cit.

¹⁴¹ Cabinet memorandum, 157/74, March 11, 1974, op. cit.

¹⁴² Cabinet memorandum, 180/74, April 5, 1974, op. cit.

¹⁴³ Kawaley, *Fair Cross-Section Principle*, 544.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 546.

2.2 No more Anguillas: ‘Presentational’ constitutional reform, November 1970-April 1973

As shown above, the UBP and FCO worked together to build a package of policies that were a response to the exigencies of the security situation rather than a result of a genuine impulse to address social or economic divisions. This process revealed two things. Firstly, it exposed political anxieties on the part of the UBP. Secondly, it elucidated a relationship of frustration but also of implicit trust in what the FCO’s permanent under-secretary of state, David Scott, called the UBP’s ‘moderate and sensible policies’.¹⁴⁵ As the UBP approached the prospect of a general election, to be held by May 1973 at the latest, some of the same impulses would shape discussions over a new package of constitutional reforms that would affect how much responsibility each part of the government held for internal security.

Up until April 1973, Government House control over the issue was tempered by an informal practice of consultation between the Governor and UBP and government leader. In November 1970, it was suggested at a UBP committee on constitutional reform, headed by Member for Finance John Sharpe, that the ‘Government Leader should have greater control over internal security’.¹⁴⁶ As Sharpe would argue on a trip to London in the summer of 1971, the UBP hoped London would agree to make Bermuda an Associated State to remedy this.

Ministers expressed a marked reluctance to do this.¹⁴⁷ The experience in Anguilla in March 1969 was fresh in the FCO mind and it was thought Britain could be ‘embarrassed’ if more powers were delegated to local ministers. As Home wrote to Martonmere in June: “Anguilla is a good example of an internal matter which at the same time had serious defence and external affairs implications for Britain.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Fairclough to Scott, October 8, 1970, 44/408.

¹⁴⁶ Kinnear to Posnett, May 7, 1971, 823.

¹⁴⁷ Posnett to CS Roberts, June 18, 1971, *ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Home to Martonmere, June 23, 1971, *op. cit.*

It was also suggested that internal security was a particularly sensitive area for Douglas-Home politically. As Shaw put it: “The maintenance of law and order... is the aspect... in respect of which parliament and public opinion hold him particularly responsible.”¹⁴⁹ This resistance might also have been bolstered by the fact that Northern Ireland had brought security issues to the forefront of debate at Westminster. As Kinnear put it in May when explaining how he had tried to tell Sharpe that there was ‘no prospect’ of delegating powers over security to UBP ministers: “Internal security was a particularly sensitive subject in the House of Commons.”¹⁵⁰

However, these discussions also revealed that the objections of the FCO to delegation were not so much objections of principle, but politically contingent. Such fears led to suggestions that delegations of security responsibilities ‘were not now acceptable because of the dangers if such delegated powers got into irresponsible hands’.¹⁵¹ Scott gave the argument a Cold War dimension when he suggested that ‘these days, it was often difficult to distinguish between matters of external defence and internal subversion’. He added that the UBP would be ‘well advised’ to note that any new constitution would be applicable to successors ‘who might have very different views on the future of the colony’.¹⁵²

Despite this resistance, the FCO was also under pressure to make some concession because the UBP was opposed to independence. The party’s stance stemmed from a fear that, as Sharpe put it, the move ‘could stimulate internal disaffection’ by removing ‘the element of restraint represented by the fact that British troops could be called in if the worst came to the worst’.¹⁵³ As FCO official JW Maslen argued:

*The [internal security] aspect is in fact the strongest element in Bermuda’s desire not to seek independence, and if we are ever to be rid of our responsibility for the island we must seek a solution to the [internal security] problem.*¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Mortlock to Clewley, February 1, 1971, op. cit.

¹⁵⁰ Kinnear to Posnett, May 7, 1971, op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Record of conversation between Sharpe and Godber, May 27, 1971, op. cit.

¹⁵² Monson to Renwick, May 26, 1971, op. cit.

¹⁵³ Record of meeting between Sharpe and DA Scott, July 20, 1971, op. cit.

¹⁵⁴ Matthews from JW Maslen, December 8, 1971, 824.

The FCO was also under pressure to give the UBP government a further public relations victory in the run up to the General Election. At a meeting between Tucker, Sharpe and ministers in London in November, Sharpe suggested the constitutional reform proposal was part of a package that was ‘a gesture to show they appreciate the need for progress.’¹⁵⁵ Sir James McPetrie, who had been sent by the FCO to Bermuda to advise on the reforms, put it more bluntly, noting: “Nothing less than a substantial delegation of responsibility would effectively enhance the prestige of the Bermuda Ministerial Government.”¹⁵⁶

As a result of this pressure, the FCO agreed to meet the UBP demands ‘presentationally’ with a cosmetic change in the constitution. This would involve ‘a provision empowering the Governor to consult either the leader of Government or the Executive Council collectively’ on internal security matters. However, the proviso was that this was done on the Governor’s ‘discretion and on the clear stipulation that he was not required to act in accordance with the advice tendered’.¹⁵⁷

The change was contained in the package of reforms that were agreed during August and September of 1972 by Douglas-Home and the new Government Leader Sir Edward Richards.¹⁵⁸ These changes created a new Governor’s Council, along lines already established in Gibraltar, in which ‘in addition to two officials [the Chief Secretary and Attorney General] the Premier, Deputy Premier and at least one other minister’ would be consulted regularly, and without prejudice, by the Governor over internal security matters.¹⁵⁹ The changes were debated in the House of Assembly in late October and came into effect in April 1973, only a month after Sharples’ and Sayers’ murders, events

¹⁵⁵ Meeting minutes from meeting between Bermuda delegates and FCO officials, November 16, 1971, 823.

¹⁵⁶ Draft of report on Bermuda Constitutional Reform by Sir James McPetrie, enclosed in letter from Mortlock to Maslen, December 20, 1971, *ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ JDB Shaw to Posnett, June 15, 1971, *op. cit.*

¹⁵⁸ Douglas-Home to Martonmere, August 16, 1972, BNA.

¹⁵⁹ ExCo memorandum, 395/72, September 15, 1972, *ibid.*

which would spur in British officials grave doubts about the system of executive power-sharing.¹⁶⁰

This solution seemed to allow the ‘prestige’ of the UBP government to be enhanced while the FCO did not technically really give away any of powers. However, the move may have undermined the Governor’s ability to set agendas. Technically he did not give up any powers. Practically, there was a world of difference between operating in isolation and operating in ‘consultation’ with the UBP.

2.3 Repression, panic and denial in the midst of assassinations, September 1972 – May 1973

This sub-section will suggest that the murders of Duckett, Sayers and Sharples in 1972 and 1973 were met with a mix of repression and denial on the part of both UBP officials and in Government House. However, it also led to a belief on the part of some officials that the Governor’s constitutional position exposed the occupant of the office to unnecessary dangers. This led to a newfound desire to push Bermuda into independence. Despite the death threat list received by authorities in 1970, the state of security at Government House was highly inadequate. Smith wrote that when he interviewed Sharples ‘the only sign of security was a Bermuda police constable who opened the front door’.¹⁶¹ Another press report following the murder painted a picture of the security at Government House, ‘a turreted grey and white mansion set back from Blackwatch Pass on the outskirts of Hamilton’:

The security by the standards of 1973 is almost comical. Townspeople in Hamilton frequently vault the low fence to take a walk in the Government House grounds at night.¹⁶²

This was the security that protected the former Conservative MP and Home Office Minister Sharples as he and the 26-year-old Sayers took the Governor’s

¹⁶⁰ ExCo 447/72, October 20, 1972, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ *Sunday People*, March 18, 1973.

¹⁶² *Daily Telegraph*, March 12, 1973.

dog for an after-dinner walk on Saturday, March 10, 1973.¹⁶³ As they chatted at the top of the stone steps that led down into the 45-acre garden, the dog ran down the steps ahead of them.¹⁶⁴ At that moment someone hiding in the darkness below the steps shot the dog, then shot Sayers twice, and then Sharples twice. Each were hit twice with bullets from the .38 caliber pistol. Sayers died instantly. Sharples called out for help but died shortly after hitting the concrete.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Daily Express*, March 15, 1973.

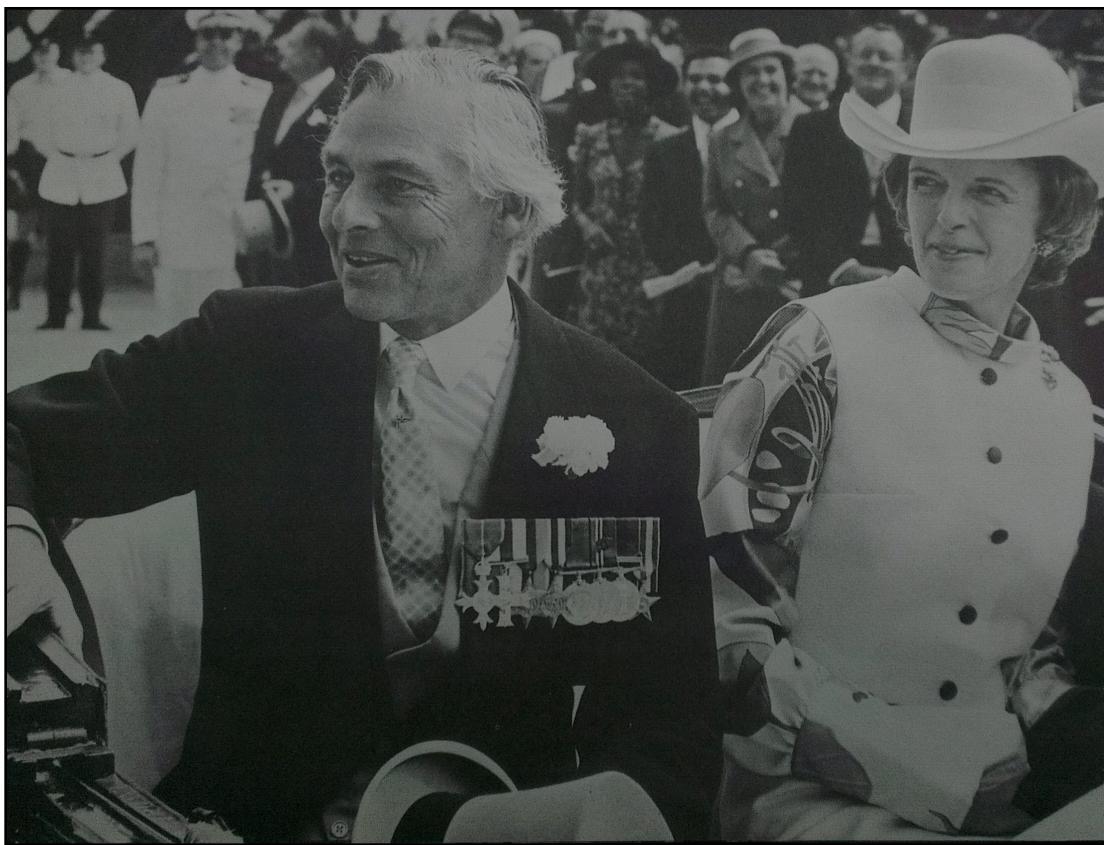
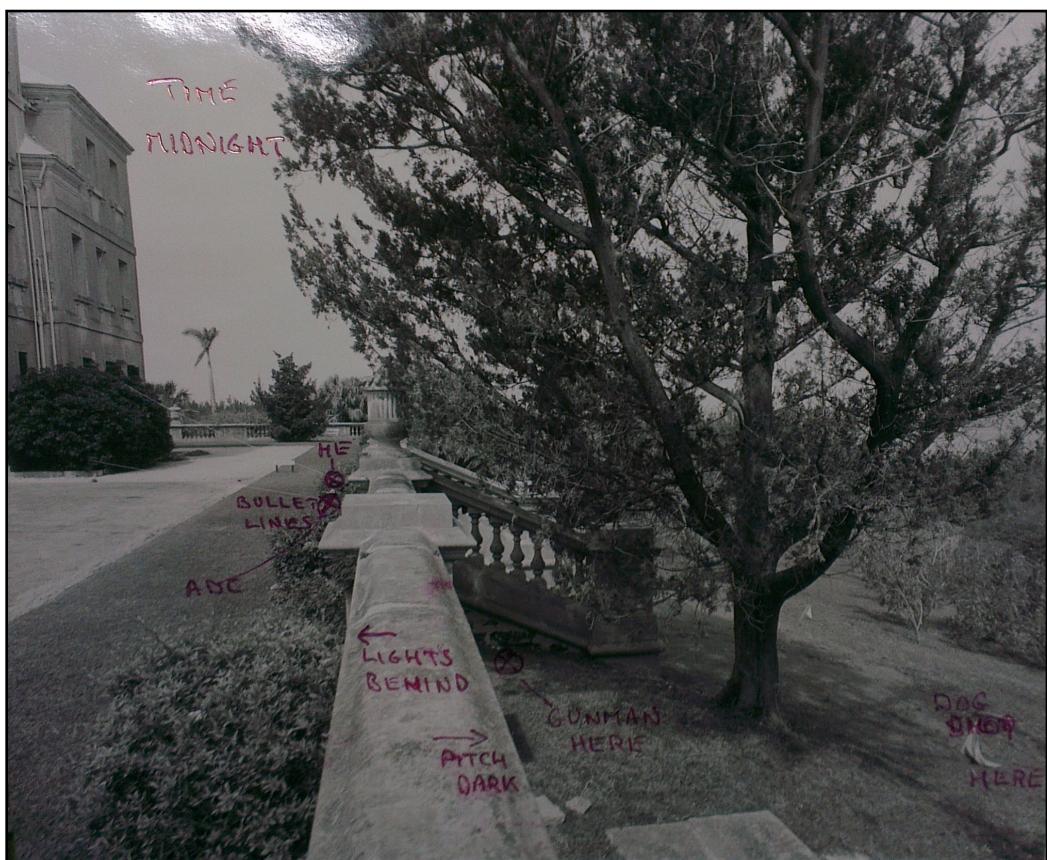
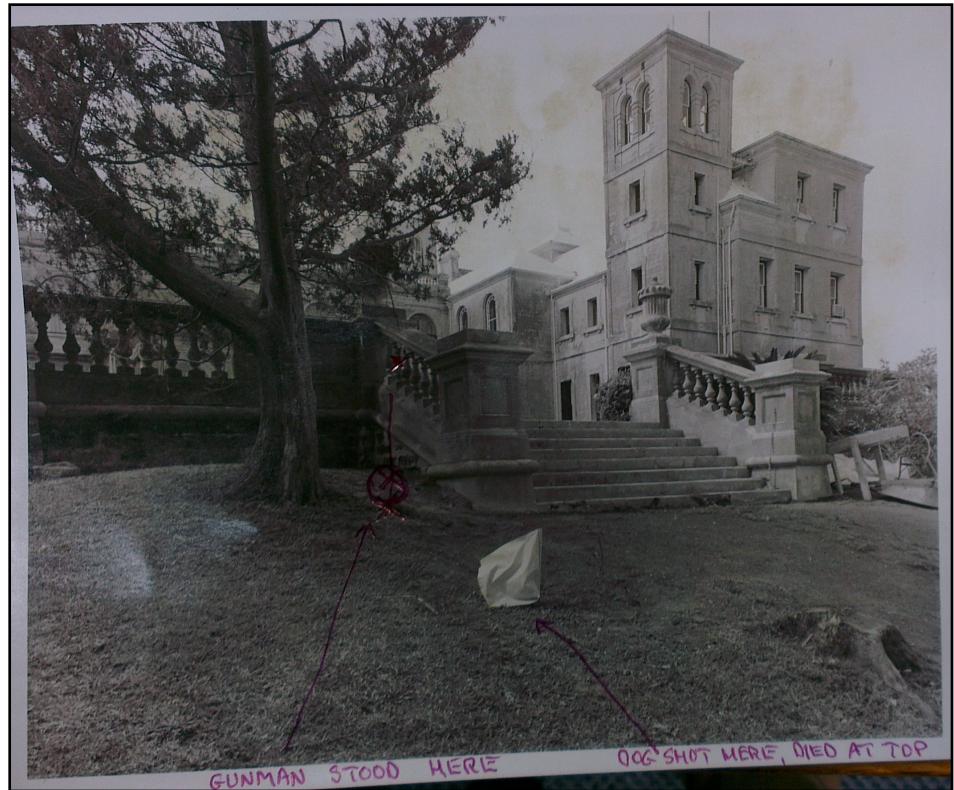


Figure 15: Sir Richard Sharples and his wife Lady Pamela Sharples. © Gordon Hireson, *Kiwanis Club of Bermuda pictorial tribute to Sir Richard Sharples: Governor and Commander-in-Chief* (Bermuda, 1973).



Figure 16: Sir Richard Sharples and his ADC Captain Hugh Sayers. © Gordon Hireson, *Kiwanis Club of Bermuda pictorial tribute to Sir Richard Sharples: Governor and Commander-in-Chief* (Bermuda, 1973).



Figures 17 and 18: Police crime scene photographs taken following the murder of Sir Richard Sharples and Captain Hugh Sayers.

© London Metropolitan Police, National Archives, London, UK.

The murders had led to fears in the FCO about the ‘political stability’ of Bermuda.¹⁶⁵ Acting Governor Ian Kinnear, who wrote to London in May of the possibility that ‘outside influences are at work’ in the murders thought they may be ‘part of a plan to undermine authority and to exacerbate racial tensions, with a view to forcing Bermuda to independence and a black government’.¹⁶⁶ Worrying about how to secure prosecutions against people suspected of the murders ‘against whom we have very little evidence’ in October 1973, Sharples’ successor Sir Edwin Leather suggested that ‘we may have to use unorthodox measures’. He wondered ‘what prospect there is of us getting some specialist advice on the lines [of IRD]’.¹⁶⁷

Another reaction on the part of Government House was a panicked desire to escape from Bermuda. Ian Kinnear told London that the Governor’s political role of maintaining internal security meant he could ‘unjustifiably become... the target of a frustrated minority’. Because of recent constitutional changes, meanwhile, it was difficult for Britain to take the action that was needed to ‘integrate’ the 75 per cent expatriate police force. Bermuda’s colonial status was ‘an anachronism’. In summary, he proposed a policy of slowly nudging Bermuda towards full sovereignty: “I believe we must actively encourage Bermudians to think seriously whether their colonial status is now more of a burden than an asset to them”.¹⁶⁸ In receipt of the memo, FCO official D Reid noted that Kinnear’s recommendations were ‘sound and very much in line with FCO thinking’.¹⁶⁹

While the FCO planned an escape route, the UBP played on British habits of denial. Kinnear had noted his view that ‘the unreality of the traditional pomp and ceremony’ was provocative to black Bermudians and that ‘Government should look for a more modest Government House’.¹⁷⁰ On April 6, Sharples’

¹⁶⁵ Leather, *Annual Report 1973*, February 7, 1974, FCO 63/1220, TNA.

¹⁶⁶ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

¹⁶⁷ Leather to Sir Duncan Watson, October 16, 1973, FCO 63/1100, TNA.

¹⁶⁸ Op. cit.

¹⁶⁹ D Reid to Mr Roberts, May 15, 1973, 63/1095.

¹⁷⁰ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, *ibid.*

wife Pamela reinforced this point, writing to Heath recommending that another, less ostentatious residence be found:

The mere fact of “them up there and us down here” is a physical fact and often mentioned... This is not the right house for the job...It is resented by very many and it’s easy to understand.¹⁷¹

Despite this appeal from the wife of a murdered governor, someone who had been a sailing companion of the Prime Minister, Downing Street official AC Acland noted that Richards believed ‘it would not be right at the present time to abandon the property.... which would be regarded as a panic measure’.¹⁷² Writing back rather apologetically to Sharples, Heath noted that although he was ‘in substantial agreement’ with what she said, this was ‘a subject on which we have to pay attention to the views of the Bermuda Government’.¹⁷³ As a result, no change was made to the Governor’s living quarters (the Governor lives in the same house to this day), even though as Acland noted, its ‘three-mile circumference’ made it very difficult to defend.¹⁷⁴ The fact that Downing Street deferred entirely to Bermuda’s view, however, shows just how much influence local ministers had on security decisions by this stage.

Conclusion

In its report on the causes of riots that broke out in April 1968, the Wooding Commission noted that the UBP was ‘under pressure to prove’ that its policy was that of a ‘new nationalism... the demand for a Bermuda for all Bermudians’.¹⁷⁵ This links into a phenomenon, of a ‘new nationalism’ that was in the process of being sculpted in former dominions such as Australia and Canada during the 1960s and 1970s. This chapter, and the previous two chapters, have suggested that Bermuda’s ‘new nationalism’ was not so much a

¹⁷¹ Lady Sharples to Heath, April 6, 1973, PREM 15/1313, TNA.

¹⁷² Acland to Lord Tom Bridges, April 13, 1973, *ibid.*

¹⁷³ Heath to (Pamela) Sharples, April 16, 1973, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁴ Acland to Lord Tom Bridges, April 13, 1973, *op. cit.*

¹⁷⁵ Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 34.

result of an organic sense of nationhood, nor part of a conscious UBP plan, but a part of a response to deteriorating law and order in 1968-1973.¹⁷⁶

The roots of violence were to be found largely in local circumstances that saw worsening relations between Bermuda's largely white and English-run Police Force and younger, black Bermudians. Yet it should also be remembered that the wider context of violence was the legacy of the denial of Bermuda's black majority from the higher echelons of power and a starkly unequal division of society into a richer white segment and a poorer black majority.¹⁷⁷ This was reinforced by the developments detailed in chapter one, by which the oligarchy entrenched its power by political means in an unfair constitutional setup sanctioned by London.

Yet this chapter has suggested that the spread of protest, intimidation, threats and murder in 1970-1973 was also the result of a confluence of communal political divisions and international political trends that saw the actions of governments in British-controlled territories held under a more penetrating spotlight of accountability. This could also lead to isolated attempts to create 'disorder' in Bermuda for the sake of the international audience. Secondly, it also led, more constructively, to a Black Power Conference in which globalised ideas about black identity were discussed. This conference also led to the creation of the BBC.

The FCO propaganda campaign to 'project' government successes and to 'expose the enemy' in response to this may have helped to entrench UBP complacency and conservatism. Meanwhile, constitutional reform, aimed at bolstering the 'prestige' of the UBP, was agreed to in the aim of meeting short-term electoral exigencies. This change was acquiesced to by a Heath government that was facing 'a fundamental choice about Britain's position in the world' in the midst of 'the "Nixon shocks" in economic policy and the turn towards China'.¹⁷⁸ Both the intervention by the soon-to-be-disbanded IRD and the constitutional changes set in train in 1971-2 must be seen in the context of

¹⁷⁶ Schreuder and Ward, *Australia's Empire*, 401

¹⁷⁷ Background note on Bermuda by MP Preston, June 23, 1975, FCO 63/1318, TNA.

¹⁷⁸ Hill and Lord, *Foreign Policy of the Heath Government*, 312.

an ‘old world [which] was dying’ and a ‘new one [which] was struggling to be born’.¹⁷⁹

Because they were half-measures, the April 1973 reforms may have critically undermined the British ability to lead events in Bermuda. In September 1975, Governor Sir Edwin Leather pointed to the ‘political impossibility’ of his being able to ‘take action which was in any way contrary to the view of Bermuda Ministers’.¹⁸⁰ This was not a situation in which British responsibilities could be looked after, nor British interests pursued. As we will see in the chapters to come, this may have led to disastrous consequences in 1977.

Meanwhile, the assassination of Sharples was an isolated example of how foreign policy during the Heath years was not quite ‘a *mare tranquilitatis* by comparison to [his] Government’s domestic troubles’.¹⁸¹ The panicked telegram from Kinnear following the murders symbolises the reactivity of British policy towards Bermuda. Habituation to the ‘art of forgetting’ also led Government House to neglect security measures that might have prevented the assassinations. Finally, the refusal to countenance a change in the Governor’s living quarters displayed a degree of stubbornness and distraction in the context of economic and industrial strife in 1973, which was a prelude to the ‘worst economic crisis since the war’.¹⁸² However, the correspondence also reveals the extent of deferral to the UBP that even Heath felt necessary *in a matter that directly affected* the security and image of the British government representative in Bermuda.

The murder of the Governor was a cold-blooded and brutally symbolic act that spoke to the way in which both colonial and racial grievances had combined and been supercharged at an international level. The UBP had not taken bold steps to tackle the legacies of this segregation. Nor did the rigged political system inspire any confidence. Rather, these omissions and legacies left

¹⁷⁹ Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Record of a conversation between Leather and Sir Duncan Watson, September 8, 1975, FCO 63/1333, TNA.

¹⁸¹ Hill and Lord, *Foreign Policy of the Heath Government*, 312.

¹⁸² Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, 12.

divisions to fester and widen. Far from simply being a matter of institutions and documents, democracy's most significant asset is both the experience and expectation of a steady and peaceful transfer of power. This was not to come about until the PLP victory in 1998. The next chapter will detail the way in which the UBP continued to carve out its role at the level of high politics and in the trappings of power. Its denial of racial legacies, and refusal to address them, would undermine both the UBP leadership and Bermuda's wider social stability. In this atmosphere, political change, and UBP agenda-setting, would lead to something of a crisis of confidence surrounding the office of Governor, to be discussed in chapters five and six.

Chapter Four

Electoral success, the creation of the office of Premier and racial dissension within the UBP, December 1971 - August 1977

1. Introduction

The first three chapters of this thesis showed how two linked processes played out between 1963 and the early 1970s. Firstly, the process of Bermudian constitutional change produced a situation in which Britain's ability to set agendas on the ground was curtailed. This process gathered pace in part because reform was based upon particular 'kith-and-kin'-oriented ideas about Bermuda, channeled via 'acceptable' voices such as Tucker, and refracted through Martonmere's political bias. As Acting Governor Ian Kinnear suggested in May 1973, the two packages of constitutional reform in 1968 and 1973 had produced 'an unsatisfactory situation which could become increasingly embarrassing to Her Majesty's Government'.¹

The second process detailed in this thesis was rooted in the domestic political paradigm patrolled by the UBP. The UBP provides a new example of the forms that the denial of racial legacies could take. The party's commitment to integration was initially branded as a challenge to the old order. Indeed its creation occurred in the context of a process of modernisation in the civil service. This, under the pressure of protest and civil disobedience, unpacked the extreme status quo of state-sanctioned apartheid.²

However, as chapter two argued, the UBP also remained a product of oligarchical paternalism that aimed to deny history for short-term economic and political convenience. The UBP's social panacea - 'integration' – may have been a genuine conviction on the part of some party figures. However it was also a tool for bolstering an image of 'racial harmony' conducive to the

¹ IAC Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

² See for example, Statement by Tucker in the Bermuda House of Assembly, *Integration of Primary Schools*, January 29, 1971, BNA.

development of the island's tourism industry.³ As this chapter will show, the unacknowledged demons of race came back to haunt the party's unity in the 1970s.

The abuse of incumbency has been described as an 'impediment to democratic consolidation' which can enhance the 'phenomenon of political godfatherism'.⁴ This chapter will argue that the UBP made full use of its incumbency by engineering constitutional change in a political way. The first process detailed above, by which the FCO lost the ability to set agendas in Bermuda, was accelerated by Richards's enhancement of his party's political position vis-à-vis Government House. This occurred not just with an election victory in 1972, but also with 'partly symbolic' constitutional reforms that took effect in April 1973.⁵ This introduction will suggest, firstly, that the UBP's political incumbency was protected by features of the constitution that gave it an advantage during elections vis-à-vis the PLP. Secondly, it will examine the notion of leadership in majoritarian democracies.

1.1. 'A façade of democracy'??: In-built electoral advantages for the UBP and combined racial and colonial grievances

The UBP's political strategy between 1971 and 1977 involved the 'co-option of the centre' which reconstructed a 'socially mixed but essentially conservative coalition' both to institute some reforms while preserving the main elements of the status quo.⁶ Messaging emphasised the UBP government's experience, along with ideas of prosperity and 'racial harmony'.

However, UBP incumbency also depended upon electoral advantages that had been written into the Bermuda constitution in 1968. Historian and journalist Ira Philip has called Bermuda's electoral arena in this period a 'façade of democracy', in which the constitution was used as one of the 'key instruments

³ *Gazette*, April 4 1968.

⁴ Nwanegbo and Alumona, *Inc incumbency Factor and Democratic Consolidation*, 125-130.

⁵ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 231.

⁶ Manning, *Bermudian Politics in Transition*. 27.

of the containment policies of the oligarchs'.⁷ In the words of Browne-Evans: "Each vote doesn't have equal value."⁸ Philip charges that gerrymandered voting districts 'guaranteed the Establishment at least 14 seats in the 40-seat House of Assembly'.⁹ However, Johnston and Payne argue that 'neither party was either advantaged or disadvantaged by biases within the electoral system'.¹⁰ What is more important for the purposes of this chapter, however, is the symbolic significance that these electoral inequalities would take on.

The second more serious allegation involved the continued enfranchisement of Commonwealth citizens who had lived on the island for three years, which also brought cultural and racial questions – particularly about Bermuda's place in a wider British network - into the heart of elections. Philip argues that a 5,743 increase in the foreign-born population between 1960 and 1970 meant that, in marginal constituencies 'the balance of power [was] held by foreign-born voters' who were 'largely white, British-born' and had 'a vested interest in maintaining the political status quo'.¹¹

It was claimed such voters overwhelmingly supported the UBP and helped bolster the party's majority. However, Brown has convincingly argued that 'there is no justification in asserting that [the non-Bermudian vote] has decided which party comes to power'.¹² However, although, it may not have been enough to put the PLP in power, the power of the Commonwealth Vote as a symbol of white power undermined the legitimacy of the ground on which elections were fought in the 1970s.

Meanwhile, the UBP had already used its incumbency to tip the demographic scales to their advantage. As the Royal Commission Report of 1978 noted, between 1960 and 1970, the 'relatively slow growth of the black population

⁷ Philip, *Freedom Fighters*, 241-242.

⁸ *Mid-Ocean News*, June 3, 1972.

⁹ Philip, *Freedom Fighters*, 241-242.

¹⁰ Johnston and Payne, *Electoral Reform in Bermuda*, 217.

¹¹ Philip, *Freedom Fighters*, 243.

¹² Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 115.

arose from natural increase, while ‘the faster growth of the white population stemmed from highly selective immigration’.¹³

While they may not have decided which party won elections in 1972 and 1976, however, such advantages probably enhanced the size of the UBP majority, while they acted as powerful reminders of the linkage between UBP incumbency, cultural colonialism and racist legacies. Late 1974 saw the creation of the UBP Black Caucus, a body that reflected an increasing disaffection amongst leading black members in the UBP.¹⁴ This group’s formation was inspired by the creation in the United States of the Congressional Black Caucus in 1971¹⁵. As Burchall argues, UBP blacks ‘turned to black America for help and advice’, despite the fact that in America blacks were a ‘disadvantaged...minority group’ while in Bermuda they were the ‘demographic majority’. It was a hint that UBP blacks ‘still felt controlled and powerless – as if they were still shackled and chained’.¹⁶

Thus, constitutionally-inscribed electoral advantages enjoyed by the UBP were accompanied with dissatisfaction within the party amongst many leading black members. As this chapter will show, the resistance of the UBP leadership towards addressing such grievances would lead to a situation in which the UBP’s incumbency became associated with a feeling of alienation amongst black Bermudians in their own land.

1.2. Enhanced Bermudian executive power

In December 1971, when Tucker stepped down as Government Leader, and gave way to Richards, the position was not as powerful as it would become. The Governor, for example, still chaired the Executive Council.¹⁷ This would change following Richards’ accession, as he continued the process of reform that had begun under Tucker in 1971.

¹³ Pitt et al, *Report...into the 1977 Disturbances*, 19.

¹⁴ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 131.

¹⁵ Miler, *Constituency Motivations of Caucus Membership*, 885-920.

¹⁶ Burchall, *Fine and Wine*, 143.

¹⁷ Record of conversation between Sharpe and Godber on May 27, 1971, 823.

Reforms that brought about the creation of the position of Premier in April 1973 contained the potential to place the British Government at a distinct disadvantage vis-à-vis the elected Bermudian government. Firstly, because of the colonial connection, the prestige of leaders could be further entrenched by reforms that were agreed at the level of high politics thousands of miles from Bermuda. Secondly, the UBP was in a position to use constitutional tinkering in a political way that enhanced the ‘prestige’ of the UBP government for the domestic audience vis-à-vis Government House. Thirdly, however, these advantages could be reinforced or made a liability by a leader’s identity and style. While the creation of the position of Premier enhanced high political freedom of action it also made the job even more attractive to potential rivals.

Firstly, the Westminster-model already gave the Government Leader considerable powers of patronage and also provided constitutional space in which to operate. It was characterised by five elements: concentration of power in a collective and responsible Cabinet, accountability of ministers to parliament, a constitutional bureaucracy with a non-partisan and expert civil service, an opposition acting as an executive-in-waiting and parliamentary sovereignty with its unity of the executive and legislature.¹⁸ As Bishop argues, the adaptation of the Westminster model to the Caribbean produced a system ‘where leaders often hang on for eternities, shaping the state forcefully in accordance with their considerable powers of patronage’.¹⁹

The diffuse nature of the British constitution also meant the proliferation of secret cabinet committees in which successive ministers could make key decisions away from the scrutiny of MPs or the public. The chapter argues that Bermudian political development was ensconced in this constitutional culture. A change in 1973 placed the Premier at the head of Executive Council, yet this person was also afforded a unique degree of freedom in which to discuss constitutional change and build relationships with FCO officials and politicians.

¹⁸Rhodes. And Weller, *Westminster transplanted and Westminster implanted*, 1–12; Bishop, *Slaying the ‘Westmonster’?*, 422.

¹⁹Bishop, *Slaying the ‘Westmonster’?*, 423.

Secondly, the Government Leader was also afforded a growing degree of political power and prestige in the view of Bermuda's domestic electorate. This period saw high political office gain real meaning and gravity in Bermuda. This chapter follows Schumpeter's leadership model of democracy, in which elections involve 'not only the people choosing agents but also the people consenting to these elected individuals acting as a special type of agent'. The Prime Minister is someone whose actions provide the 'personal touch' to government but whose power is restricted by sub-leaders and in which 'competition' for leadership is a prime element. However, it also casts some leaders as possessing 'extraneous' or 'undeserved' competitive advantages.²⁰

Similar to the case of British Prime Ministers, Bermudian Government Leaders and Premiers could, following the 1968 and 1973 constitutional reforms, 'achieve an above-parties leadership of public opinion'.²¹ The importance of incumbent political leadership in the UBP's identity and style of governing and campaigning, was reinforced by institutional factors, such as the increase in parliamentary sovereignty, embodied in the creation of a 'Responsible Government' model in 1968, in a 'winner takes all' system of majoritarian rule.²²

Finally, however, personalities, identities and management skills became a more integral part of governance as the position of Premier was enlarged. Richards' accession as Government Leader was a major symbolic coup for the UBP since this was the first time a black person had taken the reins of top political leadership in Bermuda. However, leadership was a double-edged sword. This chapter argues that, while the UBP benefited from the focus on leadership under Richards, it became a victim of this very fact under John Sharpe, whose time as Premier was the start of a period of 'poor leadership, political blunders and ineffective rule'.²³

²⁰ Paul Brooker, *Leadership in Democracy*, 3-5.

²¹ Brooker, *Leadership in Democracy*, 114.

²² *Daily Gleaner*, (Jamaica), October 2, 2005.

²³ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 132.

The creation of the Black Caucus epitomised and widened latent divisions based on personal animosities that, in August 1977, would lead to Sharpe's ousting as Premier by members of his own party.²⁴ Only 14 years after the inauguration of Bermudian party politics, the country witnessed a coup similar to Margaret Thatcher's ousting in 1990, an event which signified the precariousness of her ideology as a political force and vulnerability of the office of Prime Minister.²⁵

This chapter will examine this period in two parts. The first part will cover Sir Edward Richards' period in office from 1971 to 1975. It will begin by examining how the UBP combined its in-built advantages with a resonant political move to win the General Election of 1972 by a landslide. Secondly, it will show how constitutional reform was inspired by a political desire on the part of the UBP to counteract charges that they were being controlled by colonial puppet-masters in London. Richards and the UBP were able to use the secretive channels of high political constitutional debates with London to their advantage.

The second part will examine the less successful Premiership of Sharpe. It will examine how Sharpe's time as Premier was undermined by Bermuda's less healthy economic performance. This occurred as disunity within the UBP burst into the open. The UBP's in-fighting was in part an embodiment of the attempt of the Black Caucus to push the party into addressing racial legacies. However, factionalism was also founded in resentment towards Sharpe's particular leadership style.

2. The secretive 'loner' behind the new office of Premier: Sir Edward Trenton Richards

The accession of Sir Edward Trenton Richards in December 1971 to the leadership of both the Government and the UBP was greeted by some as a harbinger of change. Arnold Francis, who had been one of the PLP's first

²⁴ Ibid, 133-4.

²⁵ Alan Watkins, *Conservative Coup*, 31.

MCPs, noted: “If [the UBP] were prepared to have a black leader at that crucial time, they must be serious about desegregation and progress.”²⁶ However, Richards’ record as a reformer has been called into question. Richards’ biographer argues that ‘a great many people were soon disillusioned, for [Richards] did not move as quickly [at changing the status quo] as they had expected’.²⁷ This was also the perception of political opponents. Arthur Hodgson, who took office in 1972 as PLP member of the Legislative Council, later judged Richards to be a ‘token’.²⁸

The UBP possessed two particular advantages during this period: political incumbency strengthened by ongoing electoral success and a shrewd, rather single-minded leader. Richards’ ‘conservative’ outlook meant he was more of an adaptive and managerial leader than an innovative or entrepreneurial one in terms of policy.²⁹ However, the accession of a black man to the leadership of the country scored ‘a significant ideological victory in what can only be considered a deftly executed political move’ on the part of the UBP.³⁰ Under Richards’ leadership, the UBP went on to win a landslide victory in the June 1972 election, securing the party in power. Secondly, Richards was a bold and tough negotiator vis-à-vis the FCO in his battle to enhance the prestige of his leadership during constitutional reforms that took effect in April 1973.

2.1. ‘David versus Goliath’: The UBP election campaign of June 1972

The May 1968 election had been a three party contest, with the centrist Bermuda Democratic Party (BDP), led by Francis, taking 6.69 per cent of the vote, while independents had taken 2.34 per cent of the vote.³¹ In 1968, some 19,123 people – or more than 91.4 per cent of registered voters – had cast

²⁶ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 215.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 217.

²⁸ (Arthur) Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

²⁹ Brooker, *Leadership in Democracy*, 8; Richards discusses the legacy of his Premiership in *Sun*, January 3, 1976.

³⁰ Brown, *Race and Party Politics*, 117.

³¹ *Sun*, June 8, 1972.

37,688 ballots (for two candidates in each seat) in 20 constituencies. In that election the UBP had won 30 seats (and 56.6 per cent of the vote) and the PLP 10 seats (and 34.37 per cent of the vote).³² The first past the post system meant the BDP went away with no seats and shortly afterwards disbanded.

On June 7, 1972 the UBP would virtually replicate this victory. Why did the white-controlled UBP win so decisively in a majority black country? As the introduction suggested, the electoral system, particularly the influence of the Commonwealth citizens' vote, favoured the UBP. In an interview with the *Bermuda Recorder*, Browne-Evans 'laid the blame' for the PLP defeat partly 'upon the (UBP's) gerrymandering of the electoral districts'.³³ However, as the introduction argued, UBP incumbency was not solely dependent upon these advantages.



Figure 19: Progressive Labour Party Leader Lois Browne-Evans (1968-1972 and 1976 -1985).
© Bermuda National Archives, from Barbara Harries Hunter, *The People of Bermuda: Beyond the Crossroads*, (Toronto, 1993).

This was because the UBP also won its large majority as a result of superiority of organisation and message. In the first week of April 1972, a new 'American-style primary' process for selecting constituency candidates was launched. In 19 of the 20 constituencies, adoption meetings were spread out over three

³² Ibid.

³³ *Recorder*, June 8, 1972.

weeks in late April and early May.³⁴ At one meeting on May 2, to adopt candidates for Paget East, 500 members turned up.³⁵ A newspaper reported that the system helped to increase party membership ‘from 100 to over 2,500 in a matter of months’.³⁶ On May 4, 250 activists attended a ‘clinic’ to learn the techniques of canvassing. At a meeting on May 12, hundreds of leading activists were given an in-depth briefing on the party’s manifesto commitments on constitutional reform.³⁷

In addition, due to its connections to business and the oligarchy, the UBP was also better-funded than the PLP. The party used the same public relations firm from Canada that they had used for the 1968 election.³⁸ The PLP meanwhile was using a local firm of advertisers run by Bermudian public relations consultant Alex Scott. By the second week of May the UBP platform had been printed and large amounts of advertising had been booked.³⁹ As Scott said in 2011:

We were donating our services to the PLP while the UBP was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars bringing in the talent. It was a David and Goliath battle.⁴⁰

In a first for Bermuda, the UBP made use of a computer to ‘help it decide where it should apply its full canvassing strength and at which section of the community it should aim its election propaganda’.⁴¹ Arthur Hodgson noted: “I remember the 1972 campaign in particular. I was running the [PLP] campaign. We spent \$10,000 in ‘72 and the UBP spent \$100,000.”⁴² A glance at the issues of the weekly, black-owned *Bermuda Recorder* newspaper for the three weeks before the election reveals a total of only two advertisements for the PLP and eight advertisements for the UBP. Browne-Evans countered by

³⁴ *Gazette*, May 5, 1972.

³⁵ *Ibid*, May 3, 1972.

³⁶ *Op. cit.*, May 5, 1972

³⁷ *Op. cit.*, May 12, 1972

³⁸ *Op. cit.*, May 5, 1972.

³⁹ *Op. cit.*, May 6, 1972.

⁴⁰ Scott interview, December 20, 2011.

⁴¹ *Gazette*, May 16, 1972.

⁴² (Arthur) Hodgson interview, December 19, 2011.

urging people ‘not to be fooled by all these glossy pamphlets’.⁴³ The disparity in the conservative *Royal Gazette* is even more stark.

According to real-estate magnate John Swan, who was elected in June 1972, ‘the UBP was controlled by whites’.⁴⁴ But, following on from the accession of Richards, the party made another move to reinforce its image as a multi-racial party by June 1972. Tucker had indicated his desire to retire both as Government Leader and as an MCP in early December 1971. He picked the 36-year-old John Swan as his successor to become representative for his safe, overwhelmingly white Paget East seat. According to Swan:

*[Tucker] said to me ‘Bermuda has been very good to you....you obviously will make an equal contribution in politics as you have done in your business so I would like you to run for my seat’.*⁴⁵

Swan topped the polls in a UBP primary in Paget East in May, beating incumbent MCP DeForest Trimingham into second place.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, on December 30 1971, Richards had been elected leader of both the government and the United Bermuda Party by a unanimous vote by his fellow MPs. Overnight, the UBP had placed one of Bermuda’s foremost parliamentary campaigners against segregation, one of Eva Hodgson’s *Second Class Citizens, First Class Men*, at the head of the white oligarchy’s political arm.⁴⁷

Finally, the UBP was running both on a record and on a vision, held together by a clear, if somewhat utopian, brand: ‘The United Way’. Adverts pointed to achievements in the past four years such as free hospitalisation for children.⁴⁸ This strategy paid electoral dividends. The UBP secured 19 per cent of the black vote in 1972.⁴⁹

⁴³ *Gazette*, June 2, 1972.

⁴⁴ Swan interview, August 9, 2011.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ The results were: John Swan 250, DeForest Trimingham 234, Harry Cox 217, Richard Pearman 116, Commander Geoffrey Kitson, 74. *Gazette*, May 3, 1972. A few days later, PLP leader Lois Browne-Evans said the UBP was trying to ‘prove a point by having a black man (Swan) top the poll’. *Gazette*, May 6, 1972. However, Browne Evans also said Swan had been chosen by the UBP because the party had said: ‘This is a good Negro, vote for him.’ *Recorder*, June 8, 1972.

⁴⁷ Hodgson, *Second Class Citizens, First Class Men*.

⁴⁸ *Gazette*, June 1, 1972.

⁴⁹ Manning, *Politics in Transition*, 199.

UBP literature and press advertisements were generally positive, although attacks on the PLP were reserved for firebrand speeches at public meetings, where candidates accused the PLP of being, for instance, a party of sectional trade union interests that was overpromising with ‘rotten carrots’.⁵⁰ In contrast a full-page advert entitled ‘Bermuda on the move together – The United Way’ showed a black and a white worker in hardhats conferring over blueprints. Key phrases were: “A better quality of life - A stable cooperative society – a buoyant economy– promises kept the United Way – a reason to continue the United Way.”⁵¹ At its final rally at Hamilton’s Rosebank Theatre on June 6, activists were shown a film called ‘Look around you’, extolling the party’s record since 1968.⁵² At the final rally, Richards attacked the PLP as a threat to ‘peace and plenty’, warning people not to vote for the PLP, the party of ‘violence and destruction’.⁵³

On June 7, 1972, the UBP won thirty seats to the PLP’s ten.⁵⁴ The vote share of the UBP with 61.3 per cent and the PLP with 38.7 per cent, reflected the fact that the nine percent of votes that had previously gone to the BDP and independent candidates, now split almost evenly between the two main parties. Of these votes, about 4.7 per cent went to candidates from Richards’ party and 4.3 per cent to Browne-Evans’ party.⁵⁵

The story of the 1972 election suggests a starkly uneven electoral playing field that the UBP exploited to the full. Added to this, a combination of financial and organisational advantages and a clear message built on a record of relative prosperity and a symbolic shift in leadership helped the UBP win a landslide victory. This would leave the UBP in a position to consolidate the constitutional position of the local government vis-à-vis Government House, a project it had embarked on in late 1970 but which Richards now took to with single-mindedness. The next section will suggest, however, that despite his

⁵⁰ Dr Clarence James, *Gazette*, June 3, 1972.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, May 1972

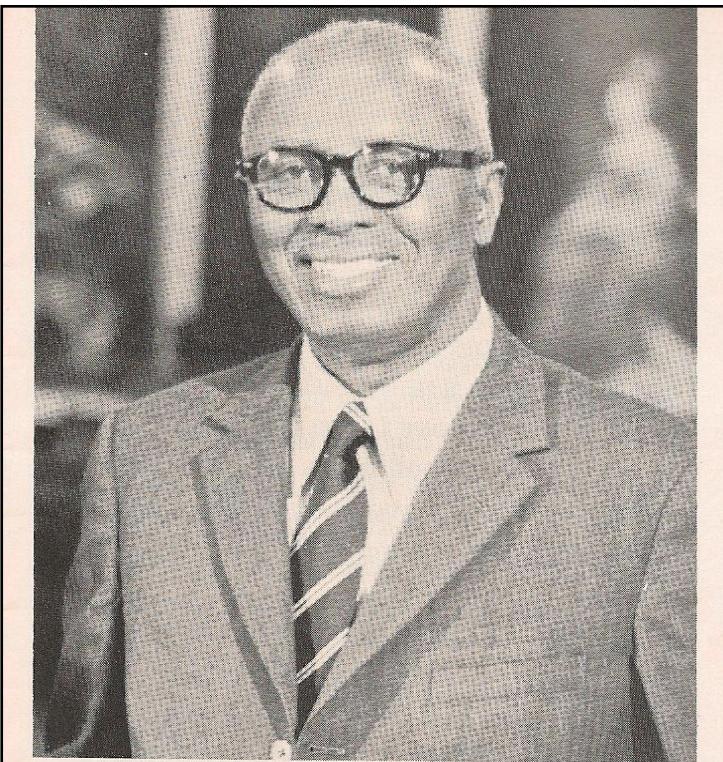
⁵² *Op. cit*, June 1, 1972.

⁵³ *Op. cit*, June 7, 1972

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Op. cit*.

electoral success, Richards was still subject to pressures from the oligarchy in resisting moves by more liberal British officials to foist on Bermuda a Ministerial Code of Conduct, which would guard against conflicts of interest in office.



**A better life
for all—
through
promises
kept the
United Way.**

Figure 20: Sir ET Richards, UBP 1972 General Election Manifesto.
© United Bermuda Party 1972 General Election Manifesto,
From the private papers of JC (Kit) Astwood



SIR HENRY TUCKER

**Let's continue to move forward
the United Way**

The most memorable years of my life will always be those during which we formed the United Bermuda Party and subsequently through the efforts of many hard working and dedicated Bermudians we went on to form the first Government under the new two party system.

At the time, we took a most important step for Bermudian peace and progress, that of determined bi-racial integration and co-operation. Today after four short years of progress, we know that both races can work as one, in peace and harmony. Although I have felt it necessary to step down from the party leadership, the work of the United Bermuda Party on behalf of the people of Bermuda will remain a cardinal interest of my life. No party could be better served than by my good friend Sir Edward Richards, a man of unquestioned integrity and statesmanship. Today he heads a team of men and women, highly qualified to continue serving Bermuda.

For the continued progress of Bermuda, I ask you to support all the United Bermuda Party candidates in 1972 so Bermudians can continue - on the move together - the United Way.

**Published by the United Bermuda Party
Bermudiana Arcade, Hamilton, Bermuda**

Printed in Bermuda by The Island Press Ltd.
Victoria Street, Hamilton - 1972



**Bermuda
on the move together**

The United Way
Programme of the United Bermuda Party

Figure 21: The front and back pages of the United Bermuda Party General Election manifesto, June 1972. © United Bermuda Party 1972 General Election Manifesto, from the private papers of JC (Kit) Astwood

2.2. An Anglo-Bermudian culture of secrecy and Bermuda's 'sinister... white knights': The debate over the Ministerial Code of Conduct

As has been suggested, because of its size and the number of different positions of influence held by elected politicians such as Tucker, the potential for conflicts of interest was significant. As well as heading the Bank of Bermuda, Tucker had held directorships on the Bermuda Drug Company, Bermuda Aviation Services, Bermuda Fire and Marine Insurance 'and many others'.⁵⁶ This was also true of Richards, who before becoming Government Leader had been simultaneously the member for Immigration and Labour, Deputy Government Leader, Senior Vice President of the Bermuda Football Association, Chair of the Berkeley Educational Society and a director on the boards of the *Bermuda Sun* newspaper, the Union Printery, the Dismont Robinson liquor company, Capital Broadcasting, the Bank of Bermuda, the Bermuda Telephone Company and Radio Cabs Ltd.⁵⁷

It was clear, however that FCO support for the introduction of a Ministerial Code of Conduct to guard against such conflicts was propelled not by wariness of the white oligarchy but by fear of the PLP alternative. On his trip to Bermuda in early 1971, Posnett had spoken to several members of both parties and found mixed views on whether ministers should be part or full-time. One UBP Executive Council member, he said, 'took the view that the issue was too important for compromise, that a full ministerial system must be introduced'. Posnett added that the UBP parliamentarian 'thought it vital that the system should be hanged under the present regime before another, perhaps less scrupulous, Government could be elected'.⁵⁸

In another memorandum of April that year, however, another official took a different view, arguing that, although Bermuda required 'checks and balances' to prevent corruption, the lessons of white minority corruption in the

⁵⁶ Williams, *Man of Stature*, 178.

⁵⁷ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 201.

⁵⁸ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

Bahamas should not be transferred too uniformly to Bermuda. In the document, the FCO's Overseas Labour Adviser (OLA) G Foggon wrote:

Bay Street [in the Bahamas] and Front Street have a slightly sinister sound and are very often linked together but my own belief is that Bermuda has been more fortunate than the Bahamas in the quality and probity of its 'white knights'.⁵⁹

However, by October 1971 the FCO indicated that the idea of a Code of Conduct was not something it was 'prepared to dispense with', especially 'should some other party form a future government in Bermuda'.⁶⁰ FCO officials started pushing Bermuda along such lines. Scott wrote hopefully in a telegram to Martonmere in April 1971:

No doubt, [the Government] will be making proposals for members to become full-time and relinquish their private and professional interests. I would assure you that we would give every support to such reforms.⁶¹

Finally, the matter was laid down to the Bermuda Government as a type of *quid pro quo* for the wider package of April 1973 reforms in an August 1972 telegram from Home. As the Foreign Secretary told Richards, the change of style of 'Member' to 'Minister' would be 'acceptable' provided that 'as is customary in such circumstances a Code of Ministerial Conduct was also introduced'.⁶² In October, Richards wrote back to London that the code would 'be made public on some suitable occasion'. He added: "At that time the code will also be supplied to Ministers for their observance."⁶³

However, by February 1973, Sir Edward had changed his mind, noting in a memorandum that 'the code should not be published'. The reason, he wrote, was that 'the document might well be used in attempts to make political capital out of alleged breaches of the code, either in the past or in the future'. Richards continued:

I propose therefore that, instead of publishing the code, a copy

⁵⁹ Foggon to Posnett from, April 30, 1971, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ D Blain, Dependent Territories General Department, to Mr. Powell, October 11, 1971, *op. cit.*

⁶¹ Scott to Martonmere (circa April 1971), *op. cit.*

⁶² Home to Martonere, August 16, 1972, BNA.

⁶³ ExCo memorandum 458/72, October 27, 1972, *ibid.*

*should be sent, as a matter of routine, under confidential cover, to each minister as and when he takes office.*⁶⁴

Richards seemed to believe that the Ministerial Code of Conduct would be effective even if ministers were not subjected to it under the public spotlight. This suggests that he had either bought into the oligarchical realities of UBP rule or that he felt constrained by some colleagues' resistance to reform. A Ministerial Code of Conduct may have represented too much of a change for the bulk of leading UBP politicians who also had private concerns and were able to successfully merge the two jobs into a profitable enterprise. As a UBP member of the Executive Council told Posnett:

*Even present members who were above reproach inevitably obtained some advantage in their private business arising from their membership of the Executive Council.*⁶⁵

It could be argued that this episode points to the residual power of the oligarchy behind the UBP curtains. The episode may also reveal something of the secretive nature of Richards. This was a trait also pointed to by Leather shortly after Richards' resignation. Leather wrote to London that Richards had a 'passion' for 'playing his cards close to his chest'.⁶⁶

It is unclear when the Ministerial Code of Conduct was finally made public in Bermuda. By June 2012 it had been published.⁶⁷ However, it should be added that in attempting to keep the code secret, Richards was doing no worse than Bermuda's colonial rulers in London. The Code of Conduct for UK ministers, contained in the document "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", was only revealed to the public in 1992 following an Open Government initiative by the Prime Minister John Major'. It was not until after the Nolan Committee in 1995 that a full Ministerial Code of Conduct was published (in June 2001).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ ExCo memorandum 127/73, February 23, 1973. op. cit.

⁶⁵ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

⁶⁶ Leather, *Annual Report for 1975*, FCO 63/1411, TNA.

⁶⁷ Bermuda Government, *Ministerial Code of Conduct*, June 2012.

⁶⁸ UK Cabinet Office, *Ministerial Code of Conduct*, May 2010.

2.3 ‘Improving our status, both at home and abroad’: Reforming the constitution, 1971-5

The UBP’s negotiation of constitutional reform between 1971 and 1975 led to several outcomes. Firstly, it led to an about turn by Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Home, whose reluctance to contemplate major change was gradually worn down by Richards. Secondly, Richards’ single-mindedness revealed him to be shrewd and stubborn, but also suggested he was keen on enhancing the status of Premier for both political and personal reasons. Finally, this process revealed Richards beginning to bypass the traditional mediator of Government House and form relationships with FCO officials himself.

Throughout 1971, a UBP caucus committee had been preparing a raft of proposed constitutional changes. The first of these included the suggestion that the Government Leader, not the Governor, should preside over the Executive Council (soon to be renamed Cabinet) meetings. The second was that Britain should ‘formally consult’ with the Bermuda government over key appointments, in particular over the process of appointing the Governor.⁶⁹ Bermudian ministers did not feel they had been consulted enough over Martonmere’s appointment in 1964.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, at a key meeting between Bermudian officials and FCO bureaucrats and Godber, Sharpe noted:

The Governor’s continuing to preside over Executive Council has been used by the Opposition to exemplify the continuance of colonialism in Bermuda. These opposition charges had made some impact within the community.⁷¹

In January 1972, weeks after Richards took office, he endorsed before the Executive Council the report written by Sharpe for the UBP’s caucus committee on constitutional reform. Sharpe had also suggested changing the names of the Executive Council to the ‘Cabinet’, and Members of the Colonial Parliament (MCPs) to Members of Parliament (MPs). Sharpe added he hoped

⁶⁹ Home to Sharples, August 16, 1972. BNA.

⁷⁰ Memorandum by Godber, May 27, 1971, 823.

⁷¹ Record of meeting between Bermuda Government delegation and FCO officials, London, November 16, 1971, *ibid.*

the changes would ‘improve our image and “status” both at home and abroad’.⁷²

As chapter three argued, the UBP aimed to use constitutional change in a political way to shore up its support. The changes that were eventually put into effect in April 1973 were not a foregone conclusion however. The British Government was resistant to the idea of being pushed further, given that the 1968 constitution was ‘the furthest advance possible for a territory that has not yet declared its wish to proceed to early independence’.⁷³ Roberts believed Sharpe’s proposals were ‘open to objection on the grounds that they involve the erosion of present powers and the position of the Governor’.⁷⁴

Scepticism about constitutional advance was reinforced by political bias. Kinnear pointed to a view amongst some British officials that ‘the opposition PLP would be unable to produce a government of the same calibre as the UBP’.⁷⁵ Because of this clear bias, Richards as UBP Government Leader was in a strong position to argue his case. Yet Home indicated in an August 1972 telegram that the changes ‘would be difficult for [the British Government] to accept’ and formal consultation over key appointments would ‘not be possible’.⁷⁶

That both Richards and Sharpe invested so much into it was partly due to the political reasons above. Yet there was also a desire to consolidate the position of Government Leader into something more prestigious and powerful. Perhaps this was something Richards felt particularly keenly, given that he was constrained not just by the colonial bureaucracy from above, but also by the oligarchy on his right and the PLP on his left.

The requested change of name from Government Leader to Premier in April 1973 was indicative of this. This was being pushed by officials in the FCO such

⁷² Sharpe to members of the UBP constitutional committee, January 19, 1972, BNA.

⁷³ CS Roberts to Scott, August 11, 1972, 823.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ KR Crook to Kinnear, November 16, 1972, 823.

⁷⁶ Home to Kinnear, August 16, 1972, BNA.

as the UBP's British constitutional adviser McPetrie. However, the idea was contested by Posnett in London, who argued that the change of title from the Government Leader to Premier was not 'orthodox'. The title of Premier was only used in British Honduras out of the West Indian territories and there it had only been done 'as a sop because the territory was in every other way ready and willing to go to independence'. Posnett suggested the title of Chief Minister be used instead, 'unless or until Bermuda indicates that they wish to proceed to independence. They could then change to Prime Minister after a constitutional conference'.⁷⁷

The fact that Richards succeeded in having the title changed is indicative both of his negotiating skills and his desire for that title. Richards was 'very jealous of his [own] position', according to Leather.⁷⁸ And in July 1974, FCO official MP Preston described Richards as a Colonial Premier who was 'inclined' to stand on his 'dignity' and made several requests to the FCO for 'VIP treatment' when he was travelling to and from London. During a visit earlier that year, for example, he had asked for the luxurious Alcock and Browne suite to be made available for him at London Airport 'at the cost of £40 to the UK taxpayer'. 'British Airways' Monarch Lounge was apparently not good enough', noted Preston sarcastically.⁷⁹

In the late summer of 1972, fresh from his election victory in June, Richards and the FCO went head to head on the key aim of removing the Governor as chair of the Executive Council and gaining a right of at least informal consultation over who the Governor would be. On arriving back in Bermuda, Richards told the Executive Council that Home had changed his mind. While the Premier would preside over the newly-named Cabinet, the Governor would preside over the new Governor's Council, in which the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General, the Premier, Deputy Premier and 'at least one other minister' would be consulted on issues of internal security.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Posnett to CG Mortlock, November 23, 1971, 823.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 260.

⁷⁹ MP Preston to GP Lloyd, July 31, 1974, FCO 63/1225, TNA.

⁸⁰ ExCo Memorandum 395/72, September 15, 1972, BNA.

Meanwhile, the FCO had also agreed to informally consult the UBP on the appointment of subsequent Governors. The changes, having been approved by the UK's Privy Council, were put into effect on April 13, 1973. This process revealed Richards to have won the negotiation battle with Home, who had initially told Bermuda 'it would not be possible' for the Premier to chair the Cabinet. However, Home had completely reversed his position by September 1972. Richards' goal had been to entrench his own power, or in the words of his successor David Gibbons, 'to try and build up the Premier's position'.⁸¹

A final round of constitutional negotiation, in the last half of 1975, this time over an abortive bid to pass control over the running the Police force, revealed something of the operating style of Richards.⁸² As the next chapter will show, the tenor of his trip was heavily influenced by the fact that both Richards *and* certain FCO bureaucrats had fallen out with Leather since the latter had become Governor in August 1973. Gibraltar and General Department official EG Lewis told FCO colleagues Leather was 'persona non grata' to Richards and his ministers and that 'this view is also endorsed in this office'.⁸³

At the time of the trip in September 1975, Leather suggested Richards 'had suddenly gone abroad once again without a word to anybody'.⁸⁴ During Richards' meeting in London on September 15, he complained to Sir Duncan Watson that 'they had had problems working the present constitution particularly since the arrival of the present Governor' and he 'made clear that he would not wish the present Governor to remain after the end of his three years in mid-1976'. This meeting revealed Richards attempting to build relationships with the FCO over the Governor's head.⁸⁵

A few months later, Leather would describe Richards as a 'loner': "On many occasions he did not even inform his cabinet of his endless constitutional talks." Leather added that he 'really believe[d] [Richards] refused to accept

⁸¹ Note to Mr Stratton from PC Duff, September 30, 1977, FCO 44/ 1456, TNA.

⁸² Record of conversation between Rowlands and Richards, at FCO, November 25, 1975. *ibid.*

⁸³ EG Lewis to EN Larmour, August 7, 1975, FCO 86/340, TNA.

⁸⁴ Letter from Leather to Watson, September 28, 1975, 63/1321, TNA.

⁸⁵ Record of meeting between Richards and Watson, September 15, 1975, *ibid.*

that everything said on those occasions was immediately reported to me'.⁸⁶ In contrast to the friendly relations between Tucker and Martonmere, this was a time of triangular diplomacy between London, Government House and Richards, with the UBP attempting to gain an advantage vis-à-vis Leather.

Richards was a secretive and controlling leader who enjoyed the cut and thrust of high politics. Leather had acknowledged, in a 1973 telegram to London, the 'de facto' reality that it was the 'duty of the Governor...to enforce the law of Bermuda enacted by a democratically elected Government'.⁸⁷ Richards was maximising the space that the constitution provided him, essentially by-passing a Governor he did not get on with in order to conduct negotiations over reform with London directly. However, he may also have been maneuvering to enhance his position vis-à-vis the still powerful oligarchy. In addition, constitutional tinkering was believed by the UBP to have a political benefit in giving lie to the PLP charge that London was still running Bermuda's affairs.

3. 'Too nice and too weak': Sir John Sharpe and his ill-fated Premiership, December 1975–August 1977

Richards stood down from the leadership in December 1975. He did this in a typically secretive way, not revealing his intentions to his successor even to his deputy Sharpe until mid-September.⁸⁸ By August, Leather was telling the FCO that the 54-year-old Sharpe was the 'obvious successor' to Richards, an 'outstanding politician and the anchor man of the present government'.⁸⁹

Born in Bermuda in 1921, Sharpe had gone to university in Canada. During World War Two, he had served with the Royal Canadian Air Force attached to the RAF in England. On returning to the island, he 'started with a local firm of commission agents as dock checker and clerical assistant, then became salesman', then personnel director and vice president of the company. He had

⁸⁶ Leather to FCO, Annual Report for 1975, January 28, 1976, FCO 63/1411, TNA.

⁸⁷ Leather, *Annual Report for 1973*, February 7, 1974, FCO 63/1220, TNA.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Record of a call at the FCO by Leather, August 1975, *ibid.*

attended the 1966 Constitutional Conference and was awarded a CBE in 1972. Married to a Canadian with one son and one daughter, this former football and cricket player's interests included reading and gardening.⁹⁰

Sharpe's period in office was not a happy one, and his leadership style was resented by many of his colleagues. According to Gloria McPhee, the MP and Cabinet Minister who led the UBP Black Caucus from its creation in 1974 until its gradual disintegration in the late 1970s, 'the deterioration in the leadership came about quickly'.⁹¹ Saul, who served under Sharpe as the Permanent Secretary for Finance, said he was 'too nice and too weak'.⁹² Yet, no detailed work has been done to analyse why it was Sharpe was ousted or what this said about the UBP.

This section suggests that debates within the UBP between 1975 and 1977 both reflected and exacerbated racial tensions in Bermuda on a wider scale. While the demands of the UBP Black Caucus were essentially ignored by Sharpe, as Richards had downplayed them before him, his leadership position became increasingly untenable as he showed he was not able to assert his will. Animosity towards him was increased by his mixture of micromanaging and indecisiveness. However, Sharpe was also the victim of a situation that had seen the position of Premier grow in stature since 1971. This undermined party unity by increasing the desire of fellow Cabinet ministers to get their hands on the job.

3.1 The mask comes off: Racial tension within the UBP, 1974-1976

Racial divisions had been bubbling within the UBP since its inception. Blacks who had joined the party in the 1960s were conscious of the attack that they were being used by the white oligarchy. During Richards' tenure, the UBP was riven from late 1974 onwards by the formation of a Black Caucus, consisting of

⁹⁰ Brief on Jack Sharpe, December 29, 1975, FCO 63/1450, TNA.

⁹¹ McPhee to former UBP colleagues, circa 2003.

⁹² Saul interview, April 4, 2012.

eight MPs and Legislative Council members. Although the group was revealed in a newspaper report in December 1974, it was not until spring 1975 that they submitted a report to Richards.⁹³

This document is remarkable for its candid analysis of Bermudian racial attitudes. “Many Bermudians are doubting the sincerity of the UBP and its proclaimed philosophy of racial partnership”. The report added that ‘too many black youths continue to give the letters the meaning ‘Used Black People.’

Even more revealing were the ‘stereotypes’ of black men in particular that signatories to the report suggested had been perpetuated by the Government’s actions:

The road to the economic marketplace has been fraught with roadblocks...Therefore it has sometimes and still is more gratifying to stimulate and satisfy themselves e.g. illegitimacy and riots. [Anger and frustration of psychological deprivations have led to the stereotype of the virile black male].⁹⁴

The report called for an increased focus on increasing black representation within the party, increased focus on Bermudianisation of the workforce and on upward social mobility and education.

On receiving the report, Richards appointed a committee of black and white MPs to study it.⁹⁵ However, Richards was not publically in solidarity with the Black Caucus. On first being approached by McPhee about it, he said: “You don’t expect me to be a part of it do you?”. After being turned over to Richards’ deputy Sharpe for consideration by the UBP caucus, it was ‘flatly rejected’.⁹⁶

A second report, signed by seven of the ten black parliamentarians was submitted in January 1976. It specifically called for more black participation in party affairs; an increased focus on ‘a comprehensive, ‘racially-integrated’ educational program to ‘remove the excuse of whites who withdraw their

⁹³ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 272.

⁹⁴ First report of the UBP Black Caucus, Spring 1975, *ibid*.

⁹⁵ *Sun*, January 3, 1976.

⁹⁶ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 273-4.

children from the public schools'; for a new economic development program, including a manpower survey, equal employment opportunities, a governmental agency with the power of enforcement a body to help small business; a program of action to 'meet the problem of non-Bermudian workers' and a strengthened Race Relations Council.⁹⁷ McPhee was never informed whether this report was accepted by her colleagues.⁹⁸

Three changes were engendered by the formation of the UBP Black Caucus and their lobbying. Firstly, both the UBP leadership and Government House now at least had to acknowledge the presence of organised and public pressure from within its ranks to develop policy in a certain direction. It is clear that Sharpe, who took over from Richards as Premier in December 1975, was unimpressed by the Black Caucus's demands. Yet they led, for instance, to an apparent policy shift in the 1976 General Election manifesto, which proposed reorganising the Ministry of Labour and Immigration into the Ministry of Human Resources, Employment and Industry. As the *Bermuda Sun* noted in May 1976: "Follow-up proposals to the Black Caucus report are in the UBP manifesto".⁹⁹ This promise never seems to have been implemented however.

Moreover, the force that the group was exerting on the UBP was noticed by Leather, who worried that what he understood as 'strong pressure potentially for a black Premier' by the Caucus might prevent the succession of his favoured candidate Sharpe into the office of UBP leader. In August that year, an FCO memorandum revealed that Leather told top officials:

For some time [Sharpe] has been regarded as 'heir apparent', and the Governor regards his succession as in the best interests of Bermuda and [Her Majesty's Government].¹⁰⁰

Secondly, the hostile reception that the caucus received within the party's leadership structure added to the sense of grievance that animated the group as time went on between 1974 and 1977. This much could be seen from the

⁹⁷ *Sun*, April 10, 1976.

⁹⁸ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 275.

⁹⁹ *Sun*, May 1, 1976.

¹⁰⁰ Record of meeting of Leather with FCO officials in London, August 1975, 63/1333.

note in the first report that referred to ‘rumour-mongering, the downright lies and the refusal to believe our repeatedly stated aims’ that followed the submission of the first report.¹⁰¹

Perhaps something of the establishment’s insouciance was indicated by Tucker when he told the *Bermuda Sun* in April 1976 that he thought the Black Caucus was ‘not a very serious matter’, yet symbolic of ‘a party that’s had a big majority for quite a long time’. Because of this, he actually suggested it might be a good thing if the UBP lost some seats in the upcoming election.¹⁰²

In fact the attitude of the establishment to the caucus was ruthless. Minister of Sports Lancelot Swan had joined the caucus but left it after only a few meetings ‘after being threatened with the loss of his portfolio’.¹⁰³ And Black Caucus member (and Immigration and Labour Minister) Jim Woolridge alleged: “We had a Judas present in our midst, who conveyed everything that transpired to [Sharpe] and the white members of the party”.¹⁰⁴

There were more mixed noises coming out of the UBP as the election approached in May 1976. In January, Richards had said he believed the Black Caucus was ‘a healthy sign’ and ‘to the advantage of the UBP and the country as a whole’. Meanwhile, he told the public on the eve of the election that the second report had been ‘unanimously adopted by the regular caucus and by the party’s central executive and was now a valid document of the UBP’.¹⁰⁵

However, Stanley Ratteray would later reveal that the growing challenges to Sharpe’s leadership of the UBP were in part related to his handling of the second report in the early part of 1976. Sharpe’s treatment of the report, he said, ‘did not redound to the credit of the UBP. Nothing was done about it for too long... and Black Caucus members were discredited as a result’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 337.

¹⁰² *Sun*, April 10, 1976.

¹⁰³ Woolridge, *House that Jack Built*, 88.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Gazette*, May 1, 1976.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, February 25, 1977.

The third sign of growing divisions within the UBP was a split along axes other than race. Some MPs, such as Lancelot Swan, had initially joined the Black Caucus and left. Some never joined at all, such as ET Richards and Quinton Edness, and one person, John Swan, joined but did not sign the reports when they were published. In fact, a line was left for Swan's signature but it was left blank.¹⁰⁷ Asked why he did not join the caucus in 2012, Edness said he thought Black Caucus's goal 'was legitimate but I didn't agree with their method':

I never joined because my fights were always in the open caucus. There was always a threat in a political party that when you start forming little power bases it can lead to the destruction of [the] party.¹⁰⁸

Meanwhile, by the spring of 1976 there was also, according to a report in the *Bermuda Sun*, a 'growing clique of rebel, predominantly white UBP MPs' who were dissatisfied with Sharpe's leadership.¹⁰⁹ These factions were to coalesce into a larger Reform group by February 1977 that would oust Sharpe from the Premier's office, in part due to his reluctance to accept the Black Caucus recommendations. As Ratteray said when the group resigned *en masse* from the Cabinet in February 1977: "The leader of the party has to bear responsibility for the handling of the [second Black Caucus] report."¹¹⁰

What is striking about Black Caucus and the party's response to it is the chasm of difference between what was said in public and in private. In public, members of the group 'denied that it constituted a breakaway group, and said that the aim was to further the party's declared intent to unite Bermuda'.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, members of the oligarchical leadership, such as Tucker, told journalists he thought the group was a 'constructive effort'.¹¹² In private UBP meetings, however, 'pandemonium broke loose', and 'whites became very antagonistic'. In the words of one witness, 'it was an inquisition, demeaning and embarrassing, especially in light of the fact that we were trying to help the

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 335-341.

¹⁰⁸ Edness, interview, July 4, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ *Sun*, April 10, 1976.

¹¹⁰ *Gazette*, February 25, 1977.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, December 6, 1974.

¹¹² *Sun*, April 10, 1976.

UBP'.¹¹³ This suggested that the discussion of racial issues was still very much something done behind closed doors in conservative Bermuda.¹¹⁴

The Black Caucus revealed that the vaunting UBP rhetoric of racial unity was not even believed by many of the party's black MPs and most of its black Cabinet Ministers. This glimpse beneath the surface of the party highlights the extent to which it was felt, even during Richards' premiership, that Tucker and the oligarchy still pulled the strings away from the limelight. However, as this section suggested, the Black Caucus episode of 1974-6 was just the opening to a period that saw the party split into various factions. By 1977, this squabbling would cost Sharpe his job as Premier.

3.2 'A dissident faction' with 'no cause and no leader': The ousting of Premier Jack Sharpe

When the general election votes had been counted in the early hours of May 19, 1976, it was clear that the UBP had won, but had been given a bloody nose by the electorate for the first time in its history. Its lead in the share of votes was nearly halved to 11.1 per cent, compared with a 22.6 lead from 1972. Although it had won 55.5 per cent of the vote (against the PLP's 44.4 per cent) on a turnout 4.3 per cent lower than in 1972, it had lost four seats. Despite this, for the first time ever, the House of Assembly now had a majority of black faces, with 21 black MPs (13 in the PLP and eight in the UBP) compared to 19 whites (18 in the UBP and one in the PLP).¹¹⁵

Why had the UBP struggled this time in contrast to 1972? To start with the economy experienced a 'slight recession' in the summer of 1975; put another way the economy was 'taking a breather after a long period of expansion'.¹¹⁶ A measure of how things had changed in two years can be seen by the fact that through 1973, although inflation continued at an annual rate of about 'ten per

¹¹³ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 274.

¹¹⁴ *Sun*, April 10, 1976.

¹¹⁵ *Sun*, May 19, 1976.

¹¹⁶ Note by Director General of Trade Development Office G Booth, report on visit to Bermuda, July 14-17, 1975, FCO 63/1318, TNA.

cent', Bermuda had enjoyed a 'state of overemployment'.¹¹⁷ Despite this, the completion of a number of major building projects towards the end of that year threatened to create some unemployment. During 1975, the unemployment rate climbed to over two per cent, although recovery started in September.¹¹⁸ By December 1975, Leather reported to London that the island's inflation rate had been 4.5 per cent and its maximum rate of unemployment 1.6 per cent.¹¹⁹

1974 and 1975 had also been years of intense industrial action and momentous events in the justice system. For instance, in February 1975 garbage had accumulated and freight had gone unloaded as a public sector strike had virtually paralysed Bermuda on the eve of a visit to the island by Queen Elizabeth II.¹²⁰ In the summer of 1976, meanwhile, the courts were about to try Burrows for the murders of Duckett, Sharples and Sayers. Racial animosities were bubbling within both of these events. The General Election held on May 18, 1976 exposed faultlines that would help contribute to the ousting of Sharpe just over a year later.

This was partly because the election represented a moment in which the UBP found itself on the defensive. Two of its key claims – economic competence and unity based upon supposed 'racial harmony', had been shaken by events. First of all, inflation and unemployment during 1975 had dramatised frustrations about immigration and about the Commonwealth Vote, which the PLP attempted to channel. As PLP member Una Butler Joell said at a party rally in May 1976: "Often we feel like aliens in our own land."¹²¹ Meanwhile, the attempt by the UBP Black Caucus to push the government into addressing the issue of race appeared to give lie to the image of the UBP as the embodiment of 'racial harmony'.

¹¹⁷ Leather, *Annual Report 1973*, February 7, 1974, 63/1220.

¹¹⁸ Leather, *Annual Report 1975*, January 28, 1976, 63/1411.

¹¹⁹ Leather to Callaghan, December 27, 1975, 63/1318.

¹²⁰ Leather, *Annual Report 1975*, January 28, 1976, 63/1411.

¹²¹ *Gazette*, May 18, 1976.

10.¹²⁴ However, in March a special high-powered committee led by Tucker and Richards recommended to Sharpe that he ‘make way for a new Premier’ by December 1977.¹²⁵ By August 18, he had already bowed to the inevitable and resigned ‘as a result of continuing pressure by dissidents’.¹²⁶ His successor was the scion of a wealthy white family of Hamilton merchants, Finance Minister David Gibbons.

The story of Sharpe’s ousting reveals the multifarious tensions at work in the UBP. The residual influence of the Black Caucus was present. In the view of the FCO in September 1977, a ‘major reason’ for the dissidents’ campaign against Sharpe was the belief that ‘a coloured Premier would present a better face in competing with the PLP’.¹²⁷ And one of the key recommendations made by the high-powered committee in March was that the party implement new machinery for the election of officers, the effect of which would be to ‘centralise authority’ with the object of ‘facilitating the participation of more able, young, black people - often now blocked by reactionary elements in the party at constituency level’.¹²⁸

Secondly, there is evidence that personal animosity to Sharpe had been brewing since before he even became Premier. For instance, FCO official PC Duff suggested that Sharpe believed resignations at the beginning of 1977 were the result of the fact that ‘he had blocked two of them in a deal with First City National Bank when he was Minister of Finance’.¹²⁹

Thirdly, electoral performance may have been a significant factor. Dissidents blamed Sharpe for the loss of four seats at the General Election. Meanwhile, the UBP majority of 12 would soon be whittled down further by a UBP by-election loss in Sandys North in early 1977, an event which added to the

¹²⁴ Brief for the visit of Sharpe to the FCO by the Mexico and Caribbean Department, April 1977, FCO 63/1450, TNA.

¹²⁵ Lloyd to FCO, April 14, 1977. FCO 44/1455, TNA.

¹²⁶ Government House to FCO, London, August 18, 1977, *ibid*.

¹²⁷ Note to Stratton from PC Duff, September 30, 1977, FCO 44/1456, TNA.

¹²⁸ GP Lloyd to HSH Stanley, April 14, 1977. 44/1455.

¹²⁹ Note for record by PC Duff, October 7, 1977, 44/1455.

pressure on Sharpe to resign.¹³⁰ FCO West Indies and Atlantic Department official PC Duff wrote after his resignation that the UBP ‘party hierarchy blamed’ Sharpe for these losses.¹³¹

Finally, unhappiness rooted in perceptions of Sharpe political ideology and his leadership style¹³² were suggested as reasons for his ousting. Following Sharpe’s resignation, Governor Sir Peter Ramsbotham noted that he had been forced out by his fellow MPs as a result of his ‘alleged indecision, and his liberalism’.¹³³ Deputy Governor GP Lloyd said he believed Sharpe was ‘far too ready to bend with every breeze that blows’.¹³⁴ Ministers and MPs had an even more scathing view. These were set out in a press release by McPhee in February, which accused Sharpe of ‘moving towards a dictatorial Premiership’ characterised by ‘indecisiveness’, ‘shortsightedness’, ‘playing off one person against another’ ‘continual interference’ and ‘being unable to take an overview of [the] task at hand’.¹³⁵

Dr Clarence Terceira revealed how, as Party Chairman, he had been forced to try and resolve the differences between Sharpe and ‘four different factions’ in the UBP who were naming him as the reason for ‘legislation not going through’. One key grievance, Terceira revealed, was dissatisfaction with Sharpe’s taking the role of chairman of the caucus at the same time as being Premier.¹³⁶ Woolridge backed this up, claiming he thought Sharpe had to go because he ‘began to interfere with decisions made by individual ministers’ and that Sharpe ‘took the attitude that it would be his way or the doorway’.¹³⁷

Even more revealing is the manner in which Leather viewed these leadership squabbles. When Leather wrote his final dispatch as Governor in April 1977,

¹³⁰ Brown, *Struggle for reform*, 133.

¹³¹ Note by PC Duff, October 7, 1977, 44/1455.

¹³² Lloyd to FCO, April 14, 1977, *ibid*.

¹³³ Sir Peter Ramsbotham, Cover note to Annual Report for 1977, February 8, 1978, FCO 44/1679, TNA.

¹³⁴ Lloyd, to Stanley April 14, 1977, 44/1455.

¹³⁵ *Gazette*, February 25, 1977.

¹³⁶ Interview conducted by the author with Dr Clarence Terceira on June 6, 2012, in Sandys Parish, Bermuda.

¹³⁷ Woolridge, *House that Jack built*, 89; Interview conducted by the present author with Woolridge on September 15, 2011 in Smiths Parish, Bermuda.

Sharpe was still attempting to hold on to power. His observations should be understood in light of the fact that Leather was one of Sharpe's strongest supporters. Leather railed against the dissidents, Stubbs and Harry Viera, as 'dishonourable and unprincipled', while expressing fears that as long as they remained in the UBP, it would be impossible to unite the party under any leader. He denounced the rest of the party's MPs as 'nice people but naïve people, all of whom want the Premier's job'. He worried that the UBP's divisions would lead to the PLP being the 'beneficiary'. He suggested that the onslaught on Sharpe by a 'dissident faction' with 'no cause and no leader' suggested something of Bermuda's political immaturity:

In this very sophisticated, highly organised society the one thing which is new here is 'party politics'. No more than a handful know the ground rules of the game, many do not even know there are rules.¹³⁸

Leather's support was not enough to save Sharpe. By now Bermudian party politics had taken on a life of its own, independent of the colonial dimension. Sharpe's ousting reveals something of the poisonous personal disputes that the creation and bolstering of the office of Premier had stoked from burning embers. This in-fighting was largely personal, with marriages of convenience between right-wingers such as Viera and liberals such as Stubbs. When Sharpe became Premier, disquiet about an unpopular colleague holding the levers of power combined with latent discontent founded in racial divisions. As a result, discontent burst into a rather public struggle for the leadership of the party. This was something that led to disquiet in Government House and at the FCO.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the period 1971 to 1977 witnessed the evolution of the domestic Bermudian political scene in two key ways. Firstly, constitutional reform occurred in the context of the secret space of the British constitution but in a manner that essentially left Britain at a disadvantage.

¹³⁸ Leather, *Valedictory Dispatch*, April 7, 1977, FCO 44/1454, TNA.

Secondly, UBP internal party politics revealed themselves to be crippled by the persistence of the oligarchy behind the scenes, racial divisions and personal factionalism that turned its fire on Sharpe.

The 1972 election victory ascribed the UBP with newfound legitimacy which it then built on with a host of constitutional changes in April 1973. The way in which debates over the Ministerial Code of Conduct unfolded, however, revealed the persisting influence of the oligarchy. Richards decided to meet the FCO halfway in their demands, agreeing to distribute a Code of Conduct to his ministers but refusing to make it public. Like the process of constitutional change, this revealed a strong sensitivity to the political vulnerability of the UBP and its oligarchical image. Paradoxically, it also confirmed the power of this legacy, and vitiated any cleansing effect that the Code of Conduct might have had.

The removal of the Governor as chair of the Executive Council in April 1973 was a major victory for Richards vis-à-vis the FCO. Richards had, through his single-mindedness, overcome Home's initial resistance. His new position as Premier gave him enhanced prestige both at home and in the meeting rooms of the FCO.

However, these reforms confused decision-making in the area of internal security. This episode is redolent the Heath Government's weakness of purpose in foreign policy, apart from in the European sphere. In fields such as Rhodesia, Home's initiatives 'came to nothing', while there were also abortive contacts with France over nuclear cooperation.¹³⁹ Indeed, 'he was a reactive, not a creative Secretary of State'.¹⁴⁰ Instead of clear and firm lines of negotiation in Bermudian constitutional reform, Home initially resisted and then gave into UBP demands, allowing *ad-hoc* reform with no coherence of purpose. Bermuda became an Associated State in all but name, with perhaps the largest degree of autonomy of any of Britain's remaining territories.

¹³⁹ Hill and Lord, *Foreign Policy of the Heath Government*, 313.

¹⁴⁰ Thorpe, *Douglas-Home*, 437-8.

The second way in which the Bermudian political scene evolved was the unmasking of the UBP on two of its key political branding strengths. The UBP's election victory in 1972 had been ensured through a variety of in-built advantages, organisational superiority, a clear message and two deft political, if perhaps tokenistic, moves that symbolised a passing of the torch from Tucker to Richards and Swan. The election result was a personal triumph for Richards who then felt emboldened in his constitutional reform negotiations in London that September.

However, the economy stalled in 1975, in the midst of the rise of world economic 'stagflation' and higher fuel costs and industrial action at home. This led Bermudians to question whether the UBP was as economically surefooted as its leaders boasted. Secondly, the founding of the UBP Black Caucus in 1974 suggested that the UBP's claim to embody 'racial harmony' was not as true as it may have originally appeared.

The accession to office of Sharpe in December 1975 was also politically problematic. After the symbolic changing of the guard with Richards' accession, the UBP now seemed to be moving backwards. Tucker still pulled the strings from the shadows. And Sharpe's ascent to the newly padded-out job came at a time when racial tensions in the UBP were already being aired in public. Moreover, Sharpe was already unpopular with a number of his own ministers and MPs due to his actions as Finance Minister. Meanwhile, the fact that Sharpe was a proponent of independence may have also guaranteed him the bitter opposition of several of his party colleagues, especially Gibbons who was ardently opposed to independence.

The UBP's victory in the 1976 election did not save Sharpe from his ruthless colleagues. His ousting was the result of resentment at his leadership style and personal animosity. Finally, party opponents were hungry to hold the recently enhanced power of Premier themselves. Party politics in this individualistic culture was a new phenomenon and there was now a prize to be fought for.

This chapter has demonstrated how the complexities of the British role in Bermuda were gradually proliferating throughout the period 1971 to 1977. Leather did not just have to deal with a new and complex party political situation, combining internal party disunity with attacks from an increasingly emboldened opposition. He also had to deal with a changing and unclear constitutional setup.

The next chapter will discuss the way in which Leather and the FCO responded to these shifts. It will suggest that the changing Bermudian political scene, and the increasing space afforded to Bermudian Premiers, made the exercise of the job of Governor increasingly problematic. However, Leather also made enemies within the Bermudian political establishment and at the FCO.

Chapter Five

Ensuring ‘good government’ or ‘accelerated decolonisation’? Discussions over British ‘contingent liabilities’ and the paradoxical job of Governor, 1971-1977

1. Introduction

Chapter Four detailed a process whereby the UBP government gained confidence in dealing with the FCO and opted out of communicating with London via the cipher of Government House. Electoral success gave local ministers a new standing in FCO eyes and Richards took advantage of this. What remains to be understood is the way in which British personnel and institutions adapted to these rapidly evolving circumstances. This chapter suggests that the enhancement of the UBP’s political position was accompanied by an obfuscation of Britain’s role in Bermuda. This is revealed in debates over the job of Governor and the notion of ‘good government’.

As an FCO brief in August 1975 suggested, until the 1960s, ‘the Governor’s role in Bermuda was pre-eminently that of a local leader of society’.¹ This would begin to change, however as decolonisation acquired ‘a sense of inevitability’ during that decade.² By 1965 the British government was ‘bent on liquidating the last remnants of colonialism’.³ While colonies remained, however, Britain was still understood by FCO bureaucrats to be responsible for ‘good government’.⁴ Such a commitment could be interpreted in different ways. In Martonmere’s eyes in 1971:

The present [UBP] government was the best which Bermuda could get... a Government led by the likes of the present opposition would wreak havoc with Bermuda’s economic and social fabric, and

¹ Brief by EG Lewis, August 7, 1975, 86/340.

² Schreuder and Ward, *Australia’s Empire*, 389.

³ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s Withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean*, 74

⁴ FCO Brief, date and author unknown, mid-1975, FCO 63/1332, TNA.

*[Britain] had a responsibility to see the continuation of good government.*⁵

This chapter will argue, however that such an interpretation of ‘good government’ was incorrect, since it implied a political bias and nullified Britain’s mediation role, implied by her legacy as an imperial power that had historically gained much from her dominion. It was, however, in the large amount of freedom granted to Governors for interpreting such notions that problems for Government House during period 1971-1977 lay.

From 1967, the abortive experiment in Associated Statehood contributed to a British policy that was ‘arbitrary’ and lacked uniformity.⁶ Drower, Hintjens and Hodge and Taylor all point to problems of governance that arose as Britain attempted to reconcile pressure to grant autonomy to local governments whilst also retaining a certain degree of power to set agendas.⁷ Overseeing a full and egalitarian transition to full democracy was Britain’s sacred responsibility after centuries of complicity in slavery and segregation. However, Bermuda should be treated as a case study of the way in which she failed to live up to this historical ‘trusteeship’ during the 1960s and 1970s.

This introduction will argue that there were three reasons British governance was incoherent in the 1970s. The first reason was that Bermuda was treated by some as a privileged case amongst British colonies. The economic dimension of British withdrawal from the Eastern Caribbean, which ‘played a seminal role throughout’, was not present in the case of Bermuda.⁸ The FCO believed there to be a ‘common Western interest in Bermuda’s prosperity and stability’, and Bermuda’s importance to the UK in particular derived from ‘her strategic position [e.g. as a staging post] and as a market for British goods [approximately £10.4 million in 1972]’.⁹ However, the management of her finances was understood by London to be ‘conservative and cautious’ and the

⁵ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

⁶ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s Withdrawal...*, 74.

⁷ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*; Hintjens and Hodge, *Governing unruliness*; Taylor, *British colonial policy in the Caribbean*.

⁸ Op. cit, 75.

⁹ Brief by Lewis, August 7, 1975, 86/340.

island was ‘intensely proud that Bermuda had never received or asked for a penny of economic aid from anybody’.¹⁰

As a result, while other islands were viewed as ‘shameless mendicants’ who were ‘always complaining loudly about the past’, and trying to make ‘exorbitant demands for the future’, Bermuda was seen as self-sufficient.¹¹ In the early 1990s, British territories received some £31 million in aid from the UK, but Bermuda as not one of them.¹² Fiscal conservatism, combined with the domination of the UBP by whites, may have reassured the more reactionary elements at the FCO and Government House that what Frederic Bennett had called ‘mutual confidence and friendship’ remained secure.¹³

While the benefits of being a British colony actually could mean something material (for example, in the case of aid for Montserrat¹⁴) or strategic (in the theoretical protection of the Falklands from Argentinian invasion), Bermuda is an example of the way in which the British colonial connection could take on something of a sentimentally comforting form for conservative Bermudians and occupants of Government House. The intangibility of this reality must have flummoxed officials such as Ted Rowlands, (Labour’s ‘Minister for Decolonisation’) as they attempted to push independence onto Bermuda from 1974 until 1979.¹⁵ This gap in perceptions can be discerned throughout correspondence between Bermuda and London.

Secondly, this was also a period during which Britain’s attentions were increasingly focusing on domestic difficulties, such as Northern Ireland, rampant inflation and labour confrontations. This was a period of ‘malaise’ and the ‘loss of a sense of purpose’ that became even more acute from October 1973¹⁶ until the public sector industrial action siege of the Winter of

¹⁰Leather, *Annual Report for 1973*, February 7, 1974, 63/1220.

¹¹ Cox-Alomar, *Britain’s Withdrawal...*, 79.

¹² Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, xii.

¹³ Hansard, June 19, 1967.

¹⁴ Clegg and Gold, *Decade of progress and prosperity?*, 116-117.

¹⁵ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 30.

¹⁶ Sandbrook, *State of Emergency*, 12.

Discontent in 1978-1979.¹⁷ As one of Wilson's senior advisers noted in his diary on September 1975: "This is the psychology of national decline ...That is why no economic plans will make any difference. The state of mind is that of a loser."¹⁸ How this psychology affected Britain's role in Bermuda is one of the topics of this chapter.

In other areas it has been argued that far from encouraging stasis however, these problems helped crystallise a new way of understanding Britain's identity.¹⁹ Lane has suggested the image of the Labour Government's 'profound lack of confidence' in foreign policy between 1974 and 1979 'owes more to the back-projection of Conservative Party hagiography' than to reality. While there is some truth to the point that, for instance in Rhodesia, actions during the 1970s 'laid the foundations for the foreign policy successes of the 1980s', this is not true in Bermuda's case.²⁰ Foreign Secretary James Callaghan's reinvigoration of the Anglo-American alliance and his occupation of the 'middle ground' in the Cold War came at the price of an unhealthy admiration of Henry Kissinger's version of *realpolitik*, involving a sacrifice of principles for expediency.²¹

Sharpe had already quizzed Conservative Minister of State Godber in 1971 about whether Britain's 'closer involvement with Europe' would lead to it 'no longer desiring to maintain its responsibilities in Bermuda'.²² And as Leather revealed in 1973, 'being thrown out of the Sterling Area was regarded 'as betrayal by many of Britain's best friends' in Bermuda.²³ As UBP politicians reacted to these changes by attempting to carve out a greater local leadership role, the question was whether the UK's policy in the Caribbean dependencies would remain, as one Anguilla politician described it, 'aggressively non-interventionist'.²⁴

¹⁷ Pimlott, *Wilson*, 671.

¹⁸ Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, 499-500.

¹⁹ Harrison, *Finding a Role*, 441.

²⁰ Lane, *Foreign and Defence Policy*, 154 and 166.

²¹ During the invasion of Cyprus in 1974, for instance, Callaghan 'left the running of policy to' Kissinger 'with disastrous results', Hitchens and Kellner, *Callaghan*, 142.

²² Record of meeting between UBP ministers and Godber in London, November 17, 1971, 823.

²³ Leather, *Annual Report 1973*, February 7, 1974, 63/1220.

²⁴ Hintjens, *Alternatives to Independence*, 41.

Thirdly, the nebulous job of Governor took on a new meaning, as the Premier gained the chair of the Cabinet from April 1973 onwards. Stephanie Williams argues that little has been written about Governors in the history of the British Empire, who often appear ‘as little more than ciphers [and are] remembered as founders or innovators or villains’.²⁵ The period 1971-1977 saw Sharples murdered. His successor, Leather, was to experience a complete breakdown in his relationship with the Government Leader (and after April 1973, Premier). This breakdown in relations, over Leather’s ‘perceived interference in local affairs’, became a ‘serious political concern’.²⁶

Leather later pointed to two reasons for the turmoil. Firstly, he said, it was because ‘we were faced with a totally unprecedented situation’ of a breakdown of law and order. Secondly, he said, ‘we were subject to a constitution which was not designed to deal with such a problem’.²⁷ This allusion to the failure of the constitution contrasts starkly with his assertion in early 1974 that the 1973 constitutional amendments had made the system the ‘vastly more attuned to the realities of effective power’.²⁸ More succinctly, as he wrote of the constitution in April 1977: “It works.”²⁹ The apparent contradiction begs a question: Was it the man who failed Bermuda or was it the case that the constitution simply did ‘not, in itself, make for good government’ as Kinnear put it in May 1973 in the aftermath of Sharples’ assassination?³⁰

Although he records the breakdown of relations that occurred between Leather and Richards between 1973 and 1975, (JR) Williams does not make any suggestion about the effect this had on governance and leadership. This chapter will attempt to address this gap. As (Stephanie) Williams argues, “All (Governors) agreed that no one in London understood their jobs, or appreciated the difficulties they had to face”.³¹

²⁵ Williams, *Running the Show*, 2.

²⁶ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 259.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 260.

²⁸ Leather, *Annual Review for 1973*, April 7, 1974, 63/1220.

²⁹ Leather, *Valedictory Dispatch*, April 7, 1977, 44/1454.

³⁰ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

³¹ Williams, *Running the Show*, 10.

There were two problems. Firstly, there was the question of managing what Grocott calls a ‘careful balance of interests’ between Whitehall and the local ‘community’.³² Was it a Governor’s role to lobby for British interests vis-à-vis Bermuda or vice versa? The 1973 constitutional reforms muddied these waters. Wiener suggests that, depending on the closeness of relations between a Governor and local politicians, officials at Government House could sometimes gang up with local political leaders against the metropole.³³ This had also occurred in Kenya during the 1950s, as Governor Sir Philip Mitchell ‘disappointed a rather impotent Colonial Office by always siding with the settlers in his racially restrictive view of Africans’. As a result, Mitchell was ‘the unwitting architect of the unfolding loss of control’ that led to the Mau Mau rebellion and horrors of repression on the part of the colonial state.³⁴ Leather also seemed somewhat willing to read British interests through the kaleidoscope of settler-infused Bermuda, while this situation may have been exacerbated by the fact that he was a former Conservative politician operating in what he seemed to think was his own private little kingdom, thousands of miles from the Labour Foreign Secretaries (from February 1974 onwards) who were his bosses.

The second problem, as this chapter will show, was that Leather was increasingly torn between his public and private roles in Bermuda itself. His public role involved a certain degree of political leadership. However, this was paralleled by a private, mediation role as a kind of ‘father confessor’ for the different political parties.³⁵ The evidence suggests the rip-tide forces on both axes helped to confuse Leather. The three factors detailed above created a situation in which a debate was spurred over just what ‘good government’ implied.

Firstly, this chapter will examine how Leather’s interpretation of the job of Governor threatened Government House’s relations both with the FCO and

³² Grocott, *Good Soldier, but Maligned Governor*, 421.

³³ Wiener, *Empire on Trial*, 109.

³⁴ Lewis, *Nasty, Brutish and in shorts?*, 210.

³⁵ Louis, *British Withdrawal from the Gulf*, 100.

UBP politicians. Meanwhile, his time in Bermuda also encouraged a view amongst UBP politicians that future occupants of the office should be more 'low key'. Secondly, this chapter will engage in a wider examination of British foreign policy, seen through the lens of discussions on Bermudian independence, begun by Premier Jack Sharpe in early 1976 but eagerly taken up by the FCO. Finally, this chapter will examine the way in which the FCO set about replacing Leather. It will be suggested that a mix of circumstances and mistakes, as well as the informal power of veto held by the Bermudian Premier, led to delays in the new appointment. As the next chapter will argue, these helped contribute to further problems in 1977.

2. 'If he did not muzzle himself, someone else would': Sir Edwin Leather as Governor, July 1973 – April 1977

This section will argue that Leather's personal interpretation of his job helped lead to a deterioration in relations between Government House and UBP Ministers because he refused to keep quiet on matters that local politicians believed to be their responsibility. Secondly, and paradoxically, Leather also fell out with FCO personnel because he was believed to be insubordinate to the Foreign Secretary. Finally, his period in office also helped to expose what were some of the more latent contradictions in the role of Governor itself.

Born in 1919 in Hamilton, Ontario, Sir Edwin Leather had served as a Captain in the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion in England and fought on D-Day. He wrote a manual, *Combat Without Weapons*, for the Home Guard. From 1950 until 1964, he was the Conservative MP for North Somerset. A strong supporter of the European Community, he was a founder of the One Nation Tory group and a popular speaker at Conservative Party conferences.³⁶ According to David Owen, Foreign Secretary from 1977 to 1979, Leather was 'quite a character': "Everybody knew him. He used to be on Any Questions."³⁷ Interviewed in the 1980s about why he had been chosen as Governor, Leather said he thought Heath had selected him 'for three reasons':

³⁶ *Daily Telegraph*, April 6, 2005.

³⁷ Lord Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

I had a lot of experience in the post-colonial world. He [felt he] owed me something 'after my voluntary service to the party', and the British Government wanted to break the established mould of the type of Governor that came here – the British gentleman.³⁸

A few months after arriving, Leather wrote back to London a rosy report of the way in which he felt the constitution worked, much in contrast to Kinnear's report just after the assassinations.

Leather noted that, since he was no longer chairing the Cabinet he was 'not in a position to influence the Government in any way' in its discussions. Even though this idea seems odd, given that he was tasked with maintaining internal security, Leather noted that one positive effect of the reforms was an increase in consultation between Government House and ministers in Governor's Council over matters of security, 'which Ministers have, in the past, tended to regard as something unpleasant'.³⁹ Despite this characteristically optimistic analysis⁴⁰, Leather was brushing over the awkward fact that his responsibility for internal security necessarily led to his getting involved in political matters while maintaining both an even-handed neutrality and a clear appraisal of British interests. As will be shown, the FCO would, by 1975, express its view that Leather had misinterpreted his role.

2.1 'Refusing to be a eunuch': Leather 'ruffles the feathers' of UBP ministers

UBP Finance Minister Jack Sharpe had noted in November 1970:

It was clearly important that there should be mutual trust and a good working relationship between the two sides of government if the present constitution was to be made to work.⁴¹

³⁸ Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 249.

³⁹ Leather, *Annual Review 1973*, February 7, 1974, 63/1220.

⁴⁰ Following an incident of alleged police brutality against a youngster, for instance, the FCO were sceptical of Leather's opinion on the ability and credibility of the Police Force. They suggested a visit by the FCO's OPA MJ Macoun in October 1973 because 'clearly things are not as rosy as this letter seems to indicate'. JC Philip to MP Preston, October 3, 1973, FCO 64/1094, TNA.

⁴¹ Minutes of the UBP committee on constitutional reform, November 10, 1970, 823.

Leather's time of sharing power with Richards would see such hopes dashed, in part, because he seemed ambivalent about what his role in Bermuda was. On one hand, he recognised that constitutional changes in 1968 and 1973 meant that 'it is the Premier of Bermuda who has the power in his hands, not the Governor'.⁴² However, he also brought a paternalistically Greater British patriotic *timbre* to his new role. In 1974, he complained in a BBC interview that there had not been enough Royal visits to Bermuda, an accusation FCO personnel somewhat bitterly dismissed.⁴³ Reporting on the visit of the Queen to Bermuda in July 1976, during which the Queen's Jubilee Committee raised approximately \$1,250,000, Leather glowingly suggested that 'the best cement for British-Bermudian relations will continue to be Royal visits'.⁴⁴



Figure 23: Governor Sir Edwin Leather with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II in Bermuda in 1975. © *The Royal Gazette*

The difference between Richards and Leather was that while Richards was tasked with the public relations function of leading the nation politically, Leather was tasked with the political power and responsibility that it was now

⁴² Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*, 249.

⁴³ Interview of Leather by Chris Drake, BBC *Today* radio program, on April 11, 1974. FCO 63/1221, TNA.

⁴⁴ *Annual Report 1976*, 44/1454.

understood should be exercised by the Governor's office *behind the scenes*. Ominously, Leather also reported that Ministers were 'extremely sensitive about what they regard[ed] as interference in matters reserved to the elected Government under the constitution'.⁴⁵ This theme would crop up routinely and become more serious as Richards and Leather fell out. The breakdown in relations occurred because Leather was seen to be commenting and interfering in local politics. As a result of such perceived 'interference', PLP leader Walter Robinson brought a motion of censure against the Governor to the House of Assembly in August 1973, a month after Leather arrived, which the UBP voted down.⁴⁶

Leather did not believe he should be quiet. Speaking at the Royal Air Forces Association (Bermuda) Battle of Britain anniversary dinner on September 16, 1973, he told the audience:

*I can see the case for no Governor at all. What there is absolutely no case for is an eunuch Governor! And no responsible human being could expect me to be a mute Governor.*⁴⁷

Quoting Churchill, Leather added: "The lessons of courage, of duty, of loyalty are just as important today as they were in 1940, even in this crisis-drenched age".⁴⁸ On April 11, 1974, Leather was interviewed by Bermuda's union-funded newspaper *Worker's Voice*. He suggested the island's electoral system unfairly favoured the UBP. Richards saw this as a major trespass on the government's prerogative under the 1968 constitution. Deputy Governor Lloyd wrote to London that Leather had 'undoubted energy, enthusiasm and flair for public relations' but added that these at times can 'lead him to play an active and public part in affairs which local Ministers, rightly or wrongly, regard as their preserve'. He added that he expected 'a few more ruffled ministerial feathers (and gubernatorial plumes)'.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Annual Report 1973*, 63/1220.

⁴⁶ *Gazette*, August 1973; FCO 63/1227, TNA.

⁴⁷ *Gazette*, September 17, 1973.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Lloyd to MP Preston, May 7, 1974, 63/1227.

As the murder of Sharples showed, the job may have been seen and treated as a sinecure by politicians in London, but its potential for attracting violence and criticism in Bermuda was increased by the large amount of money that was spent on the Governor's household and entertainment function. According to Pamela Sharples, the 'minimum number of staff' was seven living-in and five dailies', although Martonmere had had 19 servants.⁵⁰ Shortly before he was assassinated Sir Richard Sharples was verbally assailed in the House of Assembly for holding a 'lavish' birthday party for his dog Horsa. One MP said: "I'd like to know where the money for the dog food comes from."⁵¹ It is not known whether Sharples spent taxpayers' money on this party. The Governor's salary, from April 1972, was \$30,000 Bermuda dollars (or £12,500), but he also had a housekeeping and entertaining allowance of \$22,000 (£9,100).⁵² By 1975, Leather seemed to be earning \$33,750 per annum. And by 1977, the salary was down again to \$31,477.48 and the housekeeping allowance was at \$20,000.⁵³

During Leather's time as Governor, however, housekeeping expenses rocketed. In part this was down to the fact that Government House was a turreted, Italianate 'mansion'⁵⁴, built in 1892, which Leather and his wife regarded as 'the only suitable building in Bermuda' to serve as Government House.⁵⁵ By July 1975, following a change for the 1973/1974 financial year, it appeared that the Governor was spending an astounding \$66,000 (or £28,374) per annum on housekeeping expenses and \$13,200 (£5,675) on entertaining. This was far in excess of any other British territory, including Hong Kong. Although the Governor of Hong Kong, then Sir Murray MacLehose, earned more than Leather (£26,316 as against £14,509), he spent only £2,105 on household and entertaining combined.

⁵⁰ Lady Sharples to Heath, April 6, 1973, 15/1313.

⁵¹ *Daily Express*, March 12, 1973.

⁵² JDB Shaw to Sir Duncan Watson, March 12, 1973, FCO 63/1102, TNA.

⁵³ Governor's office, 1977/1978 estimates, FCO 44/1467, TNA.

⁵⁴ *Daily Telegraph*, March 12, 1973.

⁵⁵ Lloyd to NF Green, March 30, 1977, 44/1467.



Figure 24: Government House, on Langton Hill in Pembroke Parish.
© Gordon Hireson, *Kiwanis Club of Bermuda pictorial tribute to Sir Richard Sharples: Governor and Commander-in-Chief* (Bermuda, 1973).

It is revealing that the FCO believed that this expense was necessary because it was what Bermudians demanded. An FCO brief explained the cost away as being due to the 'local cost of living and the style which the Governor has traditionally been expected to maintain'.⁵⁶ As FCO official Nick Larmour noted in 1976, men with private incomes were often sought for the post of Governor 'because the Governor's pay and allowances bore little relationship to his high expenses in Bermuda'.⁵⁷ Not all officials were happy with this degree of flummery, however. Kinnear described how he was 'struck by the unreality of the traditional pomp and ceremony'⁵⁸; something Leather later fondly described as 'the unending social and ceremonial part' of the job which accompanied the role.⁵⁹

Chapter five suggested that Leather's controversial style, and the acrimonious relations between him and Richards, meant the latter began to appeal over his head to the FCO to complain about him. This was the beginning of a nexus of UBP-FCO relationship-building at the expense of Government House, marking out a shift in British-Bermudian relations over the period 1971-1977.

⁵⁶ Brief by Lewis, August 7, 1975, 86/340.

⁵⁷ EN Larmour to FCO Private Secretary, July 21, 1976, 73/347.

⁵⁸ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

⁵⁹ *Annual Report for 1976*, 44/1454.

At a meeting in London with officials in December 1973, Richards was ‘very critical of the way the Governor sometimes rushes into action without apparently any thought’.⁶⁰ On April 29, official MP Preston wrote to colleagues about Richards’ many complaints about Leather that he was ‘an impulsive talker, talked in the wrong places, and had upset a lot of people at first’.⁶¹

This was part of a shift that saw the UBP becoming more confident in dealing with London. For instance, an FCO official noted in April 1974, only months after Leather arrived, that Richards had advised the Governor that ‘if he did not muzzle himself someone else would’.⁶² As the last chapter suggested, Richards began a tradition of UBP ministers ‘conduct[ing] his own external affairs’⁶³; so much so that, by 1977, Leather believed that ‘as far as [the Governor’s] responsibility for ‘external affairs [was] concerned...[his successor could] virtually forget it’.⁶⁴

Most significantly, Leather’s unorthodox behaviour presented the UBP with an opportunity to express discontent about the constitution. In late 1975, Richards was conducting constitutional talks with London, without Leather’s knowledge, attempting to push the British into further constitutional concessions on the administration of the police. As Richards told the FCO on a visit to London in September, there had been ‘problems in working the present constitution particularly since the arrival of the present Governor’.⁶⁵ Thus, Leather’s behaviour was being used as a bargaining chip in a bid to demonstrate that the constitution needed to be reformed further on UBP terms.

⁶⁰ Philip, to unknown, December 19, 1973, 63/1227.

⁶¹ Preston to EN Larmour, April 29, 1975, 63 /1221.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Annual Report 1976*, 44/1454.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Record of visit by Richards to the FCO, London, September 15, 1975, 63/1321, TNA.

2.2 ‘Putting the interests of Bermuda first’: Leather falls out with personnel at the FCO

A breakdown in relations between FCO officials and Leather exacerbated the situation. Between immediately after his arrival in 1973 and late 1975, when Richards stood down as Premier, Leather was increasingly isolated. This was because the FCO was privately getting frustrated with Leather’s actions too. He had caused anger in March 1974 when he left Bermuda to visit Martonmere in the Bahamas without seeking permission from London. Considering whether they should rebuke him, FCO officials suggested that ‘in the special case of... Leather, who is somewhat impatient of regulations, it might be needlessly provocative to appear to chide him’.⁶⁶

However, another incident nearly brought matters to a head. Leather insisted on going to Tokyo to help launch a Bermuda-registered ship. The trip was funded by the shipping company, something that was against FCO regulations. When civil servants told Leather he must convince the Bermuda Government to fund the trip, he wrote back to say that this was ‘unjust, unreasonable and discriminatory’ and would create ‘acute political embarrassment to all concerned’.⁶⁷

By November 1974, Foreign Secretary James Callaghan had had enough. He asked when [Leather’s] appointment ‘could be terminated, on what terms he was appointed and what action would be need to be taken to bring his appointment to an end’. Political differences between Callaghan (Labour) and Leather (Conservative) may have played into this. Callaghan was told that it would be possible to remove him before the end of his term in office on July 15, 1976, yet warned that removing him before that date ‘would present practical and more particularly political difficulties’.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Preston to Watson, March 18, 1974, 63/1227.

⁶⁷ Lloyd, quoting Leather, to FCO, September 30, 1974, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ EN Larmour, November 18, 1974, FCO 63/1227, *op. cit.*

Meanwhile, Leather had also fallen out with civil servants at the FCO, especially Preston, then in charge of the Bermuda brief. A note from Preston suggesting to Leather that he was planning to be away from Bermuda for too long in the summer of 1975 led to Deputy Governor Peter Lloyd being rebuked for having informed London about his plans to travel to Canada, the UK and Jamaica to ‘to address Rotary international’, and take part in fishing and golf competitions.⁶⁹ He wrote to Lloyd: “I regard this letter of Preston’s as officious and impertinent. I am not a civil servant... How long leave I take is a matter between me and the Premier.”⁷⁰ For Preston this was the last straw. In a memorandum to colleagues he wrote: “I am afraid it is clear that [Leather] regards his allegiance to the Secretary of State as minimal”.⁷¹ This, as well as some other illuminating observations, was the gist of a letter by EN Larmour to colleagues on August 14, 1975:

From the FCO point of view [Leather] has shown himself quite unaware of his responsibilities towards HMG and regards himself entirely as a Bermudian governor putting the interests of Bermuda first. He is energetic, full of sound ideas about race relations and gets around his parish. But he is a vain man.⁷²

These cross-cutting animosities played into the growing uncertainty visible both at Government House and the FCO over exactly what role Leather was expected to play in Bermuda.

2.3 Walking ‘something of a tightrope’: Contradictions in the role of Governor

Throughout 1975, several attempts were made to try and pin down definitions of the job of Bermuda Governor. An August 1975 brief by Gibraltar and General Department official EG Lewis noted that the Governor’s most important role was ‘acting as “father confessor” to Bermudian ministers, exerting influence ‘through wise counsel’ and ‘uniting the different

⁶⁹ Lloyd to P Longworth, April 4, 1975, FCO 63/1333, TNA.

⁷⁰ Leather to Lloyd, July 2, 1975, *ibid*.

⁷¹ Preston to Larmour, July 29, 1975, *op. cit.*

⁷² Larmour to Watson, August 14, 1975, 86/340.

communities of the island'. This was an evocation of the Governor's neutral role.⁷³

Yet, Leather also had a political role, evidenced by his powers in 'external affairs, defence, internal security and the police'.⁷⁴ As deputy under-secretary at the FCO Sir Duncan Watson told Bermudian ministers in November 1975, the functions of Governor were 'partly those of a constitutional monarch' and 'partly those of an executive', an amalgam which necessitated a 'marrying of interests'.⁷⁵ This is reflected in the view of a former Governor of Montserrat that the role was, in theory, 'halfway to being a constitutional monarch, acting on the advice of Ministers in most matters and taking his own decisions in those areas reserved for him'.⁷⁶

The political power and influence given to Leather as Governor had been seen by him as part of a responsibility to help shape the development of the island, especially in the management of its external affairs. Yet, as Sharpe complained to the FCO in December 1976, the problem with having politicians appointed as Governor was that there was a tendency for them to 'appear as though they [were] still running for office - engaged in a popularity contest even with the Government'.⁷⁷ The implication, voiced by civil servant Anthony Galsworthy, was that someone 'who was capable of keeping a low profile' would be a better fit for Bermuda.⁷⁸

Yet, as will be made clear in the next chapter, the Governor still had powerful functions, for instance the power of life and death in the exercise of the prerogative of mercy and because of this was required to take views on matters. Leather's personal political views were clear. He felt Sharpe's accession as Premier following Richards' resignation was 'in the best interests of Bermuda'. He also felt that Browne-Evans, the leader of the PLP from

⁷³ Lewis, August 7, 1975, op. cit.

⁷⁴ Op. cit.

⁷⁵ Record of meeting between Richards, Sharpe, Watson and Preston in Hamilton, November 5, 1975, 63/1321.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *British colonial policy in the Caribbean*, 339.

⁷⁷ Sharpe to Larmour, December 16, 1976, 73/347.

⁷⁸ Galsworthy to Private Secretary, October 26 1976, *ibid.*

spring 1976, was someone who would ‘cross the line’ between ‘political opposition... and criminal activity... either without realising it or caring’.⁷⁹ Moreover, he felt that if the PLP won the 1976 General Election ‘[as seemed very unlikely]...he could not really see himself working with them’.⁸⁰ This bias undermined the office of Governor, however, since the job was best interpreted as a neutral job of mediation that should be combined with a clear appraisal of British interests and responsibilities.

Leather’s proclivity for prolixity in sensitive matters was not a harmless and forgivable problem. He crossed the line of negligence when he suggested both to the *Daily Mail* in December 1973 and to the *BBC* in April 1974 that the murderers of Sharples, Duckett, Sayers, Doe and Rego had been caught, before they had faced inquests or trials on the charges.⁸¹ The identity of those who had been caught was known throughout the island as the arrests had been reported in the local press. This was a gross betrayal of the defendants’ rights to a fair trial, enshrined in section six of the Bermuda Constitution 1968. It may have prejudiced potential jury members in subsequent court proceedings. Richards was right when he complained to London that Leather’s actions could ‘cause considerable difficulty if the men were brought to trial’.⁸²

Trans-Atlantic complaints about Leather mounted so that by July 1975, Gibraltar and General Department official JS Champion was ‘proposing to recommend to’ the Dependent Territories Senior Appointments Board that Leather’s term of office ‘should not be renewed when it expires in July 1976’.⁸³ It is clear from the record that three officials in particular, Lewis, Larmour and Preston, were scheming for Leather’s removal. However, by September,

⁷⁹ Leather to Watson, September 30, 1975, FCO 63/1321, TNA.

⁸⁰ Watson to staff in confidence, September 9, 1975, 86/340.

⁸¹ Leather had told the *Daily Mail* that ‘he knew who the murderers of Sir Richards Sharples and the Commissioner of Police were and that they were now in custody on other charges’, JC Philip to unknown, December 19, 1973, 63/1227; In April 1974, he had told a BBC radio program that ‘there have only been three known gun-slingers in Bermuda since the war. All three of them are in jail, very long sentences’, Leather, *BBC Today*, April 11, 1974, 63/1221.

⁸² Philip to unknown, December 19, 1973, 63/1227.

⁸³ Preston to Lewis, July 29, 1975, 86/340.

Leather had not yet been informed that he would not be able to serve for another four-year term as Martonmere had done.

Watson was a ‘conservative, pipe-smoking Yorkshireman’ who served as the FCO’s ‘troubleshooter’. He described his mission as ‘the orderly and peaceful dissolution of our empire’ and believed that ‘Britain had the wisdom and the power to de-colonise skilfully, to foster democracy and free trade unions, and...block Moscow’s ambitions’. Watson had been the FCO’s head of secret intelligence and security during the Mau Mau uprising and had arranged the Wilson-Smith talks on *HMS Fearless* in 1968.⁸⁴

Watson was called in to help ease Leather out of his job. He thought he might break the news of Leather’s firing to him when he visited Bermuda in October and November 1975.⁸⁵ Before this, however, he arranged a meeting with Leather when the Governor was in London, in September 1975. The discussions the two had over lunch are revealing in showing how the job of Governor in an advanced territory was subject to widely differing interpretations, even within the FCO. Leather told Watson he felt his job was ‘misunderstood’ by the FCO, describing the...

*...political impossibility of the Governor taking action which was in any way contrary to the view of Bermuda Ministers, even in matters for which he constitutionally retained special responsibilities.*⁸⁶

Leather believed that because he was dependent on the Bermuda Government ‘for supply’, he had ‘responsibility without power’.⁸⁷ Watson meanwhile told Leather that his job was also to ‘represent the Secretary of State’. Walking the bridge between lobbying on behalf of London and ‘maintaining the confidence of his ministers’ would be difficult but, Watson said, ‘he was in a position to influence Ministers by persuasion on issues where a conflict of interests arose

⁸⁴ *Guardian*, July 20, 1999.

⁸⁵ Larmour to Watson, August 14, 1975, 86/340.

⁸⁶ Record of conversation between Leather and Watson, September 8, 1975. FCO 63/1333, TNA.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

between the two'.⁸⁸ In a follow up letter, Watson said the job of Governor in a territory with a constitution as 'advanced' as that of Bermuda would always involve walking 'something of a tightrope'.⁸⁹

By July 1976, Leather had been told the Bermuda Government had 'refused to agree to his suggestion that his term be extended', something that 'was rather a blow' for him.⁹⁰ However, he was leaving the job at an unpropitious time, when Bermuda was grappling with issues of sentencing in the Duckett, Government House and Shopping Centre murders. Meanwhile, it was believed by the FCO that keeping local Ministers onside was particularly important. This was because, particularly following the election of the Labour Government in February 1974, FCO ministers were 'seeking to encourage moves towards independence in [Britain's] remaining territories... especially those such as Bermuda which [were] economically viable'.⁹¹

3. Bending over backwards 'in the British interest': The FCO hopes to depart Bermuda with 'indecent haste'

FCO discussions about the prospect of Bermudian independence revealed that views of Britain's role on the island evolved during the period 1971-1977. Whilst in the early 1970s, Britain was seen as having *locus standi* in Bermuda's internal affairs, this view would change during the mid-1970s as the Labour Government brought in a policy of 'accelerated decolonisation'. This policy would not last, however, and by 1977, ministers were beginning to believe that Britain's interests would not necessarily be served by attempts to 'nudge' Bermuda into independence.

⁸⁸ Op. cit.

⁸⁹ Watson to Leather, September 12, 1975, op. cit.

⁹⁰ Larmour to the Foreign Secretary's Private Secretary, July 21 1976, 73/347.

⁹¹ Watson to Richards, December 11, 1975, 63/1321.

3.1 The weakening of the commitment to ‘good government’, 1971-1975

On the one hand, some senior officials believed Britain’s role was ensuring ‘good government’. As senior official Sir Leslie Monson wrote in a June 1972 memorandum: “We must plan on the assumption that HMG will carry ultimate responsibility for good government for a prolonged period.”⁹² In Monson’s view the role of Governors would be ‘increasingly concerned with economic development and the improvement of services’. He added:

*The organisation of such activities, together with continuing responsibility for the civil service and for internal security is adding to the workload placed on the Governors themselves at an alarming rate.*⁹³

It is interesting that senior officials were speaking in such terms at this late stage of decolonisation. However, these comments should be seen in the context of decisions that had been made between 1970 and late 1971, when a study for halfway house solutions, similar to Associated Statehood, had been carried out ‘but scrapped’. From thereon, ‘the only choice available to most of Britain’s territories was between continuing dependence or outright independence’.⁹⁴

However, a change of government in 1974 would begin to move the emphasis at the FCO away from ideas of ‘good government’ and towards ‘accelerated decolonisation’. As one senior FCO civil servant would note of the Eastern Caribbean in 1978:

*It seems to me that we should terminate association with, if necessary, indecent haste and cease to have any responsibility for these islands before they blow up in our faces like a series of powder kegs.*⁹⁵

⁹² Internal memorandum by Monson, June 2, 1972, 839.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 27.

⁹⁵ Williams, *Keeping a Line Open*, 480.

Documents throughout 1975 stated that Bermuda fell ‘into a group considered fit for accelerated decolonisation’.⁹⁶ This was in part because Bermuda had met the tests for decolonisation, because she was ‘economically viable (with one of the world highest levels of GNP per head), [was] commercially sophisticated and [had] advanced to a Ministerial form of government’.⁹⁷

Britain had recently shown intransigence over moves by Bermuda to gain more control over decision-making in the areas of shipping and civil aviation.⁹⁸ Although the suggestion was denied by Watson when he visited the island in November 1975, the perception amongst Bermudian ministers was that...

...UK authorities deliberately made it difficult to make progress on matters such as civil aviation licensing and shipping manning standards in order to force Bermuda into independence.⁹⁹

In light of the consistent refusal to countenance Associated Statehood for Bermuda, it is important to speculate on the reason for this shift towards ‘accelerated decolonisation’ in Bermuda’s case.¹⁰⁰ The record of a meeting between Rowlands and Richards in London in November 1975 is insightful. Rowlands started off by reiterating that Britain was ‘encouraging the movement amongst our dependencies from internal self-government to independence’. He then elaborated on the reason for this:

Because of the present constitutional position we were from time to time dragged into issues... in which we had no standing. People still considered that they could appeal to HMG as ultimately responsible even for Bermuda’s internal affairs.¹⁰¹

This suggestion that Britain had ‘no standing’ in issues of ‘internal affairs’ was an unprecedented admission, indicating a shift of emphasis between the

⁹⁶ Unknown to Preston, mid-1975, 63/1332.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ FCO note, September 2, 1975, 63/1333.

⁹⁹ Minutes of meeting between Watson, Richards and Sharpe in Hamilton on November 10, 1975, FCO 63/1321.

¹⁰⁰ Watson to Richards, December 11, 1975, ibid.

¹⁰¹ Record of meeting between Rowlands and Richards, November 25, 1975 in London, 63/1321, op. cit.

Conservative Government and the Labour Government, and perhaps even between Labour ministers and their civil servants. In 1971, senior FCO official CG Mortlock had mentioned how the ‘maintenance of law and order’ was one aspect of the British government’s responsibilities for ‘good government’ in colonies.¹⁰² However, Rowlands’ view was the Britain should no longer be concerned with ‘good government’ or ‘internal affairs’. This difference of interpretation highlighted the ambiguity of Britain’s responsibilities in Bermuda, while it also highlighted the brief moment under Wilson between 1974 and 1976 when the FCO was pushing Bermuda towards independence more forcefully than ever.

As a result, the FCO would even attempt to stiffen the UBP’s resolve as Sharpe expressed his intention to begin an island-wide conversation on independence during his Premiership. As Preston noted in December 1975: “The Bermuda Government wish to be seen by their public as gaining from HMG a significant constitutional advance.”¹⁰³ However, senior FCO bureaucrat HSH Stanley suggested to Sharpe that his government’s Green Paper on independence, published in July 1977, was ‘so unenthusiastic about independence as to convey an impression of hesitancy unworthy of his Government’.¹⁰⁴ Stanley added that it was indicative of an ‘attitude of indecisive timidity’ that ‘may work against...our policy of encouraging Bermuda to go independent’.¹⁰⁵ Meanwhile, during a meeting between Sharpe and Rowlands on April 20, 1977, Rowlands said the British Government was ‘anxious to give cover to the Bermudan (sic) Government against critics who were opposed to independence. This was in the British interest.’¹⁰⁶

Perhaps the British desire to be rid of Bermuda speaks to the gravity of the economic crisis then concerning ministers and officials in London. While Bermuda did not receive aid from London, there was always the danger that an internal security situation would require Britain to divert resources

¹⁰² Mortlock to Clewley, February 1, 1971, 823.

¹⁰³ Brief by Preston, December 4, 1975, 63/1321.

¹⁰⁴ Stanley to Rowlands, April 19, 1977, FCO 63/1450, TNA.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ JFR Martin, *Report of meeting between Sharpe and Rowlands*, April 20, 1977, op. cit.

towards sending troops there.¹⁰⁷ In December 1974, Wilson had been warned by economist and Energy Minister Lord Balogh about ‘possible wholesale domestic liquidation [of the British economy] starting with a notable bankruptcy’. Adding that ‘the magnitude of this threat is quite incalculable’, he warned: “Should inflation accelerate further, a deep constitutional crisis can no longer be treated as fanciful speculation.”¹⁰⁸ Despite this context, Wilson’s approach to ‘accelerated decolonisation’ may have been part of ‘the first hesitant beginnings of a renewed British engagement with the rest of the world’. Despite the undoubted need for such revisionism, however, it also seemed that Britain underplayed its focus on ‘principles of socialist internationalism’ when it came to its faltering and timid interaction with Bermuda’s oligarchy.¹⁰⁹

3.2 The sidelining of FCO concerns about Bermudian electoral iniquities, 1971-1977

The effect of Labour’s new policy of ‘accelerated decolonisation’ seems to have led to the sidelining of FCO concerns about the iniquities in Bermuda’s electoral system. Reformers in Bermuda were arguing that the answer to problems of governance in Bermuda was not independence but constitutional reform. A PLP press release suggested in February 1976 that an independent Bermuda under the UBP would mean the ‘present structure of power’ remained ‘unchanged’, creating a situation in which ‘the only difference would be that the oligarchical powers would be absolute’.¹¹⁰

What is striking, in answer to Lane’s rosy view of Labour’s period in office, is the extent to which previously-expressed concerns about electoral boundaries seem to have taken a back seat between 1971 and 1977. Previous chapters showed how between 1964 and 1972, Martonmere had resisted changes to the electoral system or constituency boundaries because he was opposed to the

¹⁰⁷ As the next chapter will show, the effect of troops being sent to Bermuda in December 1977 would be seen in a diminishment of the government’s ability to cope with a strike by firefighters over the Christmas period.

¹⁰⁸ BBC news, December 29, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Lane, *Foreign and Defence Policy*, 154.

¹¹⁰ *Bermuda Sun*, February 14, 1976.

PLP gaining power. At the time, Posnett had argued that Martonmere's view was 'wrong in democratic principles' and 'also liable to lead later to an even more violent swing to the other extreme when the swing comes'.¹¹¹ The term 'violent' was prescient, given the riots that broke out in 1977. Posnett was joined by Scott, who believed it was 'in the long term interest of Bermuda that this problem be tackled firmly as soon as possible'.¹¹²

A Boundaries Commission, headed by James S Duncan, was appointed in December 1971, yet, stacked as it was with two UBP appointees John Plowman and Jim Woolridge, and only one PLP representative, Arthur Hodgson, it made only minor changes and it was not tasked with addressing the main point about constituencies being straitjacketed by parish boundaries, nor with the more serious problem of Commonwealth citizens being given the right to vote after three years' residence.¹¹³ This was despite the fact the FCO admitted in December 1977 that the votes of such people may 'have been important in the marginal seats' at the 1976 election.¹¹⁴

Between 1971 and 1977, the issue of constituency boundaries seems to have virtually disappeared from the FCO radar. In 1975, a draft brief only alluded to an 'understanding' that the UBP government was 'planning changes to the PLP advantage'. And in records of meetings between UK and Bermudian ministers the issue does not seem to have been raised.¹¹⁵ An optimistic letter from Ramsbotham in September 1977 suggested that the new Premier, Gibbons, was seeking residents' 'opinions' on the 'expatriate or residential vote' and that a 'White Paper [on possible constitutional change] would then follow probably next summer' but these suggestions seem vague.¹¹⁶ It was not until the outbreak of violence in December 1977, moreover, that the boundaries issue was raised in any serious way by the FCO, when it was again admitted that the PLP's argument 'does have some force'.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ Memorandum by Posnett, April 20, 1971, 823.

¹¹² Scott to Martonmere, late April, 1971, *ibid.*

¹¹³ *Gazette*, December 8, 1971.

¹¹⁴ Briefing by PC Duff, December 20, 1977. FCO 44/1465, TNA.

¹¹⁵ Record of conversation between Rowlands and Richards, 63/1332.

¹¹⁶ Ramsbotham to Rowlands, September 29, 1977, 44/1456.

¹¹⁷ Briefing by Duff, December 20, 1977, 44/1465.

This somewhat contradicts (Lord David) Owen's claim that 'human rights' were the 'leitmotif' of his time as Foreign Secretary, which began in February 1977. In Owen's defence, as he was briefed to tell the House of Commons in December 1977, 'inequalities between electorates [in Bermuda] are less than in the UK'.¹¹⁸ Owen explained that his negotiating position on Bermudian independence had been: "Get your black and white relations right and then we will look at the issue." He added his recollection that 'we were pushing Gibbons to make more changes to be more open to blacks'.¹¹⁹

It is true that pressure of this sort occurred, but there is little evidence of FCO lobbying on the subject before riots struck in December 1977. Crucially, a meeting between Sharpe and Owen in April 1977, at which Sharpe optimistically thought that 'in practice independence would come in three or four years time', there was no record of Owen having raised the issues of the franchise nor constituency boundaries.¹²⁰ Indeed, such reforms were left to be recommended in the report of the Royal Commission headed by Lord Pitt, published in February 1978.¹²¹

This section has argued that British policy was characterised by a gradual shift away from ideas of 'good government' towards a policy of disengagement that was partly inspired by events on the ground in Bermuda, which had seen the Governor targeted by a 'frustrated minority', but also by wider policy changes in London as a new Labour Government came to power in February 1974. One minister voiced his belief that Britain had 'no standing' in Bermuda's internal affairs – an erroneous view given Britain's remaining constitutional responsibility for internal security. Meanwhile, Britain's history in Bermuda left her with a more profound moral responsibility to ensure openness, pluralism and accountability in her democratic topography. 'Accelerated decolonisation' was accompanied by an apparent lack of concern about Bermuda's electoral iniquities.

¹¹⁸ Notes by Duff, December 5, 1977, FCO 44/1464, TNA.

¹¹⁹ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹²⁰ Record of a discussion between Sharpe and Owen in London, April 19, 1977, 73/347.

¹²¹ Pitt et al, *Report into...the 1977 Disturbances*, 36.

4. 'Things have moved rather quickly here': The 'messy' process of searching for Leather's successor, 1976-77

Between late 1975 and the summer of 1976, Leather's term in office was extended until March 31, 1977. This was likely because Leather had a much closer relationship with Sharpe than he had had with Richards. There were four aspects to the Anglo-Bermudian handling of the search for Leather's successor. Firstly, there was a lack of care shown in the fact that the Governor oversaw Bermuda's judiciary at a time of judicial proceedings following high-profile murders. Secondly, there was a desire to find someone who was more sensitive to constitutional niceties than Leather. Thirdly, the process was crippled by indecisiveness on the part of Sharpe, who had an effective veto over the decision. Finally, the decision became caught up in wider global staffing changes at the FCO.

4.1 The FCO and the UBP believe there is 'no urgency' in finding a successor

Firstly, there was a general lack of care about the fact that Leather was presiding over a process of judicial mercy that could lead to the last executions on British soil. In September 1975, it was expected therefore that Leather would have given way to his successor by mid-1976. The problem was that this turnover in senior personnel was happening at a critical time in the judicial and sentencing proceedings of Erskine Burrows, sentenced to death for murdering Sharples, Sayers and Duckett in July 1976; and Larry Tacklyn, sentenced to death after having been found guilty in October 1976, alongside Burrows, of killing Mark Doe and Victor Rego during a robbery at the Shopping Centre supermarket in Hamilton in April 1973.¹²² The Governor had the grave responsibility of deciding whether Tacklyn and Burrows should be

¹²² Williams, *Lois*, 94-99.

reprieved from the sentences of hanging under his prerogative of mercy power. In April 1977, Leather told London he had 'extremely mixed' feelings about 'not being able to fulfill his responsibilities to the final curtain'.¹²³

Leather's worries exposed a crucial failing in the transatlantic handling of the personnel changeover. In fact, Leather's successor would not be in place until September 1977, at which point the events in the sentencing process had proceeded all the way to the Judicial Panel of the Privy Council in the House of Lords. It was a daunting welcome for someone inexperienced both in Bermudian politics and in the nuances of the job of Governor. Despite this, the minutes of a meeting between Owen, and Sharpe noted that 'there was no great rush to get a new Governor to the Island.'¹²⁴

4.2 The FCO aims to appoint someone who can operate an 'advanced constitution'

Secondly, the problems experienced during Leather's period in office from 1973 onwards had created a desire to find someone who was capable of handling 'advanced-type constitutions', who was loyal to the FCO itself and the Foreign Secretary and subtle enough to understand constitutional niceties. As an official explained in early 1977, the new Governor's work 'will probably have more political content, but will entail less public prominence'.¹²⁵

The first names were circulated more than a year after this process could have begun. Two civil servants were proposed. The first recommendation was 56-year-old Harry SH Stanley, who 'originally joined the Commonwealth Relations Office' and 'whose subsequent experience has been in Africa'. Also proposed was former Sudan political service and judiciary officer Donald F Hawley, who was 55 at the time.¹²⁶ These suggestions are an indication that the FCO had been frustrated by Leather's lack of loyalty to the department and

¹²³ *Valedictory dispatch 1976*, 44/1454.

¹²⁴ Record of a conversation between Owen and Sharpe, April 19, 77, 73/347; note to Staff in Confidence by Fergusson, July 22, 1976, *ibid*.

¹²⁵ EAJ Fergusson to Wright, December 7, 1976, *op. cit.*

¹²⁶ *Op. cit.*

his inability to handle the complexities of Bermuda's constitutional setup. As was noted by Stanley, Sharpe 'and his colleagues favoured an appointment from the Diplomatic Service'.¹²⁷

4.3 The process is delayed by Sharpe's indecision

This second point links into the third aspect of the handling of this process: the acute indecision displayed by Sharpe, upon whom the FCO were depending to sign-off on the proposed name. The names of Stanley and Hawley had in fact been put forward after Sharpe indicated he 'would be very ready to accept... someone with experience of advance-type colonial constitutions' when he visited Bermuda in September 1976.¹²⁸ As Premier, he had an effective veto on the name, in the informal convention that saw him given 'a chance to comment on a proposed appointment before the submission [was] made to Her Majesty'.¹²⁹

By December, with Sharpe's apparent blessing, the FCO had decided to recommend Hawley's name to the Dependent Territories Senior Appointments Board, which indicated that it thought Hawley was 'admirably suited to the task'.¹³⁰ Thus, it seemed the process was nearly complete, and only awaited a final sign-off by Crosland, and then the Queen.

The major spanner in the works was that Sharpe kept changing his mind. In fact as early as December 7, he had indicated that he was having 'second thoughts' to which FCO official Ewen Fergusson understood 'he tends to be prone'.¹³¹ Sharpe asked whether a political heavyweight such as Attorney General Lord Elwyn-Jones, former Ambassador to the US and former Bank of England Governor George Baring (the Earl of Cromer) or the African-Trinidadian former chair of the Greater London Council Lord Pitt of Hampstead might be available. These suggestions were in spite of his

¹²⁷ Stanley to CG Forster, April 14, 1977, op. cit.

¹²⁸ Op. cit.

¹²⁹ To Patrick Wright from Fergusson, December 7, 1976, op. cit.

¹³⁰ Op. cit.

¹³¹ Op. cit.

comments that he had ‘reservations’ about having another politician, but certainly wanted someone with ‘an interested and agreeable wife with the social graces’.¹³²

By March, Fergusson had had enough of Sharpe’s dithering: “It is all rather messy... Moreover the timing is now very tight.”¹³³ By April, the FCO was getting worried and aware of press reaction to the delay. Official CG Forster noted:

*One of the problems is that over the last six months Mr Sharpe has come up with a series of different names at different times... The appointment of a new Governor is now overdue.*¹³⁴

Britain’s deferral to the UBP left them dependent on the changing whims of Sharpe in making this crucial appointment.

4.4 The decision-making process is caught up in a wider departmental personnel change

These three factors snowballed into a final fourth factor: a changeover in personnel at the top of the Foreign Office and an entanglement with wider personnel issues. David Owen took over as Foreign Secretary from Tony Crosland, who died on February 19, 1977. The evidence suggests that the process of appointing a new Governor became entangled in Owen’s decision to remove Sir Peter Ramsbotham from his position as British Ambassador to the United States and, controversially, to replace him with Callaghan’s son-in-law Peter Jay.

Born in 1919, Ramsbotham was the younger son of Conservative politician Herwald Ramsbotham and attended Eton and Magdalen College, Oxford before joining the army in 1943. He served as political officer in Germany and Austria after World War Two and joined the Foreign Office in 1950. According

¹³² Sharpe to Larmour, December 16, 1976, op. cit.

¹³³ Fergusson to Wright, March 15, 1977, op. cit.

¹³⁴ Forster to Rowlands, April 15, 1977, op. cit.

to the *Daily Telegraph*'s 2010 laudatory obituary of Ramsbotham, he was a former head of mission in Cyprus and ambassador to Iran, and combined a 'brilliant mind and a diffident manner'.¹³⁵

Ramsbotham was not popular, however, with Wilson, Callaghan or Owen. Owen described how during his and Callaghan's first visit to Washington to meet with the new President, Jimmy Carter, who had been inaugurated on January 20, he had decided to remove Ramsbotham because the Ambassador did not get on with Callaghan. Owen noted that it also 'became clear... that we had an Ambassador who wasn't seen as a politically enough aware figure, that the PM was not going to use politically'.¹³⁶ The 'rationale' was that a relatively young Carter 'would bond better with a young Ambassador'.¹³⁷ It was part of the dilemma of 'how to get alongside this new President'.¹³⁸

The prospect of Ramsbotham's ejection from the Ambassadorship in May, after three years of serving under three Presidents, meant a job had to be found for him. At a meeting between Owen and Sharpe on April 19, 'the primary purpose' of which, for Sharpe at least, was the discussion of the Governorship,¹³⁹ Sharpe suggested 'it would not hurt to have a man of distinction, someone like a retiring Ambassador from Washington'. Owen replied that 'he would look carefully at this'.¹⁴⁰ The April 19 meeting was the moment when Sharpe's latest whim coincided with the political convenience of London. By May 10, Owen sent Sharpe a telegram in which he noted he was 'very happy to find when we met that our thinking was on exactly the same lines' and in which he officially suggested Ramsbotham for the Bermuda job.

Before Sharpe could reply even, the decision to move Ramsbotham was announced to the press. Ramsbotham was described as 'delighted and

¹³⁵ *Daily Telegraph*, April 9, 2010.

¹³⁶ The animosity between Callaghan and Ramsbotham was so great that, during the trip, Owen revealed that the Prime Minister had decided not to stay at the British Ambassador's residence in Washington but to stay instead at Blair House, Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹³⁷ *Independent*, April 21, 2010.

¹³⁸ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹³⁹ Stanley to Forster, April 14, 1977, 73/347.

¹⁴⁰ Record of discussion between Sharpe and Owen, *ibid.*

honoured' to accept the appointment.¹⁴¹ This was not quite true, as Ramsbotham would acknowledge years later when it became apparent that he was angry at having been effectively demoted.¹⁴² According to the *Daily Telegraph*:

The switch was made at very short notice, and was accompanied by a clumsy smear campaign in which Ramsbotham was portrayed as a "fuddy-duddy" and an "old-fashioned snob".¹⁴³

This was what Donoughue sarcastically called a 'dirty briefing against sweet old Ramsbotham'.¹⁴⁴ It was carried out by Callaghan's press secretary Tom McCaffrey in the midst of a press war with the FCO. Ramsbotham would later describe how he found the move 'annoying' because 'I was just beginning then to be really useful... It was silly to change'.¹⁴⁵

Ramsbotham made clear that he was not very keen on going to Bermuda. He said when asked where he would like to go that his first choice was Hong Kong. The trouble was that Hong Kong's highly successful and popular (Labour-leaning) Governor Sir Murray MacLehose, who had been there for six years already, had just been reappointed and 'wanted to stay for another five years'.¹⁴⁶ As Ramsbotham recounted: "It went on like that until finally they came in and said, blushing a little bit, Would you go as Governor and Commander-in-Chief to Bermuda?"¹⁴⁷

It should be remembered that Ramsbotham had never worked as a Governor. He had been an Ambassador in Tehran and the US, and was experienced in diplomatic nuances but not with the exercise of executive power. He had been High Commissioner in Cyprus in the late 1960s. Cyprus was already

¹⁴¹ Draft telegram from FCO to Sharpe, May 10, 1977, op. cit.

¹⁴² Bain, *Ramsbotham interview*, 42.

¹⁴³ *Telegraph*, April 9, 2010.

¹⁴⁴ On May 16 Donoughue wrote: "Our handling of it has gone wrong and the press won't let it go. The Foreign Office is heavily briefing against No. 10...." Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, 188-89.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ In fact, the FCO noted that there was 'pressure' in Hong Kong for MacLehose's appointment to be extended up until 1979, Palliser to Crosland, October 13, 1976, 73/347; Owen was particularly fond of MacLehose, who he believed to be a 'wise man', Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹⁴⁷ Bain, *Ramsbotham interview*, 42-43.

independent at that point and most of his time was spent working on handling delicate negotiations between the Turkish and Greek Cypriots.¹⁴⁸

Thus the Bermuda job was more of a sinecure or a consolation prize for someone looking to play out his time quietly, as senior diplomat Paul Gore-Booth had put it to Ramsbotham, ‘under a palm tree’.¹⁴⁹ For this reason, he was the wrong person to send to Bermuda during this period. Despite nearly 20-odd months in which to find Leather’s replacement, the name of Ramsbotham had only been in circulation for less than a month. This was captured in a message from Fergusson to colleagues on May 11 in which he noted that ‘since my last message, things have moved rather quickly here’.¹⁵⁰

There was worse to come. Ramsbotham’s arrival in Bermuda was further delayed by dithering that saw the absence of a Governor during crucial months that saw judicial wrangling over Tacklyn’s appeal to the Judicial Panel of the Privy Council in the House of Lords. Sharpe was not initially able to tell the Bermuda press when Ramsbotham would arrive. In a private communication to Ramsbotham from Lloyd, it was revealed he would not be able to permanently move to Bermuda until late August or early September due to a ‘personal problem’.¹⁵¹ The crucial events that transpired in Bermuda at the end of 1977 may have been made more likely by the tortuous and rather arbitrary process by which Bermuda’s Governor was appointed.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how ambiguities and contradictions in the role of Governor could quickly be brought into the light by one flamboyant individual. Leather’s behaviour from the moment he arrived suggested he still believed he had a public, political role to play. He filled this role in a manner that indicated he saw himself as Bermuda’s paternal debate-framer and international champion. He did not, however, see himself as the advocate of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴⁹ Op. cit., 34.

¹⁵⁰ Note by Fergusson, May 10, 1977, 44/1467.

¹⁵¹ Lloyd to Ramsbotham, May 13, 1977, ibid.

British interests on Bermudian soil. As Labour Minister Chris Mullin would opine his diary in 2001, Governors of British territories were 'big fish in very small pools. Amiable, graying men in their fifties, coasting towards retirement'. He added: "Once in the post they tend to go native and make all sorts of unreasonable demands."¹⁵²

This was a view that contrasted with perceptions that Governors should operate power in a way that placed relationships on British terms, as was arguably the view of more conservative ministers such as Callaghan, who viewed British 'contingent liabilities' primarily through the lens of short-term domestic politics and economic exigencies. The alternative view was of Britain operating power as a means by which she could meet her historically-accrued responsibilities. Such a view had been espoused in the Labour Party by MPs such as Brockway, Driberg and Lester, arguably, in the Conservatives, by Iain MacLeod and at the FCO by Posnett.

Understandably perhaps, Leather misunderstood the political role he was expected to play; one that exercised power behind closed doors, away from public scrutiny – the 'father confessor' in public who exercised great power in private. The role had been clouded by *ad hoc* constitutional reforms in April 1973, implemented in part to suit the political demands of the UBP. In 1973, the Governor had been removed as chair of the Executive Council. The new Governor's Council proved to be a repository of ambiguity, in which Bermudian ministers were 'consulted' over Leather's reserved powers of internal security and external affairs. The question was: who made the final decision?

Without the power to set agendas, how could Leather meet his responsibility to help provide 'good government'? As Leather complained, in carrying out his role he was dependent upon 'supply' from the UBP government. 'Good government' necessarily involved internal affairs, and even if he was not chairing it, the Governor should have at least had a leading permanent role within the Cabinet if he was to fulfill his responsibilities properly. The

¹⁵² Mullin, *View from the Foothills*, 196-7.

problem was that pragmatic constitutional reforms exacerbated the incoherence of ‘anachronistic’ arrangements that Kinnear presciently denounced shortly following the murders of Sharples and Sayers.¹⁵³ This incoherence was exacerbated by internal security problems. It would have implications for the judicial and mercy processes and contribute to civil unrest in December 1977.

One of the problems was that former Conservative MP and Canadian Leather saw himself as more of a Commonwealth citizen than as a representative of the British government (especially a Labour government). This chapter argues that Leather saw in Bermuda an imperial vision of a post-colonial Commonwealth. Whereas ‘the official attitude to...the adoption of British-style institutions in parts of the Empire not populated by European settlers ranged from ambivalence to outright contempt’, Bermuda was in Leather’s eyes a perfect ‘projection of the British or English character overseas’.¹⁵⁴

The steadfast adherence to this view was part of an attempt to fill the ‘moral and political vacuum’ that existed ‘as the Commonwealth rapidly expanded beyond the old empire of kith and kin’. Leather’s friend Heath oversaw ‘a low point’ in Britain’s relations with the Commonwealth over the issue of arms sales to South Africa. Leather embodied and attempted to promote an older view of the Commonwealth; a particular vision of British-dominated and white-led stability.¹⁵⁵ An outcrop of this was his fervent belief that ‘the best cement’ for British-Bermudian relations was Royal visits.¹⁵⁶

Leather’s unique stamp on the job also rapidly brought into the light some of the contradictions embodied in the advanced Bermudian constitution. How could he balance his responsibility to personify British interests with those of providing leadership in and championing the interests of Bermuda? On several occasions, Leather revealed that he saw himself more as Bermuda’s Foreign Minister, for instance traveling to Japan for the ship naming

¹⁵³ Kinnear to FCO, May 1, 1973, 63/1095.

¹⁵⁴ Murphy, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 269-70.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁵⁶ Leather, *Annual Report 1976*, 44/1454.

ceremonies¹⁵⁷ and building stronger relations between Bermuda and Canada.¹⁵⁸ His interpretation of the job was unacceptable to London because he refused to follow Callaghan's orders and became hostile whenever reminded of his duties.

The evidence showed that the FCO saw the responsibilities of the Governor's job as a cross between an Ambassador, constitutional monarch and 'those of an executive'. This was the nub of the matter, as Bermuda was fast evolving from a colony into a quasi-independent 'Dominion'-type territory. Leather could not play the reserved constitutional monarch, since he was political, biased towards the UBP and outspoken. Meanwhile, he would not be allowed to play the role of 'executive' either, at least not in public, because UBP Ministers now saw themselves, owing to their artificially inflated electoral mandate, as the big parrot fish in a tiny lagoon. This led to a mutual FCO/UBP interest, from Leather's time onwards, in finding 'low key' people to fill the role.

Meanwhile, the UK's stance on independence indicated changing priorities between 1971 and 1977, between the years of Conservative and Labour government and between the administrations of Wilson and Callaghan. During the Heath government there was an initial reluctance to nudge Bermuda to independence. The term 'good government' was misleading since it seemed to suggest the UK somehow had monopoly on efficient and equitable forms of governance. However, its more profound significance was that it symbolised Britain's continuing responsibility to ensure that the history of oligarchical-domination was not able to replicate itself for a new age. In this task, the British definition of 'good government' was revealed to be severely slanted towards conservative and myopic notions of 'stability'.

When Labour came to power in 1974, Wilson appeared to be in favour of 'accelerated decolonisation'. This view, based on the idea that Britain no longer had real 'standing' in Bermuda's internal affairs, risked Whitehall

¹⁵⁷ Preston to Watson, March 18, 1974, 63/1227.

¹⁵⁸ Leather, *Annual Report 1976*, 44/1454.

taking its eye off the problems in the island's electoral arrangements which amounted to a real source of grievance for many Bermudians. The problem was that Britain was prepared to let the UBP call the shots. The UBP had no interest in changing the system until forced to (as they did in 1979 following the riots). Despite Owen's suggestion that he wanted Bermuda to get its 'black/white' relations right before independence, there is no evidence of any pressure being brought to bear on these matters in the years 1972-1977.¹⁵⁹

Finally, because the FCO took its lead almost entirely from the UBP and did not exert leadership or decisiveness, the job of Governor was not filled as quickly as it should have been. As a result of a combination of these delays, Sharpe's power of veto combined with his natural indecisiveness, and the fact that the process became caught up in wider personnel changes, meaning that the job of Governor was filled by someone with no experience of Bermuda. Nor had Ramsbotham any experience of the quasi-monarchical life and death powers of Governor. As the next chapter will argue, this may have contributed to the debacle that led to the last hangings on British soil in 1977.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Six

The Last Hangings on British Soil: The Royal Prerogative of Mercy, the Creech Jones Doctrine and the hangings of Erskine Durrant Burrows and Larry Winfield Tacklyn

I had never realised what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man. When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle, I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide.¹

1. Introduction

The final chapter will examine how Bermudian political dynamics, whereby the UBP were privileged constitutionally vis-à-vis Government House and electorally vis-à-vis the PLP, affected the way in which Britain exercised its responsibilities over the justice and mercy processes in 1977. This would be revealed following the killings of Governor Sir Richard Sharples, Captain Hugh Sayers, Police Commissioner George Duckett and two civilians, Mark Doe and Victor Rego. Bermuda had the dubious distinction of being the last British-controlled territory in which executions occurred when Erskine Burrows and Larry Tacklyn were hanged in the early hours of December 2, 1977.²

This chapter thus offers a dramatic insight into the last days of the British Empire in the 1970s and highlights dilemmas over questions of intervention that are relevant to this day. The debate about the death penalty and its social impact took place in the context of a wider push for Britain to pull out of Bermuda. What becomes clear is the way in which British officials realised they were not completely in control.

¹ Orwell, *The Hanging*, 97-8.

² For accounts of the arrests, trials and sentencing of Burrows and Tacklyn, see Darrell, *Acel'dama*; Williams, *Lois*; Williams, *Peaceful Warrior*; Harries Hunter, *The People of Bermuda*; Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*; Moir, Ramsbotham and Gibbons, *Partners in Peace and Prosperity*; and for an account of the riots that followed Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries* and Burchall, *Fine as Wine*.

This was, in part, because the British Empire operated through a ‘highly decentralised power structure, resting on a variety of local collaborators’.³ Yet in Bermuda, the situation had been taken to a new extreme during the 1970s as the UBP had attained a state of independence that posed a challenge to the British Government’s political will to intervene. The lead-up to the hangings revealed the way in which a Labour government policy that was ‘basically reactive to the wishes of colonies’⁴ came up against notions of ‘trusteeship’⁵, forcing imperial dilemmas into Cabinet and parliamentary discussions.

Williams argues that Tacklyn’s lawyer Lois Browne-Evans believed the conviction and execution of her client and Burrows represented a kind of ‘divine retribution’ by the ruling oligarchy following a politically-charged set of murders.⁶ Meanwhile, Kawaley argues that Tacklyn and Burrows may have been deprived of their constitutional rights during their trials on murder-charges stemming from the armed robbery of the Shopping Centre supermarket in April 1973.⁷

This chapter will build upon these arguments, suggesting that the process by which the British Government decided whether or not Tacklyn and Burrows should be granted mercy was unclear and caught up in a set of personal relations and political circumstances that obscured real questions about whether or not the men had been the victims of a miscarriage of justice.

In the words of Swan, the Burrows and Tacklyn cases exposed the ‘racial dynamics’ of Bermuda to the glaring light of day.⁸ However, these dynamics also became caught up in wider issues relating to the exercise of diffuse, global power via Britain’s superannuated constitution. These hangings were also a result of a diminution of leadership on the part of a supposedly progressive UK government faced with a Bermudian justice system biased towards the

³ Murphy, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 279.

⁴ Drower, *Fistful of islands*, 29.

⁵ Hyam, *Understanding the British Empire*, 211-237.

⁶ Williams, *Lois* 192.

⁷ Kawaley, *Fair Cross-Section Principle*, 522-546.

⁸ Swan, *Black Power in Bermuda*, 179.

cause of execution. Metropolitan political fragility and constitutional ambiguity added to a diffuse culture of complacency that reached from Bermuda's Cabinet Office to Government House, Whitehall and even Buckingham Palace. Firstly, the story of the last hangings on British soil is a case study of the way in which the superstructure of empire and questions of racial difference and justice could interact to produce civil disorder. Secondly, this episode provides a demonstration of the way in which centralised, largely unregulated, quasi-judicial power allowed politicians to obscure lines of accountability.

1.1. 'The language of the unheard': The explosive potential of 'justice' in the context of colonial institutional racism

The aftermaths of the cases of Rodney King and Mark Duggan provide examples of the explosive effect that charges of institutional discrimination can have in connection with the operation of law enforcement and justice.⁹ As Dr Martin Luther King Jr argued, rioting is the 'language of the unheard'.¹⁰ What this comment suggests is a link between systems of institutional representation and agglomeration and a violent popular response in the event of such institutions appearing to have failed to work fairly. The existence of such a conjunction between discrimination in political and legal institutions could take on a multifarious character throughout the British Empire. Here, a mix of unaccountable transnational institutions and local legal systems helped to make 'whiteness an objective fact'.¹¹ The field of crime and punishment was a key arena in which the tensions of imperial repression played out.

The Wooding Commission report following the 1968 riots pointed to what it viewed as the tendency of certain officers within the police to display 'perhaps a contempt for the black Bermudian and his entitlement to fairplay and justice'.¹² However, institutional racism seems to also have extended to the highest reaches of the UBP government, Government House and the FCO. The

⁹ Lawrence Vogelman, *Big Black Man Syndrome*, 571-578; Martin, *Beating of Rodney King*, 307-326.

¹⁰ CBS News, *King interview*, September 27, 1966.

¹¹ Garner, *Whiteness*, 31.

¹² Wooding, Springer and Browning, *Bermuda civil disorders*, 50.

Black Caucus described in Chapter Four, showed that there was a widespread perception of racial discrimination within the UBP. And previous chapters have shown instances of animus on the part of Martonmere at least towards what he saw as ‘extreme black elements’.¹³ Finally, Swan has detailed the ‘racist’ comments contained in at least one report written by an IRD officer.¹⁴

This is relevant to this chapter because the Governor had the power to oversee the Bermudian justice system and appoint judges under Section 73 (2) and (3) of the Bermuda Constitution.¹⁵ This chapter will argue that the justice system in Bermuda was flawed and unbalanced. Leather, who oversaw the operation of justice believed Burrows and Tacklyn to be guilty. Politics was also allowed to enter into the operation of justice via the involvement of the Premier in the decision of whether Tacklyn and Burrows should hang.

Claims of institutional racism were not enough to prove that it existed. Although basic pride in ‘British justice’ based on the idea of equality before the law was paralleled by ‘inequality of power’ between ‘between white and non-white races’,¹⁶ Wiener argues that, although flawed, the ideal of the rule of law ‘never ceased to exert its pressure on the practice’ of the law. In this way the contradictions of British law were often exposed and ‘the Empire itself [was] put on trial’.¹⁷

However, there is evidence that the rule of law could also be used as a cover-up for crimes committed in the name of British imperial stability. Mass executions in times of ‘civil emergency’ found their way into the operation of British imperial power in the mid-20th century.¹⁸ David Anderson describes how Britain tried about 3,000 Kikuyu on capital charges, and sent 1,090 people to the gallows.¹⁹ He elucidates the ‘grimly ironic’ way in which the British kept documentary records of these events in ‘meticulous, voluminous

¹³ Posnett memorandum, April 20, 1971, 823.

¹⁴ Swan, *Black power in Bermuda*.

¹⁵ Bermuda Constitution Order 1968.

¹⁶ Wiener, *Empire on Trial*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ For a first-hand account of a hanging in Burma in the 1930s, see the account by Orwell, who worked as a policeman there, *The Hanging*.

¹⁹ Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 6-7.

detail'.²⁰ The central issue relevant to the Bermuda case is the question of whether it was racism that enabled a similar disparity between the trappings of due process and the reality of the brutal use of state violence.

1.2 The death penalty in dependent territories

Even after it was banned for homicide in 1969, capital punishment remained a politically explosive issue. Firstly, the political debate about whether the death penalty would remain banned was unsettled, with key Conservatives, such as leader Margaret Thatcher, arguing that it should be brought back for terrorist murders in the context of a sectarian bombing campaign.²¹ Secondly, Britain's remnants of empire provided a space in which both the British Foreign and Home Secretaries (in Jersey and the Isle of Man) retained responsibility for dealing with death sentences handed down by colonial judges in Dependent Territories.²²

In Bermuda, the death penalty had been in use since the English had settled on the island in 1609. In 1695, for example, an Indian man called Captive had been found guilty of fatally stabbing a man. He was hanged at Flatts inlet and his head was displayed on a pole.²³ The last hanging in Bermuda before 1977 however, took place in 1943. In that period, seven cases had been commuted by the Governor.²⁴

Despite the permanent banning of the death penalty in the UK in 1969 and 1973, the death penalty remained enshrined in Bermudian law until 2000.²⁵ However, in 1975, UBP MP for Devonshire South, William Cox, introduced a private member's bill for the abolition of capital punishment. Cox claimed he 'was denounced for his stand and incurred hostility from several of his UBP

²⁰ Op. cit., 7 & 8.

²¹ Owen, *Time to Declare*; Draft statement by JAB Stewart, April 29, 1977, FCO 44/1463, TNA.

²² Memorandum by Lord President of the Council Michael Foot MP, to Cabinet, February 21, 1978, (CP(78)21), TNA.

²³ Bernhard, *Slaves and Slaveholders in Bermuda*, 207.

²⁴ Clive Rose and Clive Whitmore, "Reprieves and executions between 1954 and 1965 in the United Kingdom", Gen 103(77)1, October 10, 1977, CAB 130/991, TNA.

²⁵ Amnesty International website, January 7, 2000.

colleagues, “especially the red necks”.²⁶ In a free vote, following a lengthy debate, it was decided to retain the death penalty for murder by a majority of 25 to 9.²⁷ Given the death penalty had been banned in the UK, and the Crown’s and Government House’s responsibility for justice under the Bermudian constitution, the stage was set for a potential clash between colony and metropole.

The banning of the death penalty in the UK led to an intriguing question about Britain’s proper role as the colonial power. After 1969, the UK suggested to the remaining overseas territories that they should, of their own volition, ban the death penalty for murder. All remaining territories did this except seven.²⁸ These territories were the Bahamas (which subsequently went independent in 1973), and Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, Belize, Cayman Islands, Hong Kong, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos, all of which remained colonies until 1980 and beyond.

Depending on the level of publicity that cases of capital punishment received, executions thus had the power to, in the words of FCO minister Rowlands, ‘embarrass’ the British Government, especially when it was under a Labour Government that hangings had been abolished.²⁹ Following the last UK execution in 1964, however, hangings did occur in overseas territories on three occasions before 1977; in Hong Kong in 1966, in the British Virgin Islands in 1972 and in Belize in 1974.³⁰ Executions also occurred in independent Commonwealth Countries where the Queen remained the Head of State: in Trinidad and Tobago in 1975 and Bahamas in 1974.³¹

There is evidence that the ongoing use of executions in these places was worrying for Cabinet ministers and civil servants. The high-profile nature of the Bermuda cases, which had seen the first murder of a Governor since the 1950s but also the killing of someone who was a former MP and Government

²⁶ Williams, *Lois*, 199.

²⁷ Ramsbotham to FCO, February 15, 1978, FCO 40/923, TNA.

²⁸ WE Quantrill to RJ Stratton, December 6, 1977, 44/1464.

²⁹ Record of meeting between Gibbons and Rowlands, October 6, 1977, 44/1456.

³⁰ Rose and Whitmore, *Reprieves and executions*, 130/991.

³¹ Minutes of Cabinet committee meeting, October 13, 1977, *ibid.*

Minister, created a situation in which these fears of ‘embarrassment’ were to be realised. However, the way in which this case was dealt with depended upon individuals who were operating in a particular institutional context.

2. A culture of sinecure, the Royal Prerogative and inadequate systems of oversight

As has just been suggested, Governors were granted the power of saving or killing someone under the Bermuda constitution. This section will suggest that this power was supplemented by power granted to them by the Royal Prerogative. It also suggests that the way in which Tacklyn’s and Burrows’ appeals for mercy were handled in the second half of 1977 was couched in an institutional culture of entitlement and sinecure. In this atmosphere, as in most offices, petty disputes accompanied the personnel management decisions made by Cabinet Ministers. Secondly, however, this section lays out the argument that the British Constitution itself placed too much power in the hands of single individuals such as Cabinet Ministers and Governors. Thirdly, it suggests that this power was insufficiently regulated.

2.1 The potentially fatal consequences of ‘inherit not merit’³²

The last chapter detailed the way in which Ramsbotham’s route to the Governorship of Bermuda was characterised by a combination of personnel turnover, indecisiveness, procrastination and events in other parts of the British diplomatic service in the spring of 1977. This chapter develops that point by suggesting that the patronage power granted to the Foreign Secretary could come back to haunt him in the exercise of his office by affecting relations and communications between London and Bermuda.

Recent grassroots campaigns in Britain have highlighted the way in which deference to the aristocracy and the Royal Family could compromise selection procedures for posts in public institutions that should be based on merit.³³ Research has exposed the myth of meritocracy in British society, suggesting

³² *Merit not Inherit* website.

³³ *Ibid.*

instead that many of Britain's business leaders between 1900 and 1970 advanced their careers on the basis of 'elite self-recruitment'.³⁴

A 'core stratum' based on wealth, privilege, status and informal relationships may also have heavily influenced the culture of advancement in the FCO.³⁵ The manner of Ramsbotham's posting to Bermuda was decided in the context of his dismissal by Owen and his replacement with Callaghan's son-in-law, Peter Jay. The decision at the time caused a press scandal because it exposed the avuncular and supposedly down-to-earth Callaghan to charges of 'naked nepotism'.³⁶

For his part, Owen suggested that this decision had been made on the basis that he thought Jay would do a better job.³⁷ However, this claim has been called into question by second-hand evidence. Labour MP Neil Kinnock was reported to have told Alan Clark in March 1978 that 'Jay got Owen his job rather than the other way around'³⁸, suggesting the US Ambassadorship was part of a process of payback for Owen's advancement into the FCO at the unusually young age of 38.

This chapter argues, however, that Ramsbotham was given his job because he was a senior figure essentially with nothing to do at that point as he had been fired from Washington. In effect, this was an unintended result of the 'inherit not merit' system. Since Jay's and Owen's jobs were possibly the result of horse-trading on their parts, and since Ramsbotham as the son of a Conservative MP was not politically affiliated with them, the Bermuda posting was something of a compensating sinecure, aimed at tiding him over in the two-and-a-half year period during which he still had to earn his pension.

In Ramsbotham's words in 2001: "What on earth were they going to do with me?" After being offered the Bermuda post, he 'had to say "Yes" because I had

³⁴ Stanworth and Giddens, *Economic Elite*; Nicholas, *Myth of meritocracy*, 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁶ *People*, May 30, 1977; Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary 2*, 162.

³⁷ Owen, *Time to Declare*; Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

³⁸ Clark, *Into Politics*, 115.

to earn my living and there was nothing else going'.³⁹ More pointedly, he noted: "I was at Eton and Magdalen, I was the son of a Viscount, I wasn't [Owen's] man." According to Ramsbotham, Owen 'was very Labour, not SDP yet, but very Labour-conscious at that time, and allowed it to spill over in his role as Foreign Secretary'. The incident left a further sour taste in Ramsbotham's mouth because following his removal, in his view, he was 'smeared in London' through press briefings in two tabloid newspapers.⁴⁰ As this chapter will reveal, bitterness towards Owen over the way in which Ramsbotham had been transferred contributed to a breakdown in communications that helped to undermine the mercy process.

2.2. The Royal Prerogative of Mercy and the operation of quasi-judicial powers

As noted, the death penalty had been commuted by Bermuda Governors on seven occasions since 1943.⁴¹ This had been done under an area of the British Constitution called the Royal Prerogative, a type of arbitrary power in which the executive branch of Government, nominally the Crown, but in practice the Government of the day, was able to take action without the permission or scrutiny of parliament.⁴² Under this shady area of unaccountable power, the British Crown had the right to commute a death sentence or completely pardon someone of a crime, in practice following advice from the Secretary of State.⁴³

In the 19th century, Governors, as local representatives of the Crown had also been given the right to exercise this prerogative of mercy, which meant they could either pardon the offender or commute the sentence. However, as was confirmed in the House of Commons by Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones in August 1947, the 'legal position', as advised by the Lord Chancellor, was that the Governor's ability to use the prerogative of mercy did 'not entirely

³⁹ Bain, *Ramsbotham interview*, 42-3.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Owen in the House of Commons, Hansard, December 6, 1977, 44/1464.

⁴² Barnett, *Britain Unwrapped*, 8.

⁴³ Ibid.

empty the King of his own prerogative of mercy'.⁴⁴ The Secretary of State could intervene with a recommendation of mercy only if a Governor had chosen not to use her or his own power to commute and only if she or he believed a 'miscarriage of justice' had occurred.

Owen acknowledged that he was obliged, under the powers delegated to him, under the Royal Prerogative, to make what he called a 'semi-judicial decision' in the case of Tacklyn and Burrows.⁴⁵ Gardner argues that 'quasi-judicial decisions... involve determining a dispute between competing claims, or making findings of fact, or deciding whether to impose sanctions on anyone'.⁴⁶ Effectively, prerogative power entitled Owen to take an independent decision to recommend to the Queen whether or not to grant Tacklyn and Burrows mercy. Just what scope this gave Owen to question whether justice had been done in the trials is unclear. Owen claimed he was not in a position to judge whether it was fair to use a Special Jury in the Shopping Centre trial. 'That's not a judgment I can take,' he argued.⁴⁷

However, in September 1975 senior civil servant Sir Duncan Watson seemed to take a different view. In such cases, the Foreign Secretary...

...would have to take into account all the facts of the individual case and the state of local opinion and law, as well as the political considerations that might arise.⁴⁸

This wide ambit appeared to give Owen the power to take into account much more than the simple facts of the case.

This use of quasi-judicial powers revealed two ridiculous realities of the British constitution. The first of these was the reliance on the idea that a human being operating in isolation could make 'quasi-judicial' decisions

⁴⁴ Creech-Jones, *Hansard*, HC Deb August 11, 1947 vol 441 cc230-3W.

⁴⁵ For a more recent example of controversy over 'quasi-judicial' decisions, see the case of then Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt's handling of Rupert Murdoch's proposed buy-out of BSkyB, *Telegraph*, May 24, 2012.

⁴⁶ Carl Gardner, *Taking Vince Cable off the BSkyB case*.

⁴⁷ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

⁴⁸ Record of conversation between Watson and Leather, September 8, 1975, FCO 63/1333, TNA.

without being influenced by personal opinions, political interests or circumstances. Since he was a politician, what was there to stop Owen from being influenced by his own political considerations in taking this decision? Indeed, the conflict between law and politics, Owen admitted, was a ‘very sensitive nerve in our constitution’.⁴⁹

Secondly, the decisions taken under the power of Royal Prerogative, in which Owen was formally advising the Queen what to do, revealed the very significant role that the Queen still played in British political life. Far from being an unelected irrelevance, the Monarch and Head of State remained a significant factor in the way such decisions were made. As Owen suggested:

*In this particular situation you have to play this by the book. If you get it wrong it also harms the Queen because, although it's not her decision, it is also seen as her decision.*⁵⁰

It will be argued that the atmosphere in which this decision was made was characterised by two features of the political context.

The first was the relatively conservative nature of Callaghan’s Premiership. Although a relative progressive on some issues such as race and labour relations, Callaghan ‘could be intensely conservative’ and he was leading the country at a time of ‘deep public anxiety about crime and morality’.⁵¹ Meanwhile:

*Any criticism of the police, the armed forces or the trade unions was guaranteed to provoke [Callaghan], while, like [Harold] Wilson, he nursed a profound admiration for the Queen and the Boy Scouts.*⁵²

These were also years in which both Conservative and Labour governments had been forced onto the defensive in debates about whether to bring back the death penalty for crimes committed by Northern Irish sectarians.⁵³

⁴⁹ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, 463.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Record of Cabinet Meeting, April 4, 1973. CAB 130/674) and Cabinet Conclusions, February 23, 1978, CM(78) 7th, TNA.

Secondly, Callaghan's government had been forced into a pact with the Liberals in March after losing its small majority and was on the defensive from Margaret Thatcher's rejuvenated Conservative Party which led Labour in the polls by between 4½ and 11 per cent in September 1977.⁵⁴ 'The late nights were eating away at Labour's morale: barely a week seemed to pass without a one nail-biting defeat or other', while 'the Tories scented blood' and 'the mood inside the palace of Westminster felt more confrontational than at any time since the War'.⁵⁵

2.3. Constitutional Conventions and the Creech Jones Doctrine

Nevertheless, conventions regulated the ability of British Governments and Governors to exercise mercy in capital punishment cases. Dicey defines conventions, as distinct from legal sources of the constitution, such as statute or common law, as...

*...understandings, habits or practices which, though they may regulate the...conduct of the several members of the sovereign power...are not in reality laws at all since they are not enforced by the courts.*⁵⁶

Moreover, conventions have an 'inherent flexibility' and 'change over time'. Undemocratically, 'quite how and why they change is difficult to see at the time and becomes apparent only with hindsight'.⁵⁷

On August 11, 1947 Creech Jones promulgated his convention in response to the case of a convict called Apedwa from the Gold Coast in a speech in the House of Commons. Creech Jones was concerned to try and clarify the procedure for how a sentence of death should be commuted. There was ambiguity over who was ultimately responsible for commuting a death sentence. Creech Jones' statement ruled out legislation to clear this up.

⁵⁴ Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary* 2, 236.

⁵⁵ Sandbrook, *Seasons in the Sun*, 644-5.

⁵⁶ Dicey, *Introduction to...the Constitution*, 23-24.

⁵⁷ Barnett, *Britain Unwrapped*, 17.

However, he argued that intervention by the Secretary of State in London on behalf of the Crown, that is use of the Queen's Prerogative of Mercy, should generally be avoided. He said this was for reasons of administrative difficulty. However, in the summary, he argued:

For the Secretary of State to intervene would be.... contrary to the common sense of the situation, since the Governor, knowing all the circumstances, is in a better position to judge whether the prerogative of mercy should be exercised in any particular case.⁵⁸

He also noted that there could be exceptions to this general rule or convention:

I do not, however, say that, if some exceptional case were brought to the Secretary of State's notice in which there were an indication that a miscarriage of justice had occurred, he would shut his eyes to it. The Secretary of State would communicate with the Governor as the case required.⁵⁹

This convention set out what came to be general practice. Creech Jones summed it up by noting that he was 'convinced that to follow any other course would seriously impair the administration of justice in the Colonies'.⁶⁰

The Creech Jones doctrine clarified that the power of life and death over people convicted of capital crimes lay in the Governor's hands. This convention was far from unambiguous however. As Barnett points out, conventions are 'unwritten, binding rules which regulate the conduct of the institutions and personnel of government' and 'nowhere are these written down in any authoritative document'.⁶¹ Bafflingly, breaking a convention may be unconstitutional but not unlawful. This was a nebulous set of rules on which to base decisions of life and death. It is suggested that the ambiguity of these rules was politically convenient because it allowed politicians to claim legal justification for their decisions even if such justification was questionable. In Barnett's words: "Conventions lurk in the shadows of the constitution, rarely obvious but always influential."⁶²

⁵⁸ Hansard, August 11, 1947.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Op. cit.

⁶¹ Barnett, *Britain Unwrapped*, 17.

⁶² Ibid.

2.4 Two Exceptions in the Observance of the Creech Jones Doctrine

Practice across the dwindling expanse of the British Empire from 1947 until 1977 showed that the Creech Jones Doctrine was not observed uniformly by British Governments. There were two types of exception. One was rather underhand; the second an overt and flagrant breach.

Firstly, the Creech Jones Doctrine had been ignored by then-Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home in the spring of 1973. The minutes of a later Cabinet Committee meeting quote Owen referring to the fact that the Creech Jones Doctrine had been 'breached' in the case of Tsoi Kwok-Cheong in Hong Kong.⁶³ Despite the decision of the Governor of Hong Kong to execute Tsoi, Home had intervened and 'advised' the Queen to commute the sentence. An official defended this decision as being related to the fact that, because the Executive Council was unelected, unlike in Bermuda for example, the UK Government had more grounds on which to intervene.⁶⁴ However, in a Cabinet Committee paper prepared in the autumn of 1977, officials insisted that 'in the Tsoi case, Her Majesty's Government's decision was based on considerations of UK policy quite unrelated to Hong Kong'.⁶⁵

The death penalty could also get caught up in diplomatic relations. Posnett's account of his time as Governor of Belize reveals that, in making decisions over whether to grant mercy, he had to take account of the views of the Foreign Secretary in Britain. For example, he describes how Callaghan intervened to pressure him to 'reconsider' his decision to recommend the death sentence be carried out in a case where a white American had shot another dead in Belize in 1974.⁶⁶

⁶³ Members of the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong successfully petitioned for Tsoi's life, *South China Morning Post*, April 27, 1973.

⁶⁴ DF Murray to various, November 1, 1977, 40/829.

⁶⁵ Rose and Whitmore, October 10, 1977, 130/991.

⁶⁶ Posnett, *Scent of Eucalyptus*, 155.

Posnett said initially that he ‘was not prepared to alter my decision unless it was on [the Belizean] ministers’ advice’.⁶⁷ At this point the Belizean government, sensitive to the fact that the crime had caused ‘outrage’ locally and that the advisory committee was ‘unanimous’ in support of death, still wanted the man hanged. However, as Posnett adds, he ‘reminded them of the importance to Belize in the longer term of the continued political and financial support of both the UK and US governments’. As a result, ‘they quickly saw the point and decided that it was not in the political interests of Belize to make this a sticking point’.⁶⁸

The above account suggests that, far from intervening only in the case of a ‘miscarriage of justice’, as specified in the Creech Jones doctrine, Foreign Secretaries of both Labour and Conservatives stripes, including Callaghan himself, had intervened to disregard the spirit of the Creech Jones principle when it politically suited them. There is also evidence that pressure was exerted upon the Governor of Hong Kong by the Foreign Secretary to commute sentences after its last execution in 1966 before reverting back to Chinese rule in 1997.⁶⁹

As Barnett suggests, conventions ‘develop and change over time to meet new requirements’.⁷⁰ As will be suggested, the regulation of Royal Prerogative power was left to conventions which were open to a wide degree of interpretation.

3. Stacking the deck of justice in favour of convictions

This section will argue that the period between 1971 and 1976 saw Government House and the UBP working in concert to secure the convictions of Burrows and Tacklyn following their arrests in 1973. Chapter three showed how the UBP brought in illiberal laws, such as the use of Special Juries and

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Op. cit.

⁶⁹ MacLehose to FCO, November 30, 1977, 44/1464.

⁷⁰ Barnett, *Britain Unwrapped*, 17.

limitation on the rights of peremptory challenge in the early 1970s. As Kawaley argues, the use of a Special Jury, by which jurors were chosen by a body called a Revising Tribunal on the basis of their 'education, qualifications, occupation or experience'⁷¹, may have amounted to a breach of Tacklyn and Burrows' rights to a fair trial by an impartial jury under section six of the Bermuda Constitution.⁷² This section argues that the Special Jury was used in a context that saw the Bermudian justice system subject to the personal biases of Leather, whose power over the justice system was only diffusely accounted for in the Bermuda Constitution, and who wished to distance the British Government from his decisions by bringing the UBP into them.

3.1 The politicisation of justice in advance of the trials of Erskine Durrant Burrows and Larry Winfield Tacklyn, October 1973- November 1975

On October 18, 1973, Erskine Burrows was arrested in one of what Leather called 'the densest and loneliest patches' of 'dense bush'⁷³ on the north-east edge of the City of Hamilton by Police officers Neville Darrell, Clive Donald and LE Smith.⁷⁴ On April 6 of that year, two employees of the Shopping Centre supermarket had been shot dead after having been tied up and robbed. On August 1, a taxi driver had been sitting by the side of the road when two men demanded money at gunpoint and then shot him twice before running away. On September 25, a man 'fitting Burrows description' robbed the Bank of Bermuda in Hamilton at gunpoint of \$30,000 in cash before escaping on a mobylette. Burrows at that moment was also a suspect in the murders of Sharples and Sayers, on March 10, and of Duckett, on September 9, 1972.

Another suspect was Larry Tacklyn, already in prison and serving a sentence of 15 and a half years (later reduced by the Court of Appeal to 14 and a half years on December 4) for the armed robbery of Masters' Hardware store in

⁷¹ Kawaley, *Fair Cross-Section Principle*, 544.

⁷² Ibid., 546.

⁷³ Leather to Watson, October 23, 1973, 63/1100.

⁷⁴ Darrell, *Acel'dama*, 83-9.

Hamilton in 1973, possession of a revolver in a public place and unlawfully depriving another of his liberty.⁷⁵

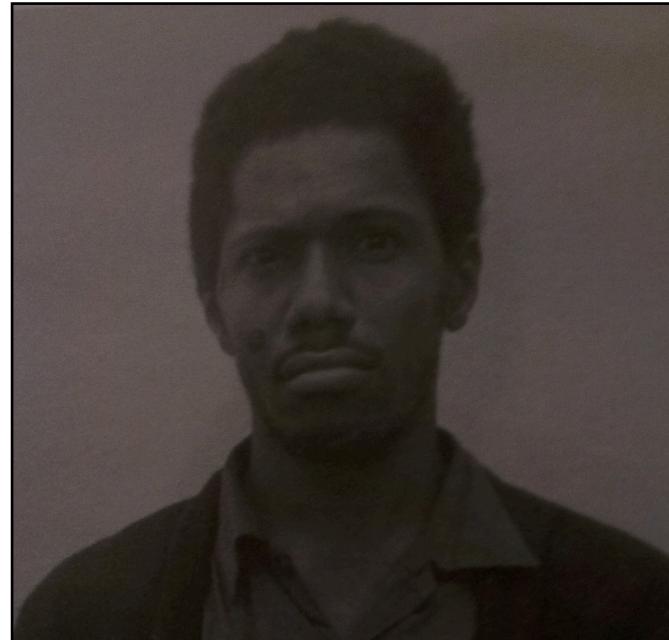


Figure 25: Erskine Durrant Burrows. © Bermuda Police Service, from Rosemary Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, (Bermuda, 2004).

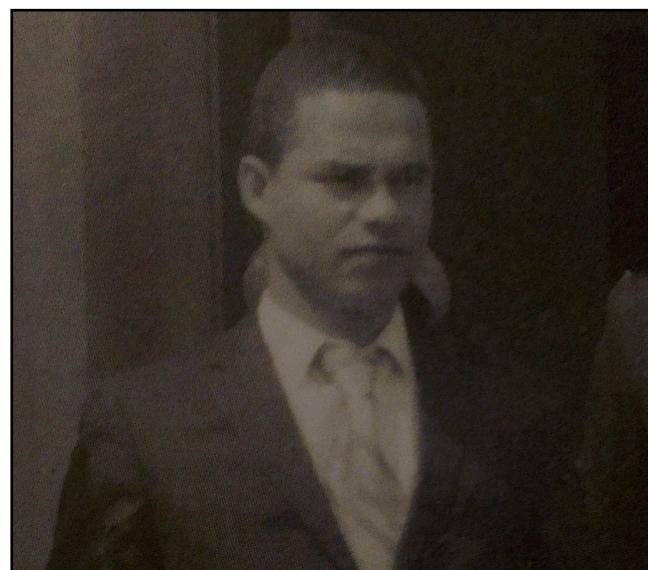


Figure 26: Larry Winfield Tacklyn. © Bermuda Police Service, from Rosemary Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, (Bermuda, 2004).

⁷⁵ BIC report, November 7 until December 4, 1973, 63/1100.

Following his arrest on October 18 after a manhunt that ended at the junction of Friswell's Hill and Parson's Road in Pembroke Parish,⁷⁶ Burrows first appeared in court on 23 October⁷⁷ and was committed on November 23 to stand trial for the Shopping Centre murders and the murders of Sharples, Sayers and Duckett.⁷⁸ It was not until June 23, 1975 that Burrows faced a jury for the charges but it was a Coroner's Jury. They found him to be responsible for the murder of Duckett.⁷⁹ On July 24, it found that Burrows and Tacklyn were both accessories before the fact to the Shopping Centre murders.⁸⁰ In November, both were found by a Coroner's Jury to be responsible for the murders of Sharples and Sayers.⁸¹

The administration of justice is a grey area in the Bermuda constitution. It is not mentioned under the list of the Governor's reserved powers under Section 62. However, effectively, justice was in Government House's hands because Section 73 empowered the Governor to select judges after consulting with the Premier, while Section 77 allowed the Governor to select judges for the Court of Appeal without reference to the Premier.⁸² The Governor meanwhile had the power to order inquests, which served as preliminary proceedings witnessed by juries, before trials even began.⁸³

The fact that inquests on the murders had been held before the trials would later be seized on by Tacklyn's defence counsel Ian Ramsey QC. In early June, he argued that these proceedings caused 'massive prejudice'.⁸⁴ Further evidence of such prejudice was found behind the scenes. Chapter five showed that Leather was convinced of Burrows and Tacklyn's guilt. He had already reflected this bias in January 1976, justifying his decision to order the inquests

⁷⁶ Philip to various within FCO, November 16, 1973, 63/1099; Darrell, *Acel'dama*, 84.

⁷⁷ Philip to various, October 25, 1973, *ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Annual Review 1973*, 63/1220.

⁷⁹ 24/226.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Op. cit.*

⁸² *Bermuda Constitution Order, 1968*, Sections 73 and 77.

⁸³ *Annual Report 1975*, 63/1411.

⁸⁴ *Gazette*, June 1-15, 1976.

by suggesting that ‘the worst result we could arrive at would be one that produced a trial and an acquittal’.⁸⁵

This episode also revealed an insight into the way Leather conceived of the dangers inherent in Britain’s colonial role. He was keen that politics should be brought into the administration of justice for wider constitutional reasons, rather than kept out of it in order to ensure the trial process was fair and seen to be fair. He suggested he was ‘determined that, at every stage, the Premier and Cabinet, not only went along with me, but that they should be seen by all Bermuda to have done so’. Most crucially Leather added:

*At this stage in [Bermuda’s] constitutional development... nothing must be allowed to happen in such a manner that the local political leaders can wash their hands of it if things go wrong; we must make no move that can be blamed on ‘colonialism’.*⁸⁶

This suggests that Leather was not interested in exercising his judgment in these matters in a rational and balanced way. Rather he seemed completely fine with letting his personal biases creep into his role. Bizarrely, he also revealed his desire that the British Government should politically distance itself from decisions it was constitutionally responsible for making.

1976 was to be the year of what *The Royal Gazette* called ‘The Big Trial’.⁸⁷ On May 25, Burrows and Tacklyn were arraigned in the Supreme Court on seven counts before Puisne Judge Earle Seaton. Three of the counts related to the Shopping Centre murders. The first four counts related to the killings of Duckett, Sayers and Sharples and a conspiracy charge in relation to them.⁸⁸ At first they were due to stand trial together on all seven counts. However, Tacklyn’s lawyer successfully argued against this and Burrows was the first to stand trial.⁸⁹ His first trial, on the three counts relating to the murder of Duckett, Sayers and Sharples, began in early June and lasted through the month.

⁸⁵ *Annual Report 1975*, 63/1411.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Gazette*, June 22, 1976.

⁸⁸ 24/226.

⁸⁹ *Gazette*, June 1-30, 1976.

During proceedings, Burrows handed a note purporting to be a confession to the chief prosecutor John Marriage QC. In the note, Burrows revealed his reason for killing Sharples and Sayers was to make 'black people in particular, become aware of the...wickedness of the colonialist system' in Bermuda.⁹⁰ Later he would send a note to Leather in which he 'expressed regret that he did not kill more of the English colonial scum'.⁹¹ He was found guilty and sentenced to death on July 6. He was unrepresented by legal counsel at his own request and did not take the stand in his own defence.

Tacklyn's trial on the Sharples and Sayers murders began the next day. Tacklyn was found not guilty by majority verdicts after the jury deliberated for three and a half hours on July 20.⁹² He still had to face trial for the Shopping Centre murders, as did Burrows. This began on October 5. In this case, both Burrows and Tacklyn were tried together, unlike in the Sharples, Sayers and Duckett cases. A Special Jury of nine whites and three blacks took seven hours before delivering a majority verdict of guilty for both men. Tacklyn was also sentenced to death.

Thus, the impartiality of Bermudian justice was compromised by the fact that Leather, who was responsible for deciding whether or not the trials should be preceded by inquests, was prejudiced. He already believed Burrows and Tacklyn to be the culprits of the crimes. In essence, Leather was not above politics but was acting as chief prosecutor from behind the scenes. It is also argued that Leather hoped to bring politics into the operation of justice, with the UBP taking part of the responsibility for the way events played out.

4. Appeals for mercy and the decision-making processes in Government House and Whitehall

The decision-making process by which both Government House and eventually Owen turned down appeals for mercy was compromised by

⁹⁰ Photocopy of Burrows' handwritten note, June 26, 1976, 26/187/1.

⁹¹ Lloyd to Stanley, 44/1463.

⁹² 24/226.

personal factors. These had seen the appointment of a Governor unsuited to his job. Meanwhile, there was animosity between Ramsbotham and Owen. These personal factors were accompanied by local dynamics that saw the UBP exert a dominating influence on Government House. Finally, the decision-making process in London was overwhelmed by party political considerations. This meant questions about whether a ‘miscarriage of justice’ had occurred were effectively sidelined.

4.1 Public intransigence and private misgivings at Government House

An analysis of the process of Government House decision-making during 1977 reveals a number of factors to be at work. Firstly, Government House’s apparent reluctance to go ahead with the executions was initially assuaged by expectations about an intervention through policy change in London that would have stopped hangings at a metropolitan level. Secondly, a shift in London’s position in October was not communicated properly to Bermuda. Thirdly, an uncertain and pusillanimous attitude on the part of Ramsbotham and a misinterpretation of his role as Governor left it to, fourthly, the UBP to make the final erroneous decision to hang the men.

(i) Government House and the belief in London’s intention to abrogate the Creech Jones doctrine, March–November 1977

Three different men sat in the Governor’s office throughout the year. Leather left office at the end of March. The Deputy Governor, Peter Lloyd, took over as Acting Governor during the summer until a new Governor was found. Lloyd was the son of former a Permanent Secretary at the Colonial Office. According to Posnett, who became Governor of Bermuda in 1980 while Lloyd remained in the Deputy post, he was an ‘able administrator’ who started his career as a district officer in Kenya.⁹³ In May, Ramsbotham was appointed Governor of

⁹³ Posnett, *Scent of Eucalyptus*, 224.

Bermuda. He visited the island in June for a garden party on the Queen's Birthday but did not arrive until September.⁹⁴

However, as suggested above, Government House seemed, from April 1977, to be cowed by the encroachment of politics into the 'process of mercy'. This fact reflected Leather's view that the Governor had lost the power to set agendas. Under section 23 of the 1968 constitution, Bermuda's local advisory committee on the prerogative of mercy consisted of six people, including the Premier, the Attorney General, the Minister of Home Affairs and several anonymous 'regular Bermudians', appointed on the advice of the Premier.⁹⁵

The very presence of the Premier and his hand-picked placemen on this council politicised it, while it could be argued that the presence of the Attorney General on this body was prejudicial, as he was a prosecutor in the cases and was the representative of the Crown in the appeals. Thus, it was suggested, he had a vested interest in seeing the executions carried out.⁹⁶ For their part, the FCO believed that the presence of the AG on the council was 'well supported by precedent' and could 'not be said to be objectionable'.⁹⁷

There is evidence of racial prejudice and insensitivity on the part of those on the advisory council. On April 25, this body advised, by a majority of five to one, that neither Tacklyn nor Burrows should be reprieved.⁹⁸ Lloyd described to the FCO how members had told him that 'the risk of creating martyrs [was] negligible and that any exacerbation of race relations should be neither significant nor lasting'. Meanwhile, those most likely to be upset by the law taking its course were 'people who normally related to the Caribbean more easily than the UK'.⁹⁹ On May 2, Lloyd 'reluctantly' decided to accept this advice and let the hangings proceed.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Lloyd to Ramsbotham, May 13, 1977, FCO 44/1467, TNA.

⁹⁵ *Bermuda Constitution Order 1968*, section 23.

⁹⁶ However, during the Royal Commission that followed the riots, Pitt refused to accept this view, noting: "Lawyers are not there to see that a man is punished, but that justice is done." *Gazette*, May 2, 1978.

⁹⁷ Duff to Lloyd, November 1, 1978, 40/923.

⁹⁸ Ramsbotham to FCO, February 15, 1978, *ibid.*

⁹⁹ Lloyd to FCO, April 25, 1977, 44/1463.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Lloyd seems to have been holding out hope, however, that the men would not be hanged. This seems an odd hope from someone who, under section 22 of the constitution, had the power to 'grant to any person a respite, either indefinite or for a specified period, from the execution of any punishment' imposed by a Bermudian court.¹⁰¹

However, it seemed that in April 1977, Lloyd knew the FCO was on the verge of taking action to ensure no more executions took place anywhere on British sovereign territory. As suggested, the Tsoi decision by Home had undermined the Creech Jones doctrine. All that remained to be done was for a conscious acknowledgement of that to be made as part of a policy change in London.

It also emerged that when he was Foreign Secretary, Callaghan had effectively suggested that the formula was irrelevant. In 1974, he had minuted that 'he saw no prospect of returning to the Creech Jones formula for the time being and of sustaining it when challenged in the House [of Commons]'.¹⁰² As official JAB Stewart would note, 'the effect of Mr Callaghan's minute would seem to indicate a ministerial decision to change this doctrine'. Stewart suggested in April 1977 that this was still the view of the FCO when he noted:

*There is no real constitutional reason why the Secretary of State should not consistently advise the Queen to commute death sentences in British territories in respect of which the Queen is petitioned to apply the prerogative of mercy.*¹⁰³

Lloyd was told of these developments. On May 31, HSH Stanley wrote to Lloyd that...

*Officials were inviting Ministers to consider abrogating the Creech Jones doctrine and drawing attention to the need for an early decision of principle because cases were pending ie. Burrows and Tacklyn.*¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Bermuda Constitution Order 1968*. See section 22.

¹⁰² Stewart to Rowlands, undated, 44/1464.

¹⁰³ Note by Stewart, April 29, 1977, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ Report by Sir Antony Duff, December 1977, 44/1465.

As a result of this understanding, Lloyd ‘encouraged [PLP leader] Browne-Evans to arrange a petition to the Queen’.¹⁰⁵ This is crucial because it suggests that the grassroots campaign led by Browne-Evans to save the men, which gathered pace in the next six months, was initially encouraged by Government House in the hope that it would provide a pretext (the petition to the Queen) for London to intervene.

There was reason for Lloyd to be hopeful this would work. Owen accepted the recommendation of civil servants that the Creech Jones formula should be abrogated by July 20. A later report by former High Commissioner to Kenya, and later director-general of MI5, Sir Anthony Duff noted:

If his Ministerial colleagues agreed, as they were pretty certain to do, the FCO would inform the Governor officially before a statement was made in the House of Commons.¹⁰⁶

However, Lloyd was aware that delays were a possibility. Anxiously, he wrote to London pointing out that British ministers must be asked to ‘make up their minds quickly since delays could have law and order implications’.¹⁰⁷ Lloyd’s hope for an ‘early decision’ however was to be disappointed, as the question was ‘referred back to officials’ by Callaghan in early August.¹⁰⁸

(ii) A change of mind in London is paralleled by a ‘sorry catalogue of errors’, September – November 1977

Opinion in London changed between August and October. This change and the way in which it was communicated would lead to a falling out between the FCO and Government House and may have led to a situation in which the authorities were not prepared for civil disorders when they occurred.

It is evident that, up until the end of September, Lloyd was still trying to prevent Ramsbotham from having to get involved. This is remarkable, since such decisions were one of a Governor’s gravest responsibilities. On

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Op. cit.

¹⁰⁷ Op. cit.

¹⁰⁸ Op. cit.

September 29, the recently-arrived Ramsbotham received a petition with 6,000 Bermudian signatures (by the time of the hangings in the early hours of December 2, this had increased to 13,000)¹⁰⁹ calling for mercy. A comment by Duff, written in retrospect, suggested Ramsbotham hoped this would be the end of the matter:

[The] Acting Governor, having announced on 2 May the confirmation of the sentences, it would be unnecessary for the new Governor to take a view or get involved in any way.¹¹⁰

Lloyd's hope that Ramsbotham would be kept out of the controversy was to be dashed after Ministers decided on October 13 that they would not step in to abrogate the Creech Jones doctrine.¹¹¹ In mid-November, meanwhile, Owen personally advised the Queen not to exercise the Prerogative of Mercy on the men's behalf.

Much to Ramsbotham's dismay, he was asked by the FCO to review Lloyd's May confirmation of the sentences. However, a paragraph in a telegram by the FCO, which informed Ramsbotham that Owen and his colleagues felt 'unable to take a decision' in this case, was removed by Owen. As a result, up until November 15...

...The expectation within the Bermuda Government was that a reprieve would be granted and their responsibility would simply be to deal with whatever security difficulties might ensue.¹¹²

This was confirmed in Duff's suggestion that, when Ramsbotham replied to the FCO on October 27, 'he had been given to believe that [Her Majesty's Government] would not allow the executions to take place'.¹¹³ Ramsbotham later said he felt he had been kept 'deliberately uninformed' by Owen.¹¹⁴ This suggestion was somewhat backed up by Duff, who visited Bermuda at Ramsbotham's request, and found that there had been:

¹⁰⁹ Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 218.

¹¹⁰ Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465.

¹¹¹ Ministerial Group minutes, October 13, 1977, 130/991.

¹¹² Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Bain, *Ramsbotham interview*, 45.

A sorry catalogue of errors and failures in communication compounded by the absence of key officials from London at the crucial time and by the Secretary of State taking matters into his own hands and refusing to allow the explanations of Ministers' decisions to be sent to Bermuda on the part of the FCO.¹¹⁵

Creech Jones had noted when promulgating his doctrine that, in mercy decisions, the Secretary of State should 'communicate with the Governor as the case required'.¹¹⁶ In this case, however, instead of close contact between two parts of the British government, there was obfuscation. This may have had law and order implications for events as they transpired. Duff's report found that, because of the FCO's shortcomings:

[The Bermuda Government] continued to assess the risk to law and order in a situation in which reprieves would have been granted rather than a situation in which the executions had taken place.¹¹⁷

The suggestion that Owen kept Ramsbotham 'deliberately uninformed' was called 'disgraceful' by Owen. He explained that he had removed the paragraph from the telegram because he felt 'it put too much pressure on' Ramsbotham. He noted that the fact that he had fired Ramsbotham a few months earlier 'made it even more important that I did not pressurise him'.¹¹⁸ Yet this case provides a stark contrast to the way in which Callaghan had pressured Posnett into stopping the execution in Belize in 1974.

(iii) An abdication of Government House's responsibility: Ramsbotham misinterprets his job, November-December 1977

With Owen's decision not to stop the hangings in London, the ball was now in Ramsbotham's court. Why, then, did he, especially given his supposedly 'abolitionist convictions' and his full ability to stop them, decide to let them proceed? Two reasons are suggested. Firstly, Ramsbotham did not quite understand what his role as Governor required him to do. The evidence suggests this former Ambassador and High Commissioner saw the job as involving more diplomatic than executive functions. Although one of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hansard, August 11, 1947.

¹¹⁷ Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465.

¹¹⁸ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

reasons he gave for not wanting to be seen as having made the decision was because he felt ‘the safety [of him] and his family’ would be at risk, he also wanted to ‘retain the effective ability to work with and through the political parties on the main issues confronting Bermuda’:

*It was therefore important that he should not be associated with the hangings and thereby be labeled as a creature of the [white-dominated] Government.*¹¹⁹

However, Ramsbotham also seemed to believe that, once the option of shifting the responsibility for stopping the hangings onto London’s shoulders had been exhausted, he had no choice but to do what the elected UBP government wanted. As he suggested in 2001, because of the advice of his ‘prerogative of mercy committee’ to let the hangings proceed, ‘I had no option’.¹²⁰

This was not true however. Ramsbotham’s responsibility was not to do what the UBP government told him but to exercise his own judgment. As the FCO’s ‘troubleshooter’ Watson noted in a conversation with Leather in September 1975, ‘the exercise of the prerogative of mercy was not part of the judicial process’. While the Governor was ‘constitutionally bound to consult the advisory committee on the prerogative of mercy’, she or he ‘was not bound to act in accordance with their advice’. Instead she or he ‘acted in his own absolute discretion, and had to take into account all the circumstances of the case’.¹²¹

Ramsbotham’s misinterpretation of his job may have been a result of a combination of his inexperience of the role, and also his newness to Bermuda. It also may have been founded in the inherent ambiguities of the job itself. As chapter five made clear, the role combined a need for diplomatic even-handedness with taking controversial political decisions. The only defensible way in which such decisions could be taken was in a spirit of openness that strictly followed clear guidelines, demonstrated even-handedness and respected due process. These were not evident in this case.

¹¹⁹ Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465.

¹²⁰ Bain, Ramsbotham interview, 45.

¹²¹ Record of conversation between Watson and Leather, September 8, 1975, 63/1333.

Ramsbotham's reluctance to be seen to give the order to hang Tacklyn and Burrows was also tempered by a natural political affinity for conservative positions and a personal friendship with Gibbons.¹²² Ramsbotham, the younger son of a Conservative MP, owed his job as US Ambassador to Heath. Although he was apparently 'a convinced abolitionist'¹²³, his commitment to this cause was later belied by his suggestion that he believed Bermuda should retain capital punishment for a 'closely defined range of premeditated murder'.¹²⁴ Ramsbotham's reluctance to challenge, or alternatively, his deferral rooted in affinity towards Gibbons, therefore created a situation in which the UBP was the decisive actor in these events.

(iv) An Anglo-Bermudian misjudgment: Gibbons, the UBP and the final decision to execute, November-December 1977

Thus, the fifth factor in the final decision was Gibbons' ardent belief that the executions should go ahead as planned. He had told Owen in early October:

I would be less than honest if I didn't tell you that the vast the majority of Bermudians will not be happy about [the hangings being stopped] given the terrible nature of these crimes.¹²⁵

As matters reached a head in late November, the UBP would commit a major error of judgment. Owen described how he gave Government House one last chance to opt out of going ahead with the hangings by asking in a telegram at the end of November whether there were 'any reasons of internal security' that might be relevant for stopping them.¹²⁶

In making the final call, Ramsbotham said he 'consulted the Premier [who in turn sought the opinions of some of his colleagues] and the Deputy Governor as well as the Attorney-General'. He continued:

¹²² Ramsbotham and Gibbons later collaborated in working on a book about this period together. Moir, *Partners in Peace and Prosperity*.

¹²³ Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465; Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹²⁴ Note by (Sir Antony) Duff, December 20, 1977, 44/1465.

¹²⁵ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

They all considered that racial harmony, respect for law and order generally, and the security situation would suffer more if a stay of execution were granted.

Duff later suggested this opinion was ‘very much in the face of the last minute scenes’.¹²⁷ Indeed, the UBP argument beggared belief. As Owen suggested: “They got it wrong, let’s face it.”¹²⁸ It either revealed a major misreading of the situation on the ground or sophistry employed to argue for hangings that the party leadership wanted to proceed regardless of the aftermath.

Blame for this misjudgment should primarily be laid at Gibbons’ feet. As Owen suggests: “[Gibbons] wanted these people to hang.”¹²⁹ This impression was backed up by UBP cabinet minister Quinton Edness, who said that, at the time, he believed Gibbons had left him out of a last-minute ring-around of Ministers, suggested by Ramsbotham, to see whether they ‘still wish to go through with this’. Edness said: “I was never called. I wasn’t called because the then-Premier knew what my position was. I was vehemently opposed to this.”¹³⁰

Interviewed in 2011, Gibbons revealed that he had been called at midnight on the evening of the hangings for a final check on whether the hangings should proceed. “The phone rang and the warden said ‘do they go?’ I said of course. And I went back to sleep with a totally clear conscience.” He added that he believed the island was totally supportive of the decision, ‘although a few people came out and assembled’.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Duff report, December 1977, 44/1465.

¹²⁸ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Edness interview, July 4, 2012.

¹³¹ Interview by the author with Sir David Gibbons, September 16, 2011.



Figure 27: Bermuda's Sessions House where three days of rioting began following news that the last appeals had failed. © Benedict Greening, January 2013

After having her last-ditch appeals turned down by the courts at 10.10 pm on December 1, Browne-Evans drove to the West End of the Island, where Casemates Prison was located at the old Royal Naval Dockyard, to tell her client that he would die within hours. She then went to a church and prayed. While she was doing this, however, groups of demonstrators had been gathering outside the Supreme Court building, housed within the Sessions House where the House of Assembly was also located.

When news came that the hangings would go ahead, the protesters went on the rampage, setting fire to commercial property. Burrows was hanged at 4am on December 2, and Tacklyn at 4.30am. The violence spread out from the capital city and across the island. That night, a fire spread through the Southampton Princess hotel. Three people, including two tourists and one Bermudian hotel employee, died as the flames licked up the newly painted walls of the corridor on the top floor.¹³²

On December 3, Ramsbotham requested troops be sent to Bermuda to help quell the rioting. As a result, two planeloads of personnel, including 120 soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, based in England, were shipped to

¹³² Jones, *Bermuda: Five Centuries*, 219; Lloyd to AE Clarke in the FCO, December 20, 1978, 40/923.

Bermuda, as well as 80 men from the Royal Regiment of Wales who had been guarding the Belizean frontier with Guatemala.¹³³

Although Callaghan immediately agreed to send in troops, it seems the need to take such drastic action caught him completely off guard. A press report on December 5 described how Callaghan was said to be 'hopping mad' that the Cabinet was given no option but to send troops to the island' to quell the riot.¹³⁴ Moreover, a firefighter strike was also on the cards in the UK and troops were thought to be needed in the UK over Christmas to stand in.¹³⁵ The Bermuda situation was named by the *Daily Mail* as the 'last straw' in a more general 'manpower crisis' in the Army.¹³⁶

This section has suggested that Tacklyn and Burrows were hanged because of a refusal on the part of Ramsbotham to stand up to Gibbons. This may have been the result of tacit belief in the justice of the executions, out of pusillanimity, the result of a misinterpretation of his job or a combination of some or all of these factors. The situation was exacerbated, however, by a failure of communication on the part of London. Rambotham would later believe this had been engineered deliberately by Owen. In any event, a process that should have been clear and above board was affected by a personal dispute. This was perhaps a result of both men trying to pass their responsibility for this difficult political decision onto the other. As the next section will show, the process of mercy was also caught up in metropolitan politics.

4.2 'No alternative'??: The decision by the British Government not to abolish capital punishment 'while a particular case is pending'

The decision on the part of the British Government not to stop the hangings in London was characterised by several factors. Firstly, this episode demonstrated an example of vacillation and climbdown by a Government that

¹³³ Briefing notes for Owen's address in House of Commons, December 5, 1977, 44/1464.

¹³⁴ *Daily Mail*, December 5, 1977.

¹³⁵ Clark, *Into Politics*, 106.

¹³⁶ *Daily Mail*, December 5, 1977.

had originally indicated its intention to reassert the right of the Foreign Secretary to stop executions in British territories. Then, following the Government's change of heart over the Creech Jones doctrine in October, the spotlight focused on Owen. The evidence suggests that his interpretation of the doctrine was that it was the responsibility of Governors to take into account UK law as it stood. Thirdly, Owen also believed that in giving advice to the Queen on the prerogative of mercy he was not obliged to look at all of the facts surrounding the trials, although the doctrine bound him to stop the hangings if he believed a 'miscarriage of justice' had occurred.

(i) The FCO's vacillation over abrogating the Creech Jones Doctrine

Section 2.4 above suggests there were exceptions to the Creech Jones doctrine, while an official also stated in April that there was 'no constitutional reason' why ministers should not intervene to stop all executions on British soil. The crucial period in which the decision over whether to abrogate the doctrine was made was mid-October, when two vital events occurred. Firstly, on October 6, the Judicial Council of the Privy Council refused Tacklyn special leave to appeal.¹³⁷ This essentially meant that the course of justice had been run and a date now had to be set for the executions or the Queen had to grant mercy herself.

Secondly, on October 13, a Cabinet committee, chaired by Lord President of the Council Michael Foot, but also consisting of Owen, Home Secretary Merlyn Rees, Defence Secretary Fred Mulley and Attorney General Samuel Silkin postponed making a final decision to pull back from the planned abrogation.¹³⁸ This was essentially a decision not to save Tacklyn's and Burrows' lives.

The ground for this meeting had been prepared by a meeting of civil servants, including representatives of the Cabinet office, the Lord Chancellor, the Home

¹³⁷ CC Long to Rowlands, October 5, 1977, 44/1456.

¹³⁸ *Ministerial Group minutes*, October 13, 1977. CAB 130/991.

Office, the FCO, and the Law Officers' Department on September 21. The minutes of this meeting reveal fears about 'push[ing] Ministers in the direction of preferring' a certain option.¹³⁹ Moreover, there was ambivalence about whether the death penalty should be effectively banned. The meeting noted, for example, that 'there were circumstances in which the sentences might not be commuted, for example the murder of a Governor.'¹⁴⁰ At the meeting of the Ministerial Group on October 13, a final draft of the paper detailing five options, completed by senior civil servants Sir Clive Rose and CA Whitmore on October 5, was presented. Ministers were shown the choices:

- 1) *An instruction for Governors to introduce legislation to abolish capital punishment*
- 2) *Legislation by Order in Council*
- 3) *A UK bill to abolish capital punishment unilaterally*
- 4) *Removal from Governors of the power to exercise the prerogative of mercy*
- 5) *A parliamentary statement abrogating the Creech Jones doctrine*¹⁴¹

As a result, in August, Governors in seven territories were consulted about which method of the five they preferred. Perhaps predictably, and because of their varying constitutional setups and political contexts, they went in different directions. While Lloyd in Bermuda and Hong Kong plumped for option 5 (abrogation by Owen in parliament), Belize chose option 2, BVI and Turks and Caicos chose option 3 and the Cayman Islands option 4. Montserrat expressed no preference.¹⁴² This lack of consensus helped stall the momentum of abrogation.

As has been suggested, it was feared that the political fallout from the Bermudian hangings would be grave, not just at Westminster but around the world. West Indies and Atlantic Department for Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the FCO HAH Cortazzi noted: "The current Bermuda cases are being quoted in the context of probable adverse reactions at Westminster if the death sentences were carried out."¹⁴³ Essentially, the choice was between an

¹³⁹ *Official Group papers*, Gen 99(77), September 21, 1977, CAB 130/987.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Rose and Whitmore, Gen 103(77), October 13, 1977, 130/991.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ West Indies and Atlantic Department to HAH Cortazzi, July 1977, 44/1467.

adverse Conservative reaction if the hangings were stopped, or a backbench Labour revolt if they occurred. The full force of this latter point was hinted at in the wake of the executions when 134 MPs signed an Early Day Motion calling for the Creech Jones doctrine to be abrogated. The motion ‘viewed with deep concern the racial disorders’ and ‘deeply regret[ed] the limitations’ imposed on the Foreign Secretary by the Creech Jones formula.¹⁴⁴

It was also feared, according to Governor of Hong Kong MacLehose, that the reaction there to executions in Bermuda, due to the publicity surrounding their cases, ‘would be strong’. This was because executions had essentially been abolished in Hong Kong by a unique combination of FCO cajoling behind-the-scenes and Gubernatorial discretion. In these circumstances, it was felt by officials, that the Foreign Secretary should be given a ‘greater area of control’ in relation to capital punishment.¹⁴⁵

However, by October 13, ministerial feelings had changed. The committee noted that there could be ‘disadvantages’ in making a change while the Tacklyn and Burrows cases were pending because of the appearance of a kneejerk reaction to events: “It might be preferable to introduce any general change at a time when no case had been recently considered or was in the offing.”¹⁴⁶

In summing up the meeting, Foot agreed they would meet again (ie after Tacklyn and Burrows were dead) because ‘they wished to consider further how a change might most appropriately be made and its timing’.¹⁴⁷ The Cabinet Committee’s decisions were endorsed by Callaghan himself on October 24. According to an inquiry by Duff, the Prime Minister ‘commented that the Foreign Secretary would probably have to let the law take its course in the Bermuda case.’¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Note by ER Worsnop, December 9, 1977, 44/1465.

¹⁴⁵ *Ministerial Group minutes*, October 13, 1977. CAB 130/991.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*

¹⁴⁸ *Duff report*, December 1977, 44/1465.

(ii) Political and parliamentary considerations become crucial factors

In an interview with the author in May 2013, Owen suggested that the fact that one of the murder victims was Sharples, a former MP and former Government Minister, did play a role in the Ministerial decision not to abrogate the Creech Jones principle. He detailed how the decision not to abrogate was a legal decision made by political appointees, such as Attorney General Sam Silkin and the Lord Chancellor Lord Gerald Austen Gardiner. Owen suggested they 'would have known they were making a legal recommendation in a highly charged atmosphere':

[The question was] do you want to create another debate on the floor of the House involving Richard Sharples? The more you think of it the worse it was.¹⁴⁹

Owen also admitted that political factors such as the potential for a damaging debate in the House of Commons were also at play:

You go to the House and you are effectively getting them to make a judgment on whether these particular men should be [saved], in the very emotive atmosphere that's its going to be debated because a fellow MP known to all those people has been killed.¹⁵⁰

This is an admission that the hangings of Tacklyn and Burrows were allowed to proceed, even though Britain had banned the death penalty, in part because of the identity of the person who had been murdered. Other factors were also at play however. It is worth remembering that Callaghan had lost his majority in the House of Commons after the Westminster by-election in February 1977, and was relying on a pact with the Liberals (and informally the Ulster Unionists) voted through by Cabinet on March 23 to get legislation through from then until the autumn of 1978, when the Liberals ended the arrangement.¹⁵¹ An earlier document noted that a statement in the House of Commons abrogating the Creech Jones doctrine could have led to a debate and then a vote.

¹⁴⁹ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary*, 153 and 170.

Michael Foot pointed out in a Cabinet Committee in February 1978 that it was ‘questionable whether a Motion to abrogate the Creech Jones doctrine would be carried’.¹⁵² He also noted the political problems surrounding the topic at that time. For instance, Thatcher had visited Hong Kong in April 1977 and suggested ‘Hong Kong should be allowed to tackle its problems in its own way’, a veiled reference to the death penalty.¹⁵³ Foot pointed out ‘there was a growing movement in the Conservative Party in favour of bringing back hangings in the UK for terrorist murders’. He added:

*There was a risk that this could become a major issue in a pre-Election period. It would be a mistake to do anything at present which might increase that risk... it could encourage public debate of the domestic issues and weaken the general position of those in favour of the continued abolition of the death penalty.*¹⁵⁴

Owen defended his original proposal to abrogate the Creech Jones doctrine, yet he acknowledged that ‘the force of the current domestic political difficulties’ would affect the timing of any political change.¹⁵⁵ In summing up the discussion, Callaghan said ‘the present political climate in the United Kingdom made this an inopportune time’ to change the policy, yet Cabinet would consider the policy again ‘at an appropriate time’. He also noted that ‘the danger of stimulating public debate...should be pointed out’ to Labour MPs who were pushing for speedier change.¹⁵⁶

(iii) Owen does not believe that the Tsoi precedent applies

The next two sub-sections focus on Owen’s actions after the rejection of the proposal to abrogate the Creech Jones doctrine. Despite this October 13 decision, however, Owen still had the power to stop the hangings using his own Royal Prerogative advisory power. He chose, however, on November 15, to use his power to advise the Queen to reject the pleas for mercy. Following the

¹⁵² Cabinet conclusions, February 23, 1978, CM(78) 7th

¹⁵³ Clipping of Hong Kong Daily News received in registry on April 27, 1977, 40/829.

¹⁵⁴ Cabinet conclusions, February 23, 1978, CM(78) 7th

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Op. cit.

outbreak of riots and in a statement to the House of Commons on December 6, Owen argued that:

*Having satisfied myself that there were no grounds for believing that there had been a miscarriage of justice, I had no alternative but to advise Her Majesty not to intervene.*¹⁵⁷

Owen noted that, under ‘present policy’, the Foreign Secretary did not advise the Queen to intervene ‘unless there had been an evident ‘miscarriage of justice’. This may have been technically true, but Foreign Secretaries, such as Callaghan in the case in Belize, had put pressure on Governors in the past. The Creech Jones doctrine had also been breached in 1973 with no evident backlash. However, Owen later explained that he ‘deliberately decided’ not to follow the Tsoi precedent, set by Home in 1973, ‘because the reading of Creech Jones is quite clear that you have got to follow the procedures which Creech Jones outlined’.¹⁵⁸

Owen’s reading of the Tsoi precedent is intriguing. He suggested that Home’s unilateral commutation of a death sentence in Hong Kong in 1973 had been read by ‘Governors all over the world’ as a signal that ‘abolition had taken’. In fact, ever since Tsoi, MacLehose had stopped executions from occurring. In Owen’s words: “[MacLehose] took the view that Parliament had spoken and therefore he would advise for clemency”. Thus, Owen implied that Tsoi should have been seen as a type of hint for Governors to commute on their own volition. However, Ramsbotham did not draw the same lessons as MacLehose. ‘I think he wanted to play it all ways,’ suggested Owen.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Hansard, *HC Deb 05 December 1977 vol 940 cc1014-24.*

¹⁵⁸ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

(iv) Owen does not include consideration of the use of the Special Jury in his deciding whether a ‘miscarriage of justice’ has occurred

One of Owen’s responsibilities was to ensure he was satisfied there had been no ‘miscarriage of justice’ in Burrows’ and Tacklyn’s trials.¹⁶⁰ In fact, he would later volunteer: “I am a doctor by training and I was hoping I could get him off on medical grounds but I was not able to do so”.¹⁶¹ However, when questioned later, Owen noted that he had not been ‘making a decision about justice’. For instance he added that it ‘was not my position to judge the procedures of selection of the jury. That’s not a judgment I can take’. As suggested above, however, it could be argued that it was Owen’s responsibility to take into account ‘all the circumstances of the case’. In fact, Tacklyn had been acquitted of killing Sharples and Sayers, while the Shopping Centre trial was questionable because of the possibly unconstitutional use of the Special Jury.

Another legitimate question is why Owen did not anticipate the hangings could cause riots, given the island’s history of rioting in 1968 and 1970, which had involved British forces in the form of troops and frigates. Instead of analysing the situation objectively, based upon years of dealing with Bermuda, the FCO simply deferred to the judgment of Ramsbotham, someone who had only arrived on the island three months before. Ramsbotham’s suggestion, based on faulty UBP advice, that ‘there is unlikely to be the sort of confrontation that would attract public or parliamentary interest in Britain’ was taken as gospel.¹⁶² Despite this, Owen insisted that he and the FCO had ‘no’ responsibility for the civil disorder that occurred because Ramsbotham had left him ‘no room for maneuver at all’.¹⁶³ This statement seems extraordinary given that the FCO was well aware of the history and distinct possibility of civil disorder in Bermuda.

¹⁶⁰ Stewart to Ramsbotham, November 16, 1977, 44/1465; Letter from FCO to Miss Beryl Knights, February 23, 1978, 40/923; draft letter from Rowlands to G McLennan, December 2, 1977, 44/1464.

¹⁶¹ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

¹⁶² Paper by DF Murray, November 1, ibid.

¹⁶³ Owen interview, May 23, 2013.

Owen was not proud of having taken the decision that led to the last hangings on British soil. “It’s not one of my personal, private moments of glory. You can’t complain. That’s life.”¹⁶⁴ However, it’s not clear whether the same could be said of Buckingham Palace. According to a Privy Councilor who was with Elizabeth II when she received Owen’s advice on the case of Burrows and Tacklyn, the Queen made it clear that she supported at least one of the hangings. The Privy Councillor told Labour MP Chris Mullin that Her Majesty signed the death warrants ‘with a flourish’ while noting ‘indignantly’: “He’s got a cheek, asking me for clemency. Do you know, he even shot the dog?”¹⁶⁵

This section has suggested that Whitehall witnessed a major climbdown in its proposed policy of abrogating the Creech Jones doctrine during the summer and early autumn of 1977; a change that would essentially have given the British government the power to stop executions in dependent territories. This proposal was founded in both political and moral reasoning. Owen himself admitted that the doctrine placed him ‘in a difficult position’, partly at least because it ‘did not offer him protection against political pressures’.¹⁶⁶ The proposal to abrogate the convention fell victim more to short-term political calculations which were also linked to the identity of the person who had been killed.

Despite his attempts to abrogate the doctrine and his Ministerial colleagues’ vacillation, Owen’s responsibility in the Bermuda case remains grave. He interpreted the Tsoi precedent in a way that did not allow him to intervene. Meanwhile, he also viewed his role in weighing up whether a miscarriage of justice had occurred particularly narrowly. Namely he refused to take into consideration the manner in which the jury had been selected, despite the possibility that the Special Jury law, reintroduced in 1971 was unconstitutional, contravening section six of Bermuda’s new bill of rights.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Mullin, *Walk-on Part*.

¹⁶⁶ Cabinet conclusions, February 23, 1978, CM(78) 7th.

Conclusion

The journalist and polemicist Christopher Hitchens argued that Jim Callaghan's Labour administration was 'sort of Weimar without the sex', in its abandonment of principle and its 'avuncular and dogmatic maintenance of a mediocre and deteriorating status quo'.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, this episode seems to provide an example of noble principles being sullied by compromise and timidity, in answer to Morgan's suggestion that the 'cautious' Callaghan's Government oversaw a 'constructive period in foreign policy'.¹⁶⁸ This chapter also brings to light deeper realities about the nature of the British constitution and its application to superannuated colonial structures of justice and mercy.

Several points need to be made in conclusion. Firstly, despite the new 1968 constitution, which enshrined a bill of rights for Bermudians, the realities of Westminster-style government in Bermuda meant key principles of justice in Bermuda were bought off by the stacking of the deck in the favour of prosecutions and executions. Secondly, this chapter demonstrates a problem of personnel – in particular the shortcomings of a system that granted a Governor who has only been in office for a few months the power of life and death. Thirdly, it represents an episode of vacillation over the assertion of moral commitments in areas that were still under the remit of the Crown. Finally, it involves important issues of administration and accountability within the abstruse British constitution.

Firstly, this argument must take into account the process of justice in Bermuda itself. As has been shown, there is a credible argument that Tacklyn and Burrows' rights to a trial by jury, under section six of the Bermuda Constitution, were infringed unfairly with the use of the Special Jury. This was combined with Leather's potentially *sub judice* comments through 1973 and 1974, his decision to hold possibly prejudicial inquests and his desire to make the cases political.

¹⁶⁷ Hitchens, *For the Sake of Argument*, 162 and 164.

¹⁶⁸ Morgan, 'Was Britain dying?', 306.

Secondly, this episode involved a crisis of personnel. Bermuda had three Governors during 1977. All of these Governors claimed to be opposed to the death penalty. Yet, as Posnett notes, the perhaps impossible job Governors were shouldered with involved carrying out the law regardless of personal beliefs. Owen agreed that Governors were placed in a difficult position. They had to maintain good relations with elected politicians from different political camps. Meanwhile, they had controversial responsibilities for exercising the prerogative of mercy and maintaining law and order.

In both of these last respects Ramsbotham failed to live up to his duties. First of all this period revealed there to be a fundamental lack of self-confidence within Government House. Ramsbotham, who viewed going to Bermuda as a major demotion, hoped he could avoid having to exercise his grave functions under section 22 of the Bermudian Constitution.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps he believed he did not know enough about Bermuda; he also did not want to endanger his and his family's safety. Ramsbotham also fell victim to the contradiction built into his role.

Handling his task was even more difficult because he did not naturally seem to be very confident, and his communications with the FCO seem to have broken down. The relationship between Owen and Ramsbotham had been poisoned by their recent history. This may have helped ensure the executions because, as we have seen, Foreign Secretaries and Governors, such as MacLehose or Posnett, had worked together to engineer commutations in difficult cases in the past. Meanwhile, Bermuda Governors had commuted seven death penalties since 1943. That fact makes it all the more worrying that these hangings were allowed to proceed.

Thirdly, the 1970s were changing Britain quickly. The country was being 'mortgaged to the IMF; there was 'placemanship and jobbery everywhere', 'clumsy and brutal' attempts were being made to prosecute journalists with the Official Secrets Act and ministers such as Roy Mason were making a

¹⁶⁹ Donoughue complained of civil servants such as Ramsbotham: "Anybody else can sacked and put on the street; they are given the Bermuda governorship and they wail and whine." May 12, 1977. Donoughue, *Downing Street Diary 2*, 188.

‘cynical defence of the use of torture against Irish dissidents’.¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, since 1965, the country had enacted anti-sex discrimination laws, legalised homosexual sex and liberalised divorce laws.¹⁷¹

Aspects of both Britain’s liberalism and her decline can be seen in her treatment of Bermuda in 1977. Conservative symbols of empire such as Bermuda could be seen as sources of embarrassment. However, while Belize had been persuaded not to hang a white American as a result of Callaghan’s veiled economic and political threats, more strategically and economically secure places such as Bermuda were being deferred to. Meanwhile, short-term political and electoral considerations took priority over principled assertion. The fragility of the UK Government encouraged ministers to shy away from opening up an explosive issue.

Finally, this case highlights problems with the British constitution itself. In particular, it seems conventions such as the Creech Jones doctrine were not clear enough to regulate the use of the great power of the Royal Prerogative. By 1977, the Creech Jones principle was outdated. Yet the very way in which it had been conjured out of thin air with a statement in the late 1940s spoke to its flexibility. This meant Owen could have simply ignored it, as Home had done in 1973. Alternatively, he could have recognised the irregularities inherent in the use of the Special Jury, which Britain had abolished in criminal cases in 1949, as well as the possibly prejudicial nature of Tacklyn’s trial. He chose to do neither.

As the seven commutations between 1943 and 1977 attested, executions were often halted not for reasons of mercy or because they were ‘miscarriages of justice’. Home had commuted in the Tsoi case of 1973 because he did not want to encourage debate about capital punishment in the UK at a time of outrage at sectarian bombings on the British mainland. Thus, when Owen protested he had had ‘no alternative’ but to recommend to the Queen that the law be

¹⁷⁰ Hitchens, *Credibility Politics: Sado-Monetarist Economics*, 162 & 164.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

allowed to take its course, this does not appear to be the whole truth. It was more likely a legalistic way of rationalising a political motivation.

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that the process of late decolonisation in Bermuda was characterised by two fundamental realities: the weakening, adaptation and renewed entrenchment of an ancient oligarchy by ‘democratic’ means; and the increasing weakness of a British colonial state that failed to wholeheartedly challenge this process. The metropole also provided vital support and comfort to the oligarchy at key moments. The ‘essential preconditions’ of British world power disappeared during the ‘strategic disaster in Asia’ and ‘cataclysm’ in Europe in the 1940s.¹ However, while a weakening metropole and the superpower confrontation may help to explain the failure of Britain to ‘impose’ a just constitutional and political settlement on its tiny possession in the North Atlantic, it does not forgive it.

This thesis has sought to show how discourses of affinity could structure decolonisation on an island such as Bermuda where a white minority had engineered, over a long period, a cultural hegemony that inflated the significance of the British link. This concluding chapter will take each of the two themes in turn, suggesting that the UBP’s re-assertion of power represented something of a counter-revolution following the progressive gains of the civil rights movement of the early 1960s. In the process it stultified discussion about Bermuda’s legacies of racism. Secondly, this chapter will suggest that Britain lost control of the decolonisation process in Bermuda because the empire’s decentralised nature and its constitution created space for very personal interpretations of Britain’s role by Governors. This, in league with a habitual affinity towards local oligarchs, came at the expense of clear lobbying on behalf of British interests or human rights.

¹ Darwin, *Unfinished Empire*, 402.

1. The counter-revolution of the oligarchy following the gains of the civil-rights movement

The United Bermuda Party ceased to be in June 2011 by way of a furtive press release. Even the last two remaining UBP MPs in the House of Assembly did not seem to have been alerted to the party's imminent demise.² During its time in executive office from 1968 until 1998 however the UBP had been a virtually unstoppable political force, winning eight back-to-back general elections. Chapter one detailed how Martonmere and a mix of civil servants and centrist politicians helped engineer a constitutional settlement that privileged the UBP.

In the midst of this, Bermudian democracy was still-born because of a denial of dignity to the island's long-excluded black majority. Dignity was an important concept because it resonated with the long history of subjugation that did not simply evaporate in the midst of modernising or liberalising reforms. The UBP employed its privileged position and its majority in the House of Assembly to advantage during the period 1964-8, taking credit for a booming tourist economy, endorsing the end of segregation in schools and supporting political change and building up its multi-racial profile.

1.1 Divide and rule: The elite bid to weaken black solidarity

Chapter two argued that the denial of race employed in the rhetoric of the UBP during the period 1964-1968 was an arrogation in the context of hundreds of years during which race had been employed as a decisive criterion in every aspect of daily life. Non-racialism took on the character of a convenient religious conversion for those who had seen the light. Those mortals caught up in the legacies of history were cast out as heretics.

White racial superiority was a 'myth' reinforced by writers, scientists and propagandists in Britain itself, especially from the 1860s onwards. However,

² *Gazette*, June 30, 2011.

legacies of exclusion meant Bermuda's black community had evolved a historical solidarity. The first years of the UBP asked black Bermudians to affect an immediate air of amnesia to this history; to break up a community that had been built to withstand hate. Some candidates were able to do this, either because, like Quinton Edness, they bought into the idea of 'integration' and saw it as the route to a better Bermuda. Some, such as Helene Brown, believed they could do more for blacks as part of 'the party in power'; some, such as Sir ET Richards, believed in stability and order.

Chapter two also suggested that the period 1963-1968 witnessed the final transfiguration of Bermuda into a post-colonial refuge for wealthy and sensitive tourists; an Anglo-American playground for the rich *par excellence*. This paradigm was intimately linked with race, since 'segregation developed in [Bermuda and the Bahamas] mainly because of their dependence on the tourism trade with rich Americans'.³ With the closure of the Royal Naval Dockyard and the withdrawal of the British Army garrison in the 1950s, tourism attained an even greater significance for local employment.

As a result, ideas of continued prosperity linked into the unofficial incumbency of the UBP (in the form of their legislative majority) to consolidate the party in power at the May 1968 election. A rhetoric of prosperity which focused on tourism, emphasising an image of peaceful harmony, was partly economically-inspired but also an appeal to stability at a time of a global fragmentation and a breakdown in law and order. This transition was eased by the presence of black candidates who helped to create an image of virtual integration, something that may have convince British civil servants as much as it did liberally-inclined white Bermudians that the days of racism were over.⁴

³ High, *Racial Politics of Criminal Jurisdiction*, 81.

⁴ Steinhorn and Digg-Brown, *By the Color of Our Skin*.

1.2 The resort to old illiberal habits in the face of violence

From the mid-1960s, the sermon of non-racialism began to be contested in earnest by the PLP and then by the BBC. Chapter three showed how this exploded into protest and then violence between 1969-70 and 1973. Symbols of white and British heritage (from Governors and Police officers to churches, parks and nursery rhymes) were targeted. Resistance was the embodiment of the fact that, although the trappings of democracy had been bestowed on Bermuda, there had been no alternation in government; a requirement that is ‘one of the core values in a democracy’.⁵ As one young man put it in 1977, ‘the same government had been in power since black people had been slaves’.

However, chapter three also argued that the UBP used this moment to launch an attack on notions such as the right to a trial by jury and freedom of expression, both of which had been protected in the bill of rights contained in the constitution of 1968.⁶ The attack on these liberties so soon after their enactment was an act of betrayal by a scared, reactionary elite. It was also a reminder that, especially in the Caribbean, devices such as bills of rights had been seen by Whitehall more as devices to ‘try and lock in the constitutional *status quo*’ than as fundamental protections for individuals faced with state power.⁷

Ironically, as Swan suggests, the incarceration focus of the UBP may have smoothed the path to the assassinations of 1972-3, although there could be no legitimate excuse for the cold-blooded violence, destruction and grief the murderers left in their wake. When the murders occurred however, both the UBP and Government House were quick to resort to coded messages about special measures that could be taken to ensure convictions in trials. This was, however, the re-assertion of an old habit that had not been evoked since the 1950s. For instance, as High finds, Sections 13, 33 and 36 of the Bermuda Jury Act had been ‘designed for precisely [the] purpose’ of ‘arranging’ for ‘all white

⁵ Lundell, *Accountability and Patterns of Alternation*, 145.

⁶ See articles six and nine of schedule two of the Bermuda Constitution Order, 1968.

⁷ Parkinson, *Bills of Rights and Decolonisation*.

juries' in high-profile criminal proceedings.⁸ The 1971 resurrection of Special Juries, the attempted consolidation of the use of these in 1974 and the attack on the right of peremptory challenge in jury selection embodied a new manifestation of ancient practice.

1.3 The creation of the office of Premier and the by-passing of Government House

The attempt to deny race that was implicit in the identity of the UBP was not something that could be sustained indefinitely. Chapter four outlined how, between 1971 and 1977, the UBP leadership grew increasingly distant from its backbenches. Richards, Sharpe and Gibbons spearheaded the carving out of the space of executive leadership in the office of Premier. Premiers, like diplomats and civil servants, operated most comfortably in the trans-national space of high political constitutional negotiations.

Chapter four also showed how the UBP leadership fell out with Government House from 1973 onwards, and began bypassing it; in doing this it cultivated the notion of the Premier as the external face of Bermuda. 'New Nationalism' may have been largely sculpted through the 'refashioning of official rites, national holidays, flags and anthems'.⁹ But it also materialised in the gradual shifts in the dynamics of personal interactions in the offices where power relationships were hammered out in secret.

1.4 Institutional racism within the UBP

Meanwhile, chapter four argued that the party itself was riven by disunity founded in Bermuda's wider racial divisions. The UBP Black Caucus may have ascribed this group with a false minority mindset in a black majority country¹⁰, yet it also represented a real dissatisfaction with the public relations aspect of the party – which posited 'unity' in the face of another philosophical

⁸ High, *Racial Politics of Criminal Jurisdiction*, 85.

⁹ Stuart Ward is paraphrased in Darian-Smith, Grimshaw and MacIntyre, *Britishness Abroad*, 10.

¹⁰ Burchall, *Fine as Wine*, 143.

commitment to materialistic individualism. The rejection of the Black Caucus's demands, however, acted as a fitting reminder that what was becoming a multi-racial rather than an exclusively white oligarchy retained control of the UBP behind the scenes.

This truth was symbolised in the final climax of the UBP counter-revolution of the 1970s: the re-introduction of the use of the death penalty in Bermuda detailed in chapter six, which had been dormant since the 1940s. Successive Governors had commuted seven death sentences since then. However, the murders of five white men, and the attack on symbols of colonial power, in 1972-3, led to a desire for vengeance. It was a twist of fate that in August 1977, the office of Premier passed from the hands of an ostensible liberal such as Sharpe into the hands of the reactionary Gibbons. As has been argued, because of his influence over Ramsbotham, Gibbons' holds a large degree of responsibility for the fact that the hangings went ahead and were followed by street violence on an unprecedented scale, leading to three more deaths.

2. The coalescence of affinity-based and pragmatic decolonisation vis-à-vis the honouring of historical responsibilities

British decolonisation policy evoked the very nature of the empire itself. Its decentralised structure meant sober appraisals of British interest in Whitehall were threatened by adulteration from two sources. On one hand, the FCO could be subject to the tendency to go along to get along, sacrificing national interests in a bid to preserve diplomatic harmony. This was triggered by the 'acute' awareness 'of the US determination not to allow Britain to withdraw her existing responsibilities' in the Eastern Caribbean during the 1960s and 1970s.¹¹ The compromise between US desires and the growing British desire to withdraw, under pressure from the UN and a weakening of the economy, however, was found in pursuit of comforting ideas of stability.

¹¹ Williams, *Keeping a Line Open*, 480.

As chapter five showed, however, the other threat to a sober elaboration of British interests was the significant degree of personal interpretive power that a ‘man on the spot’ could apply in this field. The office of Governor was a privileged one, characterised by the flummery of a Victorian-era mansion, the title of ‘His Excellency’, a plumed hat, a copious expenditure on alcohol and an ‘entertainment allowance’. It also came with the danger of sentimental intoxication in a white man’s fantasy playground.

As a result, notions of ‘influence’ could transmute into feelings of affinity with a dominant, white minority that was still diffusing British cultural standards across the island. Leather embodied this reality most clearly in his view that Bermuda’s social problems were best treated with a dose of Royal Visits. As this section will argue, British rationalisation of its global decline was paralleled by a resurgence of imperial affinity occasioned by knowledge of this attenuation in power.

2.1 Providing new constitutional clothing for an oligarchy of affinity

Chapter one detailed the way in which a starting point of agreement between Martonmere in Government House and a CO under Duncan Sandys began to cultivate Tucker as Bermuda’s new leader from 1963 onwards. It was at this moment that the partial stultification of the new Bermudian democratic settlement began.

Following the election of a Labour Government in October 1964, however, constitutional reform took on the air of a compromise – the argument that since Bermuda’s Europeans were not as ‘savage’ as white Rhodesians, the handing-down of the compromise of a Responsible Government constitution would be the best Britain could hope for. Crucial was the provision, enshrined in the constitution, that constituency boundaries had to remain delimited within ancient parish boundaries. One significant aspect of this process was the material support offered to Tucker, for instance in the selection of constitutional conference delegates, by Lord Martonmere.

The second significant aspect in the creation of the new constitution was the abdication of Britain's self-ascribed *locus standi* to 'impose a solution'. For some Labour MPs such as internationalists like Tony Benn, Fenner Brockway or Tom Driberg, this was nothing less than a moral imperative founded in colonial legacies. As Hitchens notes in the context of a discussion of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the 'true term for this [omission was] betrayal':

The only thinkable justification for the occupation of someone else's territory...is the testable, honourable intention of applying an impartial justice, a disinterested administration and an even hand as regards bandits and sectarians.¹²

An anticolonial movement that increasingly spoke in terms of civil liberties, human rights and racial justice was overwhelmed by a cloying cross-party consensus attempting to explain away its own 'pragmatic' feebleness. British MPs such as Frederic Bennett, who had been groomed as a UBP candidate for the 1968 election, felt they could not 'impose a solution' as 'friendship' and 'mutual regard' were 'the only means we have left'. This was the deployment of the *chetif* state as cover up for the decolonisation of affinity – the tacit reinforcement of the oligarchical minority as an expression of Greater British white solidarity. It was also an abdication of responsibility towards Bermuda's black majority after centuries of oppression by Britain's favoured collaborators.

2.2 The imperial connection as the convenient space for secretive leadership

The period 1968-1973 saw the creation of a convenient space of executive power that stemmed in part from the close understanding between Tucker and Martonmere. Constitutional reform in 1968 had followed the Westminster model with one important exception. Whilst the British constitution contained a recognition of nominal Parliamentary Sovereignty, the Bermudian House of Assembly was disadvantaged at the hands of an

¹² Hitchens, *The Perils of Partition*, 483-4.

executive with two powerful components. On one hand, a new position of Government Leader took a seat in the Executive Council. This was the first time an elected politician had taken hold of executive power in Bermudian history. Secondly, however, executive power was also held by the Governor, who both chaired the Executive Council until 1973 and also had access to logistical support from Britain's security and propaganda services, and who was also empowered to call on military support.

The attack on colonial symbols in 1968 and 1973 was partly a response to the fact that such symbols had been repeatedly employed in a bid to 'restore order', for instance the use of a frigate to 'deter' riots on election night in May 1968. Working together, the two elements of the executive in Bermuda had a great deal of power. This was buttressed by the calling into service of the IRD – a late manifestation of Cold War paranoia reconfigured for battle with the Angry Brigades of the 1970s. The IRD's covert role meant the FCO actively encouraged the undermining of constitutional protections that the British Government had been involved in formalising only two years before.

Finally, as chapter three showed, the stoical and repressed response of the British to the assassinations, suggested by the refusal to stop using the Governor's mansion despite appeals by Pamela Sharples – was reflected in the suggestion by Leather that Bermuda's problems were not political but related to criminality. The social significance of the assassinations was swept under the rug. The UBP's disinclination to change an economic status quo in which whites held the highest-paying jobs and the largest tracts of land fit too conveniently into the reality of a Governor's mansion set in 33 acres of verdant gardens next to one of Bermuda's poorest neighbourhoods.

2.3 Increased confusion in the British role in Bermuda

Chapter four showed how Government House and the FCO struggled to adjust to new constitutional realities, cemented by reforms in April 1973. These meant the UBP had gained an increased ability to set agendas, obfuscating unity of action in issues such as internal security, which were still considered

to be important elements in Britain's 'contingent liabilities' in Bermuda.¹³ The increase in UBP power led to confusion over what civil servants understood as Britain's role in Bermuda.

The focus on 'good government' fit in with Conservative sensibilities between 1970 and 1973. However, between 1974 and 1979, a Labour Government increasingly pined for Bermudian independence, meaning the focus on intervention was sidelined, as were concerns about electoral iniquities. Scholarship has focused on the problems that ad-hoc constitutional evolution, partly inspired by obtuse, short-term political demands, created for Britain's role in its remaining territories. As former Governor of Montserrat David Taylor notes: "It was never intended that such constitutions should achieve the semi-permanent status which they have now acquired."¹⁴ 'The absence of a coordinated policy institution' has resulted, as in the Bermuda case, in 'dramatic UK government interventions' following emergencies.¹⁵

This led to a recalibration following the revelation of a 'complete lack of clarity about who was responsible' during the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the eruption of a volcano in Montserrat in 1995-1997.¹⁶ Between the late 1990s and the present, Britain re-asserted its right to intervene in such matters as financial services, the environment and 'better government', focusing on the 'security, stability and prosperity' of the 14 remaining territories.¹⁷ Recent criticism by MPs, however, has been directed at the UK Government for failing to live up to its duties in funding the protection of endangered species.¹⁸

Secondly, however, this period also revealed that Leather was comfortable with a situation in which he did not set agendas and essentially acted as Bermuda's almost ceremonial foreign minister. Leather was the embodiment

¹³ Hintjens and Hodge, *Governing Unruliness*, 199.

¹⁴ Taylor, *British colonial policy in the Caribbean*, 338-9.

¹⁵ Hintjens and Hodge, *Governing Unruliness*, 205-6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 200.

¹⁷ FCO White Paper, *Partnership for Progress and Prosperity*, FCO White Paper, *Security, Success and Sustainability*.

¹⁸ *The Guardian*, January 16, 2014.

of Anglo-Bermudian affinities, for he privileged the UBP's imperfect democratic mandate over any allegiance that he was meant to feel towards Britain's (from March 1974, Labour) Foreign Secretaries. Bermuda, in Leather's eyes, became one of the last redoubts of the Greater British, royally-infused, white-dominated Commonwealth.

At the same time, as chapter five argued, there was a more insular disagreement between Leather and Richards over the nature of his private and public role. This highlighted the potential problems of making political appointments to the post of Governor. This led to a more low-key articulation of the role from 1977 onwards. Governors were meant to be seen but not heard, exercising a more 'neutral' oversight role as 'Father Confessor' as opposed to 'leaders of the local community'.

2.4 A decision to have 'no alternative' in the process of mercy

The Royal Commission report that followed the 1977 crisis over the hangings of Tacklyn and Burrows, and the 'disturbances' that followed focused largely on Bermuda's socio-economic conditions and her political system. This led to the recommendation, unwelcome for Bermudian conservatives, that 'only with independence can national unity be forged and pride in being Bermudian fully develop'.¹⁹ This report did not look in any detail, however, at the process by which Tacklyn and Burrows' pleas for mercies were considered and then rejected. This thesis has attempted to remedy that gap.

Chapter six argued three key points. Firstly, collusion between Leather and the UBP, in part enshrined via the constitution itself, meant the trials and appeals processes were compromised and may have amounted to a 'miscarriage of justice' for Tacklyn, who was found not guilty of the murders of Sayers and Sharples and may have been tried in a prejudicial manner for the Shopping Centre killings. Cold-blooded crimes had occurred before. Yet the

¹⁹ Pitt et al, *Report... into the 1977 Disturbances*, 36.

murders of 1972-3 shocked whites because they were founded in a mixture of colonial and racial grievance.

Secondly, the weakening and shrinking of the public role of the office of Governor meant that by 1977, occupants of the office such as Ramsbotham were displaying a distinct lack of confidence in the exercise of their power. Ramsbotham constitutionally had the power to stop the hangings *whatever* the UBP or his advisory council on the prerogative of mercy recommended. His lack of confidence, however, was exacerbated by a ‘sorry catalogue of failure’ in communication on the part of the FCO. Finally, it was cemented by Ramsbotham’s lack of experience of Bermuda, which led to him accepting the UBP’s critically flawed advice.

Thirdly, as the FCO revealed, ‘there was no constitutional reason’ why Britain could not stop hangings in places such as Bermuda. However, a civil service-propelled initiative to abrogate the Creech-Jones doctrine by which the metropole left decisions to Governors was trapped in political vacillation. Owen had the power to stop the hangings but essentially chose not to. His suggestion to parliament on December 5 that he had ‘no alternative’ but to advise the Queen that ‘justice should be allowed to take its course’ was, in the final analysis, designed to help him in a tricky political situation. As chapter six argued, Owen could have attempted to convince Ramsbotham to stop the hangings, as Callaghan had done with Posnett in Belize in 1974. As he revealed, however, the ‘history of firing’ warded him away from this course, leading him to be particularly guarded in his communications.

Ironically, a Labour Foreign Secretary allowed hangings to go ahead, while a Conservative predecessor had stopped them. Owen could also have followed the Tsoi precedent, ignoring the Creech Jones doctrine as Douglas-Home had done in 1973. His suggestion that he chose not to do this because the Creech Jones doctrine left him ‘no room for maneuver at all’ is open to objection. As Owen’s own words suggest, he ‘deliberately decided’ he was not going to follow the Tsoi precedent on the basis of his subjective reading of what the

Creech Jones doctrine legally entailed. This justification implies a certain degree of freedom of interpretation.

Owen's inclination to hold back from intervening was couched, however, in the rhetoric of legalism in which hands were cast as regrettably tied. Moreover, the fact that hangings involved a case in which a former MP, Minister and Governor had been killed seemed to be regarded as a reason for ruling out the abrogation of the doctrine. After all, as Owen noted, this would have led to an emotional debate in the House of Commons. It was a debate, as Foot indicated, the government believed it may have lost and did not want to risk in a 'pre-election period'. The brutal fact was that the process of mercy became caught up in political wrangling and events in the UK.

Summary

The essential themes of this story were determined by the fact that, far from being a managed process, British decolonisation was 'largely determined by geopolitical forces over which the British themselves had little control'.²⁰ Between 1963-1977 this lack of control was entrenched by the UBP's simple refusal to either to embrace the prospect of independence or make basic reforms to Bermuda's electoral system, despite the 'critical juncture' represented by the Constitutional Conference of November 1966.²¹

Indeed, Britain 'never exercised anything describable as global hegemony', while imperial action and policy shifts depended on 'an ever-varying mixture of linkages between metropole and peripheries — links of coercion, or persuasion, of economic interest, of emotional loyalty and more'.²² The force of such links meant Bermudian decolonisation took the path of 'de-dominionisation' because they placed unrepresentative rulers in the position to set agendas. The idea of dominion status was a 'characteristically

²⁰ Darwin, *Empire Project*, 649.

²¹ Daron Acemoglu and James A Robinson note that 'critical junctures' are 'major events that disrupt the existing political and economic balance in one or many societies', *Why Nations Fail*, 431.

²² Howe, *British Worlds, Settler Worlds, World Systems...*, 699.

ambiguous imperial invention'. It recognised 'various states of self-government while managing to convey overtones of continuing subordination'. Implicit in this was the idea of the 'pan-Britannic overtones' and linkages that were overpowering for officials such as Leather.²³

For oligarchs such as Tucker this meant that during the 1960s and 1970s, 'hyper-whiteness' retained a private yet controlling hand in 'a shadowless space of burning sunlight'; it 'served as [a] permanent counterpoint to the perceived decay corroding the imperial centre.'²⁴ Tucker's UBP made just enough concessions to stay in power, while repressing a much-needed discussion of racist and colonial legacies.

Bias towards the UBP at Government House meant a decolonisation of affinity took precedence over a decolonisation of pragmatism or principle. Britain treated Bermuda as a 'white' dominion in this period, despite the fact that she had a black majority that had been violently oppressed for centuries.

In part this may have been because 'the globalisation of decolonisation' had by the 1970s created an international atmosphere that argued against increased intervention of any kind.²⁵ However, from 1946 onwards, black Bermudians had attempted to appeal to the better angels of Britain's nature without much success. They merely asked that the imperial state live up to its espoused principles without regard to the crippling affinities of Anglo-Bermudian collusion at the level of local politics. A 'multi-track strategy of operating a laissez-faire policy' of decolonisation may have, in one sense, been 'wise', resulting in comparatively less bloodshed than the tortured French, Belgian, Dutch or Portuguese imperial disengagements.²⁶

However, continued colonial government came at a price, paid by Bermuda's disenfranchised on behalf of those in power. This was embodied in the remaining influence of a shadowy constitution full of grey areas, in which

²³ Hopkins, *Rethinking Decolonisation*, 212 and 219.

²⁴ Schwarz, *White Man's World*, 80.

²⁵ Nicholas White, *Decolonisation*, 104.

²⁶ Drower, *Fistful of Islands*, 37.

nudges, winks, undertones and informal networks mattered. Hitchens refers to the ‘committee that never meets’ as an example of the British elite’s proclivity for secrecy:

Like the ‘unwritten’ constitution or the ‘invisible earnings’ of the City of London, this is a definition and a method of exceptional convenience to those interested in ruling discreetly.²⁷

‘Ruling discreetly’ may have been in the interests of British politicians, ‘men on the spot’ and oligarchical politicians. However, this thesis has shown that colonial governance would be improved by clearer structures of accountability and more lucid definitions of terms such as ‘better government’, as the term ‘good government’ is re-phrased for the 2012 White Paper.²⁸ Such reforms would perhaps be less politically convenient for those elected to executive power. However, they would help Governors to manage an increasingly confused and contradictory job.

²⁷ Hitchens, *For the Sake of Argument*, 215.

²⁸ FCO White Paper, *Security, Success and Sustainability*.

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