

Achievements in the First Decade of the Modern Tobago House of Assembly: The 1980s

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Abstract

This paper outlines, in chronological fashion, the development of Tobago brought about by the accomplishments of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA or Assembly) during the first decade after its re-establishment in 1980. Using a qualitative approach, the work examines a number of primary sources from the THA, debates in the Trinidad and Tobago legislature, and Colonial Office Papers. The article first provides a brief overview of Tobago from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century when Tobago gained internal self-government. It then establishes a baseline of development on the island as articulated by A.P.T. James, Tobago's sole legislative representative in the mid-twentieth century. Finally, the paper outlines the achievements of the THA in the 1980s. The picture that emerges from a review of the contributions and impact of the THA is one of significant transformation of Tobago's physical and social infrastructure. That transformation was evident in the development of roads, water supply, providing meals for school-aged children, upgrading and constructing community centres, provision of enhanced international access facilities for trade and tourism, supporting fisheries, preserving and promoting the island's unique cultural heritage, as well as providing employment for Tobagonians as a social safety net.

Keywords: A.P.T. James, Assembly, development, Legislative Council, THA, Tobago

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Introduction

This paper examines the issues of development in Tobago. “International development focuses on the improvement of various facets of quality of life within a society” (Internationalrelations.org, para. 2). The development of Tobago within the unitary state of Trinidad and Tobago has been a contentious issue for more than a century since the two islands were unified as one colony in 1889, even though development issues pre-date the union. Claims of neglect and second-class status of Tobago and Tobagonians have echoed in the Trinidad and Tobago legislature for many decades. These claims, in part, led to calls for autonomy and fueled a movement to secure internal self-government for Tobago, which was achieved in 1980 with the re-establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly. Since that time, the Assembly has worked vigorously on improving infrastructure, social and economic development in Tobago. This paper examines the broad areas of development on the island in the first decade after the modern Tobago House of Assembly was established.

In support of its claims of significant development in Tobago in the 1980s, the article examines and cites a number of primary sources such as Minutes of meetings and debates of the Legislative Council of Trinidad and Tobago, Colonial Office Papers, as well as financial statements and administrative reports of the Tobago House of Assembly. Along with those contemporary sources, key secondary sources by authors who have researched Tobago’s history such as Eric Williams, Douglas Archibald, and C. R. Ottley were used to add texture to the narrative. A review of the above-mentioned sources highlights a call to action to develop Tobago by A.P.T. James, and the response from the Tobago House of Assembly in the 1980s.

Theoretical Framework

International development deals with various initiatives to improve the facets of the quality of life of people in a society. According to website internationalrelations.org, the broad historical trend in the concept of international development includes:

“both economic and social development and encompasses many issues such as humanitarian and foreign aid, poverty alleviation, the rule of law and governance, food and water security, capacity building, healthcare and education, women and children’s rights, disaster preparedness, infrastructure, and sustainability” (Internationalrelations.org, para. 2).

For some researchers, the emphasis is on economic growth expressed in increased “gross domestic product (GDP), import-export figures, and industrialization.” For others, the focus on social development is critical. Yet others emphasize the human element of people to provide for their basic needs through their own initiative (Internationalrelations.org, para.2). Sustainability is also an important factor with a focus on development that does not leave natural resources depleted to the extent that future generations cannot benefit from them. Some scholars advocate for the

“reorganization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems ... [even] radical changes in institutional, social, and administrative structures” (Internationalrelations.org, para 3).

This article embraces a multidimensional view of international development that includes, economic and social improvement, capacity building, infrastructure improvement, water and food security, preserving cultural heritage, and the like. Having achieved the radical change in the administrative structure that came with internal self-government in 1980, the leaders of the Tobago House of Assembly embarked on an ambitious plan to achieve development in as many facets of life in Tobago as possible to improve the lives of the residents of Tobago. This can be seen in their efforts to improve road infrastructure, water winning and distribution, nutrition of school children, community centres, fishing, the preservation of land for residents, construction of sporting facilities, provision of an economic safety net for residents using part-time employment, harbor and airport facilities to increase tourism and enhance tourism revenue, and preserving the unique cultural heritage of the island. The leaders of the Tobago House of Assembly attempted a multidimensional approach to development on the island that made a positive impact on the lives and prospects of Tobagonians.

Review of the Literature

There is a paucity of secondary sources on the history, economic and social development of Tobago. Therefore, this article is fundamentally based on primary sources gleaned from the Public Records Office in London, the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, and the Tobago House of Assembly. The Colonial Office papers provide firsthand accounts of British officials who dealt with the administration of Tobago in the nineteenth century. Those sources are a treasure trove of correspondences between high-ranking British administrators giving their perspectives of the island, and its political, economic, and administrative character.

The state of development of Tobago in the period prior to the re-establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly in 1980 is captured in the minutes and debates of the Trinidad and Tobago Legislative Council. The Council was the body responsible for development of the country, and it was, *inter alia*, charged with making laws and passing budgets to promote the welfare of the country. The advocacy of its elected representatives articulated the plight as well as aspirations of the populace. With respect to Tobago, the Minutes and debates of the Council that captured the advocacy of the lone Tobago representative from 1946 to 1961, A.P.T. James, reflects the yearnings of Tobagonians for the development of their island-home and establishes a baseline for what was lacking economically, socially, and in terms of infrastructure on the island. No other written source is as rich and descriptive of the state of Tobago for the period as those recorded in

the documents of the Legislative Council. The elected representatives articulated the kind of development that Tobagonians cared most about.

As the Tobago House of Assembly tried to address the challenges on the island from the 1980s, the official source of the accomplishments of the institution is best found in its own publications. These are its Annual Financial Statements and Administrative Reports. Apart from oral history, which needs to be conducted, these statements and reports bear witness to the work of the Assembly and provide a basis for which the institution can be held accountable in carrying out its plans to improve development on the island.

Selected secondary sources from the small number of scholars who research and write the history of Tobago provide context and help fill in documentary gaps. Thus, the works of Eric Williams, Douglas Archibald, C. R. Ottley, and Learie Luke are used to help paint, with broad strokes, the story of Tobago's political, administrative, economic, social, and infrastructure development.

Missing from these fruitful sources is oral history of key figures who served in the modern Tobago House of Assembly, as well as recordings of civil servants and ordinary Tobagonians in the 1980s. Indeed, oral history, when compiled, will add texture to the tapestry of the history of Tobago.

Research Question and Methodology

Governments exist, *inter alia*, to govern and address the needs of the populations they serve. This includes improving the welfare of the citizenry by providing conditions and initiatives that foster social, economic, and political improvement. This improvement is called development. The challenge that scholars who have delved into the history of Tobago have faced is answering the question: How has the government served the people of Tobago with respect to the issues Tobagonians care most about? In examining this research question for the decade of the 1980s under consideration, the paper seeks to fill the gap in the development discourse, not from a national viewpoint, but from a regional Tobagonian perspective.

This paper first provides a very brief overview of Tobago's political and administrative development. Then it delves into the articulation of issues critical to Tobagonians as laid out by A.P.T. James who can be viewed as the voice of Tobagonians in early to mid-twentieth century. Finally, it provides data on improvements made in Tobago by Tobagonians themselves through the Tobago House of Assembly after it was re-established in 1980. An examination mainly of primary sources weave a tapestry of development on the island, when one compares the concerns of Tobagonians prior to the existence of the modern Tobago House of Assembly with the impact of that institution in the initial period when Tobagonians were given political, administrative, and budgetary agency to determine how their concerns should be addressed.

One type of qualitative research is historical research, which examines past events to draw conclusions and make predictions about the future. This paper utilizes the historical model of qualitative research to describe and examine past events in Tobago to chronologically document Tobago's history in order to better understand development on the island in the decade after the re-establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly in 1980. This approach is useful because of the dearth of published scholarly sources on Tobago. As a result, there is not a great deal of information that catalogs development in Tobago. In large measure, Tobago has been seen as a neglected rural appendage of Trinidad, not only politically and administratively, but in the scholarly realm as well. The autonomists who advocated for secession and internal self-government over the years decried the paltry social and economic development on the island in the period prior to 1980. This article provides a chronological account of development and achievements in Tobago from 1980 to 1990.

Historical Overview of Tobago 1763-1980

Tobago's separate identity as a British colony began in 1763 at the conclusion of the Seven Years' War between France and England. The Treaty of Paris on February 10, 1763 gave the British sovereignty over the island (Archibald, 1987, p. 97). "By the Order in Council of 7 October 1763, King George III established Tobago as one of several independent, self-governing territories under the Grenada government (Archibald, 1987, p. 98). In June 1768, the first governor of Tobago, General Robert Melville, upgraded the Tobago Island Council, which was an extension of the General Council of the Grenada Government. Melville's upgrade resulted in a bicameral legislature with an upper chamber called the Legislative Council consisting of nine members appointed by the governor, and a lower chamber called the Legislative Assembly with an elected body of thirteen members drawn from the various parishes and the town of Plymouth (Luke, p. 4, 5). The Tobago House of Assembly ran the affairs of the colony independently until it surrendered its powers and became a Crown Colony after the Belmanna Riots in 1876. Subsequently, Tobago was united with Trinidad in 1889.

On 1 November 1879, Lieutenant-Governor Augustus Frederick Gore, concerned about the declining state of the island's finances, made the first formal recommendation to unify the two colonies. He believed that the union would result in savings to the Crown. Writing to the lieutenant-governor of the Windward Islands, he stated: "I am of the opinion that there is no necessity for maintaining the colony as a separate government" (CO 288/28). By 7 April 1883, the Crossman Commission visited Tobago and found a heavy burden of taxation on the masses, little expenditure on infrastructure, and poorly paid government officials because of the impoverished condition of the treasury. This led the commissioners to recommend the federation of St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Grenada, Tobago and possibly Dominica, with headquarters in Grenada (Williams, 1963, p. 136). The publication of the Commission's report in 1884 tragically coincided with the

bankruptcy of the London Mercantile firm of A. M. Gillespie and Company, which held interest in nineteen or three-quarters of Tobago's estates (Ottley, 1973, 89; CO 321/99). This was the death knell of the Tobago sugar industry and foreshadowed the demise of the first Tobago House of Assembly. The Trinidad and Tobago Act of 1887 provided the authority to unite the two colonies. Under that Act, on 17 November 1888, Queen Victoria proclaimed the Order in Council uniting Tobago and Trinidad as one colony called Trinidad and Tobago, effective 1 January 1889 (CO 289/5).

Thus, the first Tobago House of Assembly was dissolved, and a Financial Board was established with the powers to enact local regulations, collect revenues, and pay expenses. The union did not solve Tobago's chronic economic problems. Therefore, the 1897 West Indian Royal Commission recommended the "complete amalgamation of Tobago and Trinidad." Consequently, on 20 October 1898, an order in council made Tobago a ward or mere administrative district of the colony of Trinidad and Tobago, effective 1 January 1899 (CO 298/62). The aspirations of Tobagonians for greater autonomy and regional development grew continuously from that date. After a protracted political and parliamentary struggle in the latter part of the 1970s, Tobago was granted internal self-government in 1980. Thereafter, the THA responded positively to the calls for development in Tobago that were made by advocates such as A.P.T. James.

A.P.T. James' Advocacy for Development in Tobago 1946-1961

While strong advocacy for development in Tobago can be traced to early twentieth century Tobagonian representatives such as James A. A. Biggart and others (Luke, 2007, pp. 125-146), the contribution and impact of the THA can be placed within the context of the advocacy of one of Tobago's most vocal and unrelenting legislators, A.P.T. James from the village of Patience Hill. James was the sole Tobagonian representative in the Trinidad and Tobago Legislative Council from 1946-1961. In 1957, trade union leader and fellow legislator Uriah Butler described James in the following words: "Since his advent here I am certain that I speak the truth when I say that Tobago has never had in this hon. Chamber a greater champion of its cause" (Trinidad and Tobago, 1957, p. 1971). While the purpose of this paper does not include a critique of James' views or claims of development needs of Tobago, his vision for development in Tobago encapsulates the advocacy of his legislative predecessors, and that vision was taken up by the modern THA with significant results.

Two of the first issues that A.P.T. James addressed in the Legislative Council were land and sea communications. James was a strong advocate for road construction and improvement in Tobago. He constantly asked the government to declare how much of the colony's budget was allocated to road development in Tobago, which roads were under construction, and the nature of road improvement work on the island. James kept the matter of the construction of the North Coast

Road before the legislature. That road linked the rural areas, where much of the agricultural produce was grown, to Scarborough, the main town and port. The North Coast Road was key to stimulating agribusiness development and food security on the island. It gave planters and peasants ground access to the capital for shipping their produce (Luke, 2007, p. 170). In 1949, he asked the government to increase its budgetary allocation for roads in Tobago so that it would be proportionate with expenditure on roads in Trinidad (Trinidad and Tobago, 1949, p. 655).

The need for roads in the rural districts of Tobago at that time was urgent because of the inability of the coastal steamers to dock at some of the village ports during bad weather. During debates on the budget of the colony, James repeatedly appealed to the government to improve the roads between either Castara and Parlatuvier or Roxborough and Parlatuvier. In the debate on the 1951 budget, James again urged government to construct the North Coast Road. He argued that the road would reduce the cost of operating the coastal steamers, since they would only have to operate between Port of Spain and Scarborough. To James' proposal that the road would cost \$400,000, one Council member retorted, "But Tobago is not worth that" (Trinidad and Tobago, 1951, p. 595). In 1952, James continued urging the government to construct the North Coast Road, which by then was estimated to cost \$500,000 (Trinidad and Tobago, 1952, p. 338-40).

The steamship service between Tobago and Trinidad was another major bone of contention. In 1946, the two old ships were slow, and unreliable. James constantly urged the government to purchase new ships to service the inter-island route. "The steamer service was crucial to the commercial viability of the island, as well as for transporting Tobagonians who needed to access government services in Port of Spain. The poor state of the island's roads made the steamer service even more important" (Luke, 2007, p. 169). By January 1950, James called on the government to replace the coastal steamer *Tobago*, which was in a state of disrepair (Trinidad and Tobago, 1950, p. 485). He echoed this demand in his 1953 contribution to the colony's budget debate. In May 1955, he called on the government to purchase modern ships to replace the old coastal steamers, *Tobago* and *Trinidad* (Trinidad and Tobago, 1955, p. 1425). These steamers serviced the entire colony, not Tobagonians alone. They supported tourism and transported produce from Tobago to Trinidad and overseas. In February 1955, the government sold the old ships. In 1958, James' advocacy resulted in the purchase of two new ships, the *Scarlet Ibis* and the *Bird of Paradise* (Trinidad and Tobago, 1960, p. 1972-75).

A.P.T. James also tried to improve healthcare delivery in Tobago. He called for additional medical staff for the island as well as the erection of health centres and the extension of ambulance services on the island. In a speech in the Legislative Council in January 1949, James highlighted a litany of woes concerning conditions at the Tobago colonial hospital (Trinidad and Tobago, 1949, p. 282-83). He noted that there were only six beds for females in the general hospital and no X-ray machines. Further, the boilers for sterilization promised seven years earlier had not yet been delivered, while the thirty-one-year-old Norwegian stove used for that purpose failed periodically.

In addition, the operating theatre was not separated from the ward and unsanitary conditions persisted especially with respect to waste disposal. Moreover, separate wards for patients with infectious diseases did not exist. By 1951 the government had provided three million dollars to improve health facilities in the colony, including Tobago (Trinidad and Tobago, 1951, p. 834).

A.P.T. James was also interested in education. In 1950 he urged the government to construct at least one other secondary school in Tobago because Bishop's High School was the only one at the time; and to repair the elementary schools on the island (Trinidad and Tobago, 1951, pp. 788, 790-92). He promoted the study of agriculture, which he believed was one of Tobago's greatest assets, and advocated the establishment of a farm school on the island, a trade school, and a secondary school in the windward district (Trinidad and Tobago, 1952, pp. 341-42). In 1952, James became very frustrated with the government's delay in establishing a secondary school in the rural section of Tobago. Therefore, he founded the James Foundation Secondary School in Roxborough devoted exclusively to studying agriculture (Luke, 2007, p. 173). "He was happy to hear that the government had made provision in the 1957 Tobago Development Programme for a school at Roxborough" (Luke, 2007, 173). During his tenure in office, the government built two elementary schools to replace some of the nine dilapidated schools on the island that were acquired from the Moravian Board (Luke, 2007, 173).

A.P.T. James was also passionate about the development of industries in Tobago, in part, to help staunch the constant migration of young Tobagonians from the island in search of employment in Trinidad. In early 1947, he pointed out the economic potential of the island that could include trade in tobacco, a cooking oil factory, the production of sugar, and a cattle industry. In 1948, he paid his own fare to London to take his grievances to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Sir Arthur Creech Jones. James outlined Tobago's needs and potential in animal husbandry, the production of dairy products and cocoa, secondary processing industries, telephone service, electrification, health personnel and services, education, road development, and other areas (Phillips, 1994). James recommended the provision of a \$15 million grant from the Colonial Development Corporation for the island's development (Phillips, 1994, p. 35). He also raised the issue of Tobagonians having greater authority in determining policies that directly affected them (Tobago MLC Meets Mr. Creech Jones, 1948, p. 2).

At home, in 1949, A.P.T. James promoted the development of the fishing industry, electrification of Scarborough, and the elevation of tourism. Scarborough finally received electricity in 1952 (Trinidad and Tobago, 1954, p. 58). While the Hillsborough Dam was completed in 1952, he pressed for the extension of water distribution in Tobago, urging the government to provide the pipelines needed for that service (Trinidad and Tobago, 1954, p. 58). In 1947 he alleged that Tobago had not benefited from the \$80,000 government allocation for tourism (Trinidad and Tobago, 1947, p. 133). In 1948, he moved a motion to make lands in the Crown Point-Storebay

area available to individuals interested in building hotels and developing tourism (Trinidad and Tobago 1948, p. 66).

James pushed for constitutional development that would allow Tobago to have more than one seat in the Legislative Council. He also championed the cause of full representative government, taking a position that all members of the Council should be elected. To this end, he supported the 1948 Constitutional Reform Committee's minority report written by Dr. Patrick Solomon (Trinidad and Tobago, 1948, p. 407). He even submitted his own minority report demanding two seats for Tobago in the legislature (CO 295/649/8). His demands for increased Tobagonian representation also envisioned involvement on the Executive Council and a permanent seat on the Estimates Committee which made the colony's annual budget. James pointed out that because Tobago was separated from Trinidad by sea, no one on the larger island knew the conditions of Tobago well enough, and no one was competent enough to explain what happens in Tobago other than its residents (Luke, p. 179).

James was a member of the Tobago Citizens Political and Economic Party. On 29 October 1950 that party passed a resolution and sent it to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the governor, the speaker of the Legislative Council, and senior members of the legislatures in the British West Indies. The signatories argued that Tobagonians should be seen as a "Minority Group" and be accorded "privileged" representation (CO 295/649/8). The Party also proposed an amendment to the 1950 constitution to include provision for Tobagonians to have a permanent representative on the Executive Council.

In 1951, the Party wrote a memorandum to the Secretary of State for the Colonies entitled, "Setting out the Grievances, Disabilities and Complaints of the Inhabitants of Tobago." The memorandum requested more than one seat in the Legislative Council for Tobago, and a representative on the Executive Council. It advised that a "Grant-in-Aid, coupled with better communication and Free Trade with the outside world, would not only increase the island's population, but would produce a wealthy and prosperous Tobago" (CO 295/654/70778/1/1). The 1951 memo recommended the development of cotton, tobacco and sugar cane cultivation, and the development of the fishing industry, the tourist industry, and the potential for a banana industry. The signatories complained about the lack of electricity and cold storage facilities on the island, the lack of proper roads and the non-existence of communication with the outside world, which led to the transshipment of perishable items from Trinidad (Luke, p. 186). The slow pace of development of Tobago led James to join the Tobago Independence Movement, which by 1960 recommended a referendum to consider the separation of Tobago from Trinidad within or outside of the West Indies Federation (Luke, p. 196-198).

The referendum never occurred. A.P.T. James died on 5 January 1962. While his vision for Tobago did not materialize in his day, the modern Tobago House of Assembly during its first 10

years addressed many of the issues he advocated. This is evidenced by road construction and maintenance, improved sea and air communication, electrification, improvement of water winning and distribution, provision of better health facilities, the promotion of tourism, a focus on agricultural industries and fisheries, the sourcing of significant sums of funding for development of the island, and even the matter of constitutional development. An examination of the Tobago House of Assembly record in the 1980s provides highlights of the THA's significant contribution to the development of Tobago when compared to the litany of woes outlined by A.P.T. James.

The First Decade of the Modern THA: The 1980s

The first 10 years of the modern Tobago House of Assembly were fraught with tension between the THA and the Central Government, especially over release of funds to the Assembly. There were constant complaints by the Clerks of the Assembly about delays in the monetary releases, and funding below the level requested. It was also a decade of financial contraction of the economy which impacted the entire nation of Trinidad and Tobago.

On 23 September 1980, Sir Ellis Clarke, President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, assented to Act No. 37 of 1980, the Tobago House of Assembly Act: "An Act to establish the Tobago House of Assembly for the purpose of making better provision for the administration of the island of Tobago and for matters connected therewith." The inauguration of the Assembly was held on 4 December 1980, presided over by President Clarke, at which Arthur Napoleon Raymond Robinson was elected as Chairman of the Tobago House of Assembly. Thus, the Tobago House of Assembly was re-established after a nine-decade hiatus.

The re-establishment of the Tobago House of Assembly is one of the greatest achievements of Tobagonians in recent history and represents a capstone experience of Tobagonian identity. The idea was conceived by Tobagonians and the cause was fought for with an indomitable spirit by Tobagonians. Despite its skeptics and naysayers, the institution embodies the Tobagonian spirit and values of intelligence, industriousness, determination, concern for fellow citizens, the "len-han" mentality of village cooperation, strong religious conviction, a high regard for authority balanced with an intolerance for abuse or neglect, a love for indigenous culture, and a passion for the concept of "homeland".

One of the most significant contributions of the THA to Tobago is the improvement of the island's physical infrastructure, particularly road construction and maintenance. Before the advent of the THA, Tobago's roads were notoriously narrow, and not maintained in the best of conditions. Many were simply unpaved, and the rainy seasons wreaked havoc on them. All this negatively affected the cost of transportation, the cost of maintaining vehicles, and the ability of Tobagonians to move from place to place regardless of the weather. Thus, the Assembly's emphasis, from its inception,

on improving roadways, bridges, and drainage alongside roads had a positive impact on development on the island.

As early as 1983, the Acting Clerk of the Assembly listed the opening of Phase III of the Claude Noel Highway as one of the major accomplishments of the Assembly (THA Financial Statement, 1983). This achievement occurred despite the shortage of construction materials such as bitumen, and the irregular manner in which funds were released by the Central Government (the THA received \$237.1 million from the Central Government in 1983). The commencement of operations of the Studley Park Quarry was another accomplishment that had a significant impact on road development and improvement in 1983. That led to the local production of road building materials for construction, repair, and maintenance of roads on the island.

Despite the inordinate delays in the release of funds, the “disproportionate relationships between releases received and those applied for” along with inadequate staff, one of the major accomplishments of the THA was the completion of the Claude Noel Highway in 1984. It spent \$24,170,751 on its Roads and Bridges Programme including the Claude Noel Highway, the Northside Road (Parlatuvier/Bloody Bay), Charlotteville/L’Anse Fourmi Road, the Roxborough/Bloody Bay Road, and the Auchenskeoch/Buccoo Road (THA Financial Statement, 1984). The THA also spent \$2,910,563 on drainage improvements (THA Financial Statement, 1984).

In 1984, the THA received \$190,397,380 from the Central Government. Besides roads, that money was used to start a school nutrition program, improve the water supply on the island and expand telephone services. Three kitchens were constructed and equipped, which launched the School Nutrition Programme in Tobago on 17 September 1984. It first started with a centre in Bon Accord distributing food to the schools (THA Financial Statement, 1984). Centres at Charlotteville and Mason Hall were added. “Initially, all Centres operated on a three-day basis; but by 4 October, 1984, ...189,677 meals were distributed” (THA Financial Statement, 1984, p. 50).

The water supply in Tobago has always been inadequate. Water mains and pipes often run dry, even in the rainy season, because of the lack of adequate facilities for water winning. In 1984, the THA added 2,950,000 litres per day to the water supply system. It spent \$4,701,357 on water projects at Green Hill, Courland, King’s Bay, Little Englishman’s Bay, Old Government Farm Project, and on extension of water mains (THA Financial Statement, 1984). The THA Financial Statement of 1984 also indicated that there was a “significant expansion of the telephone service throughout Tobago.”

Also in 1984, the Community Development Division reported that there were 33 functioning Village Councils, and 34 Women’s Groups of which 17 were active (THA Financial Statement, 1984, p. 52). That division focused on the following areas:

- reviving the centre construction and repairs programme
- reviving and strengthening dormant and weak community organisations
- adult education programmes
- fostering efficient group leadership through lectures, discussions, and leadership training programmes
- promoting and monitoring Aided Self-Help Programmes among community organizations, and
- promotion of the Prime Minister’s Best Village Competitions and Exhibitions

The THA’s support of community groups through technical assistance and funding was critical in the preservation of village cohesiveness and culture.

The Assembly put priority on upgrading and construction of communal spaces such as community centres on the island. In 1984, construction of three new Community Centres at Lambeau, Castara, and Patience Hill was completed; repairs of three existing centers at Plymouth, Bethel and Belle Garden were done, and the construction of the Goodwood centre was ongoing. The community centres were important places of education. In 1984, Pre-School Programmes in Tobago were held at the following five community centres: Speyside, Belle Garden, Carnbee/Mt Pleasant, Mt. Grace/Harmony Hall, and Moriah (THA Financial Statement, 1984). Thirty-three Adult Education classes were conducted and trained 501 students in the following areas:

- Business and Academic Studies (typing and shorthand)
- Music (guitar)
- Nutrition Education (food preparation and cake decorating)
- Vocational Education (garment construction and tailoring), and
- Handicraft including crochet, macramé, straw, and coiling (THA Financial Statement 1984, p. 54).

The THA was able to parley that support later for successfully launching the Tobago Heritage Festival, which has garnered national, regional, and international acclaim. Besides upgrading community centres in 1984, the THA began renovations to the Assembly Chamber.

In 1985, despite receiving only \$175.7 million from the Ministry of Finance, leaving most divisions to “operate under severe financial constraints,” the Clerk reported the following achievements:

- “the commissioning and inauguration of the Tobago House of Assembly Hall
- state land distribution from which twenty farmers benefited
- massive improvement to the Windward Main Road
- the completion and commissioning of the Auchenskeoch/Buccoo Road, and

- the completion and commissioning of the Shirvan Road” (THA Financial Statement, 1985, p. 1).

The Assembly Chamber was refurbished and officially opened as the seat of the current Tobago House of Assembly, 160 years after its original construction in 1825 (THA, 25th Anniversary, pp. 11, 14). Queen Elizabeth II unveiled the plaque of the refurbished Assembly Chamber on 2 November 1985. Other projects that were under varying stages of implementation included the new Scarborough Abattoir, the Mt. Dillon Castara Road, and substantial improvement to the Windward Road.

By 1986, the Clerk of the THA noted with frustration: “The deterioration in the funds allocated to the Tobago House of Assembly by the Ministry of Finance and Planning . . . primarily as a result of the serious deterioration in the general economic circumstances” (THA Financial Statement 1986). While Parliament approved \$167,359,350, “the THA only received \$127,655,744. . . .” That represented a shortfall of \$39,683,606 or 23%, which in the mind of the Clerk “threatened the very existence of the Assembly” (THA Financial Statement, 1986, p. 1). To deal with the shortfall and “to meet its statutory commitments and to prevent serious social disruption in the community, the Assembly authorized expenditure [of \$29,952,439] from its ‘Unspent Balances’ to satisfy \$17,301,586 in recurrent expenditure and \$12,651,843 in capital projects” (THA Financial Statement 1986, p. 1). The Mt. Dillion/Castara Road was the only major project completed in 1986, however, several other projects were ongoing including the Roxborough Sports Complex, the New Works Division Office and Mechanical Workshop, and the Louis D’Or Marketing Depot (THA Financial Statement 1986).

The financial woes continued in 1987. The Clerk of the THA noted: “We experienced our share of the rigours of the financial strictures imposed upon the country as a whole . . .” (THA Financial Statement, 1987, p. 1). While \$224,080,829 was allocated to the Assembly, it received only 78% of that amount (THA Financial Statement 1987). The Clerk described the Assembly’s progress as “modest but significant.” He cited “Physical development plans . . . commissioned and presented for five (5) estates in Windward, Tobago (Belle Garden, Richmond, Goldsborough, Lure, Studley Park)” and pointed to “Substantial progress . . . in some of the major construction projects which were started in 1986 – Roxborough Sports Complex, Louis D’Or Marketing Depot, and the Works Division Mechanical Workshop” (THA Financial Statement 1987, p. 1).

The Settlements Division was created in 1987 (Report of the THA, 1990). The purchase of large tracts of land by the Assembly was not only visionary since land prices on the island skyrocketed in the latter part of the twentieth century. Tobagonians attach great importance to land and home ownership, which gives them a sense of self-worth. Therefore, the Assembly’s land ownership initiative reflected the culture of the people. The THA also foresaw that once development began in earnest on the island, many wealthy individuals and firms who were not native to the island

would purchase the land at the disadvantage to Tobagonians who did not have the resources to seize the moment. Thus, the preservation of Tobago's land for its residents is a major contribution of the Assembly to the people of Tobago.

In 1986, the Clerk of the THA also expressed alarm over a "...most worrying aspect of the Assembly's operation...its inability to generate the much-needed employment in Tobago. The absence of major private sector programmes in Tobago puts the onus on the Tobago House of Assembly to create jobs but with the serious curtailment of its Parliamentary allocation, there must of necessity, be a reduction in job opportunities" (THA Financial Statement 1987, p. 2). Apart from political considerations, the THA worked to provide an economic safety net for its people by providing temporary employment relief programmes. Eventually, the Assembly became the employer of choice for most Tobagonians as they deemed it a stable and permanent institution.

Probably the brightest star in the Assembly's contribution to Tobago in the 1980s was the establishment of the Tobago Heritage Festival founded by Dr. Jacob D. Elder, a Councillor of the Assembly, and a cultural anthropologist. The Tobago Heritage Festival has preserved much of the traditions of the island, put them on local, national, regional, and international stages, and has brought thousands of local and international tourists to the island, thus boosting tourism which contributed to a large share of the island's gross domestic product. The Tobago Heritage Festival also gave Tobago its start as a festival tourism destination. Among other features, the festival includes the Moriah Wedding, performances of "Games We Used to Play" held at Mason Hall, "Pulling the Seine" at the Black Rock Fishing Festival, and "Dance the Cocoa" at the Charlotteville "Natural Treasures Day." The revenue benefits to the island, its people, and entrepreneurs are significant. The Tobago Heritage Festival has become the premiere event on the island's social calendar.

Despite the "deepening of the National Economic decline in 1988" with Parliamentary appropriation for the THA at \$280,090,233, but with actual receipts at \$208,270,373 or 74% of the allocation, "major construction projects were undertaken" (THA Financial Statement, 1988, p. 1). Notably, those included the expansion of the Scarborough Harbour and the extension of the Crown Point Airport Runway (THA Financial Statement, 1988). The appeals for a harbor and an airport that would allow direct international access to and from the island were longstanding. Therefore, work on these projects, apart from their immediate economic benefit, was a source of great pride for Tobagonians. "Other significant projects undertaken were the continuation of construction of a new Works Division Complex at Old Government Farm and a Sports Complex at Roxborough; completion of the Louis D'Or Marketing Depot which became operational in November 1988; and the commencement of production of a documentary film on the Tobago Bele' Dance" (THA Financial Statement, 1988, p. 2).

The THA also paid attention to the development of fisheries as a traditional economic activity of its people. With its support, 139,942 pounds of flying fish were recorded as landed at Buccoo, Mt. Irvine, and Milford/Pigeon Point beaches in 1988 (THA Administration Report, 1992, p. 27).

The decline in the national economy continued in 1989, which affected the financial releases from the Central Government. Of the \$270, 411, 006 appropriated, only \$243,263,531 or 90% was released to the Assembly (THA Financial Statement 1989). The major projects in 1989 continued to be the expansion of the Scarborough Harbour and the extension of the Crown Point Airport Runway. The construction of the new Works Division Complex at Old Government Farm and the Sport Complex at Roxborough also continued. In addition, the THA bought the Roxborough Estate in 1989 for \$543,250 (THA Financial Statement, 1996). Notably, the amount of flying fish landed at Buccoo, Mt. Irvine, and Milford/Pigeon Point beaches increased to 144,910 pounds (THA Administration Report, 1992).

Thus, year after year, the development initiatives undertaken by the modern Tobago House of Assembly sought to address issues that Tobagonians cared most about. In many areas, those issues correlated with the advocacy interests of A.P.T. James. Were he alive in 1990, he would have been proud of the development taking place on the island. However, given his legislative record of championing Tobago's cause and his historical frustration with the slow pace of development on the island, he would have been more vociferous than the Clerk of the THA in his denunciation of the Central Government for not providing the amount of funds approved for development in Tobago.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the chronological account laid out above, it is clear that in the first decade of its existence, despite the constraints related to the national economic challenges and limited financial releases from the Central Government, the modern Tobago House of Assembly made a concerted effort to address development issues that Tobagonians cared most about over the years as articulated by their leaders such as A.P.T. James. There were successful and transformative accomplishments in road improvement and construction, improving water winning and distribution, providing for the nutrition of school children, upgrading and constructing community centres as central to village life, purchasing and preserving large tracts of land for its residents, providing enhanced international access points for trade and tourism, supporting fisheries, building sporting facilities, preserving the island's unique cultural heritage, and providing an economic safety net for its people. The THA also restored the icon of its legislative, executive, and administrative power, the Assembly Hall.

The historical account of the first 10 years of the modern THA demonstrates resolute development efforts, year after year, to improve the lot of the residents of Tobago. Indeed, the improvements were in some of the problematic areas Tobagonians complained about over the years, and which they wanted addressed in a positive way. Those achievements engendered a sense of pride among the residents because they were accomplished as a result of their own agency by an institution they fought to have reestablished. Certainly, the THA's achievements of those early years reflect significant multidimensional development in Tobago.

Research on Tobago's recent past from the mid-twentieth century can benefit from more scholars and students focusing on the island in the context of the aspirations of its people. Moreover, augmenting available official government documents with oral history sources as well as opinions reflected in newspaper articles will present a more nuanced account that may call into question whether the THA did enough with the limited resources made available to it during a period of economic stringency. Since most of the sources used in this article to document the development initiatives in the 1980s are from the THA, future study should seek to determine the perspectives of the residents of the island and officials in the central government on the achievements in the period under review. Such an approach would allow for a deeper interpretation of the chronological account presented here. It would also be instructive to examine the second decade of the existence of the Tobago House of Assembly to see whether its development initiatives were sustained.

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