

THE PNP A HISTORY

From Founding Years to Present Day



C. WASHINGTON & BOBBI-JEANNE MISICK
Foreword by Rev. Dr. A.V. Butterfield

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ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

FOREWORD

Foreword

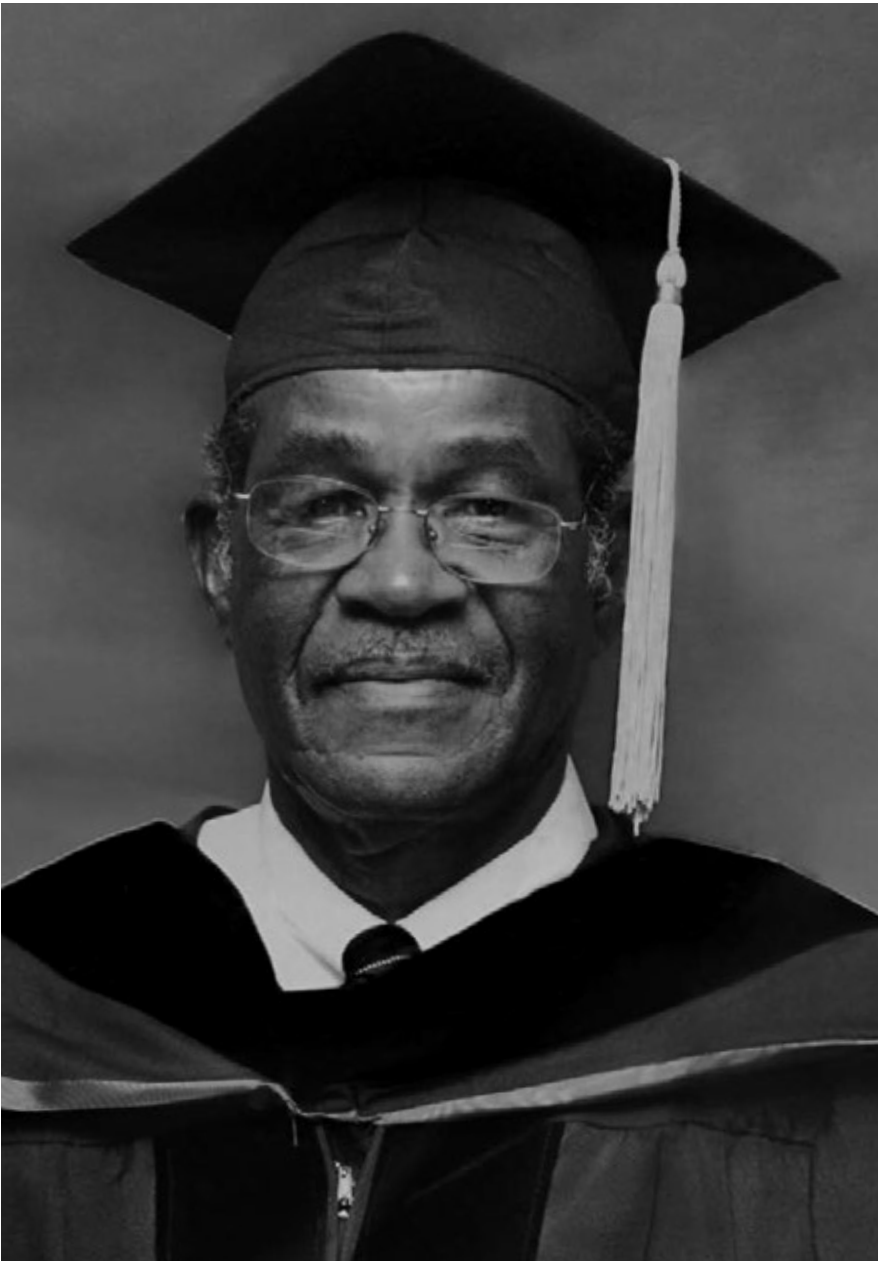
I am pleased to have been asked to write the foreword for this first edition of the History of the Progressive National Party. As a founding member of the party my thoughts go back to my colleagues, many of whom have passed, but not before leaving legacies that we can all be proud of. The vision and dreams we had for the Turks and Caicos Islands, like all visions, were audacious.

The Progressive National Party was undoubtedly the seminal political change organ in the political life of the Turks and Caicos Islands — the founders of which produced the first constitution of these islands. This was pivotal to the elected government and the rights of those who are governed.

The philosophy of the founding fathers was that the collective good required the building of democratic institutions to foster economic and social development beyond the life of any individual. It is gratifying to see that this tradition continues in the party of today. Every time the PNP has been given governing mandates it has built people-empowering new institutions and undertaken legislative initiatives that have improved the functions of government and the quality of life for the people of the TCI. It is my wish that generations of PNP yet unborn will preserve this legacy and pass it on in perpetuity.

I wish to thank this generation of leaders for commissioning the production of the History of the Party, thereby honouring my generation for our achievement. For my many colleagues who have passed and for those who remain, I challenge the PNP of today to not only strive to do things right, but if you are to preserve the vision of the founding fathers you must also act with integrity and do the right things.

Reverend Dr. Albray Victor Butterfield, CBE



Rev. Dr. Albray Victor Butterfield, CBE

[Previous spread]
State Council Members with unknown UK & US persons circa 1960
From left. Front row: A. E. "Bert" Basden, Evan Wood, unknown US Airforce officer; unknown, UK Government Administrator - Mr. Tutt; Second row: Paul Higgs, Lewis Francis, Harry Musgrove, Lou Mills, James Walkin, Emmanuel Hall, NJS Francis, Arthur Tatem, Alexander "Shorty" Smith; Back row: unknown, unknown, James Morgan, Gustavus Lightbourne
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



C H A P T E R O N E

BEGINNINGS



NORMAN B. SAUNDERS
Mr. Saunders, age 36, was educated in accounting and worked in his field for two other firms before taking over Caicos Air Services as shareholder and manager in 1973. He has been a member of the Legislative Assembly since 1967. Aside from these positions, he is a past chairman of the Tourist Board and member of the Planning and Development Authority until 1976, a member of delegations to the Caribbean and London, and of various committees and civic groups. A local preacher in the Methodist Church, Saunders has a family, and enjoys sports and photography.



CAROL E. BROOKS
Ms. Brooks, 42, mother of three, and candidate for Back Salina South, makes use of her spare time in reading.

ALBRAY V. BUTTERFIELD
Mr. Butterfield, 43, a businessman, is a husband and father of three children. He relaxes when he can in his favorite pastime, fishing.



WALTER COX
Mr. Cox, 55, is a successful businessman, and the PNP candidate for Providenciales, he has a wife and five children.

Overview

Based on details from Christopher Columbus' diary, the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) contends with the Bahamas as the explorer's first landfall in the New World on October 12, 1492. However, most historians credit Juan Ponce de Leon as the first nonindigenous visitor to the islands in 1512. For centuries, the islands are reputed to have changed hands between several European powers, eventually being retained by the British and administered until 1973 through Bermuda, Jamaica and the Bahamas at various times as proxies for Britain.

The islands were in theory autonomously governed as a British Overseas Territory from 1973. In 1976, party politics was introduced under a new constitution; of the eleven elected seats in the Legislative Council, the Progressive National Party (PNP) won four, the rival People's Democratic Movement (PDM) won five and the other two seats were won by independent candidates. Six elected seats were needed to form the government. The two independent members joined with the PDM and the government was formed. The first elected government was therefore formed by a coalition of the two independent candidates and the five members of the PDM, placing the PNP in opposition. The PNP members were Norman Benjamin (NB) Saunders, Nathaniel James Selver (NJS) Francis, Aulden L (AL) Smith and Albray Victor (AV) Butterfield.

The party remained in opposition until it won the 1980 election by 8:3. Elected were: Aulden Charles (AC) Durham, NJS Francis, Robert S. (RS) Hall, Stafford A. (SA) Misick, NB Saunders, AL Smith, AV Butterfield, and Walter Cox. The PNP won the 1984 election by 9:2. AV Butterfield did not participate in this election. Ariel Rudolph (AR) Misick won the West Road seat, and Gustavus Othniel (GO) Lightbourne won the seat in Providenciales. Unfortunately, the PNP's tenure in office was shortened due to alleged wrong-doing by members of the administration which resulted in the suspension of the islands' constitution and the termination of the mandate of the elected government in 1986. The period of suspension lasted until 1988 when fresh elections under a new constitution saw the election of the PDM.

Amid budgetary challenges, the PDM called early elections in April 1991 and the PNP was returned to office. However, the party lost the 1995 election to the PDM and was once again relegated to the opposition benches, where it remained until 2003 when it was once more elected to govern the country. The PNP was re-elected in 2007 but again due to alleged corruption its mandate was shortened when the constitution was suspended, and the UK assumed direct rule until November 2012. The PNP narrowly won the 2012 election but lost its bid for re-election in December 2016.

[left]
A page from the PNP Manifesto of 1980
photo provided by the TCI National Museum

[previous spread]
Aerial view of Grand Turk

The Formative Years

The history of the Progressive National Party, and of party politics in the TCI, can best be understood with reference to the proxy oversight for Britain by its colonies Jamaica (1848 to 1962) and the Bahamas (1962 to 1973), and the period from 1973 leading up to the 1976 general election. Given that background, the islands were late in developing the political awareness and talent needed for representational government. Still, a form of collective responsibility existed at the district level for certain basic responsibilities and a basic framework for a central government existed in Grand Turk, although not democratic in nature. One would therefore be right to assume that there has been a history of wanton neglect of the islands by the UK.

For generations, people lived in abject poverty, denied universal access to education, medical care and adequate housing. In 1976 there was one high school in the entire TCI and entry was restricted largely by privilege and address. The rest of the education infrastructure consisted of one-room schoolhouses manned by a single untrained teacher, or in larger settlements by several semi-trained or untrained teachers. Limited healthcare was administered in various settlements by practical nurses; infant mortality and maternity death rates were high and there were no real public and environmental health functions or facilities. Jobs were non-existent in the Caicos Islands other than the self-employed fishermen and subsistence farmers.

In Grand Turk, Salt Cay and South Caicos, the salt industry had collapsed by the mid-1960s; the small merchant middle class and other ambitious residents left for opportunities in the Bahamas, Bermuda, and Canada. Leading up to and immediately after the Bahamas' independence there was a flight of capital from that country and the TCI was the natural domicile of choice. However this too was frustrated by incompetence and intransigence by the local British administration, hence the financial centre bound for the TCI was diverted to the Cayman Islands.

Founding member of the PNP Headley Durham described the state of the islands in a 1974 article that appeared in the Montreal Gazette.

'There are people on these islands who don't even have beds to sleep on and never did. You can find women here ... who must go out and pick stones on the road for \$10-a-week. There are qualified university graduates here who go around begging the government for jobs – a government staffed by people less qualified academically than they are. A good wage is \$10-a-week. There is no future for our children. They get out of school at 16 or so and there's nothing for them.'

Former chief minister and founding member of the PNP the Hon. Norman Saunders explains.

'The governor at that time had almost absolute power. We were advising the Governor, but the Governor was not bound to take our advice. In other words if I wanted a tank for South Caicos I had to say that [I wanted a tank] during the budget session and if he didn't like it or he didn't agree with it, it would never happen despite the obvious need for the tank. Then I would have to lobby him on the outside to persuade him that what I asked for was very important. It took me two to three years to persuade him that the road for South Caicos was necessary to get built and tarred.'

It was in that environment that people who had been members of the State Council – an advisory body to the British-appointed British administrator – also doubled up as law makers together with British-appointed public servants. In this system the local State Council members had very limited influence over the welfare of Turks and Caicos Islanders. This lack of control over their destiny motivated them to demand internal self-government, and the idea of creating a political party was born.

By the early 1970s, Legislative Council members had grown weary of arguing for resources for their constituents only to have the governor deny them. They began to argue for constitutional change. Saunders explains that in every State Council meeting they advocated for changes to the constitution.

'Our objective ultimately was that the British government should not have the last say in decisions affecting the country – that elected members should be the body that should decide what would happen and what would not happen, not the Governor. Unless you are independent the Gov. will always have the last word.'

The men who argued for these changes included NJS 'Bops' Francis and Headley Durham from Grand Turk, Alexander Henry 'Shorty' Smith from Salt Cay, Hilly Ewing from Providenciales, Charles Nathaniel Misick from North Caicos, and Dan Malcolm and Norman Saunders from South Caicos. They were supported by A.V. Butterfield, a successful businessman from North Caicos. These seven men became the founding members of the Progressive National Organisation (PNO). They petitioned and organised and paid for the 1976 constitution of the Turks and Caicos Islands that would provide for party politics and would give Turks and Caicos Islanders a path to the autonomy they sought.



[left]
Newspaper clipping showing A.V. Butterfield and family in 1972
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



[right]
Hon. Robin Laing
photo provided by the TCI National Museum

According to Mr. Saunders' account, when the British government did agree to entertain discussions about a new constitution for the islands, Ivan Buchannan, a Kittitian working as Chief Public Health Officer for the TCI government at the time, recommended constitutional lawyer Billy Herbert from Anguilla as a person who could help. At what was at the time a significant cost, Mr. Herbert was eventually contracted by the group to spearhead constitutional negotiations, the cost of which was paid for by Butterfield, Saunders, Durham, and local resident, British citizen and philanthropist Robin Laing.

According to Mr. Saunders, Herbert's negotiations delivered the most advanced constitution that any British overseas territory in the region had, aside from Bermuda. It ushered in a limited form of Parliamentary Democracy, including a chief minister and other ministers with various portfolio responsibilities making up an Executive Council and a larger body including all elected and official members making up the Legislative Council. Ultimately, final power rested with the United Kingdom government. However, unlike before, the new constitution required the governor to take the advice of the Executive Council – advice that he/she was obliged to take unless directed otherwise by a British Secretary of State.

The group (the majority of whom were established members of the State Council that was in place before the constitution was changed) that advocated for a change in the constitution and recruited Mr. Herbert was unofficially formed long before it adopted the PNO title, which it began to use in 1975. Once the constitution made a provision for party politics, the PNO became the Progressive National Party and Norman Saunders was elected party leader.



[above]
Dr. Herbert addressing the United Nations

Leading up to the 1976 general election, a committee system was created in the State Council on which former State Council Members (all PNP colleagues) shared responsibility. Norman Saunders was responsible for tourism, Charles Nathaniel Misick chaired the Education Committee, and Alexander 'Shorty' Smith led agriculture and fisheries. While no women were members of the State Council at the time, women have always been an integral force in the party; of note are Madlyn (Pat) Wynns, Rosita Butterfield and Emily Saunders and dozens of campaigners who would later travel from island to island sharing the PNP vision. These were not only founders of the PNP but founders of the modern Turks and Caicos Islands Legislative System as we know it today.

From Direct Rule to Representative Government

The first parliamentary elections were in 1976 and neither the PNP nor the PDM was victorious. The winning party needed to secure at least six seats to be able to declare victory. The PDM won five seats and the PNP won four. Two seats were won by independent candidates – Liam McGuire from South Caicos and Danny Williams from Bottle Creek, North Caicos.

Having already served on the State Council, Mr. McGuire teamed up with Mr. Williams and approached the PNP Leader Norman Saunders requesting to be named Minister of Development in exchange for joining the PNP to give the party the advantage it needed to form the government.

Saunders explains why the PNP declined:

‘Our position was that McGuire was a foreigner and he should not hold a permanent office in the government and the PNP would not accept him within our midst in that situation and that was a unanimous decision in the party. We decided with our eyes wide open that we would rather sit in opposition for the next four years than to allow McGuire to sit among us with that authority. He could have any other [position] – chairman of the tourist board or director of tourism; those were the areas he was interested in – but we couldn’t make him a minister and we weren’t going to make him Minister of Development. That was the conscious decision we all took, and we were proud of that. We were proud to be the opposition rather than having McGuire in our midst with that authority.’

McGuire refused to accept a non-ministerial role. He and Williams joined the PDM, granting it the majority seats in the newly formed Legislative Council and the elected government. McGuire was assigned Minister of Tourism and Development and is believed to have been the most powerful member of the PDM government during that term. James Alexander George Smith (JAGS) McCartney, the leader of the PDM, became the islands’ first Chief Minister and leader of government business in the Legislative Council. Tragically, McCartney died in a plane crash on May 9, 1980. His deputy Oswald Skippings assumed the position of Chief Minister until the General Election on November 4, 1980 when the PNP defeated the PDM at the polls under the leadership of Norman Saunders who became the new Chief Minister.



Hon. Norman Saunders with his wife Emily Saunders, at the government buildings, Front Street, Grand Turk after the PNP victory in the elections of 1980.
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



Hon. Norman Saunders with A.V. Butterfield and Walter Cox at the government buildings, Front Street, Grand Turk after the PNP victory in the elections of 1980.
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



Hon. Norman Saunders with A.V. Butterfield and Walter Cox at the government buildings, Front Street, Grand Turk after the PNP victory in the elections of 1980.
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



C H A P T E R T W O

NEXT STEPS



Aerial view of Club Med Turkoise all-inclusive resort on Grace Bay Beach, Providenciales

1980 – 1986 New Development and Correcting Colonial Wrongs

In the 1980 elections the PNP ran on an anti-independence platform because it did not think the state of the economic and social development was at a stage to stand on its own. The second reason was that it felt that the British government was obligated to properly prepare the islands for self-determination by making greater investment in the TCIs' physical infrastructure and its human capital. When the votes were counted on November 4, 1980, the party won eight of the 11 seats in the Legislative Council. As leader of the party, the Hon. Norman Saunders became the Chief Minister. The PNP inherited a fledgling democracy and a stagnant economy with a most rudimentary infrastructure system.

However, the British government had made an agreement with the previous PDM administration – in exchange for political independence the UK would provide infrastructure support funding to the islands to facilitate the Club Med Resort development project in Providenciales. The all-inclusive vacation village became the catalyst for development in Grace Bay, which was previously untouched. As Chief Minister and Minister of Tourism and Development, the Hon. Saunders and his PNP elected colleagues began fresh negotiations with the UK government.

It took the position that despite the neglect of the past it had more to gain from an improved relationship with the UK than from premature political independence. It therefore disagreed that the UK assistance should be tied to independence, but rather that the UK had a duty to ensure the economic sustainability of the islands. The party was successful in securing what was to be a significant package of development aid from the UK government.

Included in this package was funding for the improvement of the Providenciales International Airport, formerly the Fritz Ludington Airport – an unpaved dirt airstrip. In 1980 this airstrip was only capable of accommodating light private aircraft. It was built in the late 1960s by developer Fritz Ludington (Provident Ltd.), an American investor, as part of a package involving the exchange of four thousand acres of land for roads, the construction of a dirt airstrip, and the development of a ten-room hotel. The 1980 package of works funded by the UK government included upgrading the airstrip to a proper runway with a terminal capable of accommodating commercial flights and expanding and paving what is now the Leeward Highway. Club Med Turkoise opened its doors on December 22, 1984 and commercial airlines have been delivering sea and sand-thirsty tourists to Provo's shores ever since.



The former Fritz Ludington Airport before improvements.
photo provided by the TCI National Museum



Providenciales International Airport in the mid-1980s after improvements
photo provided by the TCI National Museum

[previous spread]
Grace Bay, Providenciales
photo by Gary James - Provo Pictures

Financial Services Development

After two US Navy tracking bases in Grand Turk closed between 1980 and 1983, the Turks and Caicos Islands set its sights on tourism and offshore finance as its new economic pillars, and the PNP was at the head of the effort. The country had missed the opportunity to become a financial centre once, but the dream of rivalling Bermuda and other offshore havens was still alive, resulting in the passage of the 1981 Companies Ordinance that was important for facilitating the development of the offshore financial services, and the birth of the TCI as an offshore finance centre. Unfortunately, because of a confluence of global trends the TCI has never taken a prominent place in this industry. However, the finance sector remains an important contributor to the TCI GDP and the starting point for the modern TCI Financial Services Commission. Over the years the PNP, when leading the government, has enshrined in law a plethora of regulatory and enabling legislation ensuring that the jurisdiction remains at the forefront of compliance and the development of new products.

Facilitating Social and Economic Development

The Saunders-led PNP administration created the Development Board – initially a statutory body to administer the disbursement of development assistance loans and grants from donor sources, including the Caribbean Development Bank to persons and businesses engaging in agricultural, fishing, manufacturing or tourism enterprises. It was created to support entrepreneurial endeavours and alleviate poverty in order to boost economic inclusion and growth. The board also provided short-term loans for students. It was the forerunner of TCInvest, which was set up between 1994 and 1995 and became a multifunctional organisation that included a banking arm. TCInvest was dissolved by the interim administration in 2010-11 and replaced under a new ordinance with an Investment Promotion Agency under the PNP administration of Dr. Rufus Ewing in 2015.

Education Initiatives

Given that prior to 1976 the British colonial government had long focused on its interests in Grand Turk and had largely neglected the Caicos Islands, high school education for hundreds of children living west of the capital island (West of the Buoy) was overlooked. While North Caicos finally received a junior high school in 1973, in the early 1980s Providenciales was still without a secondary school facility. Then Minister of Education Robert Hall sought to change that, calling it ‘one of the greatest challenges I faced.’ There were 32 spaces available for Provo students who passed a common entrance exam to enrol in high schools in Grand Turk and South Caicos and in the junior high school in North Caicos – if their parents could afford to pay for room and board with a family on one of these islands.

The islands still relied heavily on aid from the British government and the governor balked at the idea of providing a high school for Providenciales. The PNP, however, is a party of action and Hall took a radical step and eliminated the common entrance exam and issued a mandate that every high-school-aged child in the Turks and Caicos Islands should have access to high school. Suddenly there were more than 100 students in Providenciales in need of a high school education.

Providenciales was given a junior high school, which later became the Clement Howell High School that sits in the Blue Hills settlement today. Between 1980 and 1984 Mr. Hall and his staff, including then parliamentary secretary and future Speaker



Advertisement featuring Hon. Norman Saunders in the June 5th 1984 Financial Times
photo provided by the TCI National Museum

of the House Rosita Butterfield, a registered nurse, also extended the high school curriculum to include technical and vocational subjects and upgraded the junior high school in North Caicos to a full high school, naming it after prominent local figure Raymond Gardiner.

Rather than shy away from controversy, Mr. Hall chose another then unpopular, but necessary, measure and retired nearly all of the islands' untrained primary school teachers, including his own sister. Mr. Hall was able to secure scholarships for students who wished to teach, so that the islands would have trained primary school educators moving forward.

Health Care Initiatives

Healthcare was another long-neglected area under British colonial governance. As new development in Providenciales undoubtedly caused migration from the country's other islands, a new health clinic was badly needed. Under Mr. Hall's ministry, the Myrtle Rigby Health Clinic was built with development aid assistance from the UK government. The TCI government also created a new policy that required on duty midwives on every inhabited island and initiated a clinical nurse training program. Originally called community health aids, clinical nurses were trained in first aid and stationed in areas with small populations to care for those with minor injuries, instead of only offering care at larger clinics miles away. A first aid option was desperately needed in fishing and subsistence farming villages, given that minor-yet-urgent injuries could occur miles away from larger clinics. Clinical nurses were available to offer immediate help.

Interruption In Leadership

Amid major growth in the Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr. Saunders and two other government ministers, Aulden 'Smokey' Smith of Salt Cay and Stafford Misick of North Caicos, were indicted on conspiracy charges related to drug trafficking. Viewed by many as a case of entrapment, the US Drug Enforcement Agency arrested Mr. Saunders, Mr. Smith and Mr. Misick with the support of the UK government.

This alone did not stop government functions. Given that three members of the executive council had essentially vacated their seats due to their arrests and subsequent convictions, the PNP held a by-election to fill those seats. Party co-founder NJS

Francis took over the duties of Chief Minister. However, the arrests of government ministers and the later burning of the historic Bascombe House – which housed the philatelic bureau (bureau of stamps) and the office of the Electrical Department – triggered a commission of inquiry by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth office. In 1986 the commissioner recommended that the constitution be partially suspended. The suspension lasted for two years.

A Change Of Fortune

The PDM became the governing party after the restoration of the TCI constitution in 1988, and two years and eleven months later (in April 1991), amidst rising deficits and a call for economic reform by the UK government, the PDM called an election one year before it was constitutionally due. This was presumably done in the hope of receiving a fresh mandate from the electorate before tackling the inevitable decision to make structural adjustments to the government's economic management. At that time more than 60 percent of public revenue was being used for the public service payroll, including persons on wages who had long passed normal employment age for anyone in a civilised democracy. The PDM lost the election to the PNP and Charles Washington Misick became Chief Minister in April 1991.



Hon. C. Washington Misick being sworn in as Chief Minister



Hon. C. Washington Misick and then wife Ann P. Misick after the PNP victory in the 1991 elections.

1991-1995

Misick immediately opened negotiations with the UK government for a medium-term aid program to transform the islands' aid-dependent economy to an independent economy. A verbatim reproduction of the contents of a letter as a preamble to the requested program of assistance entitled Progress Through Partnership follows: Progress Through Partnership required a road map to navigate through the treacherous economic times and this was provided by way of an economic strategy document produced by UK consultants Mokoro and commonly referred to as the Mokoro Report. It was this road map that guided the economic transformation under the PNP between 1991 and 1995. Because of strong representation and a strategy to meet targets, the TCIG received the biggest aid program (\$42 million) ever from the UK government – by way of development aid and technical assistance.

May 14th, 1991. Michael Bawden,
British Development Division, Bridgetown Barbados.

Dear Mr. Bawden,

As the new Chief Minister of the Turks and Caicos Islands, I would like to share with you, on behalf of my colleagues, a long-term vision of our beautiful islands. It is a vision for which we are determined to lay secure foundations in our first term of office. And it is a vision that could become a mere mirage unless those secure foundations are laid; to lay them successfully we need the full support and understanding of Her Majesty's government as is described in our document below 'Progress through Partnership.'

With these foundations in place the Turks and Caicos economy will become self-sustaining by the mid 1990s.

The Turks and Caicos have the potential for an exceptionally bright future. Within twenty years the islands have the opportunity to become one of the most vibrant and wealthy small nations in the world. This opportunity is due to Turks and Caicos Islands enviable geographical position adjacent to the biggest economy in the world, the USA; the changing leisure, tourism and related markets and particularly the rapid development of substantial new up market demand over the last two or three years gives unspoilt destinations, such as the Turks and Caicos Islands fundamental market advantages.

The Turks and Caicos key assets are long stretches of virgin beaches and coastal waters which have few equals. In terms of available area these resources are far more abundant than those, for example, in the Cayman Islands a country which now has one of the highest standards of living in the world. Compared to the rest of the Caribbean, the Turks and Caicos

Islands' ratio of such natural resources to population is the highest by far. This makes an extraordinary rate of growth possible - without spoiling the abundant resources available.

Whilst the increasingly favourable external market environment is the key factor in providing the Turks and Caicos with unprecedented long-term opportunities internal factors will determine whether such opportunities are taken or whether the islands stagnate. There is a very delicate balance to be struck between a desirable rate of development and the 'selling out' of the islands' future; this calls for an equally delicate balance between encouraging integration and protecting the interests of the indigenous population. We are determined to get the balance right.

In the 1980s the Turks and Caicos Islands made unsurpassed strides economically despite great political instability. This instability resulted in the election of an administration in 1988 that was xenophobic in attitude and incompetent in ability. Amongst its many destructive acts that administration introduced an immigration bill which wrecked the private sector confidence and decimated the government budget for 1990. In fact as we were taking office, the Immigration Board denied a work permit to, amongst others, the biggest employer in the offshore finance sector in Grand Turk; at a time when Grand Turk needs all the help and goodwill it can get!

It is not overstating the case that an early repeat of this sort of government could put off the development of the Turks and Caicos Islands for many years, making our vision an illusion and cementing the dependency of the islands on the UK.

More than anything the Turks and Caicos now needs a period of stable, sensible and 'management oriented' government. This is the major goal of our administration. We will work very closely with the emerging and vibrant private sector; confidence is already recovering from the trauma of 1990. It is our desire to improve dramatically the attitude, motivation and morale of our public sector which has been recognised as a constraint to the islands' development.

In the past we have not made the best use of the expatriate civil servants HMG has kindly provided under the aid programme. I hope that between us we can start to re-motivate this group and dissolve the cynical attitudes that some have developed. These British staff and others from the Commonwealth Caribbean are crucial to bringing about the rapid development of the islands.

A major task and the reason we have entitled the attached papers 'Progress through Partnership' is rebuilding a close and fruitful relationship between TCIG and HMG. Whatever the faults in the past, the bad feelings engendered have been totally unproductive, we must forthwith put these negative attitudes behind us.

By reason of history, we are in the same boat together. Our administration's goal of rapidly building a self-sustaining economy, leading to a national sense of achievement and self-respect is the same as yours. The mutual benefits are obvious and do not need restating here

To achieve these goals, we must reiterate that we need substantial support from HMG in the short term; and we are prepared to pursue our case with vigour. Politically we can only establish stability through delivering tangible benefits relatively quickly, especially as on our part the Turks and Caicos government needs to make some tough and unpopular decisions; in the immediate future these will doubtless give rise to some of the xenophobia referred to previously.

In economic terms our vision of the long term for the Turks and Caicos can only have a chance of coming to fruition if HMG gives the islands a solid push start down the right road. With such assistance we are quite certain that we can build a self-sustaining economy by the mid 1990s. Given the right encouragement the burgeoning private sector will help us achieve significantly higher rates of growth than in the 1980s. This growth in turn will provide levels of government revenue sufficient for our growing capital and recurrent needs.

The Turks and Caicos Islands have long been over dependent on HMG. Our administration is very serious about ending this dependency. We are as unhappy constantly coming back to you with the begging bowl as you must be in having to fill it. It is demeaning. We should be concentrating on building our national self-confidence. We need to establish jointly how to get out of this aid dependency at the first opportunity.

I believe the programme we have formulated will get the Turks and Caicos away from aid dependency. We are determined to do everything possible and practicable within the constraints of good government to get out of aid by 1995.

Our ability to reach this target can only be achieved with substantial seed capital from the UK government. We still have no capital budget of our own and have inherited from last year a deficit budget of \$2 million and consequently a high overdraft. We need finance for both a radical reform programme and to provide physical and economic infrastructure which will enable the private sector to do its job.

We intend to adopt unprecedented levels of financial prudence. Nevertheless, our budget is unhealthily skewed in favour of salaries and wages rather than service provision, with items such as maintenance substantially underfunded. Even with rapidly growing revenue and radical reform, it will be 1993 before recurrent surpluses are available and 1995 before they are substantial.

The following pages present a carefully calculated programme for the future. It is in large part based on Mokoro's Strategic Review, which I know has found favour with HMG as it has with us; In the program presented we draw your attention in particular to our proposed public sector and financial reforms; the establishment of a development corporation as the key element in our administration's growth policies, and the very substantial physical infrastructural needs required to attract new investment. The last were recommended to you by Mokoro, and our planned rate of implementation is significantly slower than they proposed.

To turn to the bottom line, we are looking for a one-off payment of approximately \$9 million to give our administration a fresh start. Without this payment we will be sunk before we start - with an inherited overdraft at its limit and the further prospect of a payment of some 20% of our annual budget to settle the TCNA case.

As regards the capital aid and technical co-operation programmes we are asking for a 5-year agreement totalling almost \$12 million pa. On first sight this may look excessive as we have combined capital aid and technical co-operation. In fact, the increase in cash terms is more or less swallowed up by inflation since the last agreement. Without this level of support from HM, the economy will not get the 'push start' we referred to above. Moreover, our administrative reform programme will inevitably be delayed and possibly become unworkable. At the same time the ambitious growth targets are unlikely to be realised and economic self-sufficiency is likely to recede over the horizon.

These may all have unfortunate consequences with regards to the political stability and ensuing private sector confidence that we have already referred to. We are well aware that high levels of aid for countries such as the Turks and Caicos sit uncomfortably with your ministry's global objectives of poverty alleviation. The case we are putting to you though is very soundly based in terms of the returns that will be earned.

We suspect there are few places, if any, where your aid can currently be so effective and within such a short time scale. Your full support will not go unrewarded. We are convinced that further aid will become unnecessary.

But you need more than our conviction. We believe it right and proper that the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands be fully accountable and below have suggested a regular review and assessment of our progress over the coming five years. We will welcome and encourage your full participation in our administration's efforts to achieve economic independence by the mid 1990's.



Hon. C. Washington Misick and then Miss Turks & Caicos, Ms. Michelle Mills Parker cut the ribbon to commemorate American Airlines inaugural flight between TCI and Miami.

In order to reduce the government expenditure to what was affordable, based on the level of public revenue, and standardised public sector ratios, the bloated civil service required resizing. Civil servants were offered severance packages to voluntarily leave the service. Many of them accepted those packages. The number of people working in the PWD — staffed by men who were long past retirement age — was reduced to that necessary to serve TCIG needs. In the end, very few public servants were compulsorily terminated with generous severance pay. This resulted in a reduction of the public service payroll to 50 percent of overall revenue.

The 1990s was a dynamic decade of challenges, disruptions and opportunities shaped by a confluence of cultural and economic events, including the collapse of Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) on December 4, 1991, then the only international commercial carrier serving the nascent tourism destination of the TCI. Then Chief Minister Washington Misick, who happened to be in Florida at the time, managed to arrange a charter to get everyone back home and got personally involved in manning the ticket counter and loading luggage onto the conveyor belt. It was Washington Misick as Chief Minister who rallied the business community to guarantee enough seats, together with a package of other incentives, in support of American Airlines flying to the TCI. American Airlines continues to this day to be the premier airline service to the destination.

The PNP was born out of a vision to empower the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands and this was evident by the establishment of several institutions between 1991 and 1995. Then Chief Minister Misick remarked that 'institutions outlast the life of any one person and are the best ways to secure lasting empowerment'. In his opinion it was a scar on the nation's conscience that in 1991 men over eighty were still forced to work to survive. It was therefore imperative and convenient, considering the resizing of the public service, to introduce a national pension plan. The National Insurance Plan was established by the PNP in 1992. The opposition PDM opposed the plan, and so did many in the business community, claiming that it would only add costs to organisational operations. Today, workers can retire confident of having an income to support them in their retirement because of this bold decision.

Higher Learning – Building A Community College

The PNP is proud of establishing the first tertiary education institution in the Turks and Caicos Islands. In 1992, Washington Misick publicly announced his administration's intention to build a community college within the islands. Arabella Smith, the first woman to become a government minister, and who had recently become Minister of Education, was tasked with making the ambition a reality. The British government – via the education adviser – presented the greatest obstacle to getting a community college for the islands. Smith remembers:

'He told us that in no uncertain terms – and he was quite firm – that he was not going to recommend investing grant money for the establishment of a community college for the Turks and Caicos Islands because he didn't see the need for it.'



Undeterred, Smith sought other means to get the community college built. When a representative from the Caribbean Development Bank visited the Turks and Caicos Islands, she presented the case for a community college. While the CDB could not fund the building of a facility, it offered to pay the expenses and salary for a Dr Bynoe from Guyana to conduct a study on the steps needed to establish a community college in the Turks and Caicos. In September 1994 the college was established, temporarily housed in the HJ Robinson High School in Grand Turk and the Clement Howell High School in Providenciales until appropriate dedicated facilities were later found at the former US Naval Base in Grand Turk. Today, TCI Community College operates two campuses in Grand Turk and Providenciales providing full time and part time undergraduate programs in many disciplines, thereby improving the overall quality of the local workforce and acting as a conduit for people going on to postgraduate studies.



Hon. Arabella Smith during her tenure as Minister of Education



The Turks & Caicos Islands Community College Campus

[center image]
A graduating class from the Turks & Caicos Islands Community College

Other Institutions Established Under the PNP 1991-1995 Administration

As part of the foundation for the building of a modern society, to cater to the social development of Turks and Caicos Islanders and to reduce personal risk, the following additional institutions were established by the PNP: the TCI Sports Commission and the TCI Broadcasting Commission. Also, legislation was introduced for the first time for compulsory motor vehicle insurance, and, critically, the National Insurance Program – a compulsory national pension scheme – was established. The Honourable Floyd Hall, Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier between 2003 and 2008, later said in a review of the program:

‘The National Insurance Board programs during 2003 to 2009 saw a percentage of the contributions being allocated for direct investment in our communities. Many of our elderly citizens were uplifted from abject poverty and squalid conditions to now living in proper concrete homes providing safe shelter from the environment. This particular alleviation of poverty project was made possible by the PNP arranging a joint initiative with TC-Invest and the National Insurance Board to assist the elderly throughout the country. Similarly, our boys and girls and adults can now play sports and enjoy the Parade Grounds at any hour under safe and proper lighting conditions.’

But it did not end there – Floyd Hall recalls that upon coming into office in 2003, the PNP embarked on a social public health program to eradicate all pit latrines. This exercise started in Grand Turk and was successfully executed throughout the entire country.

Another pillar of sustainability put in place by the PNP was to facilitate economic growth by establishing the TCI Investment Agency (TCInvest), an inward investment promotion agency recommended by the Mokoro Report, to facilitate foreign direct investment as well as to disburse and manage soft loans and other funds from regional and international agencies, including the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the European Investment Bank.

Place Of Honour

The Hon. JAGS McCartney, the country’s first Chief Minister and an ardent campaigner for human rights, economic and social justice, and the dignity of the people of the TCI, met his untimely demise in 1980, as mentioned earlier. The party he founded had established his birthday as a national holiday in his honour, however

the PNP did not think that this gave the level of prominence and honour that a person who made the ultimate sacrifice for his country deserved. In 1992 it therefore initiated measures to elevate the Honourable McCartney by establishing The National Heroes Day Ordinance – creating and inducting him as the first national hero of the TCI.

Change Of Hands

The foundation established between 1991 and 1995 resulted in the islands’ first balanced budget in modern times and the delivery of the promise made to the UK to move the country to economic independence. Much had happened in a short period, and there was much misunderstanding as to the goal. Oxymoronically ‘no good deed goes unpunished’ proved to be true for the accomplishments of the PNP, and the PDM became the beneficiary of the groundwork laid by the party just as the global economy rebounded. The global bull run would last until the dot-com bubble burst in 2001.



Hon. Jags McCartney



C H A P T E R T H R E E

ISLANDERS FIRST

[top]
Hon. Michael E. Misick being sworn in as Cheif Minister

{bottom}
Charles Nathaniel Misick and Mary Jane Misick attend the swearing-in ceremony of their son Hon. Michael E. Misick

2003 –2009 Turks & Caicos Islanders 1st

Between 1995 and 2003 the PDM chose to hoard the cash surplus that the TCI had begun accumulating during the PNP years and which continued to increase during the long economic growth period up to 2001. Instead of investing to stimulate the sagging economy after the global slowdown in 2001, the PDM government, led by Derek Taylor, refused to spend to improve social conditions on the islands, and when the elections were called in April 2003, the PNP emerged with an impressive majority and the Honourable Michael Eugene Misick became Chief Minister. This would again be the beginning of a quantum leap in economic and social development with a major focus on education, healthcare and infrastructure development.



[previous spread]
Northwest Point, Providenciales
photo by Gary James - Provo Pictures

The party’s slogan Turks and Caicos Islanders First was explained by the Honourable Michael Misick in his own words:

‘That was something I believed in then and I believe even more strongly in now. During [the previous eight years] the country was developing but we were being left behind. We wanted to bring everyone into the future.’

The Honourable Floyd Hall, who was named Minister of Finance recalls:

‘In embarking on this objective, Hon. Michael Misick tasked his ministers with coming up with programs in their ministries to benefit Turks & Caicos Islanders and put them on a path to making them first in our governance. I lamented the fact that Turks & Caicos Islanders were always struggling when getting into businesses and building their homes.’

Hall saw how much easier it was for foreign developers to receive duty concessions for major projects like resorts than for average Turks and Caicos businesses or home owners to receive concessions for their imports. To correct this, he drafted an incentive package that prioritised the small, locally-owned, low-startup-capital businesses that support the major airlines and resorts operating in the TCI – like escort vehicles, water sport equipment and more. Hall’s package allowed for small business owners and first-time home buyers to receive concessions – similar to what was being offered to major developers – on appliances, furnishings, etc.

The new PNP government sought to accelerate economic growth by first upgrading the infrastructure of the country, starting with continuing the work that the previous PDM government had started on Leeward Highway connecting downtown Providenciales with Grace Bay and Long Bay and Leeward on the eastern side of the island. In fact, Hall reflects, during the 2003 election, then Chief Minister hopeful Michael Misick commented negatively on the PDM’s plan for a three-lane highway. After hearing his comments, the government of the day modified the original design of the highway while it was under construction to expand it. When the PNP government took over the project was still underway; the highway was then extended to the Heaving Down Rock Marina on Providenciales’ eastern coast. When the project was completed the highway included two lanes on each side from the entrance to Grace Bay to the entrance to Kew Town and the Blue Hills settlements and Downtown, round-about intersections to manage traffic, extensive signage and significant lighting to promote safe driving.

Other road works projects during this time include a revamp of Lower Bight Road with fresh pavement, new signage and speed humps, sidewalks in Grace Bay, and round-about intersections on frequented roads located away from Leeward Highway.

North To Middle Caicos Causeway

PNP founder the Hon. Norman Saunders had long voiced his dream of building a highway that would connect the Caicos Islands from Providenciales to South Caicos. In 2007, that dream was partially realised with a causeway that linked North Caicos and Middle Caicos. Separated by a shallow channel of water, the two islands were historically used for agriculture and fishing. In previous years those wanting to cross between the two islands would have to travel by small boat. However, no official ferry service was provided. The creation of the causeway virtually eliminated the need for any such service and allowed for students living in Middle Caicos to commute to high school in North Caicos, instead of having to board with family members in North Caicos.

North and Middle Caicos were poised for new tourism opportunities. The Causeway, bolstered by a new ferry service from Providenciales to the newly built Sandy Point Marina in North Caicos, allowed for visitors to get off the beaten path and visit the historical site of Wade’s Green Plantation, the shores of Whitby, and the many caves of Conch Bar among other adventures, bringing economic growth potential to these areas that had long been overlooked.

The Causeway also created an incentive for developers to build resorts that could take some of the development pressure off of Providenciales and spread the growth and benefit of tourism to these islands, through geographic and product segmentation of offerings to visitors.

Grand Turk Cruise Center

While Grand Turk has remained the government capital, Providenciales, since the mid-60s, had gradually evolved to become the commercial capital of the islands, attracting the bulk of the foreign direct investment coming to the TCI. Over the same period, investment interest in Grand Turk had been waning. Then Minister of Finance Floyd Hall explains:

‘It became clear to the PNP that the status quo in Grand Turk was unjustifiable and that a commitment had to be made to inject new vitality back to the capital and it was essential that the government led the way.’

Therefore, when the opportunity presented itself for the development of a cruise port in Grand Turk, the Michael Misick administration worked assiduously to pull together a public-private partnership with Carnival Cruise Line to deliver a world class facility at the southern end of Grand Turk.



View of the Grand Turk Cruise center as seen from the harbor
photo by Kareem Williams



Cruise ships docked side by side at the Grand Turk Cruise Center
photo by Kareem Williams



Tourists enjoy the beach at the Grand Turk Cruise Center
photo by Kareem Williams

Interest in creating a cruise centre in Grand Turk was initially sparked by Jamaican national and long-time resident-turned-citizen of the Turks and Caicos Islands, Mr. Allan Hutchinson. In 2002 Hutchinson approached Holland America Cruise Lines to build a port in Grand Turk's downtown. The project soon proved too large for Holland America, a subsidiary of Carnival Corp., and executives from Carnival took over the negotiations with the then PDM government. But talks began to break down.

Carnival was concerned with the depth of the water in front of Grand Turk's downtown Front Street, according to the Hon. Floyd Hall.

'The infrastructure required to reach deep water necessitated that a long dock, almost a mile, had to be constructed to reach the deep water to access the ships. This would require trams to offload and on load the cruise ship passengers. This situation was further compounded by the fact that bad weather in that area would cause the ships to lose many port call days.'

Furthermore, the project required sand dredging that would have damaged the prized Library Reef dive site. Carnival executives, aware of the backlash the company might receive if the project damaged the reef, were at a standstill with the PDM government, whose members were insistent that the port be constructed downtown. The project stalled until the PNP administration was elected in August 2003, when Misick, Hall and other government ministers restarted negotiations with Carnival Corporation's Senior Vice President, facilitated by Edward St. George, a mutual friend of both parties.

After intense negotiations, Carnival agreed to build a port on the island's southern tip, avoiding damage to the valued reef system.

The port project cost \$40 million and required that Carnival sponsor beautification projects throughout Grand Turk. The government and Carnival created a contract that allows the port to revert to sole ownership of TCIG when the contract expires. The Grand Turk Cruise Centre, a 13-acre retreat on the Carnival and other cruise companies' itinerary received its first cruise ship at 7:00 a.m. on a sun-kissed Saturday morning in 2006. That year, 292,288 cruise ship passengers visited the port. By 2019 that number would reach 1,113,323. Gross visitor expenditure at the Grand Turk port in the 2014-2015 fiscal year amounted to \$95 million. During that same period, some 879,024 passengers disembarked at the port, contributing to a total average spend of \$88.75 each. Hall recalls where they started:

'When we came to office in 2003, this project was at an impasse. The previous PDM administration was not focused and was not committed to the project on a serious level and this was clearly evident from the various pieces of correspondence that we met which were

exchanged between the government and the developer at the time. There was considerable disagreement amongst the former government's cabinet members that frustrated the exercise and to make matters worse several civil service functionaries did not support the project when it came to selecting the location. Obstacles were presented at every angle from both the UK representatives and the local civil servants. There were simply too many fires burning that prevented the project from going forward in an orderly manner. In short, the project lacked clear direction and the political will to proceed by the PDM.

Under the leadership of the Chief Minister, Hon. Michael Misick and myself, the PNP administration brought focus, a sense of purpose and concise decision making to the table. We got much criticism for some of the decisions taken, but today the proof is in the pudding and the cruise ship project was delivered for the benefit of the residents of Grand Turk.'



This Land Is Our Land

Turks and Caicos Islanders are entitled to crown land. However, while a loose policy for 'Belongers' to receive land parcels had existed for some time, it had not been effectively publicised or administered. Michael Misick and his cabinet, including Minister of Natural Resources McAllister Hanchell, sought to change that by empowering islanders through land grants.

And while previous administrations had sold crown land to expatriates at discounted rates, the PNP government held that in order for foreigners to own crown land, a Turks and Caicos Islander would have to own at least 51 percent of the property. The Hon. Michael Misick explains the idea behind this policy.

'We felt that crown land, one of our major resources, one of our only resources, should be preserved for Turks and Caicos Islanders only. So, if you're an expatriate investor and you want to develop, and you want to use crown land, then you have to get a local partner. So, the crown land would be allocated to the local person. So, you merge the land with foreign capital and that's how you create a partnership that doesn't leave people behind.

'That was our idea to create a business-class of Turks and Caicos islanders because we are not like the Bermudans, Bahamians or Jamaicans that had a local business class. We never had that.'

While crown land allocation during this time proved to be controversial, critics of the Michael Misick administration, like former PNP Minister of Health and Education and former Speaker of the House the Hon. Robert Hall, admit it was an excellent way to build equity for Turks and Caicos Islanders.

'The idea of using land as an empowerment tool is an excellent one because basically in this country, that's all you have.'

Education Is Key – Scholarships

The change in government saw an unprecedented number of scholarships offered to young Turks and Caicos Islanders wishing to expand their knowledge at colleges and universities in the United States, England and elsewhere. The Hon. Galmo Williams, former Minister of Home Affairs and Public Safety and later Premier, explained that few people in the generations before his own earned high school diplomas, much less college degrees.

'Given that just 25 years prior, the Turks and Caicos Islands had no local middle class to speak of, the government of the day felt it imperative to educate its youth so that they may enrich the islands with their knowledge and become stakeholders in the islands' development in the near future. ... What we did wouldn't have been sustainable in the longer term, but we needed to do it to create advancement for our people through education. Education and exposure really change people.'

Then Minister of Education the Honourable Lillian Boyce played a critical role in this area. When the PNP government was elected in 2003, Boyce remembers that the funds allocated for scholarships was just \$3 million. Boyce developed the first scholarship policy and by the time she left the ministry the scholarship budget had increased to \$20 million. Boyce explains her approach:

'It was about planning for the future of the Turks and Caicos Islands – we couldn't just give scholarships without a plan. So, we planned that there would be a number of scholarships for medical school, education and so forth. If one person out of every family receives a scholarship, they would be able to help the other siblings later on in life so that way the whole family may have an opportunity to be educated. I have very proud moments when I see the recipients who have done so well for themselves, returning as lawyers and even doctors. This is one of the best investments that we've made.'

Boyce also secured increased funding for the community college which was created by the previous PNP government in the early 1990s and introduced new programs – including hospitality management and early childhood education – to the local institution.

As the Minister of Education, Boyce was committed to seeing that every child residing in the Turks and Caicos Islands was enrolled in school. The previous Derek Taylor-led administration had taken children out of the public school system due to their nationality and documentation. Boyce says she vowed to reverse that decision.

'It was one of my campaign promises that I would get those kids back in school. One of the first things that I did was to take back 300 children who were not allowed into our school. I was criticised for that but I know the UN policy on children and I knew that our country couldn't continue to let these children go astray.'

To accommodate these students and the general growing student body in the islands, the TCIG built new classrooms at Enid Capron Primary School and Clement Howell High School in Providenciales and at HJ Robinson High School in Grand Turk. The PNP government also negotiated government scholarships for students to attend private schools until space became available in the public school.



Hon. Galmo Williams



Hon. Lillian Boyce

Boyce was committed to ensuring that our students benefited from a holistic educational curriculum that included academics and sports. She was instrumental in getting the CARIFTA Games for the Turks and Caicos Islands and was tenacious in her efforts to get the National Stadium and the Downtown Ball Park facility built. Boyce's ministry increased the national sports budget from roughly \$150,000 to nearly \$1 million and used those funds to provide opportunities for gifted athletes to train in Jamaica and to provide sports equipment for the stadium and the ball park.

'I know it may sound political, but we were redeveloping everything. It was a makeover of everything.'

Youth & Culture

Understanding the need to preserve the Turks and Caicos Islands' local culture, the PNP-led government separated the youth and culture departments, also in Boyce's portfolio, so that they could receive the attention they needed. The department hired local cultural ambassador David Bowen, who oversaw the design of the national costume and the creation of a resource book for educators to teach Turks and Caicos culture in schools.

The government appointed youth officers and developed an entrepreneurial training scheme so that young Turks and Caicos Islanders could learn how to start their own small businesses and become more autonomous. The Youth Cadet program was also redeveloped, with the government providing new uniforms for all cadets and hiring a dedicated trainer to oversee the program.



Hon. Akierra Misick with leaders and members of the TCI Youth Cadet Corps

Changes To The Constitution

In 2006 the Turks and Caicos Constitution was amended. While the revised document did not grant full internal self-governance, it did allow for greater discretionary powers to cabinet ministers. It also changed the title of Chief Minister to that of Premier, making Michael Misick the first Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Healthier = Happier – Overhaul of the National Healthcare System

Another controversial project was the construction of two state-of-the-art hospitals in Providenciales and Grand Turk. Boyce, who became Minister of Health in 2007, explains the desire to upgrade the country's medical systems:

'All of us wanted to see those hospitals on the islands because we believe that the health of our people is the wealth of our people.'

Boyce worked alongside Premier Michael Misick and Deputy Premier Floyd Hall to negotiate for foreign healthcare entity InterHealth Canada to build, operate and transfer two general hospitals. The contract term is for the period 2008 – 2033. With these upgrades came the introduction of the National Health Insurance Board, under the National Health Insurance Ordinance of 2009, which provides for universal healthcare for Turks and Caicos Islanders.

In the early 2000s the PNP realised that the cost of providing healthcare to the people of the Turks and Caicos Islands for illnesses – the treatment of which was not readily available at home – had become unaffordable. The PNP administration decided that a new strategy was needed to increase the available scope and quality of treatment domestically. The strategy included constructing two modern, state-of-the-art hospitals to handle secondary healthcare, implementing a national health financing system (NHIP), creating the Health Regulatory Agency, promoting healthy lifestyles through government initiatives, and augmenting the Primary Care Renewal Strategy on each inhabited island.

The first part of the strategy proved to be the most challenging, in that because of conditionalities set by the UK government, it was proving difficult to directly borrow from the capital markets to fund the necessary infrastructure. Boyce remembers the negotiations.

‘There were bleak moments because the British government did not see our vision.’

After several attempts to fund the project under the traditional method, which did not work, it was decided to use the public-private partnership method of funding.

PNP elected member and later Minister for Finance and Deputy Premier Royal Robinson remembers the situation as follows:

‘This was all very new to the TCI for us here, and we had to engage mainly UK expertise to assist us in navigating through the maze.’

According to the Hon. Robinson, the TCIG retained legal representation from a UK law firm in Southampton to initiate an ‘invitation to tender’ process that would determine which bidder received the contract to design and build the hospitals and their systems. The preferred bidder would also be responsible for funding the project. Then, led by the Honourable Lillian Boyce, the PNP government engaged in a series of negotiations with the preferred bidder over several months, ‘as many of the “boiler-plate” provisions had to be jettisoned in favour of new language to fit our peculiar situation,’ Robinson explains.

The resulting contract was to build a hospital in Grand Turk and a hospital in Providenciales with 20-bed and 60-bed capacity, respectively, with an initial 50 percent fulfilment of bed spaces. The 25-year contract included two years to build the facilities and 23 years to operate.

Government Suspension

In 2008 it was recommended that the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office conduct a commission of inquiry in the Turks and Caicos Islands after anonymous reports of corruption were made during a territories-wide survey. The inquiry commissioner Robin Auld found that there was, in his words, ‘endemic corruption’ and an ‘atmosphere of fear’ and that ‘political patronage’ was pervasive. He recommended that the constitution be suspended. His recommendation was accepted by the FCO and in July 2009, Premier Michael Misick and his cabinet were dismissed. The TCI was again thrust under direct rule from the UK. The islands were governed by an interim government consisting of a consultative forum of local and UK appointees to mimic the legislative body and an advisory council made up of local personnel and UK technocrats, including the appointment of UK technocrats to Chief Executive Officer and Chief Financial Officer positions to manage the day-to-day affairs of the islands.

2009 – 2012 Perfect Storm

By 2009 the impact of the Great Recession of 2008, a period marked by soaring unemployment and foreclosure rates, required government bank bailout packages to save banks. Many financial institutions around the world went under. This economic downturn had a ripple effect that would eventually wash up on the TCIs’ shores. Major developments, including a Ritz Carlton project on the uninhabited island of West Caicos and a Mandarin Oriental project on Dellis Cay were brought to a standstill, leaving partially built structures in their wake.

Compounding this economic downturn was the damage inflicted by two hurricanes (Ike and Hanna) hitting the islands in September 2008. The newly built causeway connecting North and Middle Caicos was severely damaged.

The global recession had major consequences for these islands that rely so heavily on tourism, and the economy was in free fall. In 2011 the interim government negotiated a loan facility of \$260 million from the UK on behalf of the TCI for which it provided its own sovereign guarantee. The facility was needed to retire unpaid debts, support government operations and stabilise the economy. In addition, it put in place a package of legislation to strengthen institutions, improve the management of public finances, and establish and/or enhance good governance bodies, including an integrity commission to regulate the behaviour of public officials. In the wake of these changes an election was called on November 15, 2012 which was narrowly won by the PNP under the leadership of the Honourable Dr Rufus Ewing, who became Premier of the Turks and Caicos Islands.



C H A P T E R F O U R

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Financial Management

The PNP took over the reins of government at a time when its relationship with the UK was at its most fractious, given that it was during a PNP administration that the TCI constitution was suspended in 2009. The Hon. Dr Rufus Ewing recalls:

‘That election in 2012 was not an election for us to win. It was the intention of the British administration to dismantle the PNP and not let it see the light of day of politics in the future.’

The islands had gone through political upheaval and the economy was destabilised due to administrative overreach by the interim administration. The new political administration inherited a potential debt burden of up to \$260 million and an economy that had bottomed out — experiencing a fall of 20 percent in GDP. There was also the issue of the rising cost of the Special Investigation and Prosecution Team, a specially appointed UK team of police officers, attorneys, forensic accountants and others put in place to investigate and prosecute the former administration’s ministers suspected of corruption. The Rufus Ewing administration requested that the UK government carry the cost of the trial, given the fact that the acts that ministers were accused of were approved by the cabinet under the supervision of the governor who represented the UK government. The UK refused to fund the trial, and later issued an order in council forcing the PNP government of the day to cover the cost.

Under the terms of the bond for \$260 million, the interim administration entered into an agreement with the UK and the lender to liquidate the facility in four years. It mandated through the constitution and statute the appointment of a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) to oversee the financial management of the Ministry of Finance. It also required that the UK approve the TCI budget. In summary, the terms under which the Hon. Dr Rufus Ewing-led government was required to govern included a massive debt commitment, of which \$179 million was eventually drawn down. Dr Ewing explains that the administration chose an aggressive approach in repaying the loan.

‘We knew that we needed to get rid of this loan as early as possible because the longer we took to pay the loan, the longer we’d have the CFO as part of the package.’

To his administration’s credit, the UK Minister of State for International Development made the following statement to the UK House of Commons in February 2016:

‘I am pleased to announce that on 22 February TCIG repaid its remaining borrowing under this guarantee on schedule and with an outstanding borrowing need of just US\$28m. It was able to raise this amount without further recourse to the UK government for support and is expected to repay that loan over the next three-and-a-half years.’

In a nutshell, through an improved economy the TCI tourism industry once again flourished, and due to a series of revenue measures it was able to generate the revenue needed to retire the debt ahead of the scheduled retirement date.

‘We felt satisfied that we were able to pay off the debt and implement the majority of projects we set out to fulfil.’ – Dr Ewing



Hon. Rufus Ewing

[previous spread]
South Caicos coastline,
by Gary James - Provo Pictures

Children First

Along with the massive debt and restrictive constitution, the PNP government also inherited a public education system that had been severely underfunded, under-resourced and undermanned during the British interim government years. The country's largest public secondary institution, Clement Howell High School in Providenciales, was overcrowded and faced the rising threat of gang violence. It was clear that a new school should be built. Minister of Education and Deputy Premier Akierra Missick identified an appropriate site to build the Long Bay High School for students in Long Bay, Leeward and the Bight, thereby facilitating convenience for the students living in those communities and at the same time relieving overcrowding and congestion at Clement Howell High School.

During the Honourable Akierra Missick's tenure as Minister of Education, the Ona Glinton Primary School in Grand Turk, including the country's first purpose-built early education centre, was redeveloped after being severely damaged in a fire. According to Minister Missick:

'We wanted to give the youngest citizens of the Turks and Caicos Islands the opportunity to learn the way they learn best instead of squeezing them into a box. This is based on the concept of the child-centred learning technique.'

In the facility, classrooms are ideally comprised of no more than 10 students and are outfitted with learning pods. Teachers observe students as they interact with each pod. Educators then create individualised learning plans that suit each child's interests. Using the child-centred learning technique as a model, Missick and her ministry launched a new early childhood curriculum that was implemented throughout the primary school level. She explains:

'We had to address the curriculum, which was wholly inadequate. The new curriculum requires teachers to start teaching at the child's level and to move away from the chalk and talk system.'

A similar curriculum had already been implemented in the Cayman Islands. Missick and her team were able to look at the success of that program and use it as a resource while making reforms in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

To update educators on new styles of teaching, Missick explains how the ministry provided scholarships for those who held teaching certificates to earn their bachelor's degrees and offered scholarships and salary incentives for those seeking post-graduate degrees.



Hon. Akierra Missick with Hon. Rufus Ewing, George Lightbourne, Amanda Misick, and Portia Stubbs-Smith at the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Phase 1 of the Long Bay High School in Providenciales.



Hon. Akierra Missick with Hon. Rufus Ewing, George Lightbourne, Amanda Misick, Portia Stubbs-Smith and contractor Jermain Malcolm at the ground-breaking ceremony for Phase 2 of the construction of the Long Bay High School in Providenciales.

'We sought to create a special grading structure for educators, basing pay on those with certificates, bachelor's degrees, master's degrees and PhDs. Just about every public servant in education received some form of salary increase.'

Scholarships were able to be granted due in part to the ministry's efforts to strengthen its relationship with the University of the West Indies. Students now have the option to study at discounted tuition rates at one of the three UWI campuses or to study online using the Open Campus system, which keeps an administrative office in Downtown Providenciales.

For high school graduates not yet ready for a four-year university experience, the ministry created the 'Free Tuition Initiative'. The government committed to paying the full tuition of all Turks and Caicos Islanders who maintained a B or above average at its community college. Therefore, young citizens who are not yet ready to leave home can earn associate degrees to prepare them for a tertiary-level experience without incurring the great cost of studying overseas.

Healthcare

The previous PNP-led government under the leadership of the Honourable Michael Eugene Misick and supported by then Minister of Education and Health the Honourable Lillian Boyce, the Honourable Royal Robinson, and the Honourable Floyd Hall, assisted by the then Chief Medical Officer Dr Rufus Ewing, created a healthcare revolution in the Turks and Caicos Islands by establishing a payroll-funded universal healthcare system unique to most of the Caribbean. This system includes the National Health Insurance Programme supported by the two new state-of-the-art secondary care hospitals referred to earlier. The programme became operational under the interim administration in 2010. During 2012 – 2016, the Premier, the Hon. Dr Ewing, and his administration expanded upon these ideas by ensuring citizens and residents who found themselves unemployed could still receive healthcare for at least 18 months. To support that program, the National Health Insurance Plan was established.

The Health Ministry under the direction of the Honourable Dr Ewing, who had spent over a decade as the country's Chief Medical Officer before leading the TCI government — built new primary care clinics on Salt Cay Kew and Bottle Creek on North Caicos to ensure that those community residents receive the same excellent level of primary care that patients in the Grand Turk and Providenciales facilities enjoy. Each inhabited island was also outfitted with ambulances and a team of emergency medical technicians.

Furthermore, to ensure that patients receive the highest standard of care, the government formed the Health Regulatory Authority, a central body which could set and maintain regulations for medical professionals to follow.

Acknowledging the need for improved mental health services throughout the islands, the health ministry tabled new mental health legislation and was the initial catalyst for the development of new mental health facilities on Grand Turk. Dr Ewing explains the state of legislation on society's mentally ill prior to introducing the new bill.

'Our legislation was archaic. The legislation was called the lunatic ordinance – the name itself speaks for how archaic it is, so we introduced a new ordinance called the mental health bill.'

Adding to the new, progressive approach to mental health, Dr Ewing's administration was also the first government to give official recognition to a private organisation — the Drug Prevention Initiative — by underwriting a significant portion of the cost of constructing a rehabilitation residence for recovering drug addicts.

Debt Free & Thriving

In the face of the financial challenges occasioned by the huge inherited debt and the compressed repayment period, along with the aggressive economic performance framework established by the UK government, significant improvements in social development including expansions and reforms in education and healthcare were achieved between 2012 and 2016. On leaving office on December 15, 2016, the PNP had retired the \$179 million draw down on the credit facilities guaranteed by the UK government in 2011, met every key performance indicator in a financial performance framework agreement entered into by the interim administration, set up the framework for the establishment of a National Wealth Fund, and agreed to the deposit of \$8 million as the first tranche of cash for the fund once legally established. The incoming PDM administration passed enabling legislation to establish the fund. And for the first time in the history of the TCI a rating of its creditworthiness status was established. Standard and Poor's, under a PNP administration, rated the creditworthiness BBB+ with a positive outlook for the final two years of the PNP's administration.

The PNP between 2012 and 2016 re-established the former Investment Promotion Agency – formerly TCInvest, now Invest TCI. It also put in place the Micro, Small and Medium Size Enterprises (MSME) Ordinance, which includes a service-level agreement with the Centre for Entrepreneurial Development, a public-private initiative to provide financial grants, duty free concessions, marketing advice, and business coaching to MSMEs.

Against tremendous opposition, including from the rival PDM party, the Rufus Ewing administration signed a development agreement with the developers of the Ritz Carlton and made a series of legislative amendments to the planning laws that allowed the construction of the first major globally-branded resort property in the TCI. The agreement also called for the development of two additional globally-branded properties in Grace Bay to follow.

During its 2012 – 2016 term in office, the PNP piloted and had passed into law over 450 pieces of principal and subsidiary legislation, including the following critical laws aimed at social and economic development:

- Consumer Protection Ordinance
- National Security Ordinance
- National Health Insurance (Amendment) Ordinance 2016
- National Parks (Amendments) Ordinance 2016
- Credit Union Ordinance
- Mental Health Ordinance
- Health Appeals Tribunal Ordinance

- Health Professions Ordinance
- Health Regulatory Ordinance
- Sports Development Ordinance
- Tobacco Control Ordinance
- Immigration Ordinance 2015
- Turks and Caicos Islander Status Ordinance 2015
- Turks and Caicos Cadet Corps Ordinance
- Domestic Violence Ordinance
- Family Law (Guardianship Custody And Access to Children) Ordinance 2015
- Child (Care AND Protection) Ordinance
- Adoption Ordinance
- Fractional Ownership Ordinance
- National Honours And Awards Ordinance
- Dormant Account Ordinance
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Ordinance

The following ordinances were left at the draft stage:

- Bribery Ordinance
- Companies Ordinance
- Insolvency ordinance
- Limitations Ordinance

PNP Women

The author would like to make special recognition of the women within the party who have been integral in creating a political movement that is truly progressive. From the party's inception, the hard work and dedication of women like Madlyn (Pat) Wynns-Potter – the party's first secretary, Emily Saunders – first woman Speaker of the House, and Rosita Butterfield, also Speaker of the House, a nurse by profession and a champion for better healthcare for the islands' citizens. The Honourable Arabella Smith, whose work improved the education system in the Turks and Caicos Islands and who was the first woman to hold a ministerial portfolio. Every PNP administration since 1991 has included women in the Executive Council or Cabinet. The PNP would not have been able to build its legacy of creating and maintaining long-lasting social institutions without politicians such as Dimple Musgrove, Madlyn Potter, Rosita Butterfield, Emily Saunders, Arabella Smith, Lilian Boyce, Portia Stubbs-Smith, Amanda Misick, Akierra Missick, Ruth Blackman, and so many others.

Conclusion

The modern multi-party political system in the Turks and Caicos Islands owes its gratitude to the Progressive National Party because it is the original members of the PNP who envisioned a self-governing society that placed the utmost value on the Turks and Caicos Islands' population. The PNP has always put Turks and Caicos Islanders first – from bringing the first major development to the islands, to improving the livelihoods of the islands' aging members through the National Insurance Board, to providing educational opportunities to the islands' future leaders through the Turks and Caicos Islands Community College and expanded scholarship opportunities, and to creating one of the only universal healthcare systems in the Caribbean region. The PNP continues its mission to see that the Turks and Caicos Islanders are the main drafters of the country's destiny and take their place as the stewards of these beautiful-by-nature islands.

Twenty-One And Beyond

As this short history is being written, the TCI is facing a general election within the next six months. This at a time when the world is embroiled in a fight against the global COVID-19 pandemic decimating public sector liquidity and significantly reducing the rate of revenue generation due to the closure of the border to tourists, the mainstay of the economy. In the short term, the confluence of the economic consequences of COVID-19, the deterioration of social conditions, the increase in crime and the illegal flow of immigrants will test the resilience of the islands and pose a serious challenge for the next government. This is likely to be the PNP under current Leader Charles Washington Misick given the level of dissatisfaction with the current PDM administration. Against that background the party, in preparing its manifesto, has chosen to focus on quality of life issues as embodied in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 aimed at ensuring inclusive growth by maximising the development of TCI human capital and its best allocation, thereby achieving balanced economic growth, improving social conditions, and protecting the environment.

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Hon. C. Washington Misick is the current leader of the opposition, a former Cheif Minister; Minister of Tourism; Minister of Finance Investment and Trade. He is also a recipient of the –TCI Long Service Medal for his long and distinguished history of service to the Turks & Caicos Islands.



Bobbi-Jeanne Misick is a journalist, a creative writer and a proud Turks and Caicos Islander. Through investigative reporting she seeks to shed light on the issues affecting society's most marginalized groups.

THE PNP - A HISTORY

From Founding Years to Present Day



"The Progressive National Party was undoubtedly the seminal political change organ in the political life of the Turks and Caicos Islands."

- Rev. Dr. A.V. Butterfield -

The History of the PNP is the story of the visionary political organization that birthed party politics in the Turks and Caicos Islands. The first edition of this living document explores how the country's early politicians advocated for proper representation, founded the Progressive National Party and worked to improve the lives of all Turks and Caicos Islanders. As the PNP continues to bring innovation and increased opportunity to the TCI, this document is just the beginning.