

BAHAMAS STRIKE TIED TO RACE ISSUE

Leader of Leftist Liberals
Also Expresses Political
Protests—Islands Quiet

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Special to The New York Times.

NASSAU, the Bahamas, Jan. 16—Political, social and economic grievances behind the general strike that has paralyzed the tourist industry in this British resort colony were outlined today by Henry M. Taylor, chairman of the Progressive Liberal party.

Mr. Taylor, whose left-of-center party is the largest organized political group in the Bahamas, charged that the Negro majority—85 per cent of the islands' resident population of 98,000—was treated "worse than Negroes were in the United States' South."

Interviewed in his weather-beaten wooden house on the outskirts of Nassau, Mr. Taylor, a 54-year-old accountant, said the mass walkout was staged as a protest against ruling methods of the dominant white minority.

Meanwhile, the general strike continued in its fifth day with no sign of a compromise solution. What began last Saturday as a fairly simple dispute between the taxi union and the tourist agencies had evolved into a mass protest against the "Bay Street merchants."

Mass Meeting Is Orderly

Tonight 5,000 Negroes assembled on Windsor Cricket ground and roared approval as strike leaders urged continuance of the mass walkout. The meeting was completely orderly. No policemen or soldiers were on hand.

One of the speakers, Kenneth Sterling, secretary of the Caribbean Federation of Free Trade Unions, urged the British Government to send a Royal Commission to investigate working conditions on the island.

Between addresses, loudspeakers blared out recordings of Negro spirituals and highland songs, including "The Blue Bells of Scotland."

No violence was reported all day. The 150 white British troops flown in yesterday from Jamaica had little to do.

All hotels remained closed to guests. Although many stores were open in Bay Street, the main shopping thoroughfare, their display windows were shuttered. The town was battened down as for a hurricane.

A Government spokesman said that the Governor, Sir Oswald Raynor Arthur, was "exploring all means of restoring the situation." The spokesman said that all essential services were being maintained.

Randol Fawkes, president of the Bahamas Federation of Labor, said that the general strike, first in the island's history, would mean "the beginning of and the end of all evils inherent in British colonialism." He said the strikers were not demanding any loosening of ties with the British Crown, but were insisting on reforms in the governmental structure.

Specific demands by the Labor Federation, as listed by Mr. Fawkes, include the rights of hotel workers to organize, establishment of general wage scales for all workers, a forty-eight-hour week and establishment of arbitration procedures in labor-management disputes.

Labor and Political Terms

Mr. Fawkes also spoke of "increased participation in a democratic administration."

What this meant was explained more clearly by Mr. Taylor. He noted the property qualification for electors.

"What we want," Mr. Taylor said, "is a written constitution based on universal adult suffrage."

"Under the present voting scheme, Bay Street merchants easily control the twenty-nine-man House of Assembly."

"To qualify as a voter one must own real estate valued at least \$14 or be a tenant paying at least \$6.50 rental a year. But only one tenant living on a premise has the right to vote. If twenty tenants occupy a property this means that only one is allowed to vote."

Mr. Taylor said that the voting laws were also stacked in favor of the white minority by permitting each incorporated enterprise to vote.

Thus, the owner of an incorporated business can cast not only his individual vote but also a vote for his company. And he may delegate someone to cast the company vote in each of the colony's fifteen electoral districts where his enterprise owns at least \$14 worth of property.

On the matter of social reforms, Mr. Taylor complained that some hotels were still discriminating against Negroes. "We want a law prohibiting discrimination in public places," he said.

The Government late in the day ordered intensification of police patrols to prevent intimidation of workers remaining on their jobs. No one in the Government seemed to know exactly how many workers were on strike. Estimates ranged from 1,400 to 2,500.



Associated Press
BRITISH SOLDIER IN BAHAMAS' CAPITAL: One of the 150 men who were sent from Jamaica to Nassau to be on hand during strike. The area continued calm yesterday.