

on

ANGUILLA SITUATION

Good Evening!

As you are aware, acts of violence have been taking place in Anguilla since the month of February. They started with an assault upon a Queen Show at night and culminated in the seizure at gun point of the whole police arsenal in that part of the State today.

The violence which followed the Queen Show took the form of shooting attacks against the police as they went about their lawful business by vehicle the following day seeking to arrest persons for whom warrants had been issued. Those persons were finally brought to justice after a body of police was transported to the east end of Anguilla by warship and a surrender made later through the courageous instrumentality of our Governor, Mr. Fred Phillips, and Mr. Henry Hall, an official of the Commonwealth Office in London.

The Chief of Police, Mr. Lynch-Wade and the Superintendent, Mr. Roberts, were injured in those attacks.

Shooting attacks were subsequently made upon Police Headquarters several times as well as private homes. Last Saturday night a sustained and vicious attack, lasting over fifty minutes, was made upon Mr. David Lloyd and his hotel. Over fifty shots were fired many of which tore into the room occupied by a Peace Corps Language Instructress. As a result, all Peace Corps personnel left Anguilla on Sunday.

Last night the lock on the Customs House at the Forest was shot off and the building entered and shot up. The business premises of Mr. Albert Lake in the Valley was also extensively damaged by gunfire.

In addition to those acts of violence, Government House in Anguilla was set on fire at night and burnt to the ground in March, the Warden, Mr. Byron, barely escaping with his life.

Throughout the period under review a group consisting of people from St. Kitts and Anguilla have held public and other meetings, some illegally, in Anguilla inciting Anguillians and urging them to violence. And, as I reminded you earlier, violence has indeed taken place repeatedly.

What the whole thing is about, no Anguillian has said nor has any one of them made representations to Government.

It certainly could not be the question of Local Government because those Anguillians whom I formally approached to constitute the first Local Council declined to serve.

We know that Nevis has its Local Council and that according to law elected Local Councils for Nevis and Anguilla must be constituted before the 15th of December this year.



Yesterday afternoon a crowd of some 250 people, some in vehicles, went to the Police Headquarters in Anguilla and demanded that the police should leave the island by 10 a.m. today.

Early this morning a crowd again gathered outside the headquarters making the same demand. At the same time vehicles were parked on the airstrip to prevent it from being used by aircraft and employees of the Public Works Department engaged in lengthening and otherwise improving the airstrip were forced at gun point to place their bulldozers and other heavy equipment at a certain end of the strip.

The hostile crowd ultimately surrounded Police Headquarters continuing to demand that the police should leave.

The Officer-in-charge, Assistant Superintendent Edgings stood firm and used his best endeavours to hold his men together but they deserted him in three batches and came to St. Kitts by an airplane owned by an alien resident in or visitor to Anguilla. Edgings tried to send out his arms and ammunition to St. Kitts but the whole lot was seized at gun point at the airport. Edgings was left ultimately with only one man and when that man broke down and ring-leaders of the mob several times turned off the engine which operated the radio transmitter, Edgings was forced to withdraw after immobilizing the set.

It was against that general situation, therefore, that the Government met and declared a State of Emergency to exist in the State. We took that step as a last resort after having endured the damaging effects of three months of violence in Anguilla. But having taken that step, we intend to use all of our powers firstly to re-establish law and order more firmly than ever in Anguilla, secondly to bring the culprits to justice and thirdly, to re-establish confidence there.

We owe it as a duty to establish once again civic conditions in Anguilla under which law-abiding citizens may lead their lives in peace, free from fear of violence and we intend to discharge that duty to the utmost.

Outside assistance is being actively organized and will be brought to bear as with the utmost speed.

It may become necessary to impose certain restrictions for the more effectual fulfilment of our obligations and I would ask you to be understanding, helpful and co-operative with the forces of law and order.

This has been a black day in our history but it is the duty of all decent citizens to combine to erase it in the tomorrow.

Goodnight!