

= Molwyn Joseph =

Molwyn Joseph is an Antiguan politician and Chairman of the Antigua Labour Party (ALP) . First entering politics in 1984 when he was made a Minister without Portfolio in the government of Vere Bird , Joseph became Minister of Finance seven years later , renegotiating the Antiguan national debt and introducing fiscal reforms . After a 1996 scandal in which it was discovered he had used his position to import a 1930s Rolls Royce for a friend , bypassing normal import duties and taxes , he was dismissed from the Bird administration , returning 14 months later to serve as Minister for Planning , Implementation and the Environment . Following the 1999 general election he became Minister of Health and Social Improvement before being made Minister of Tourism and the Environment a few months later . As Minister , Joseph attempted to improve the perception of Antigua as a tourist destination and invest in the industry , spending 2 million US dollars increasing the number of hotel rooms on the island and providing money for both Air Jamaica and Air Luxor to provide flights to the island .

Outside of his ministerial duties , he also met with Jiang Zhenhua , Vice @-@ Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People 's Congress , having led the official Antiguan delegation to Beijing . Following a power struggle in 2003 , Joseph was given the Economic Development and Investment Promotion portfolio , to hold at the same time as his Tourism and the Environment position . Despite a scandal surrounding donations he had received from Texan businessman Robert Stafford , Joseph was selected to contest the seat of St Mary 's North in the 2004 Antiguan general election , in which the ALP lost power , being replaced in government by the United Progressive Party (UPP) led by Baldwin Spencer . Joseph himself lost his seat , but was elected Chairman of the ALP a year later , and regained the seat in 2009 with a majority of 21 . The same year , he was arrested for participating in an unauthorised May Day rally protesting the UPP administration ; after a lengthy trial , he and several other ALP members were convicted and fined .

= = Early career = =

Joseph entered Cabinet @-@ level politics on 19 April 1984 when , following the ALP 's general election victory , he was made a Minister without Portfolio . In 1991 he became Minister of Finance and Trade , and along with Financial Secretary Keith Hurst and Minister of Economic Development Rodney Williams negotiated the rescheduling of Antigua 's national debt with European creditors . The government 's 1992 budget , announced and drafted by Joseph , included no new taxes but did involve a cut to government spending , in response to what he claimed was reduced spending by tourists and smaller amounts of international aid in 1990 and 1991 . The 1993 budget contained similar provisions , ruling out the possibility of an income tax , as suggested by one of Antigua 's major trade unions . This was accompanied by a programme of fiscal reforms , including " expenditure control , improved revenue collection , external debt management , proper evaluation of projects , improved public sector efficiency , price controls on basic foods and commodities , tax reform and good governance " .

Within Parliament , Joseph campaigned for the Business Licensing Bill , a statute which aimed to impose licensing fees , ranging from 40 to 20 @,@ 000 East Caribbean dollars , on those seeking to start businesses in certain fields . The Bill attracted large amounts of controversy , with critics such as Hugh Marshall asserting that it violated the CARICOM Single Market and Economy agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade , and would lead to Antiguan traders finding it difficult to expand into external markets . Although other ministers such as Williams spoke in support of the bill , it was later shelved indefinitely , with Joseph saying that he " [found] myself a lonely man " .

= = Dismissal = =

In 1996 , Joseph left his position as Finance Minister after it was discovered that he had helped a friend import a 1930s Rolls Royce , using his position to bypass the normal import duties and taxes .

Although the government 's immediate reaction was to deny that this had happened , the Solicitor @-@ General issued a report in which he found that " the landing of the Rolls Royce car ... was in violation of customs and port procedures " , facilitated by Joseph 's intervention . With the growing pressure , Joseph resigned on 22 September , . Now on the backbenches , Joseph became " senior parliamentarian in charge of refugees " , and as such was the government 's chief spokesperson when the eruption of a volcano in Montserrat led to 3 @,@ 000 refugees fleeing the country and coming to Antigua and Barbuda .

= = Reappointment = =

Joseph 's position on the backbenches did not last long ; on 3 December 1997 , less than two years after his resignation , he was recalled to take up the Planning , Implementation and the Environment portfolio , with Bird saying that " his managerial skills are required at this juncture of our economic history when several projects require implementation to get off the ground quickly " . Following the 1999 general election , he was again appointed to the cabinet , this time as Minister of Health and Social Improvement , with the Planning portfolio going to Steadroy Benjamin . A few months later he became Minister of Tourism and the Environment , with Bernard Percival taking over his Health portfolio .

As Minister , Joseph oversaw a " back @-@ to @-@ basics approach " to tourism , attempting to have the nation perceived as one known " for its cleanliness , tidiness , natural beauty and pristine environment " . As part of this , the Antiguan government invested 2 million US dollars in boosting the number of hotel rooms available , from 3 @,@ 000 to 5 @,@ 000 , and opened the Antigua Hotel Institute , seeking to train Antiguanans in how to more efficiently and effectively work in the tourism industry . Joseph also oversaw the government buying a third of the Jolly Beach Resort in an attempt to save it from bankruptcy , establishing a management company to oversee the property . In February 2000 he led the government delegation in an official visit to Beijing , where they met with Jiang Zhenhua , Vice @-@ Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People 's Congress , to discuss " bilateral relations and the issues of common concern " . He also led the Antiguan delegation to the World Travel Market in 2001 . Following Joseph 's promise of government investiture in the route , Air Jamaica resumed flights to Antigua in 2002 , having ceased flying there six years earlier . This was followed by the announcement that Air Luxor would similarly begin offering flights to the islands .

After a financial scandal in early 2003 , the ALP backbencher Sherfield Bowen asked for a vote of no confidence in Bird 's government on 19 May , calling for him to step down and " accusing him of being involved corrupt practices and governing without accountability " . When Bowen was threatened with being thrown out of the Party , he claimed that several other MPs and government ministers were prepared to resign if he was dismissed , including Joseph . The dispute remained unresolved , with Bowen accusing the government of vesting too much power in Senator Asot Michael ; Bowen , Hilroy Humpheys , Bernard Percival and Longford Jeremy eventually all resigned from the ALP administration , with further suggestions that Joseph , as well as trade minister Gaston Brown , could also leave . Joseph eventually announced on 19 June , that he would resign if Michael was not immediately removed ; within a few hours , Michael 's resignation had been formally tendered . Soon afterwards , Joseph was given the Economic Development and Investment Promotion portfolio , to hold at the same time as his Tourism and the Environment position .

= = Later career = =

In late 2003 , it was discovered that Texan businessman Allen Stanford had given both Joseph and fellow minister Gaston Browne cheques worth 100 @,@ 000 East Caribbean dollars . While Browne denied suggestions that this had constituted bribery , claiming that the money had gone towards community projects , Leader of the Opposition Baldwin Spencer demanded that both ministers resign . Both ministers were part of a team negotiating with Stanford over a land exchange in St. John 's , and the news led to protesters picketing their offices . Prime Minister Lester Bird affirmed

his support in both ministers , and despite a motion of censure brought by the opposition and more protests , Stanford publicly made a second set of donations to Joseph and Browne .

Antigua had a general election in 2004 , following the dissolution of Parliament in late February ; with the ALP running a full slate , Joseph was nominated for the St Mary 's North seat . The ALP were conclusively defeated by the United Progressive Party (UPP) and forced out of government , Joseph lost his seat to Bertrand Joseph . Now in opposition , the ALP held a leadership contest in 2005 , in which Joseph was elected Party Chairman , defeating Vere Bird , Jr . 164 votes to 108 . In 2007 , he was appointed by Bird to act as Shadow Minister for Tourism and Education . In the 2009 general election he again ran for St Mary 's North , defeating Bertrand Joseph by 21 votes ; despite this , the UPP retained power . Following an unauthorised ALP march on May Day in 2009 to protest against the UPP government , Joseph and six other senior ALP figures , including the former Prime Minister , were arrested and charged with public order offences . They pleaded not guilty , but were convicted and fined .