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BERMUDA, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2005

TODAY'S HIGH 25

Premier's popularity rating rises

• Scott's support grows among blacks, the young and lower income groups

By Sam Stevens

The Premier's approval rating has jumped by nearly five percent in the last two months - while the number of people satisfied with the direction in which the country is heading has also increased.

These were the principle findings of the Research Innovation telephone poll of 403 people between July 21 and 24, which by and large contains little in the way of surprises.

While Alex Scott's job handling rating improved markedly from March through to May after reaching a crisis point just after the new year, the poll for June and July saw this particular rating remain virtually flat at 42.4 percent of the 403 people questioned.

Mr. Scott continues to command significant support among the Island's young, with 65.5 percent of those polled between the ages of 18 and 35 reportedly viewing Mr. Scott in a favourable light.

The Premier's support remains strong among the black population, with 71.1 percent of all blacks polled expressing satisfaction with him.

His desire, expressed on coming to power in 2003, to forge a better relationship with the white community continues to be reflected in poll numbers, however, with more than 50 percent of whites questioned unconvinced about him.

Yet again, lower income groups tend to favour Mr. Scott more than the wealthy - although even in the top income bracket of over \$100,000, opinion of the Premier is fairly evenly split with 48.4 percent for and 43.8 percent against.

According to the poll, however, the more people earn, the less they like him.

Meanwhile, Opposition Leader Grant Gibbons' approval figures have climbed from 43.2 to just under 47 percent, with Bermuda's older generations - 55 years of age or over - continuing to be a key area of support.

Among younger people, opinion remains firmly split. However, while Dr. Gibbons scored well at the last time of asking among low-income groups, with a 55.2 percent approval rating, that figure has taken a significant hit over the last two months, with only 30.2 percent of those earning less than \$50,000 a year now registering their contentment with him.

Dr. Gibbons remains much more popular among women than men (52.1 percent of women polled said they favoured him compared to only 37.2 percent of men) while his rating among blacks has fallen yet further from 28 percent to 22.5 percent.

The overwhelming majority of whites - 70.5 percent - voiced their support for the Opposition Leader.

Elsewhere, the culture of pessimism surrounding Bermuda's future prospects looks to have been somewhat eroded, with the number of people polled dissatisfied with "the way things are going" at this time having dropped below 50 percent for the first time since November last year.

Those most unhappy with the situation remain among the older generations, with 62.1 percent of those asked over 55 expressing their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs on the Island.

Mary marks a special anniversary



Taking the cake: Mary Williams celebrated her 105th birthday yesterday. She is pictured here with caregiver Majnunah F. Abdu-Jabbar at the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital.

Photo by Meredith Andrews

Jamaican found guilty of supplying cocaine

By Stacey Smith

A Supreme Court jury yesterday found a construction worker guilty of supplying \$70,000 worth of cocaine to a nursery school teacher.

Jamaican Willston Ezekial Davis, 43, showed no emotion as the jury foreman read out the majority verdict after more than four hours of deliberation.

Davis was seen by surveillance

officers supplying the cocaine to Cindy Onia Augustus, a teacher at Vernon Temple Childcare Centre in Southampton on June 5, 2003. Augustus is currently serving a nine-year jail term after previously admitting her part in the drug deal.

During the two-week long trial, Crown prosecutor Oonagh Vau-crosson told the ten-woman, two-man jury how Police and Customs officers staked out the nursery after

receiving reports of suspicious activity in the area.

Customs officer Kelly Trott, testified that she witnessed "a dark skinned, short by male standards, clean shaven man", pass a bag to Augustus. She was also able to identify Davis's bike, a cream-coloured Scoopy, which Davis later admitted was in his possession throughout the day.

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Willston Ezekial Davis

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Visitor slams 'hostile' Customs officers

• She continued to make anti-tourism statements which we thought were inappropriate and so out of line in trying to encourage black tourists from visiting Bermuda

By Tricia Walters

An American tourist has written a stinging letter of complaint to the Tourism Minister claiming she was discriminated against and unnecessarily interrogated by an Airport Customs officer. The Department of Tourism has promised to fully investigate the incident which left the black American woman so angry that she had chosen Bermuda rather than Hawaii.

The letter was also copied to The Royal Gazette.

In it, Californian Jo-An Turman claims the Customs officer made anti-tourism comments and repeatedly demanded to know why she had chosen Bermuda rather than Hawaii.

Mrs. Turman and her daughter arrived on the Island for a week-long holiday two weeks ago, but by the time

they cleared Customs, her opinion of Bermuda had already soured.

Mrs. Turman said every one of the six black passengers on the flight was pulled out of line and subjected to an "invasive" search and line of interrogative questioning.

She said a female Customs officer asked her if this was her first visit to Bermuda and then asked why she had not gone to Hawaii, over and over, throughout the search.

Mrs. Turman said when the officer heard they were going to stay at the Fairmont Southampton she demanded proof of how they would pay for this "pricey" hotel.

An embarrassed Mrs. Turman said she had to show her American Express statement, which "thankfully" she had with her, and proof of confirmation from the hotel.

"The officer's voice was becoming

more and more hostile as she continued to question us as to why we had not rather gone to Hawaii and then wanted to know what I do for a living and wanted to see a business card," she said.

By this time, at least a half an hour had passed and all the other passengers had left the Airport.

But the Customs officer continued her line of questioning and searched every single bag they had - a process that also included exposing their luggage to a Police narcotics dog three times.

"She made so many inappropriate, sarcastic comments while searching our bags like 'it looks like you packed for three or four people instead of two', 'why so many shoes?' and 'are you sure you don't have someone hidden in here?'"

Mrs. Turman said she was getting

tired of the subterfuge as they were both very tired - having coasted off a red-eye flight the night before.

"Our person cried, claimed that he had never even felt before and wanted to know what she was looking for," she said.

"She continued to make anti-tourism statements which we thought were very inappropriate and so out of line in trying to encourage black tourists from visiting Bermuda."

Sadly, it was not the only discouraging and discriminatory incident the Turmans would experience in Bermuda.

During a Sunday brunch at their hotel, Mrs. Turman said she noticed that they had been overcharged and pointed it out to the waiter.

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The court also heard how Davis attempted to buy an airline ticket to Newark, New Jersey, the day after the drugs handover.

"It is my suggestion that Davis knew Cindy was arrested and was trying to flea the Island to avoid arrest, purchasing a ticket at the last minute at the highest price", she told the jury.

But defence lawyer Victoria Pearman said the prosecution had failed to prove that her client was the man seen by narcotics officers carrying the drugs.

"Contrary to what my learned

friend said - that the defendant is making up things - I'm going to suggest to you that the officers are saying things contrary to what happened", said Ms Pearman.

"The prosecution has produced no evidence to you to prove that this is the man. No witness has come in here and said that's him, that's the man!"

Ms Pearman also questioned the validity of Police statements made by Davis - who cannot read or write - shortly after his arrest in which he confessed to his part in the deal.

And she implied that police

took advantage of her client and claimed that his rights were violated after his arrest.

When Davis took the stand, he claimed that he had been working in St. George's throughout the day of the drug handover.

And he retracted his Police statement, saying that he saw it for the first time more than a year after it was made.

"If I knew what was in the statement I wouldn't have signed", he said.

"If I had told them about the about drugs I would not fight a case like this."

Davis was remanded into custody until September 1.

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Photo by Meredith Andrews

Storm warning issued as Harvey comes closer

By Mikaela Ian Cannonier

Government has issued a storm warning for Tropical Storm Harvey which is expected to begin affecting Bermuda today.

Maximum sustained winds of 30 knots and gusts of 40 knots are expected with the storm. Harvey is expected to be closest to Bermuda at midnight tonight.

Meteorologist Ian Currie said that it is difficult to predict hurricanes and tropical storms in Bermuda because the island is a "small target".

"The track of hurricanes is very dependant on the set up of the atmosphere," he said. "You can't say exactly where they are going to hit."

He said that the way the storm is moving, it is expected to make its closest pass 43 nautical miles to the northwest of the island.

"The current track of the moment we will be in the strongest wind sector - the northeastern part of the hurricane - we may see the winds increase," he said.

It was originally predicted that there would be 12 storms or hurricanes for the 2005 hurricane season but the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has upped that prediction to 21 storms and 11 hurricanes before the season is over.

Mr. Currie said that predictions are "still open to errors", however, he encouraged Bermudians to prepare for Tropical Storm Harvey.

Boats should be tied down as well as anything else that can be blown around, he said.

The weather service will be updating its storm watches every three hours with a main update every six.

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