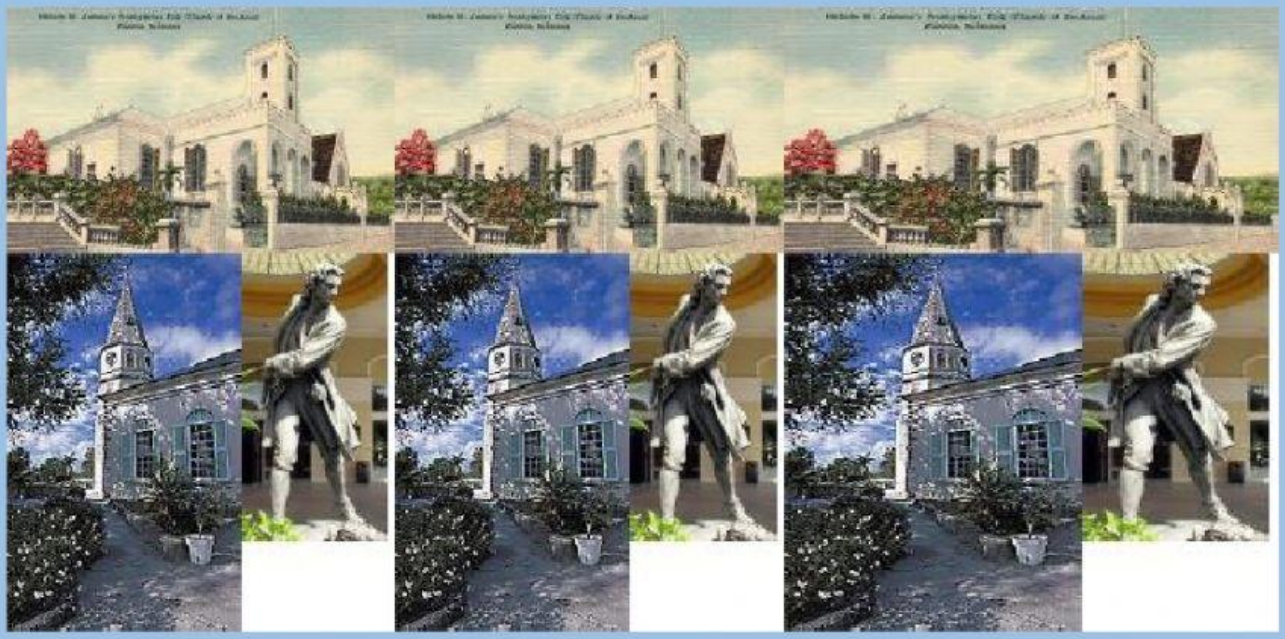
# Chapter 3 The First Parliament



Woodes Rogers, the first Royal Governor, arrived in The Bahamas on 26th July 1718. The pirates knew of his coming and many of them fled. Some of those who stayed decided to put up a fight. One, Captain Charles Vane, attacked two of Woodes Rogers' ships. He tried to stop Rogers and his men entering the Harbour, but this attempt failed. Governor Rogers and his crew landed safely on New Providence. The island was in a sad state. The fort was in ruins, the roads were overgrown, and garbage was piled high everywhere. The plantations were not producing enough crops. Rogers' first aim was to rid New Providence of pirates. He planned to bring law and order to the island, so that the colony could grow and flourish. Woodes Rogers formed a council of 12 men to help him govern the islands. With the help of these men and other citizens, he cleared up and rebuilt the

LIVEWORKSHEETS

town. The fort was also repaired, because Rogers knew that he might have to defend the islands against invaders.

In 1720 the Spaniards tried to attack Nassau, but they were driven back by Fort Nassau's guns. Governor Rogers then offered a **Pardon** to all pirates who would stop attacking ships. Nearly 300 pirates gave up their way of life. Those who refused to surrender were captured and put in prison. Many were tried and hanged at Fort Nassau. The islands became a safer place to live, and trade with other countries increased. The motto of The Bahamas then was written in Latin. It read: **Expulsis Piratis – Restituta Commercia**.

This means: '**When the pirates were driven out, trade was restored**'.

**Parliament**, as we know it today, began when Woodes Rogers came from England to New Providence for his second term as Governor, in August 1729. He called together a group of men whom he hoped would help him rule The Bahamas. The new parliament was called the House of Assembly. The Assembly first met on 29th September 1729. John Colebrook was the first Speaker, or chairman. The Speaker ruled the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly at that time was made up of 24 member selected from three islands: 16 were from New Providence, 4 from Eleuthera, and 4 from Harbour Island. From the time of that first Assembly, its members opposed the Governor on many issues.

LIVEWORKSHEETS