

CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECTORAL DEBATE 2014

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AND

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Sectoral Debate 2014

Mr. Speaker this afternoon before I commence my contribution to this year's sectoral debate I wish to give honour to God for His Grace in allowing us to meet in this Honourable House at this time. Whenever we take our seats as members of Parliament we really are standing on the shoulders of the Jamaican people who elected us and they and all of us are really supported by the Grace of God. To the Almighty we give the Glory.

My life like that of everyone else's is subject to the many twists and turns and vagaries which living in this world brings and like everyone else I have always needed and continue to need constant and consistent support in my life because even in good times life is never always easy. Mr Speaker, my wife of

over 40 years Beverly is in the gallery of this Honourable House today and I wish to thank her because she has always been my constant support, my place of safety and my refuge when the storms of life blow.

Mr. Speaker the Prime Minister of Jamaica the Most Honourable Portia Simpson Miller bestowed significant trust and much honour upon me when she advised His Excellency the Governor General of Jamaica to appoint me Attorney-General of Jamaica thereby making me the Principal Legal Advisor to the Government of Jamaica pursuant to section 79 of the Constitution of Jamaica. Through you Mr. Speaker I wish to thank the Prime Minister.

The voice of my colleague the Honourable Senator A.J. Nicholson, Q.C still resonates in my head when at the first

Cabinet Meeting I attended he said to me, “you will never work as hard in your life as you will as Attorney General” , and he was right. However what Senator Nicholson omitted to tell me was that at the end of the day there is a tremendous feeling of pride and fulfillment which I would experience for serving my people and my country, and which is indeed simply priceless.

Mr. Speaker the work in the Attorney General’s Chambers is voluminous and of great significance to the Country. Every Memorandum of Understanding, every contract for every business enterprise the government enters into either through a ministry or a public body passes through the Chambers and Cabinet Submissions follow that route also. Our staff is limited, but their ethic for team work is limitless. I wish to place on record the selfless and invaluable service the attorneys and

support staff of the Chambers perform for this Country, day in and day out, in fact on many nights and weekends.

I wish to acknowledge the Solicitor General, Mrs. Nicole Foster-Pusey, Q.C. for her invaluable and indispensable service to the mission of the Attorney General's Chambers.

The Chambers has several Divisions, each headed by a Director and each one and her team of attorneys and support staff discharge their duties with professionalism. Ms. Carlene Larmond is our Director in charge of our Litigation Division , Ms. Althea Jarrett is our Director in charge of our State Proceedings Division, Ms. Deborah Newland is our Director in charge of our Commercial Affairs Division, Ms. Candice Rochester is the Director in charge of our General Legal Advice Division, Ms. Heather Dawn Brown is also a Director in our General Legal

Advice Division, Dr. Kathy-Ann Brown is our Director in charge of our International Affairs Division, Mrs. Marlene Aldred is an Acting Deputy Solicitor General and is the head of our Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Division, Mrs. Simone Pearson is also an Acting Director serving in both our Constitutional and Commercial Divisions.

Let me also acknowledge with thanks my consultant/legal advisor Mrs. Michele Champagnie, who assists me with her tremendous legal skills, her reliable and consistent assistance.

Mr Speaker, Mrs. Champagnie was contracted initially as the consultant/legal advisor to and by my immediate predecessor former Attorney-General Mr Ransford Braham QC. Upon my taking office, Mrs Champagnie offered me her resignation to allow me to select my own consultant/ advisor. I did make my

own choice, I asked her to stay on and re-newed her contract when it expired – so much for tribalism Mr. Speaker – it has no place in Attorney-General’s Chambers.

The building of camaraderie among staff and reaching out to others are two things that the Attorney General’s Chambers tries to do.

In this regard, the Social Affairs and Staff Welfare Committee of the Chambers works inside and outside of the Chambers to make a contribution to deserving persons and organisations. They organize treats to children’s homes and other deserving places. Last year we visited the Jamaica Christian Boys’ Home. More such visits are planned. Lawyers from the Chambers contribute to a bank account to assist an infant whose mother ,

a former attorney-at-law of the Chambers died shortly after her birth.

We also have a Building Committee, a Training and Seminars Committee , and Orientation and Mentorship Committee, a Library Committee, an IT and Registry Committee and a Newsletter committee.

The Attorney General's Chambers continues to be one of the heavily sought after places where young graduates leaving the Norman Manley Law School wish to work. The Attorney General's Chambers is known to be an excellent training ground for young attorneys due to the breadth of work that we do and the importance of it. The more senior attorneys-at-law in the Chambers always try to provide continuing guidance to the more junior ones and work is typically carried out in teams.

The Attorney General's Chambers is a place which provides training and development opportunities both in Jamaica and overseas and this has assisted in the quality of the service which we are able to provide to the people of Jamaica.

The Attorney General's Chambers makes valuable contributions to the jurisprudence of our beloved country. The Attorneys from our Chambers have been involved in many of the cases touching and concerning previously uncharted waters in our jurisprudence. The Shanique Myrie case and the Maurice Tomlinson cases are examples of these.

The Attorney General's Chambers also facilitates the development of law students who work there in the summer holidays.

As the Public Sector Transformation Initiative proceeds, it is contemplated that we will one day soon have a Shared Corporate Services Environment for the delivery of Legal Services, then the Attorney General's Chambers is likely to have an even more pivotal role with regard to advice required by Ministries, Departments and Agencies as we would then liaise even more directly with the legal officers from those entities.

We are still working on the establishment of a Commercial Task Force Group which I mentioned in my contribution last year and which would be mandated to expedite important commercial transactions.

I understand the fiscal constraints the country is facing and I recognize that we must all sacrifice, but Mr. Speaker we are understaffed both at attorney and support staff level. We are

cramped for space and we could use some upgraded IT equipment. Nonetheless we soldier on until such time as the economy can accommodate us – the work must be done and we as a team will continue to prioritize the cases as we place the interest of the Country and its growth at the forefront. The Constitution and the Laws of the Country must be enforced but they must first be correctly interpreted and we must never allow our laws to be misinterpreted to create obstructions and bureaucratic difficulties in the path of growth.

Mr. Speaker it is true that corruption exists and we all have a vested interest in wiping it out of the Jamaican landscape, but to achieve these ends we must employ appropriate and modern law enforcement strategies, and not use obstructive bureaucratic methods which avoid dealing with the corruption and instead sets up obstructions to doing business. We must

search and find the way to eliminate corruption while we expedite urgently needed business projects in the country.

Mr. Speaker may I now turn to the great constituency of Trelawny Northern. I wish to acknowledge the presence of some representatives of that great Constituency who are present here today.

Trelawny is the birth place of some distinguished young citizens –Usain Bolt, Veronica Campbell Brown, Warren Weir was born there before he moved to Kingston, Michael Frater was born in Trelawny. The current world 400 meter hurdles youth champion Marvin Williams still lives there. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's house is still there. Falmouth is the home of the finest Pier in the Caribbean and a major part of the Cockpit Country is situated in North Trelawny. The mighty Martha Brae

River and the Queen of Spain Valley which accounts for 40% of Jamaica's water supply is there. The Greenfield all-purpose stadium is there and Mr. Speaker, the future center-piece of Jamaica's tourism product is there.

Perhaps Mr. Speaker, I should point out just a few of our significant achievements in the past year and let me unhesitatingly thank the Ministries and Agencies who have assisted us.

Firstly, the Prime Minister, who through the NHT, a public body for which she has portfolio responsibility, has provided well over one hundred (100) starter homes in Tilston-Wakefield, and another forty (40) in conjunction with the Sugar Transformation Unit at Steelfield in Spicy Hill.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the Minister without portfolio in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing, Hon. Dr Morais Guy for over one hundred (100) land titles and keys that were handed over at Hague in the constituency, with the promise of more to come in several other areas of the constituency.

I acknowledge and thank the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Honourable Roger Clarke who through the Sugar Transformation Unit heard my pleas and yielded to my advocacy for the improvement and rehabilitation of two significant stretches of roadway. The road between Duncans and Crawle leading all the way to Long Pond and Clarke's Town, which is much travelled, is now being rehabilitated at last. Residents tell me it has been in disrepair for over 20 odd years and now the vital stretch between Duncans and Crawle has

been Barber-Greened. The roadway at Hampden had significant work done but more is needed there.

I wish to thank the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing, Dr. the Honourable Omar Davies for significant patching of several roads. The JEEP Programme has provided a significant relief valve for the unemployed persons in the constituency. I will forever be grateful to him on behalf of the people of Northern Trelawny for setting up the Falmouth Committee which meets regularly under the Chairmanship of Dr. Paul Robertson to address the divide or lack of nexus between the Falmouth Pier on one hand and the town of Falmouth and its people on the other hand. This Committee includes representatives from the following entities:

The Port Authority, The UDC, the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Enhancement Fund, the Trelawny Parish Council, the NWA, the NWC, the Jamaica Heritage Society, and me as Member of Parliament.

The results are promising:

- (1) The relocated Falmouth Market and a Transportation Center is well into the procurement process and ground is expected to be broken later this year.
- (2) The Minister of Tourism is currently in the process of having Falmouth declared a Resort Area. Questions of the defined area are yet to be settled.
- (3) The eye sore of open drains in the Town will be addressed, they are to be covered.

(4) There is a Streetscape Enhancement Project which will involve:

- Shaded and covered walkways and sidewalks
- Traffic management
- Proper signs to assist tourist to find their way
- Overhead lighting on decorative light posts
- Hanging plant baskets
- Major façade improvements
- Several building façade improvements
- Attractive and colourful shops and kiosks

This will take place on Harbour Lane, Market Street and Tharpe Street. In addition old Hampden Wharf will be developed to provide a clean Artisan and Craft Village and a small Park

Falmouth will indeed be spruced up and for that I thank the Hon. Minister of Tourism, ...this has been long overdue.

Mr. Speaker, in the Throne Speech, also in the contribution of the Most Honourable Prime Minister, as well as in the contributions of the Honourable Ministers of Finance, of Agriculture, Tourism, Transport and Works and others, all have one common feature and that is that while this administration has taken corrective measures to halt the negative slide of the economy which we inherited, we as a country must work for Growth and Development. Mr. Speaker, every one of us must recognize that we are all in this together. Every district, every constituency, every parish must contribute to Growth. Every Member of Parliament must focus on how her or his Constituency will contribute to the Country's growth and focus on what she or he will do to achieve it.

Mr. Speaker as far as North Trelawny is concerned, I will take whatever steps I can to change the paradigm of spending our CDF or whatever funding or spending which we have influence over from the traditional political ways to a path which leads to Growth. Consequently, Mr. Speaker the CDF spending will be placing an increased focus on agriculture. We will assist farmers in Northern Trelawny to produce those items which can reduce our import bill. We will adopt programs which will contribute to the already burgeoning growth of Jamaica's Agricultural sector, and in this regard I am in discussions with the Minister of Agriculture and with RADA

Last year I focused on Education and this year I will continue with that trend also. Basic schools and Tertiary students will continue to receive special attention and assistance but there

will be an additional dimension added to N. Trelawny's CDF programme.

Earlier this year I negotiated with HEART Trust for some 150 young persons to receive training towards achieving Level 2 Certificates in construction so that they might benefit from the expected building boom in Trelawny and the rest of Jamaica. Now in addition to that program and as a result of our discussions, the HEART Trust is designing an entrepreneurial programme for some small business people in Trelawny to prepare them for the expected increased inflow of visitors to the Town consequent upon the tourism improvements that are planned. I propose to give some assistance to small businesses but with the *quid pro quo* that they get entrepreneurial training.

We will continue to encourage and assist sport programs and will continue to seek assistance form SCJ and other Agencies to maintain and refurbish our community centers.

Mr. Speaker, I join with those voices which seek to increase the CDF available to MPs. Our job is hard enough as it is and less than \$15 million is woefully inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, we are elected by the people and our work is long and hard. We as MPs take the blame for everything that goes wrong in our Constituencies, water, roads, hospital services, schools, police misconduct and we take a lot of criticisms. But you know Mr. Speaker when that lone voice from the wilderness of our Constituency calls or writes to us simply to say "Thank you M.P." for the job we do, the power of those words seem to overwhelm the hardships and difficulty we bear,

and it seems worth it. Politics is not for the faint of heart or the thin-skinned, it is for the dedicated and the committed...those whose only purpose is to make this beautiful country better than all the rest. Mr Speaker as I close I take this opportunity to respectfully remind this Honourable House, that in this quest for growth of Jamaica's economy, we are all in it together.

God Bless Jamaica.