



**STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT
BY THE MOST HON. PORTIA SIMPSON MILLER, ON, MP
PRIME MINISTER
TUESDAY, JULY 10, 2012**

Permit me, Mr. Speaker, to make a brief statement to this Honourable House and to the people of Jamaica.

Mr. Speaker, from all the indicators of the recent past in this Chamber, there was the long-sent message that the day would surely come when a Prime Minister would have had to demand that the decorum that is required to be exhibited in this, the highest Court of the Land, must not be called into question.

And, we have arrived at that day!

That demand is not for me, or for my own gratification, even though such decorum would bring pearls of joy to my heart.

Neither is that demand being made because that is what every Member of this Honourable House should be demanding of herself or himself, since it is a requirement that attaches itself to the position of Member of Parliament.

Neither is it only for the public servants who, over all administrations, have been so kind and respectful to us, and who would surely have come to expect that same kind of respect in return.

Rather, the demand rests on two foundation stones.

First, the people of Jamaica, our employers, who sent us here, did not do so, in order to have to witness what was played out last week in this House of National Hero, the Right Excellent George William Gordon.

They respected us enough, regardless of our faults which may be apparent, or our short-comings which may be hidden, to send us here to represent them in this honoured capacity.

Mr. Speaker, that kind of trust requires that our deportment; our engagement; our attitude; our manner of speaking and interacting; must be the material of which that uplifting examples are made.

That is how we repay respect with respect.

There has been widespread condemnation of the new law that some of our Membership chose to seek out last week.

The report that has come to me from all walks of life is that this must be the last of this kind of behaviour.

Enough is enough!

There is another equally compelling foundation stone on which this demand rests: That is, Respect for Self – you have to respect yourself.

When you look in the mirror you must be pleased with what you see.

Surely, a Member of Parliament must respect himself! Sir Harold Allan and Noel Nethersole; Sir Donald Sangster and Vernon Arnett; Lynden Newland and Winston Jones; Enid Bennett and Terry Gillette; as quick examples through the years, have not only been pleasing to the people, they were, and are, pleased with what they see when they have had occasion to look in the mirror. Respect for self is the means by which we are ultimately judged.

That is how every Member of Parliament is judged.

Mr. Speaker, these twin foundation stones will lead to respect for each other; knowledge of, and adherence to, the rules and regulations that are to be found in the Standing Orders; and respect for the conventions of the system of government that we are supposed to practice.

And they will lead to the decorum that the people of Jamaica, our employers, expect of the Membership of this House, and the kind of example to which our children are entitled.

Mr. Speaker, there is the demand from several quarters that punishment or condemnation or genuine apology should be exacted on the basis that that is what the Standing Orders and good order require.

That must be left to the rules by which our proceedings are required to be guided.

But that is not the reason that drove me to rise to my feet today.

For, sanctions are very often applied, and yet thereafter, there is no change in attitude and behaviour.

I rose to address this Honourable House of the representatives of the people because, as the head of government, I must demand that the utterly offensive episode that found a place in this Chamber last week, must never be repeated under my watch, or ever again.

Bringing this Chamber into disrepute is not what is to be experienced by our people, and certainly not what is expected, or should be contemplated, as we approach the 50th year of our status as an independent and proud country within the community of nations.

Our teachers must not be allowed to harbour misgivings about bringing their charges here, for fear of witnessing a type of behaviour from which those charges must be shielded.

For, if our efforts in this place are meant to drive the development of our people, to place our people on the forward track of upward mobility, then discipline and respect must be the wind beneath those efforts.

This is not a time, and there never should be a time, for dragging us through this type of horrible distraction.

There is so much that is required of us; so many challenges to be faced and to overcome; for us to be playing with this type of explosive fire.

Mr. Speaker, this is a time for coming together with love and thankfulness that we have come this far, to a place which, despite the hardships, we can count our many blessings in a country where the grass is still green and the sun continues to shine.

And, do we dare search for a silver lining that is to be found behind this dark, unwanted cloud?

Do we dare hope for, and expect, some saving grace?

Do we dare make a silent pledge to ourselves that last week's disgraceful and bitter experience must serve as a final wake-up call – a call to proper decorum in this House of Representatives?

Do we dare to make the promise that we should, as a seasoned minister of religion reminded some of us yesterday, “make our words be soft and tasty, for we might be obliged to eat them soon afterwards?”

Do we dare to pledge to our people to provide the kind of example that inspires; the kind of engagement that uplifts; the kind of effort that is a magnetic force and an attraction to do what is right?

The silver lining is there, if only we are moved to search for, and to find it.

There are certain occurrences along the journey of public life that must serve as lessons and guides to the future.

I demand and require of each and every one of us in this Chamber to make that most unfortunate occurrence of last week, push us, drive us, and propel us, to choose a better way.

The lessons that we learn from our mistakes are far more important than the mistakes themselves.

As human beings, fall we may; but it is the rising from the fall which defines us.

Exact punishment if you must; demand apologies, if that is found to be required.

However, Mr. Speaker, the demand that I make today is that the precepts and the principles that are necessary to be adopted and followed in this Parliament that we occupy, must be taken seriously, if we are to fulfill the purpose for which we were sent to this place.

I expect that my demands and my exhortation will not have fallen on deaf ears.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you.
