

SECTORAL DEBATE 2013-2014

“Sustainable Change”



Presented by:

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Western St. Mary

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1.0 Introduction

Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today in gratitude and humility on what is the first occasion on which I have the privilege of speaking to this Honorable House in a sectoral debate.

I want to take a moment to honor the greatest man I have ever known, a man Mr. Speaker who taught me by example the meaning of perseverance, integrity, service to others, loyalty and an immense pride in being Jamaican. This great man I refer to, was my father, the late Ian Silvera, who together with my mother prepared me for a life of national servitude.

I want to thank the people of Western St. Mary for affording me the opportunity to represent them as their Member of Parliament.

To my family, I thank you for your selflessness and continued unconditional support.

To the Most Honorable Portia Simpson Miller, Prime Minister, you never wavered in your belief that I would be victorious during elections, having had received the full measure of your support and endorsement. Thank you for your vision and foresight and continued support.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the presence of the Custos of St. Mary, the Hon. Jeff Mckitty, the President of the Senate Floyd Morris who also hails from the great parish of St. Mary, the chairman of the St. Mary Parish Council Mayor Levern Freeman and other sitting councilors.

Mr. Speaker, I especially want to recognize the presence of my Councilors here today, who continue to work tirelessly in the constituency.

I also want to acknowledge the support, advice and help given to me by my mentor; former Member of Parliament of Western St. Mary, Deacon Terrence Gillette. Mr Speaker this relationship began from as far back as 1995 when I served as a Councilor whilst he was the Member of Parliament.

To my constituency executive, the many supporters, friends, colleagues and well-wishers who worked long and hard to help bring my message of hope and change to the constituency, I thank you for having never lost focus on the fact that change has come and together we brought back a sense of integrity and decency to the constituency.

2.0 Western St. Mary

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a few moments to highlight the progress made in Western St. Mary under my stewardship.

Two bridges have been newly constructed in Jacks River and Fontabell. Road rehabilitation and Gabyon works continue as we speak throughout the constituency. This Mr. Speaker represents a government investment of 78 million dollars through initiatives executed by the National Works Agency under the direction of the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing.

The Coloraine housing scheme was constructed in 1972 by the Ministry of Housing and has never received rehabilitative works. Mr. Speaker, after 40 years, work has now begun to reconstruct its roads and drainage system. This represents a further 19 million dollar investment in the constituency by the government.

Mr. Speaker, funding from the JEEP project was primarily used to rehabilitate community centres located in Three Hills, Charles Town and Mango Valley.

Mr. Speaker, a 3.2 Million dollar bee project was launch successfully in the constituency. Twenty persons were recipients of training, bee hives and other equipment. Agriculture continues to absorb a significant portion of the Constituency Development Fund.

Mr. Speaker, education remains the priority. Over 5 million dollars has been invested in the constituency assisting over 400 students with subsidies on school fees and books.

Water supply, Mr. Speaker, remains a constant challenge in some areas of the constituency. I am pleased that the State Minister of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change Hon Ian Hayles has announced a 300 million dollar investment by the government to connect some 5,000 residents of Mason Hall and its surrounding areas with water. Work is expected to commence before the end of this year Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the Ministries, Heads of Agencies, and the Ministers of Water, Land, Environment and Climate Change and Transport, works and Housing for their efficiency and effectiveness in carrying out works in Western St. Mary.

Mr. Speaker, the Prospect and Retreat Police stations were furnished with two new vehicles which has increased the motorized patrols in those respective areas. I want to thank the Minister Hon. Peter Bunting for his continued support.

Mr. Speaker, last year Sandy brought devastation to the constituency. The government responded swiftly by forming a Sandy Relief Committee chaired by Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office, the Hon Luther Buchanan, on which I had the privilege to sit.

2.0 Western St. Mary

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Mr. Speaker, 70% of the persons affected in Western St. Mary were beneficiaries of cheques ranging from 30 – 60 thousand dollars for housing assistance. I intend to assist the remaining 30% of affected persons on a best efforts basis through the Constituency Development Fund for this year's budget. Also, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture provided fertilizer, seeds and in some cases life stock to those farmers who were displaced.

I want to commend the Minister Hon. Luther Buchanan for his steady and efficient facilitation of the process, which was underpinned and strengthened by a spirit of bi-partisan collaboration between all the members of the committee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize and acknowledge the Member from West Portland, who reached across political lines and offered assistance to the people of Western St. Mary. Thank you for your support.

3.0 Preparation for 2022 – 60 Years of Independence

Mr Speaker, last year's budget debate was of particular significance to the country as Jamaica celebrated 50 years of independence. Having sat in these honourable chambers to witness what was my first budget debate, I deliberated on the arguments presented by all members, particularly those of the Minister of Finance and Planning Hon. Peter Philips who opened the debate with his contribution entitled: "A new and binding Covenant for Stability, Equitable Growth and Prosperity". The member's contribution set a tone and validated the need for renewal, commitment and rebirth of the country's economy on what should have been an ostentatious milestone of 50 years of independence. Instead, the 2012/2013 budget was lubricated with austerity measures as we celebrated our 50th year of independence.

Mr. Speaker, due to time constraints, I and other members were unable to participate in that historic sectoral debate. However, I emerged resolute in my mind that the country must resurrect the economy and make preparations in the form of **sustainable change** in order to meet our next milestone of independence. Mr. Speaker, the year 2022 will mark 60 years of Independence, "Jamaica's Diamond Jubilee".

The last three budgets presented to this Honorable House for approval have been for the better part guided by deadlines and milestones set by the International Monetary Fund IMF, while the government tailors its budget to meet specific Key Performance Indicators defined by the IMF, within the context

of these scheduled deadlines. This Mr. Speaker is the necessary medicine required only to manage and treat Jamaica's current dependency on debt under the endorsement and hospices of the IMF.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to congratulate this Portia Simpson Miller led administration for securing an agreement with the IMF, at this critical juncture in our country's history. This Mr. Speaker places Jamaica on a treatment program for debt management and will provide Jamaica with credit worthiness once again.

I want to submit to this Honorable House that 60 years of independence, Jamaica's diamond Jubilee, must not catch us with our pants down in the global landscape of which we co-exist. We must exercise forward thinking and planning to meet this national milestone that must not only reflect 60 years of independence from Great Britain but also showcase Jamaica's economic independence from debt and the IMF.

The average Jamaican Mr. Speaker, is not guided by the IMF's Key Performance Indicators to give him or her ease and confidence in the Jamaican economy, the average Jamaican Mr. Speaker asks himself these basic day to day questions: Can I feed my family? Can I put petrol in my car? and Can I turn on the light in my home or business place.

Mr. Speaker, as a sovereign nation, Jamaica must measure its independence by defining and setting its own Key

3.0 Preparation for 2022 – 60 Years of Independence

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Performance Indicators in order to effect **sustainable change** in the economy. These Key Performance Indicators must be determined based on strategic initiatives that should be clearly defined as pillars of the nation's economic security, and by extension independence.

Mr. Speaker, food security and energy security are these fundamental pillars of our economy that must be protected at all times. I submit to this Honorable House, that resurrecting our agriculture sector must be a critical path for the way forward for Jamaica's economic stability, growth and independence.

3.1 Food Security

Jamaica's food import bill was 1.1 billion dollars in 2012. I want to take the opportunity to commend my member colleague Minister of Agriculture, Hon. Roger Clarke for his foresight in executing the Agro Park strategic initiative around the length and breadth of the country.

I would like to submit to this Honorable House that the government through grants and Public Private Partnerships must invest in value added strategies to compliment the crop yields from these national agro parks. This should be used to assist in securing our domestic food supply. Agro and poultry processing plants that dry, cook, can and package foods yielded from our agro parks will lengthen the shelf life of these foods. This arms the government with the ability and flexibility to reserve a recommended 30 days of food supply for national domestic consumption.

The government must move swiftly to institute these strategies that will as a result protect small and medium farmers from price and crop demand manipulation, by food distributors who also import these domestically grown crops.

Mr. Speaker, this bold initiative will breathe a fresh wave of employment opportunity right across the full spectrum of the country. Technology advancements in agriculture no longer limit crop producing to the traditional mechanisms, farmers can now grow their crops in controlled environments to increase crop yielding rates, in addition to protecting their crops from climate changes.

Mr. Speaker, our youth are no longer being encouraged in schools to become farmers. We must dismiss this notion and misperception that links farming to slavery. Today, farmers are agri business entrepreneurs.

We must employ marketing initiatives to remove this stain on the minds of our young people. We must move our youth from being the unemployed to being productive economic citizens.

Mr. Speaker, St. Mary was once known as the bread basket of Jamaica, today it is a massive expanse of what has now become primarily virgin farm lands. Countries that have run out of agricultural lands for production of food crops have implemented food security strategic initiatives, to purchase lands in other countries in order to produce their own food externally. Mr. Speaker, I have been made to understand that Trinidad, is

3.0 Preparation for 2022 – 60 Years of Independence

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currently pursuing that as part of their food security strategy.

Time is of the essence Mr. Speaker. We must not depend on preferential tariff incentives to justify productivity on our agricultural lands, we must create our own domestic incentives for full and robust agricultural activity, which must be used primarily to secure our basic food supply.

3.2 Energy Security

Mr. Speaker, Jamaica's energy demand has been traditionally met through refining crude oil for the production of petroleum products. The current demand for transportation fuels and fuel used for power generation has increased to more than double the refining capacity of PetroJam, resulting in mandatory importation of petroleum products to meet our energy demand today.

Jamaica's strong dependence on imports to generate electrical power is an underpinning vulnerability of the economy. It affects the domestic supply of foreign exchange, and by extension the stability of the Jamaican dollar, as well as productivity across manufacturing and industrial sectors.

Energy security requires **sustainable change** that must come through production as well as cheaper imports. The government must employ exploration activities to determine whether oil and gas can be produced right here in Jamaica. Mr. Speaker, our neighbor's Cuba and Aruba, have already

been firmly set on this path for their energy security.

Jamaica's energy policy for power generation seeks to replace refined and imported petroleum products with a cheaper alternative found through the importation of a cleaner fuel, natural gas. When implemented by the stake holders in the sector, it should result in massive savings and growth of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, there is a strong synergy between agriculture and energy security. Lands that are not suitable for food crops must be utilized for the production of bio fuels. I want to commend the Minister of Science Technology Energy and Mining for embarking on a robust renewable energy policy, and acknowledge the pilot study that the Petroleum Corporation of Jamaica has embarked on, to assess the viability of growing crops such as Castor oil bean and Jathropa for the production of bio-deisel.

Mr. Speaker, this has specific relevance for the supply of automotive diesel fuel to the domestic market. Under a previous administration, the Member from East Kingston, who was also Minister of Energy at that time, successfully introduced ethanol into our energy mix at blend levels of 10% to gasoline.

Bio-diesel can be introduced to Jamaica's energy mix as an automotive fuel by blending it to petroleum diesel. This Mr. Speaker will reduce sulphur levels in our diesel oil and may prove to be a viable alternative to the importation of ultra low sulphur diesel, also known as ULSD. This should alleviate engine

3.0 Preparation for 2022 – 60 Years of Independence

Continued

problems experienced in the high end European automobiles that are currently being imported to Jamaica, which are not compatible with our refined diesel.

We have seen Brazil successfully introduce bio-diesel as a transportation fuel blended at 10% to petroleum diesel. Mr. Speaker, if Brazil can do it, then so can we.

I want to submit to this Honorable House, that we must utilize all our natural resources to produce energy, and more specifically electrical power. Mr. Speaker, we have seen significant policy initiatives being executed by this government to incentivize solar power solutions for domestic residential and now commercial use. Mr. Speaker, Jamaica has also been successful at power generation from wind as seen in the Wigton Wind Farm operations.

Lastly Mr. Speaker, I want to mention that Jamaica's waste generated and stored at Riverton City has the feed stock potential to generate an additional 25 MW of power that can be added to the national grid.

The potential is here Mr. Speaker to diversify Jamaica's energy mix and significantly reduce our energy import bill. The country is poised on the path way for energy security. I want to give a global acknowledgement of the achievements acquired thus far by the Minister of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining and encourage him to press on and continue along this path.

4.0 Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, Food security and Energy security must be central to the nation's agenda in order to achieve true independence. Jamaica must be independent from the IMF by 2022, the 60th anniversary of Jamaica's independence as a sovereign nation.

Mr. Speaker, Norman Washington Manley said "the task of his generation has been completed; he has given us political independence". Michael Manley and his period created the social reforms necessary to make us look and feel like a modern and mature country, ensuring rights for women and equality for all. In 1991 Mr. Speaker, PJ Patterson said "I shall Return" and return he did to leave a legacy

of roads and highway infrastructure connecting our virgin lands to investment potential and opportunity.

Our generation, my generation Mr. Speaker, must take the final steps towards fulfilling the task assigned to us by one of our founding fathers. I am confident that my leader and Prime Minister the Most Hon. Portia Simpson Miller will leave a lasting legacy, having led the charge for completing the task that history has assigned. This task is achieving economic independence through employing **sustainable change**.

I thank you Mr. Speaker.

