

B/N P. J. Patterson

Profiles of Cabinet Ministers



Gallery

The Most Hon P.J. Patterson ON, PC, QC, MP Prime Minister of Jamaica

Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Most Honourable Percival Noel James Patterson is a Member of Parliament for Eastern Westmoreland, where he began his career as a political representative following a by-election in March 1970.

The Parliamentary representative for a rural constituency, Mr. Patterson continues to spearhead a programme of rural development as well as the renewal of urban centres with a clear emphasis on the rehabilitation and construction of economic and social infrastructure to aid the country's industrial expansion and development.

He was appointed Prime Minister of Jamaica in March 1992, following his election as President of the People's National Party, on the retirement of former Prime Minister the late Most Hon. Michael Manley.

Mr. Patterson was returned to office following the national elections of 1993. He has the distinction of being the first Prime Minister of Jamaica to have been sworn in for a third consecutive term of office in 1997 and led his Party to a historic fourth term victory in October 2002.

A former student of Somerton Primary School in St. James, Calabar High School in Kingston, Prime Minister Patterson graduated from the University of the West Indies, Mona in 1958 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree (Honours) in English. He studied law at the London School of Economics (LSE), graduating in 1963 with a Bachelor of Laws Degree.

At the LSE, he was awarded the Sir Hughes Parry prize for excellence in the Law of Contract, and won a Leverhulme Scholarship.

He was called to the Bar at Middle Temple in 1963 and admitted to the Jamaican Bar later that year. Mr. Patterson was appointed Queen's Counsel in 1984.

Political Career

Political service for Prime Minister Patterson began in 1958, when he joined the People's National Party as an Organiser, moving to membership on the Party's National Executive Council and Executive Committee in 1964. He was elected a Vice-President of the PNP in 1969 and appointed to the Senate in that year. He served as Party Chairman from 1983 until he became Party President in 1992.

Mr. Patterson's distinguished Cabinet career began in 1972,

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with his appointment as Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. Since then, he has served as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (1978-1980); Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development, Planning and Production (1989-1990); and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Planning (1990-1991).

Prime Minister Patterson's vision for Jamaica is one in which "we build a land of opportunity and prepare for a brand new world in which every citizen - man, woman and child - shares a sense of self-esteem and personal stakeholding in a modern, prosperous and truly enlightened Jamaica."

Achievements as Prime Minister

Noted among Prime Minister Patterson's lists of achievements is the development of education as his Administration's top priority. To this end, the largest non-debt portions of successive national budgets have been allocated towards this sector.

Mr. Patterson also created the National Commission on Science and Technology in 1993 and was the first to directly link Jamaica's science and technology initiatives as an integral stimulus in the nation's industrial policy and economic development efforts.

His successful implementation of sound macro-economic policies, has led to the stabilisation of the economy with the longest period of low inflation, a stable foreign exchange rate which is market determined and record levels of Net International Reserves. Prime Minister Patterson has also promulgated a National Industrial Policy, a blueprint for the nation's growth and development in the 21st century.

The success of the macro economic framework allowed the Patterson-led Government to end an 18-year borrowing relationship with the International Monetary Fund, providing the country with the autonomy to pursue a more developmental economic path. Such autonomy in the discharge of Jamaica's economic affairs enabled the Government under the guidance of P.J. Patterson to avert a collapse of the country's financial sector and its attendant social convulsions through decisive action that has earned commendation from the multilateral financial institutions. This was achieved at a time of global economic recession and financial meltdown in more resource rich economies.

The Prime Minister's social agenda has spawned the creation of a National Land and Shelter Policy and resulted in the accelerated provision of housing and land for the people of Jamaica. Special arrangements have also been made for the elderly and low income earners to benefit from

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the National Housing Trust by way of a special low interest rate.

He created the National Health Fund and has modernised the country's Social Security System increasing national pension benefits and introducing the Poverty Alleviation Through Health and Education (PATH) Programme.

Mr. Patterson's tenure has witnessed the reintroduction of the National Youth Service, the creation of the Special Training and Empowerment Programmes for the youth. He introduced the Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme, as well as the Jamaica Social Investment Fund.

These programmes are all aimed at assisting the most vulnerable groups in the society, with emphasis on the poor, the young and the elderly.

Mr. Patterson's commitment to the country's growth and development is under-pinned by his insistence on adherence to democratic principles, integrity in public life, strong social ethic and moral principles and leading a government free from any taint of corruption.

He has dedicated his entire political life to reducing political tension in Jamaica, promoting unity, harmony and consensus and building a truly participatory democracy.

Prime Minister Patterson is respected worldwide as an astute international statesman who has made a mark in such fora as the United Nations, the Group of 77 the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group, the Association of Caribbean States, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and many others. He has chaired the Group of 15 developing nations (G-15) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

He is currently the Chairman of the CARICOM Prime Ministerial Sub-Committee on External Negotiations. In July 2003 he will once again be the Chairman of the Caribbean Community.

Mr. Patterson has utilised his advocacy and negotiating skills in the international arena, especially as one of the leading architects of the Convention between the ACP states and the European Union, which was first signed in 1975. He was also one of the principal participants in the evolution of the Caribbean Free Trade Area into CARICOM.

Foreign Awards

Prime Minister Patterson was appointed to the Privy Council

of the United Kingdom in 1992 and is the recipient of several international awards.

Foreign awards include:

- Order of Aguila Aztec, Mexico – July 1990
- Order of Fransisco Morazán in the rank of Gran Cruz Placa de Oro, Honduras - 1990
- Order of Liberator Simon Bolivar (First Class), Venezuela– 1992
- The Great Cross of the Order of Bernardo O' Higgins, Chile – 1992
- Order of San Martin, Argentina–1992
- Order of Gran Cruz Gonzalo Jiminez de Quesada, Colombia– 1994
- Order of Jose Marti, Cuba – 1997
- Order of the Volta, Ghana - 1999
- Food and Agriculture Organisation Agricola Medal – awarded in Jamaica 2001
- Juan Mora Fernandez Great Silver Cross– Costa Rica 2001

Academic Awards

The Prime Minister has been bestowed with academic awards by tertiary institutions worldwide.

These include:

- Honorary Doctor of Letters, Northeastern University, USA –1994
- Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws, Brown University, USA –1998

Interests

Mr. Patterson's interests include jazz, Jamaican music and such spectator sports as cricket, boxing, tennis and track and field.

He chairs the National Sports Council and created the CHASE Foundation which gives special support to the culture, arts, sports and Basic School Education.

He has a son, a daughter, a granddaughter and a grandson.

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