

HAVING left Jamaica before PJ Patterson took over the reins of the People's National Party and the prime ministership, I cannot speak of life under the Patterson administration. This, notwithstanding, does not preclude me from commenting on national issues, celebrating the country's achievements, or expressing sincere appreciation to the leadership of this country for the many personal sacrifices made in pursuit of a better quality of life for the majority.

No enticements could ever be sufficient, or dislikes strong enough to cause or persuade me to plunge to abysmally low levels of malice or unreasonableness in assessing the contribution or value that Mr Patterson has made, or brought the people of this great country. Those who seek to denigrate him or reduce his contribution to a state of nothingness must at some point or another in the future sit down and undertake serious reconciliations of their conscience, because the country will never move beyond the restrictive pillars of doubts and ungratefulness, until we all abandon the sub-cultures of mean-jealousy and viciousness.

The call to leadership is an extraordinary one and those who respond to it should be given due respect; especially so, when they, like PJ, do not abuse power or misuse the authority vested in them to suppress, sabotage, spite or defame others. Without fear of contradiction, PJ Patterson's approach to governance epitomises that of a quintessential leader, whose desire to serve in helping to uplift and enrich the lives of the common people is surpassed only by the realities of scarce resources. Thank you, and farewell PJ, may good health and fortunes attend the rest of your life.

No one is perfect. No one individual possesses all the right qualities. PJ is

Christopher Burns



Fare thee well, PJ

no exception. There are several aspects (crime, unemployment, communication and rural development) of his stewardship that were poorly managed and void of common sense, but that should not negate the fact that Jamaica has prospered immensely over the last 14 years. Therefore, we must not allow partisan biases or any detest of PJ to rob us of objectivity or force us to live in denial. My motivation is not to paint a glowing picture of PJ, or promote a Pollyannic perspective of his tenure, but to forge a reasonable discourse about the environments and realities that characterised much of his time at the crease.

In attempting to do so, the need for context becomes fundamental. Therefore, let us categorise his tenure (not his achievements or the lack thereof) within the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. Governance becomes increasingly difficult while socio-cultural pathology is occurring as rapidly as in the 1990s. The factors

that precipitated this socio-cultural decline are carry-overs from the very violent 1970s and 80s, and have their root securely fastened in the bitter political culture and divisiveness that influenced much of that era.

Patterson's response to cauterise the social bleeding came too late and was never marketed with the kind of fervor that is necessary for the success of programmes of this kind. However, if the Values and Attitudes campaign had gone well, some of the problems that beset us would have, at the very least, been contained. It is important to point out that the solutions to some social and cultural problems require national consensus

— participation "buying-in" of the entire citizenry then becomes paramount. It is unfortunate that some in positions of power do not use their sphere of influence to defeat cynicism and promote optimism and good values.

Jamaica has had a



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long and vibrant political past, albeit not always positive since a lot of ills have been perpetrated in the name of partisan politics. The focus is not on the strict physical fights or acts of barbarism, but of its effects on the psyche of a nation anxious to rid itself of the scourge of its bitter past. The politics has caused us to become unusually selfish, unreasonable, intolerant and untrusting. These traits have carried over into our personal lives and have caused some of us to become, like it or not, largely dependent on the state for almost everything. The political culture that has emerged has made it difficult to govern, not in terms of political instability, but in terms of the political and economic realities that have come to define many governmental programmes and policies. Consequently, a great many of our citizens continue to view politics and politicians (government) as possessing all the solutions and resources to match all the problems of the country. Serious recalibration is needed if we are to move forward.

It is incontestable that good economic governance, powered by sustainable strategic economic development, is essential for social and political harmony, as well as to foster individual economic advancements. The Jamaican economy has not, in real terms, produced the kind of robust or sustained growth necessary to bring about meaningful increases in the standard of living of the majority of citizens. However, as much as local authorities are responsible for the lacklustre economic performance, full blame cannot be apportioned without an appreciation for trends and happenings in the wider international economy. Nevertheless, much of our problems stem from our inability to use the political (state) and social assets in a productive way that would ensure that economic priorities are set and implemented in the most practical and meaningful ways.

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