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Address by
Prime Minister
Hon. P.J. Patterson, Q.C., M.P

Swearing-in Ceremony
Kings House

Monday March 30 1992

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The Most Honourable Sir Howard Cooke and Lady Cooke – forgive me one personal indulgence as I refer to him for the last time as such, Prime Minister Michael Manley – colleague members of Parliament, members of the Judiciary, your Excellencies, members of the Clergy, Mayors, Custodes, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. I have had the privilege on a number of occasions to participate in, and observe, swearing-in ceremonies conducted by previous Governors-General, of ministers of government. Those ceremonies have always been memorable for me but this ceremony is, for me, a first. I do not intend it to be my last.

As Your Excellency Sir Howard administered the Oath of Office and as I looked at the audience and saw people with whom I worked for many years and the expression of hope evident on the faces of so many, I can only pray that I will be worthy of the task which has been entrusted to me today.

I have entered into service with a sense of deep humility and when I say that it is going to be a tough act to follow, it is not because of any want of confidence in myself, but because I know the awesome nature of the job and I know, indeed, it is going to be a tough act to follow.

The Governor-General has said that there have been times when we have been ‘stable companions’. Indeed, there was a time when Jamaica was threatened with the secession by the West of the island. I wish to ensure the entire Jamaica that they need not fear any take over by the West.

I begin, by returning to my original mentor – my mentor as I entered political life 34 years ago – the Rt. Excellent Norman Manley. When I decided to participate in the process of the political development of our country, he was my early inspiration. It was the vision that he provided, and above all the strength of his honesty and integrity, which motivated me to become active in public life.

In subsequent years, it has been the Rt. Hon. Michael Manley who has expressed the vision of Jamaica as an important influence in the

world despite our size. The Governor-General has already paid eloquent and fitting tribute to him, but I wish to say "thanks for your leadership". And, on behalf of all my colleagues, I say, "Thanks for the encouragement and guidance which you have afforded us all these years. Batsman that you are, sir, you have played your innings well, and you retire with your bat held high".

**"MICHAEL NORMAN MANLEY . . .
HIS CONTRIBUTION IS SIMPLY, UNRIVALLED"**

My very first act as Prime Minister relates to recognising the service of my immediate predecessor. He has given leadership in many fields, but in one area I would say that his contribution is simply unrivalled.

Jamaica, under his leadership, was raised to unprecedented international respect and importance. It is therefore, because of the sterling contribution which Michael Norman Manley has made in this field that I have recommended to the Governor-General that the Order of Merit for distinguished service in the field of international affairs, be conferred upon him.

As I make reference to Mr. Manley's international contribution in the context so ably indicated by the Governor-General, I wish to use this opportunity to say to our partners in CARICOM, in the Central and Latin American regions, to the member countries of the non-aligned movement, and to the entire Third World, that the commitment of Jamaica to the legitimate causes of human dignity, economic co-operation, and regional integration, will not cease with the 'passing of the baton'.

I am particularly pleased that for this occasion two other of the three living Prime Ministers are here. I believe that one of them would say to me that he is not here on my account but because his 'special lady' sent him. Of course, he would be referring to my mother. I am also especially pleased that members who sit on the other side of both Houses of Parliament are here on this national occasion.

NATIONAL UNITY

Today, after nearly 30 years of independence we are still in search of total national unity. We are still in the quest for developing a sense of national pride; of securing economic development and the spiritual well-being of the nation. In the context of Jamaica today, and tomorrow's world the achievement of these goals calls for even greater commitment and a compelling sense of urgency. For, if there is one recurring lesson from the past 30 years of independence, it is, simply, that, "a nation divided against itself cannot stand".

Consciously or unconsciously, it seems that we are all guilty of contributing, even in some small way, to this division in our society - by party, by social class, by religious creed, by economic status, or by accident of colour. Against the reality of these divisions all expressions of national unity become empty rhetoric.

Conscious of the sincerity and the sterling contribution of my predecessors in this high office, I have spent long hours of reflection and I have asked myself, "What difference can I really make? How can I, by example, as well as by precept, help to change our values and attitudes so that we can provide that sense of unity and action which is the only foundation on which national prosperity can be built?"

There are many who doubt that one individual can make a difference. I cannot afford the luxury of that doubt, because in the final analysis, the whole is but the sum of the individual parts. In other words, let each of us begin with the man, or woman, in the mirror. Let each of us choose to light a torch rather than curse the darkness. Then we will be well on our way.

For my part, I intend, at all times, to act and speak with the level of dignity and decorum that befits this high office. We should never allow any exigency of partisan competition to lower our standards of expression. As we speak against violence, as we speak against indiscipline, those of us in political life must eschew verbal vulgarity in our political discourse.

“WE CANNOT CONDONE... CORRUPTION ”

I am reminded of a passage which says , “Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city, for there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and shineth not”.

Within the same context, leadership must contend with the need to restore integrity and probity to public life. We must ensure that corruption does not destroy the very fabric of our society. We cannot condone it in any shape or form.

This inculcation of sound values and higher moral standards in our young people, must once again become the preoccupation of the home, the school the church and the state. Politicians cannot do it alone. No one can legislate morality. It is by example that we influence it .

As you know, public officials are required to declare their assets. I recently completed my own declaration for 1991. Although the Law makes it a private declaration, nothing in the Law forbids it from being made public by the declarant. I have already indicated, and I repeat here, my intention to make my own integrity declaration public.

I will also be recommending to the Integrity Commission that a system be instituted under which officials and Parliamentarians who are subject to this law, appear before them, on request, even by random sampling if necessary. This would be in place of the present practice which does not facilitate either the detailed examination or testing, if necessary, of the declarations which are made.

“THE TEAM STAYS IN PLACE ”

I have noted the need for unity in the country, and, of course, unity in the country in the case of the present government , has to include unity in the Party. We have just exercised our democratic right within the Party and that is now behind us. We have to go forward together, united and strong.

I am particularly aware that tomorrow morning my desk is likely to have some very awesome problems on it. In considering the question of the composition of the Cabinet, I have had to take this fact into account.

During the campaign I was asked time and time again, about the composition of the Cabinet, but I decided that was not the right time to answer those questions. I do not want to keep you in suspense any longer. Insofar as the Cabinet is concerned, I can answer in a phrase : the team stays in place.

I do not believe that this is a time to chop and change. There is work to be done immediately. There is work to be done and it has to be done now.

Tomorrow morning at 9:30, the Cabinet will be sworn in by the Governor-General. By 10:30, I expect them to be at their desks and at work.

“... AS THE BATON IS BEING PASSED... ”

High on the agenda of the new Administration will be the question of Constitutional Reform. I am also concerned, perhaps some might say, by the disadvantage of training, to feel that the Law is an important tool of economic and social policy. We will be addressing important questions such as the inequities being experienced by children born to Jamaican women and non-Jamaican spouses.

To facilitate these processes as well as several other aspects of the Legislative Programme, I will be inviting the Attorney General to join the Cabinet.

I know that the honeymoon is likely to be short-lived but one must take advantage of it while one can. It is my belief, that as the baton is being passed, within our country there is a new feeling of hope, a new resort to go that extra mile, a new desire to become a part of the solution rather than remain a part of the problem.

I cannot tell you how much this has warmed my heart. It has given me added impetus to open up this Administration to the participation of all Jamaicans of goodwill who wish to make the contribution of which they are capable.

I speak not only to the two-and-half million of us ‘on the rock’, but also the other two-and-half million who reside overseas but whose loyalty and patriotism remain undiminished.

This nation of five million, motivated by a common determination, moving together step by step, is, in my view, an unbeatable army.

A VISION SHARED

Finally, I see Jamaica not in visionary terms but in practical terms. Jamaicans from all walks of life wish to see progress that is in measurable terms, that is: that our people be able to afford a decent standard of living; that their incomes enable them to bring the prices of their basic necessities within their reach; that they have the prospect of owning their own homes; of getting a transportation system that is reliable and stress-free, and an environment which is sustainable.

I believe that this vision is shared by people not only from rural Jamaica but equally, from people who are caught-up in the problems of our urban centres.

I do not believe that it is too much for us to ask for a commitment from all of us to speak softly, to restore a sense of decency, to respect the good name of our neighbours, to exercise discipline, and to conduct our affairs based on the Christian principles of loving our neighbours as ourselves.

These are the hallmarks of the Jamaican society, which have made our name, Jamaica, recognised and respected through the world.

I hope that during my tenure it will be possible to restore harmony and balance within the nation, as we strengthen our relationships abroad. I also hope that we will work together in ensuring that our country grows resilient, grows strong, and that the beauty which nature has endowed us with, is enjoyed by the people who inherit our country, as we work together for Jamaica – land we love.

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