

THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL MOBILISATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE
DEVELOPMENT: ITS NATURE, STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS

1. THE PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MINISTRY

A Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development was established in Jamaica for the first time in January, 1977. The portfolio responsibilities of this Ministry contains two subject areas; the exact description of these subject areas are as follows:-

- (a) Co-ordination and Monitoring of Implementation of Government Programmes,
- (b) Regional Affairs.

2. DEFINING THE ROLE AND CHARACTER OF POLITICAL MOBILISATION

Political Mobilisation is a process which envisages and motivates individuals for the performance of clearly defined tasks and responsibilities. Specifically, effective political mobilisation involves the development of programmes of political and cultural education which are designed to effect changes in certain established patterns of values, attitudes and behaviour. Mobilisation also strives to inculcate new values and actions as replacements for old habits and established practices. In short, the process of political mobilisation works simultaneously on two levels. Firstly, it de-legitimises old values which are no longer regarded as being compatible with the newly defined socio-political and economic goals and objectives. Secondly, political mobilisation legitimises values and orientations which are considered as being compatible with changed or changing perspectives of national political realities and ambitions.

3. THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

The Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development has been charged with the specific responsibility of helping to ensure that a comprehensive series of programmes of political education are systematically implemented. Generally, these programmes will have as their point of departure the capacity to motivate the Jamaican people to recognise the true value and meaning of independence and national political sovereignty. The basic theme which should characterise efforts at political

education is self-reliance. And self-reliance should be understood as a goal which can be attained only in so far as every Jamaican is prepared to develop his or her own skills and creativity in ways which will produce the basic goods and services which the country demands for its survival and development. In the broadest sense of the term, the end product of political mobilisation is human resource development. Indeed, it is impossible to speak meaningfully about mobilisation unless one is concerned with the translation of latent potentialities for positive action into the realities of action itself.

In pursuing the Government's declared policy of leading the country through transition to Democratic Socialism, the work of the Ministry of National Mobilisation will be non-partisan in both thrust and direction.

Mobilisation will involve all Jamaicans in the task of nation-building. Where there are divisions in the society, it will seek to strengthen and unite; where there are tensions and uncertainties, it will aim to replace them with confidence and understanding.

Political mobilisation in the context of contemporary Jamaican society will also have as one of its central themes the goal of democratisation. Thus the Ministry will strive to keep the Government continuously informed of the reactions of the Jamaican people to on-going or anticipated Government programmes. This task is important because of the fact that in the absence of up-to-date information on popular moods and desires, the Government will be unable to identify and tackle problems which are of immediate and pressing concern to the people whom it has been elected to serve. In performing the function of monitoring popular reactions to Governmental initiatives, the Ministry will also be directly involved in helping to strengthen and promote structures and institutions which will enable every Jamaican citizen to participate as actively as possible in the formulation and implementation of public policies. Here, one thinks particularly of Community Councils, Co-operatives, Institutions for Worker Participation and so on.

At the same time as it monitors popular reactions, the Ministry will also be concerned to secure maximum general support for specific programmes of Government, as these programmes have been articulated through the various

projects for which particular ministries have been given responsibility.

The Ministry^{then} should promote a two-way flow of communication between Government and people. This two-stream communication flow necessarily begins from below with the Ministry informing the Government of what the people are thinking and expecting while, at the same time, it informs the people of how the Government is responding to their wishes, demands and desires. In this sense establishment of a Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development clearly indicates the positive intention of Government to quicken the pace and spread of democratisation throughout all levels of Jamaican society. In addition, the Ministry will have to be involved in helping to motivate persons who have been given responsibility for the implementation of public sector projects. It will also have to try to generate the support of all elements in the private sector whose activity is important for the achievement of both the general objectives and the specific programmes of Government.

If the functions which have been described above are to be performed effectively, then the Ministry will need to have:-

- (a) the capability to:
 - (i) collect and analyse information about public attitudes, concerns and expectations;
 - (ii) disseminate and help to ensure popular understanding regarding the nature and goals of Government's programmes and policies;
- (b) a strategy to ensure that the Ministry maintains a national and non-partisan credibility. This means of course that the role of the Minister as Minister will always be kept quite separate and distinct from any other position which he or she might occupy as an officer of the governing party;
- (c) techniques for assisting the Government to maintain the confidence of every Jamaican citizen.

All of this leads to the following specific requirements:

- (a) that the Ministry will need to establish a Public Relations Unit serviced by the Agency for Public Information;

- (b) that the Ministry will need to establish a special unit charged with the responsibility of collating and evaluating political and socio-economic information which emanates from the media whether such information is by way of the expression of views, comments, criticisms and so on;
- (c) that the Ministry will need to establish a department with Officers charged with the duty of attending Parish Council meetings, Community Council meetings and other public and quasi-public events at which information about the nature and direction of public opinion can be obtained. The Ministry will also need to conduct regular and scientifically oriented public opinion surveys;
- (d) that the Ministry will have to collaborate with the Ministry of the Public Service in devising as part of the latter's training programme courses in the basic philosophy of the Government and an understanding of how individual programmes relate to that basic philosophy. The Ministry will also need to identify other organisations or groups outside of the public service with whom it can work out similar kinds of educational programmes;
- (e) that the Ministry will also need to maintain a special Unit which continuously monitors on-going projects and works to ensure that there are no lags and gaps between official announcements and promises and the actual implementation of these promises. Where such lags are discovered, the Minister will convey them directly to the attention of the Ministers with the relevant portfolios. It will clearly not be his duty to publicly investigate or become involved in any kind of public debate regarding the functions of other Ministries and the ways in which they are undertaking their portfolio responsibilities. At all times, the Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development will work to protect the general credibility of

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Government by helping other Ministries to keep performance in line with popular expectations and desires. The work of the Ministry must at all times be positively oriented to the task of trying to forestall criticisms by bringing areas where criticisms are likely to arise to the attention of the relevant Ministry and to defend the Government against criticisms where such defence is clearly deemed as necessary for the maintenance of good government and in the national interest.

4. THE PROBLEM OF MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Except where specifically directed by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, the Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development will not normally be responsible for the day to day "on the ground" implementation of Government policies. The Minister's portfolio responsibilities make it clear that the task of the Ministry is to co-ordinate and monitor, not to directly implement. And essentially, as was stated earlier, this task has been broadly defined to mean working continuously and systematically to remove lags and gaps between what the Government says that it proposes to, and what it actually does. Thus, with the establishment of the new Ministry of National Mobilisation and Human Resource Development, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet have for the first time in the history of Jamaican politics institutionalised a structured arrangement for the overall monitoring of public policies and the systematic mobilisation of the entire country for self-reliance and national political development.

5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

The structure and organisation of the Ministry will reflect the role which it has been established to perform. The Mobilisation Ministry will operate with four streams or units with the Head of each Unit reporting directly to the Minister. These Units are as follows:-

- (a) An Administrative and Accounting Unit. This Unit is

022 451

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integrated into the organisation of the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister.

Thus the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister is also the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry.

- (b) A Technical Unit responsible for advising the Minister on socio-economic and political policies which are directly relevant to the role of the Ministry as the central monitoring governmental agency. This Unit will also provide information regarding the style and manner of political mobilisation which is most consistent with overall governmental policies, priorities and objectives. The Technical Unit will also have integrated within it a special Public Relations Department which will be serviced by the Agency for Public Information.
- (c) A Political and Cultural Education Unit responsible for designing and promoting programmes which will seek to effect the necessary changes in attitudes, values and actions which the transition to self-reliance and stable political development demands.
- (d) A Voluntary Mobilisation Unit responsible for establishing structured contacts with existing organisations and groups in both the private and public sectors. The Unit will also assist in monitoring the activities of community organisations (including Parish Councils) and where necessary, help in the promotion of new community groups and institutions.
- The Voluntary Mobilisation Unit will also establish and operate a Skill Bank of Volunteers whose services will be available on request to the Government or other public-oriented organisations.

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