

**ADDRESS BY  
THE HONOURABLE DENNIS LALOR, OJ  
AT HIS INDUCTION INTO THE  
PSOJ HALL OF FAME  
OCTOBER 25, 2007**

I am highly complimented to have been selected to join those illustrious individuals who have preceded me, and am deeply touched and humbled by the number of you who are here tonight to share the event.

My term as President ranks among the most exciting and rewarding periods of my life, and I would like to thank all those persons in the organization, the members and staff, for their encouragement and support.

Thanks also to my family and members of the ICWI family for their understanding and support which made it possible for me to have been involved with the PSOJ, national affairs and my business activities in the manner in which I was able to.

Creation of the Private Sector Hall of Fame resulted from the fact that traditionally, the positive role of businessmen in the development of Jamaican society had been overlooked.

And while in recent times there has been a shift in this mindset, this could be attributed to grudging homage to economic power, or a tribute to their charitable activities, rather than an acknowledgement of the creative force and social value of wealth creation.

Even today, a great many people are hostile to, or vague about profit. It is as if everybody wants money, but the profit motive is denied; the process of wealth creation is not fully accepted as productive, creative or socially useful.

People who risk years of their lives and much of their personal wealth to start new businesses are motivated by more than money.

But, entrepreneurs are drawn to countries and to communities where hard work, risk taking and success are met with approval rather than envy or criticism. The evidence shows that Jamaica does not do well at encouraging people to start businesses.

Neither are we good at encouraging small ventures to grow into big ones, and social attitudes toward entrepreneurs are at best, the same as to the business environment.

Tonight therefore, I want to talk about our country, and the possible contribution of the Private Sector toward furthering its key objectives, for I should like to see us in the business community, focus our unique talents on this task.

The controversy over our country's direction and governance has lasted for over four decades, with the result that instead of being the one imposing visa requirements for visitors to our shores, it is, in nearly every part of the globe, the other way around.

Prime Minister Golding and his Party have formed a Government at a time when Jamaica is facing serious and growing challenges to its ability to generate growth and stability.

During the election campaign, Mr Golding showed that he understands both the depth of those challenges, and the need for bold action to accelerate Jamaica's quest to be among the region's most progressive and innovative countries.

As business leaders, we should welcome his resolve and look forward to working with him and his team in pursuit of the PSOJ's long standing goal, a goal that we all share - that of making Jamaica the best place in the world to live, invest and to grow.

We need to move beyond the mutual distrust, the squabbling and the short term political opportunities that have characterized much of the past, and the first priority of all, ourselves included, must be to restore public trust and confidence in our institutions.

I share with you, my colleagues, and the vast majority of Jamaicans, disappointment and dismay at the lack of civility and respect, that characterized aspects of the election campaign.

Our society is broken, but it can be fixed. However, as a people, we love politicking too much, and we seem to lack the will to do those things which will eliminate the deterrents to growth. We need to concentrate on economics and not on politics, if we want to join the ranks of countries with successful economies.

More than ever, as Jamaicans we must all work together with unparalleled resolve, to deal with the threats and opportunities our country faces, and to forge a new strategy.

There are threats to our safety and security, threats to the environment and health, threats to our economic well being, and threats to the unity of our country.

If we fail to recognize these threats, and to take action to address them, our lives and those of our children and future generations will be poorer.

In the face of these challenges, I have an abiding faith, but the time has come to set aside complacency, to think big about what Jamaicans can achieve, and how to get from here to there.

It is time for all sectors of our society to work together, to provide the greatest possible increase in the well being of Jamaicans over the next decade, as individuals, as families and as a nation.

I speak of success, not only in terms of business profits and economic growth, for economic performance is not an end in itself, but it is our economic progress that gives us the means, as individuals and as a country, to do more for ourselves and our families and more for our less fortunate fellow Jamaicans.

We must recognize however that some of the Private Sector's difficulties are of our own making, and stem in part from a widespread belief that all we stand for is low inflation, privatization and cutting Government expenditure.

That each of these is critical to our material well being is undoubtedly true. But that is beside the point - they are means not ends.

And this is as it should be, although we have on occasion, presented them as if they are, by themselves, the promised land to which we all aspire.

As a result we are sometimes portrayed, quite unfairly I think, as unimaginative ideologues.

The reality is that, by and large, we in the private sector have noble and inspiring ideals that can be shared by the nation as a whole, and we should seek to convey these at every opportunity, and to every level of society.

Central to the vision of the PSOJ, is the belief that we have the capacity to create a well educated, prosperous society and that the key to success, is the free enterprise system.

After four plus decades however, we are no where near fulfilling our potential.

As a result, abject poverty remains, hundreds of thousands are unemployed, public services are unsatisfactory, education at the primary and secondary levels is substandard and higher education remains a privilege of the minority.

Against this background, we should be unequivocal in demanding of our politicians - not only for the life of this Parliament, but for the longer term - a strategy which is designed to:

- Enable all in the society to enjoy, at least some of the prosperity that a few already know;
- Improve the management of our economy, which will in turn assist us to expand, and sequentially offer employment to all who want it;
- Provide means of ensuring that our elderly enjoy their retirement without fear of penury, and our sick the benefit of adequate medical provision; and
- Ensure that education is of a quality, that not only enables all of our young people to realize their career potential, but encourages them to be educated participants, in a mature and cultured society.

These are the objectives and ideals for which low inflation, privatization and proper control of public expenditure represent some of the necessary means.

As regards education however, the biggest problem with the debate is that it is happening in a kind of vacuum.

Last month's election brings with it a chance for some new and visionary thinking about education.

Education is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, which continues, because we choose to ignore it, and uneducated children grow up to be poor, uneducated and unemployable adults.

And if we want to have an education system that delivers what the country needs, and leads the way toward a more prosperous and stable society, we are going to need a vision that goes beyond test scores, targets and graduation rates.

To arrive at that vision, we have to take the time to ask some big questions:

- Why are so many of our children not in school?
- What are our schools for?
- What are the essential components of an education that are relevant for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- What would an ideal school look like?
- What kind of programmes would it have in it?
- How can we measure a school's effectiveness beyond using test score results
- And how can we do a better job of creating a sense of community ownership of our schools?

This is a philosophical and practical position that places particular responsibilities on the Government, the Private Sector and the wider Jamaican population.

Restoring law and order and weeding out corruption, are also priorities of the entire country, and we in the private sector have a duty to set the tone for all Jamaica.

Crime, violence and corruption are Jamaica's running sore, although some of us are determined not to see the blood, and while we willingly associate these activities with politicians and the police, we shy away from acknowledging our role in criminal activities.

Crime, in short, has become an ordinary part of Jamaican life, and what seems undeniable, is that we have been encouraged to accept it as such.

What then are we to do? We must take back our country from the criminals!!

Every decent law abiding citizen must say **STOP! ENOUGH!** We must, every one of us, demand action from our Member of Parliament and Parish Councillor. We must tell them that our children will no longer live in fear, that we are no longer going to accept the loss of freedom that the rampant and out of control criminality has caused us.

We must raise our voices in chorus and let everyone know that we are sick and tired of living behind bars

So what can the Government do? Something must be done about the guns! Illegal guns are everywhere and it cannot be that the authorities are unable to detect the source of supply or where they are located. The question is: “Is there the will”? .

And contrary to what some political and other commentators say, I believe that what the country needs to develop is discipline, even more than democracy. As we have seen in recent times, the exuberance of democracy has led to undisciplined and disorderly conditions which are inimical to development. And I doubt very much whether successful economies could have succeeded as they have, if they had to work under a system, where opposition on every major issue is a way of life.

People power is an oft repeated buzzword, but I would ask you to consider the first well documented referendum in history. Pontius Pilate, the Governor of a Roman colony, asked the crowd who should be punished, Barabas, an insurrectionist and bandit, or Jesus, a man of peace? There is no indication that Jesus Christ even got one vote in that exercise.

As a nation, the message we have got loud and clear is that we must get our act together, because the game has changed, and we are now obliged to compete with economies not only in the region but beyond. But it would seem that despite our proximity to the action, we could be left without an entry ticket when the match starts.

To summarize then:

- It is our duty as a business class to support the Government in all of its lawful undertakings, as unless we are packing up and leaving with no intention to return to Jamaica, we have to find the ways to make the Jamaican economy work.
- Before becoming embroiled in politics, there must be acceptance by both the Private Sector and politicians, that there is something to be gained if Government, the Opposition and ourselves, sit down for some brainstorming, and the development of a long term Strategic Plan.
- The Government has to ensure that it either facilitates the Private Sector taking advantage of opportunities or does not hinder the Sector taking advantage of them.
- The most prominent threats to the security of our people are still unmet - basic needs, economic exclusion, the denial of basic rights and the loss of confidence in public institutions
- And crime and violence are as much a part of our responsibility as it is the Government's and police.

All the aims are complementary but let us not underestimate the task. Designing policy to deliver all, is a formidable one, but let me end by appealing to all who are willing and

whose consciences will not stomach them any longer, **in chorus, denounce the terrible wrongs that have afflicted us** - mismanagement, corruption, crime and violence, desecration of our institutions, and character assassinations to name but a few.

Such persons would, by breaking away, add greatly to the weight of responsible public opinion, and strike a massive blow for our tormented land.

Thank you!