



ADDRESS TO PARLIAMENT

Loyalty and Social Graces

BY

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ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE FIRST MEETING

OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SECOND PARLIAMENT

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Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

Introduction

I am grateful for the opportunity afforded me to address This First Meeting of the Second Session of the Second Parliament of this Honourable House.

Never in the chequered history of Dominica, it seems to me, that there has ever been so much goodwill directed towards our Island, as is now the case. However, if we are to take full advantage of these expressions of goodwill, we must ensure that the local climate is right.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Government's Task

The task facing this Government is a formidable one, but I wish to suggest to this Honourable House that apart from economic development there are other areas which will continue to need the active attention of Honourable Members.

Something must be done to improve the attitudes of the citizens of Dominica on the whole. We have the reputation of being a very hospitable and well-behaved people, but if we are not careful these traits may be soon lost for good.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members.

Our Attitudes

I refer to such graces as Courtesy, Politeness, Discipline and Loyalty.

The important problem of job-creation and employment generally for the youth of the Country, must also be pursued with imagination and energy.

The lack of these values in our many communities and the problem of unemployment, particularly among the youth, are gnawing at the very vitals of our beloved Country, like a malignant cancer.

The biblical saying that "Man does not live by bread alone" may be applied there. Courtesy and fine manners are everywhere a passport to friendship and respect. Good manners are necessary guards of decency and peace of society, a matter of public concern.

Courtesy, defined as gentleness and politeness, is the settled medium of social exchange, just as money is the medium of economic exchange. Part of courtesy is politeness. Like an air-cushion: there may be nothing in it, but it eases our jolts wonderfully, a “please” and a “thank you” may seem to be trivial things, but they sweeten services and are agreeable to people. It provides the ability to work efficiently and pleasantly with other people.

One of the most important needs of our people, particularly young people, going out into the world from school, is discipline. It must be understood that we need to exercise discipline because we simply cannot get along with other people without it.

We go a long way towards maturity when we substitute inner discipline for outer. Self-discipline means that we do not act according to our likes and dislikes, but according to principles of right and wrong. It gives us freedom within the law: responsible freedom to move within an orbit as wide as, but no wider than what is in harmony with preservation of the overall order on which survival and effective living depend.

Our reward for self-discipline and the acceptance of such responsibility is not necessarily money or power, but self-respect and the respect of others. Discipline has a happiness value. It will not save us from having to make choices, and therefore of sometimes making mistakes, but it will help to assess the chances and choose more wisely. Quite often we shall find that the stern thing which discipline orders is the wisest and best thing.

Both democracy and industrialism demand a greater individual display of courtesy, mutual tolerance and discipline.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Loyalty, A Noble Word

Something about Loyalty – one of the noblest words in the catalogue of social virtues. Loyalty represents something vital, a concept, a way of life. We must recognize that everyone has a desire in instinct, to be loyal. The man or woman who has nothing to be loyal to is an unhappy person. Loyalty is intelligent devotion to an idea, a cause, a person, or a Government. It includes sympathy, mutual aid and a warm appreciation of personality. There is little virtue in loyalty if it to be dispensed with at the first sign of any flaw in the human or institutional object of that loyalty.

On the other hand, the responsibility of those in whom loyalty is placed, cannot be over emphasized, the greater the loyalty, the greater the responsibility.

People and institutions must deserve loyalty. They cannot hope to win and retain it unless they themselves are loyal.

Loyalty is not servility, but a factor contributing to human dignity. A loyal person is one who is steadfast to an honourable obligation, one who does what he ought to do in his relation with people.

Loyalty is linked in our minds with honour. It is faithfulness and devotion to duty and doing an hour's work in an hour. It is one of the responsibilities of citizenship, and enthusiastic love of one's country and pride in its ideals.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Unemployment, A Serious Problem

Last but by no means the least of our problems is the serious matter of unemployment, particularly among the youth. There is no simply or quick answer to this problem. But I suggest that the biggest significance of employment is the loss of production due to the waste involved in unused manpower. To the Country it is the cost of reduction of buying power in particular. To the individual it is the frustration of idleness, the lowered standard of living and the unhappiness involved.

Production is the key-note of national prosperity and national prosperity is essential to individual happiness.

As I said earlier on, there is no simply or quick answer to the problem of unemployment. However, there are indications that there will be a meaningful breakthrough in the near future.

It is heartening to note that the Private Sector of Dominica, through its two major representative organizations, Dominica Association of Industry and Commerce and the Dominica Federation, have given to Government a very positive indication of its willingness to co-operate in finding solutions for the Island's ailing economy.

There is encouraging evidence, too that the Private Sector and Trade Unions will continue to sit down in dialogue to examine existing issues and to establish new avenues of co-operation in the interest of national economic development. This augurs well for the future.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

The Responsibility of Parliamentarians

The foregoing outlines some serious ills which appear to me to be affecting our society. Members of this Honourable House have an important duty and part to play in fostering and creating the atmosphere in which improvement in these areas may grow and develop. Co-operation and consultation with other agencies which may be able to assist in some ways are necessary.

Mr. Speaker,

Honourable Members,

Support For Government Necessary

I have no doubt that Government will receive the full support and co-operation of all Dominicans and other who have an interest in our development, if these ideas are pursued with tact and enthusiasm.

I wish you every success in your endeavours particularly those directed to the maintenance of peace and prosperity of this Country which it is your privilege and duty to lead.

May the Almighty's blessing attend your deliberations.