

Address by Prime Minister Dr. the Hon. Keith Mitchell

At the Swearing-in Ceremony

20 February 2013

- Your Excellency Sir Carlyle Glean, Governor General
- The Right Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica
- Hon. Elvin Nimrod, Deputy Prime Minister of Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique.
- Veronica Guerrero, Vice Minister and Ambassador from the Republic of Venezuela.
- The Hon. Winston Dookeran, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
- Colleagues minister of Government.
- Parliamentary Secretaries and Parliamentarians elect and spouses
- Hon. Gaston Browne MP, Leader of the Opposition in Antigua and Barbuda and Hon. Asot Michael Member of Parliament in Antigua and Barbuda
- Sir Daniel Williams, Former Governor General and Lady Williams
- Sir Royston and Lady Hopkin
- Members of the Clergy
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Resident and Visitors
- Sir James Mitchell, Former Prime Minister of St. Vincent
- Mrs. Gloria Payne-Banfield, Chairman of the Public Service Commission
- Ms. Nadica McIntyre, Acting Cabinet Secretary, Members of the Senior Management Board and other Senior Government Officials
- Senior Members of the Royal Grenada Police Force
- Members of the Executive of the New National Party
- Representatives of other Political Organizations
- Distinguished Members of the Business Community
- Members of the Media
- Friends, Well Wishers
- Ladies and Gentlemen

God is good. All the time.

Permit me though if I should say god is particularly good to me for two reason today. I have been given this special honour to be your prime minister once again But for the second reason not many of us in our lifetime would have had the opportunity to be around to see the lady who took care of them and nurtured them.my mother.she is here with us.

Mummy stand up and take a bow how many of us could be so fortunate. Stand up and take a bow.

We are pleased to see so many of you here today to witness this swearing in ceremony of members of the cabinet.

I want to especially express my appreciation for the presence of a number of our colleagues from the region.

Your presence here today is a wonderful show of regional solidarity.

Rest assured that Grenada is ready again to take its place among the proud nations of our Caribbean Community.

Our commitment to the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, and to the cause of the wider integration movement is solid and unquestioned.

We accept the issue of the Caribbean Court of Justice is one that we must address early and openly in this coming term. We also understand that it must be done in the context of constitutional change, an approach both major political parties have committed to do as soon as possible after the general elections.

This new administration will engage a robust foreign policy, with a greater emphasis on south-south co-operation.

We will seek to deepen our ties with the nations of Central and South America and expand east into Asia and Africa without ever abandoning the traditional ties with North America and Europe.

Since our independence we have had special ties with Cuba and Venezuela, which our people continue to cherish.

Those deep ties with Latin America we hope to expand to such countries as Argentina, Brazil and Chile.

Colleague Prime Minister, ambassadors and special invited foreign dignitaries, rest assured that Grenada, Carriacou and Petit Martinique is ready to engage the world.

Grenada also wants to continue to play its world leading role on matters of the environment. The issue of climate change will continue to be a major concern to small nations as ours; and its mitigation continues to speak to the heart of our development agenda.

We firmly believe that emphasis on science and technology is also crucial if we are to transform our economies, and indeed the lives of our people. This new government will place renewed emphasis on science and technology.

We will resume our leadership role on those issues at the CARICOM level. We also intend to promote some fresh initiatives that will encourage wise investment of both human capital and hardware that will be the foundation of the technological thrust.

In terms of regional development, we believe that there is nothing that captures who we are, nor unites us as a people as West Indies cricket.

The issue of the game in the region is not an ordinary discussion about a sporting team; it is a campaign of a people ready and willing to assert their independence and take their rightful place on the world stage.

We intend to also resume our leadership role on this issue.

Fellow Grenadians.....

The members of the team who have taken the oath here today represent some of the most dedicated and committed men and women you can find in the country.

They have entered this covenant with you, fully cognizant of the challenge ahead, but willing and able to face them head on.

For me, it is an honor and privilege, not just to serve for another term as Prime Minister, but to be able to lead such a team.

In choosing the team, we have come up with a mix of experienced persons who have already served in government, and some new people who have been success stories in their own lives. Their inclusion has afforded us the opportunity to freshen our leadership.

In choosing the team, we also wanted to be bold; not fearful to break with tradition and expectation; and to send the message loud and clear, that this would not be business as usual.

The results of the recent general elections have thrown up some challenges of its own - especially since coming in we were determined to reduce the number of ministries in an effort to save cost and improve efficiency.

The reduction of ministries from 16 to 11 is a first installment in our commitment to delivering efficient, cost-effective governance.

Given the fact that our New National Party has won all 15 seats in the parliament, we have been blessed with the kind of choices and options that no other Prime Minister has ever had. It has also brought with it some unique challenges.

It has been a source of inspiration to have had the opportunity to choose from among 15 of the best.

The architects of our democracy have designed the system in a way that certain positions must be filled to ensure the operation of parliament, and indeed by extension, the entire government system.

Under our system, there has to be a certain amount of non-cabinet members who will be part of the Public Accounts Committee for it to be properly commissioned.

With no official opposition in the House, whose members will normally fill some of those positions, the onus was on us to construct the team in a particular way that will allow for those positions to be filled.

One of the biggest challenges in putting together the team of cabinet ministers was who to leave out, so that we can complete our commitment to our democracy.

This might be the early days of this administration, but let me say this. In the decision to leave out three stalwarts for this time your patience and understanding is required. It was not easy to ask sister Bain Horsford, brother Tobias Clement and brother Clifton Paul to go to bat first on that team. It was not an easy one. But my friends they have been willing to put aside their own egos, curb their own ambitions, and prepared to fight perception, for the general good.

In giving up an opportunity to serve in cabinet, they have taken up the mantle of the keeper of the flame of our democracy.

They have acceded to our request for them to be used for the promotion of an effective parliament-- and at this stage there could be no more a greater calling.

The fact that our three colleagues will not be members of the cabinet will not diminish their role or effectiveness as your parliamentary representatives.

We appreciate that their constituents will have special expectations of them, and we intend to empower them to be able to fulfill those expectations.

They will be given the resources to do the job people have voted them for.

In that regard, we are currently looking at a construct that will allow us to increase the constituency allowance for the three non-cabinet members of our team.

As a team going forward, we have no choice but to ensure that all of our colleagues are accorded the respect and support.

A special sub-committee of the constituted cabinet will be set up to also brief the non-cabinet MPs weekly on all major decisions taken by cabinet. Through this briefing they will also be able to propose support services for their own constituencies.

While the parliamentarians are comfortable with the thrust, we are aware that sometimes their own supporters make it difficult for them, by trying to imply that their MP might be marginalized.

We call on all of our supporters to understand what we are trying to do; and what are our national commitments; as well as the limitations of all the structures within which we have to operate.

The decision on who to leave out of the cabinet, was very, very painful for me personally. But it became easier because our three colleagues have proven themselves to be such great team players. That's why I want to thank them publicly for their co-operation and understanding.

Second Corinthians verse 6 says in part -- and it is something we must always remember-- people are watching us, as we stay at our post; alertly; unswervingly ...in hard times; tough times....

All of our MPs understand -- which is something we have pointed out from day one -- that the appointments we announced today will not necessarily hold for a full five years. It is quite possible that people, who serve today as backbenchers, could become full-fledged members of the cabinet in the not too distant future.

I have selected this cabinet today -- men and women -- in my own deliberate judgment, but after extensive consultations with all the MPs, the wider members of our party and friends and colleagues.

I am confident, as a result of this thorough and extensive exercise that we have come up with some of the best combinations to run a tight ship.

These men and women you see here today are very clear in their heads that their job is to fight to secure the jobs of those who already have one -- and to help create the atmosphere for new jobs for those who have been forced to taste the most bitter pill of this prolonged recession and government insensitivity.

These men and women you see here today are clear that their job is to execute plans and programs that are sensitive to the needs of all Grenadians, especially the ordinary people out there.

We have been given -- yes a huge task -- but a historic opportunity to help revive this nation, restore the hopes of its children and its youth, consolidate and build an environment of a community that can take care of its elderly.

Years of inaction must now give way to a new season of responsive leadership.

Years of missed opportunities must give way to a new dawn of a nation living out its true and genuine potential.

Years of stagnation must give way to a new era of growth; and insensitivity must give way to a fresh spring of humility.

We cannot stress too much the need for our leadership to shed all sense of arrogance; to resist any temptation to be masters. We all must be prime agents of service.

It takes a lot of energy to be arrogant. It takes so much less energy to be humble.

Always remember the quote from James 4 in the bible that says: Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

The election results of February 19 have borne out the fact that our people are ready to punish not just non-performance, but arrogance.

The era of saying one thing, and doing another, is at an end.

Friends -- we come before you understanding that the concept of good governance is noble. But also understanding, that it can only properly manifest itself through genuine achievement for people, rather than good sounding phrases on political platforms or in television sound bites.

Our commitment to good governance will only manifest itself by us providing an administration that gives the nation the value for its money; that lives up to its commitment to workers and that creates an environment for businesses to flourish.

For us good governance is not an abstract concept; but its implementation means a better management of the economy, a respect for our diversity and a marked improvement in the quality of all aspects of our people's lives.

The level of accountability we will commit ourselves to, will be unmatched by any administration since independence.

Stand and behold, ladies and gentlemen, your government. This is a government in the sunshine.

This is a government that will subject itself to the closest scrutiny.

I have already spoken to the members of my team -- and will continue to emphasize --that we will not have tolerance for misconduct and bad behavior; nor for insensitivity and arrogance.

Our opportunity is on to serve with humility and respect; with sensitivity and transparency.

We shall hold no brief; nor make any excuses; nor subject ourselves to any ifs and buts when it comes to the values we are committed to.

Our message to our team is -- bad behavior is not good politics. Bad behavior is bad politics.

We have been in government before, and we have seen other governments operate while we were in opposition -- and we have learnt from all the good lessons and the bad ones.

We are committed not to repeating the bad ones, and to build and expand on the methods that have served us well, and have brought on successes.

We know we have made mistakes in the past -- every government has. And like the Bible says, we have all fallen short of the glory of God.

But thankfully we do not live in the past -- not when we have a future to behold.

We recommit ourselves to a government of inclusion, and we stand eager to engage civil society, the churches, trade unions, social groups, the business community and the media.

My announcement about the need and desire to establish a bipartisan commission that will usher in a new era of reasonableness and patriotism still stands.

As we move forward we will seek common ground as we strengthen the many things that unite us as a people.

We come accepting the reality that we share the same dreams, and hope the same things for our children, and we all love this country as deeply. We may at times defer on the means, but never on the ends.

We come understanding that we cannot build a nation on suspicion and mistrust, nor on rumor and innuendo; nor on hatred and spite.

We must wipe out the old enemy lines of the past and we must now build a future that knows no boundaries for the Grenadian family.

We must not manufacture conflicts by building up straw enemies; but opportunities by consolidating family and community links.

A new open-door policy must encourage us talking to each other, not at each other.

In life, as in politics, there is a time and season for everything.

The season for political campaigning and the colours has ended. The era of nation building must now begin.

For the people and the sectors I have had political battles with in the past, today I come offering an opened hand, not a closed fist.

I have been so moved by some incidents I have seen over the last few weeks that makes me convince that is the only way to move forward.

Only a week and a half ago I was presented with a cd of gospel music by someone who it might have been said we are on the wrong political side together five years ago.

That gospel cd has been an inspiration for me in some of the toughest moments in the last few days. To that sister I say a hearty thank you. I love you.

We are clear that the massive mandate we have received is neither a blank cheque nor an unlimited license to do as we wish.

Today I am announcing my government's commitment to have set up village and parish councils to which our MPs and ministers will have to subject themselves to the closest scrutiny.

My technical team will -- in the coming weeks --- develop the structure that will allow monthly meetings of such councils.

Our MPs and ministers must understand that they will be expected to account on a regular basis for their stewardship; and they must make themselves available and accessible to listen to the people.

The Government Information Service will have to be a pivotal role in continually reflecting the concerns and demands of the people; and in giving voice the people from all corners of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

One of major mandates of the GIS, will be to ensure that all those council meetings we speak about are given prime time priorities.

This mechanism will become even more crucial since there will be no traditional opposition in parliament.

As the cabinet gets ready to settle down, we know that we have some urgent issues at hand.

The first --within the next month -- is the preparation of a viable budget that will immediately seek to stabilize this shaky economy and build a foundation for growth and prosperity.

In going forward, we are clear that we can neither borrow, nor cut our way out of recession.

We will embark on an economic path that is sensitive to the needs of the people; that will protect our most vulnerable; that will live up to its commitment to its workers and youth, and that will create an atmosphere for growth.

Prosperity will only come through the expansion of the economy by aggressively attracting investments -both local and foreign.

No bona fide investor who comes to our shores will be maligned and character assassinated for whatever reasons. All good investors will be welcomed.

Yes we are opened for business, but we are people of pride and standards. We are opened for business that confirms to our sensitivity and customs.

To facilitate business, we are prepared to -- among the immediate measures -- remove the alien land holding rights from CARICOM nationals as the treaty dictates. Not just as we say but as the treaty dictates. We will live up to our commitments.

We will review our tax system, to ensure that it's equitable and fair; and that it lends itself to growth, rather than stifle initiative.

We are here to announce today that the era of contraction is about to end. Get ready for a new era of expansion.

It may take a few months before people feel the real effect of the path we will embark on, but within the first 100 days, the foundation which we are building will become clear.

We believe we have begun on the right path. We have closed the chapter on political spite. We have made it clear to our people that political victimization does not reflect neither the Grenadian character or spirit.

I want to say a special word about our youth. And I want to speak directly to them as well.

Following the malaise of the last five years, we appreciate that every sector of this population and this economy needs urgent attention.

But in our considered view, none more so than our young people.

Unless we move to act quickly, we are on the verge of losing an entire generation to cynicism and hopelessness.

A country undermines its very independence, if it fails to secure the future for its young people.

A nation only makes a down payment on anarchy and confusion if it fails to invest in dreams and ambitions.

We have just come from a campaign that has been inspired by the youth of the nation.

As I travelled around the country, I have seen the expectations in their eyes.

They expect their lives to get better, and we must deliver.

Letting down the youth of this nation is no longer an option.

That is why we have asked sister Emmalin Pierre to lead this important Ministry and we are giving her extra support in a vibrant young man Sheldon Scott.

Our commitment is clear as we have also included additional support and we will be showing so in the next budget of the country.

This nation has never had a brighter crop of young people than we see today -- but never had they had so little opportunity.

So many of them have gone to school and finished with top honors, only to graduate into a society of little or no opportunities.

There are scores of young people we had sent away on scholarships, only to return home with degrees -- willing and able to work -- but have been home for sometimes three years; four years.

As a nation, we cannot afford not to keep our end of the bargain, when our young people have done all that we ask of them -- be disciplined, stay out of trouble, work hard and get a good education.

We cannot continue to do this to our brightest and our best.

And so, I have ordered that a list be compiled of all the young people who have returned home from studying and have not found a job.

This government will do everything possible in the shortest period of time to provide gainful employment to these young people.

As the broader economy expands, the youths, like all other sectors of the economy, will have more opportunities.

But of course we will do some things very specific to youth. Some of those I have already mentioned.

There will also be added emphasis on sport and culture.

We have given the world top sportsmen, performer on the international stage our own Kirani James and many of them have come from humble beginnings from Gun battle and riverroad and union and hermitage.

We believe we are on to something good -- and we will invest in sports.

National players must be given the support to improve their skills and train and prepare for the highest levels; not worry about competing on the 8 -to-4 work beat as the rest of us. I have every confidence in this government team we have put forward. It's a team built to last and built to go the distance.

We march forward not daunted but determined. We walk the streets of measured expectations and a dreamer's energy.

We understand it will not be easy; but we always understood what we signed up for. Yes, it's an awesome responsibility but we accept it with all humility.

Through the grace of God and the support of you the people, there will be no mountain too high to climb.

Let the words of the song sister Petrona sung so well here today, inspire us as we go forward.

Her every note was a message of hope when she sung....

As the old year rolled into the new one, and as January, slipped into February, we had made to you one simple pledge. Through the many rallies, and the countless speeches, three simple words signified our contract with you.

Count on us to honor the contract, and when the time comes, judge us on those three simple words on which the promise was built.

And so, we go forward, inspired by -- and determined to achieve -- because of these three simple words.

And as a campaign now has crystallized into a government; let this slogan evolve into a manifesto. And let these three simple words be your declaration of faith and our execution of will.

And those three simple words, which we promise to keep is -- WE WILL DELIVER!

To God be the glory, great things he has done!

I thank you very much.