

Independence Message 2006

By Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. Bruce Golding, MP

6 August 2006

As I prepared my thoughts for this Independence message, I reflected on the messages that were delivered by our two great founding fathers, the Right Excellent Sir Alexander Bustamante and the Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley on the day we gained independence in 1962.

This is what Sir Alexander said:

“Independence means the opportunity for us to frame our own destiny and the need for us to rely on ourselves in so doing. It does not mean a licence to do as we would like. It means work and law and order. Let us resolve to build a Jamaica which will last and of which we and generations to come will be proud, remembering that especially at this time the eyes of the world are upon us.”

Mr. Manley, for his part, declared:

“We stand here today surrounded by an unseen host of witnesses who through all our history strove to keep alight the torch of freedom. And what of the future? We have come to Independence prepared and ready to shoulder our new responsibilities and united I believe in one single hope that we may make our small country a safe and happy home for all our people.”

We can only conjecture what Sir Alexander and Mr. Manley would say today of our stewardship over these 44 years, what judgment they would pass on our efforts to fulfill their dreams and to build on the foundations they left us.

Forty four years is a relatively short time in the life of a country. But it is long enough for us to have made progress – substantial progress. We have made progress but there is so much more that could have been done, should have been done and must still be done to transform the dreams of independence into the reality of our everyday experience.

We have not worked with the assiduousness that Sir Alexander admonished us to do. The law and order that he insisted on have been tarnished by the crime and violence and indiscipline that we have allowed to take hold of us. We have not made our country the safe and happy home for all our people that Norman Manley declared was his one single hope. And, therefore, as we celebrate yet another year of our independence, we must pause to look back at the distance we have travelled and the directions we have taken. But we must also look ahead at the journey that remains to be conquered and the gap that must be closed for, in too many respects, we have been overtaken in the race of economic and social development. And no matter how much the future may be clouded with uncertainty, we must never lose sight of our goal to make Jamaica a land of justice, peace and prosperity.

The emergence of new leadership in the two major political parties presents both an obligation and an opportunity. It imposes an obligation to bring a new vision and new energy to the tasks of leadership and nation building. And it creates an opportunity for change – real change – in the way we manage our affairs and in the extent to which we use the powers vested in us to improve the lives of the people who vest that power in us.

Yes, we face many challenges and so many of those challenges are defined by financial constraints. But there is much that we can do that require no financial outlay and there is much that we must do to remove those financial constraints. We are a tough people, resilient and creative. In so many areas – in sports, music and in other fields – we have demonstrated that we are among the best in the world.

It is time for us to bring forth our best in our Parliament, in the Cabinet, in our schoolrooms, at our workplaces, in our communities so that the hopes and dreams of our independence can be fulfilled and so that as the National Pledge exhorts us “Jamaica may, under God, increase in beauty, fellowship and prosperity and play her part in advancing the welfare of the whole human race”.

To the many Jamaicans in the Diaspora who are returning home for the holidays to spend time with family and friends and to share in our Independence festivities, a special welcome home to you.

May God bless Jamaica and all its people.