

Independence Message 2007

By Leader of the Opposition

The Hon. Bruce Golding, MP

6 August 2007

This year we celebrate our independence in the midst of an election campaign. It ought to be a model election because it was the right to vote and the struggles to secure that right that eventually led to our independence in 1962.

Sadly, the election campaign has been marred by incidents of violence and a few persons have already lost their lives with three weeks left to go. It is a betrayal of the struggle that was waged and the sacrifices that were made to secure our independence. In the tumultuous events of 1938 which led to the setting up of the Moyne Commission, the granting of universal adult suffrage, the various stages of internal self-government and, eventually, independence in 1962, some people died violently. But they died for a cause. Their death was the sacrifice that they made so that we could become an independent nation governing ourselves and taking charge of our own destiny.

But what are people dying for today? Why are they being killed? So that one party can be victorious over the other? That is not what those patriots who fought and gave their lives for us had intended. For, as Ernie Smith so poignantly declared in song, “as we fight one another for the power and the glory Jah kingdom goes to waste”.

It is not too late, for we have three weeks to go, for us to redeem the legacy left to us by those who fought for our independence. It is not too late for those of us who offer leadership to demonstrate that leadership by recognizing that the fight for independence is over. We won that fight

45 years ago! The fight must now be to transform that independence into prosperity, to make Jamaica a land where our people live a good life, a life of peace, happiness and justice. And, in that fight, we must fight together – not each other for neither side can do it alone, none of us can make it unless all of us make it.

No one can claim that in these 45 years of independence we have achieved as much as we should have achieved. There are too many other countries that have left us behind, too many

people for whom independence means nothing because the condition of their lives is no better than it was without independence. And, therefore, what this election ought to be about is not a fight for the power and the glory but about the path we must take to achieve the goals of independence that have for so long eluded us.

I want to see a Jamaica that is not just independent but also strong, prosperous and peaceful. I want to see a Jamaica where we respect the rights of others in the same way that our rights are respected by others, where all our people are able to enjoy a decent standard of living, where every child is able to go to a good school and every working-age adult to a decent job, where everyone might not be rich but no one has to be poor. That is my dream; that is my vision. That is what independence is all about. And that is what this election should be about.

I extend a special welcome home to all Jamaicans who are visiting family and friends for the holidays.

May you all have a blessed, peaceful and happy Independence!