

THRONE SPEECH

BY

**HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL
DAME PEARLETTE LOUISY, GCSL, GCMG, D. ST. J., PH. D., LL. D. (HON)**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE FIFTH SESSION OF THE SEVENTH- PARLIAMENT

Mr. President and Members of the Senate

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly

We entered the New Year filled with grief and shaken by the tragedy of the Minor Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. Our innocence was shattered in this moment of violation and the famous poem of Walcott "A City's Death by Fire" could well have foretold the immolation of tolerance by fire. Walcott's Hot Gospeller was, in this instance, no avenging angel but spectres of bigotry and fanaticism. Those fires of hate have, by the Grace of God, been transmuted into the warmth of reconciliation, into renewal of faith and spirit, and into regeneration of collective responsibility. Even while justice unfolds with unflinching inexorability, we must continue to be revulsed by the horror of such acts; we must sustain our resurrected sense of togetherness. My Government was deeply heartened by the maturity, sensitivity and concern exhibited by all segments of our society. My Government was encouraged by the spontaneity of the cooperation and unity of purpose achieved by both Church and State and we must all give thanks for the renewal that was forged of that fire and the recovery of the brave suffering in spite of the gravity of their injuries. Let us continue to pray for the soul of Sister Theresa Egan. We should all sing a special song of welcome and say a prayer of deliverance for all of the recovering victims and in particular Fr. Charles Gaillard.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, péyi-a ouvè lanné 2001 épi an kalité lapenn èk soufwans tèlkè nou pa té janmen kwè nou té kay wè an lavi nou an Sent Lisi; an lapenn pwèskè ensipotab. Sa ki pwan kou an Katédwal Kastwi a li 31 désanm lanné passé-a sété vweman an kwèv tjè. Sété konsi Sent Lisi, a pati di jou sala té pèd tout linosans li, tout lanmityé'y, tout chawityé pou pochen'y. M. Pwézidan, M. Speaker, kisa ou kwè ki té annekòz an kwim osi tewib? Pa anyen pasé an pèt di wèspé pou lopinyon lézòt, po chwa lézòt, pou disisyon lézòt. Mé pa lagwas di Dyé, wésulta hayisans sala mennen tout Sent Lisi ansanm en lapenn, mé an lafwa. Nou vini ansanm pou pòté soukou, konsolasyon épi lapwiyè bay yonnalòt. Nou ponmèt kò nou jou sala ki nou pa kay janmen kitè an twajédi konsa wivé nou Sent Lisyen ankò. Annou tjenn pawòl nou. Annou wèsté ansanm; annou kontiné pwan wèspansabilité pou yonnalòt. Kalité mannyè-a tout péyi-a vini ansanm apwé twakasman sala touché tjè tout moun péyi-a,

tout manm Gouvèdman-an, tout manm légliz péyi-a. Nou ka wimèsyé Bondyé pou djéwisyon-an i vizité asou nou tout kon yon pèp, mé sitou asou tout sé moun-lan ki twapé blésé ében bwilé-a. Annou kontiné pwiyé pou lam Sè. Theresa Egan. Annou swété labyenvini bay tout sa ki té ni pou vwayajé lòt péyi pou wisivwè twètman, sitou Pè Gaillard. Pwézans yo pami nou dwètèt fè nou chonjé touléjou kisa hayisans, kisa divisyon, kisa lentoléwans, menm kisa vyé pawòl sa annékoz.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly

The great English novelist Joseph Conrad once wrote that “words are the great foes of reality”. Recent trends and developments have brought home the sagacity of these words in our context. We have heard pronouncements of all complexions about the state of the national economy. Against compelling evidence it has been repeatedly said that the economy is in crisis. It has proven difficult in such a climate to extract fact from fiction even in the face of the most rigorous and objective of sources that include the International Monetary Fund and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. These analyses while acknowledging the difficult conjuncture presented by the turbulence of global currents, have also pointed to the fiscal prudence and laudable management of My Government in these times.

My Government has been encouraged by the vigor of this civic debate and the indications of deep public interest in the performance of the economy. Indeed, it adds to the new ambiance of openness and an emerging culture of free expression and argumentation which My Government had pledged to promote.

Never before has a government been subject to such intense scrutiny. Never before has an administration been held to such unrelenting standards of accountability. Never before has a political directorate been measured against expectations of such magnitude. In spite of it all, even the most dispassionate of observers would agree that My Government has demonstrated a degree of tolerance and magnanimity unprecedented in the political annals of St. Lucia.

One should recall that in every one of the throne speeches made in the life of the seventh Parliament, My Government has continually asserted the importance of placing progress above partisanship, of looking beyond the things that divide us to the necessities that unite us. We have sought to inculcate this message at every national opportunity including the theme of this year’s Independence Celebration “Respect, Tolerance and Togetherness”. That this language of national unity has now entered the national lexicon is testimony to the correctness of My Government’s stated philosophical stance. Notwithstanding Conrad’s assertion of the negation of reality by rhetoric, My Government remains deeply committed to this principle but believes that the ideal of national unity is too sacred a construct to be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency.

A RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the energies of My government have been focused, not on broad speculative idealism but on repositioning St. Lucia to meet the new and real challenges of the regional economy in a changing world. In other words, the fundamental and elemental task of bringing bread and butter to the national table in difficult times has been our main preoccupation.

Virtually all analysts agree on one fundamental characteristic of the new global economy – and that is the increasing erosion of the capacity of national decision-makers to influence its course and direction. Even developed economies are rapidly losing their autonomy and find themselves victim to the erratic unpredictability of global trends. Even developed countries are finding themselves powerless to act in the face of liberalization and interdependence. Increasingly even developed countries are discovering that globalization is not merely an economic phenomenon – it is technological, social, political, and cultural in its manifestation and impact. As the current crisis of foot and mouth disease in Europe clearly shows, no amount of political and economic management can anticipate or even resist the spread of an epidemic from country to country. The incapacity of national health and agriculture authorities to resist, manage or control the globalization of disease is a painful reminder of the vulnerability of small island states. Our own experience with bananas was the crystallizing moment of our consciousness of the full impact of this reality. Yet sadly there are many who fail to grasp this and continue to adhere to the fanciful notions either that government can solve all problems or that government is the source of all problems.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, tout moun ki ka èkzaminé zafè globalizasyon sala dakò asou yon pwen fondamantal. Pwen sala sé sa. Pli an pli, ni gwan ni piti péyi ka touvé'y pli an pli difisil pou kontwolé tout sa ki ka pwan kou andidan péyi yo menm, pa sèlman an ling di ékonomi, mé osi an sa ki ka konsèné politik, kilti, tèknoloji, épi sosyété-a menm. Annou pwan, pa èkzanp, sitwasyon-an épi sé maladi-a ki ka afèkté zanimò an sé péyi Europe-la. Ni Langlitè, ni La Fwans, ni sé lézòt péyi-a sanm kapab anpéché lépidémi sala dévalisé lendustwi agrikòl yo a. Gadé mannyè sé pwensip globalizasyon-an afèkté fig péyi-a. E poutan adan di nou pòkò apwésyé jis toujou ki nou ka viv adan yon lépòk nèf, an lépòk koté pwès gouvèdman pa kò yo ni tout sé wépons-lan ében tout sé solisyon-an i fo a pou tout pwoblenm péyi yo. Nou pa sa blamé pwès Gouvèdman non pli pou tout pwoblenm ki ka afèkté an péyi.

My Government has faced the turbulence of the times with an undiminished faith in the people's capacity to innovate and to overcome. Some of our decisions have been uncomfortable but have been vindicated by their outcomes. When My Government advised St. Lucians about the necessity of sacrifice and higher payments for water in order to modernize the water utility in St. Lucia, very few understood the wisdom and necessity of that decision. Today, even while the WASCO restructuring is still incomplete, many have reported improvements in the provision of water services. For two decades, we had been forewarned of the gathering storm of liberalization in the agricultural sector presaging difficulty for continued preferential access of our bananas to traditional markets. My Government's efforts to reposition and modernize the economy from agriculture to services is beginning to bear fruit.

There have been moments that have tested our national consciousness, resilience and courage as a people during which My Government was determined to stay its course and forge ahead in the confidence of the correctness of our cause, the rectitude of its strategy and in fulfillment of its parliamentary mandate. There are times when we must and have no choice but to face our challenges with a monolithic sense of purpose, an unfailing unity of vision and an unswerving resolve. The struggle for telecommunications reform was one such historical moment which our people should have seized with sovereign zeal and national determination. The result of that resolve can be seen in the increase in employment in the tele-communications sector. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, we live in a world that owes us no favors and accepts few obligations. If we are unable to define, articulate and defend our own sovereign and national interest, who else will do so?

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, tout péyi ni tan twakasan yo; épi Sent Lisi pa diféwan di lézòt. Lè malè tonbé nou, ében lè bagay pa djè bèl épi nou, nou sa éwisi vini about li, si nou swiv konsyans nasyonal nou, si nou vini ansanm pou fè sa ki dwèt épi sa ki méwité fèt. Nou ka viv adan yon anvwonman global koté pèsonn pa dwé nou pwès favè, koté moun pa pawé aksépté twop wèsponsabilité pou lézòt. Si nou pa kapab déside sa nou vlé pou kò nou; si nou pa kapab palé pou kò nou; si nou pa kapab défann lentéwé nasyonal nou nou menm, kilès moun, ében kilès péyi kay fè'y ban nou?

In the term of this seventh Parliament, My Government's major emphasis – consistent with economic modernization and repositioning – has been institutional reform. Economic modernity can only be accomplished if the institutional, regulatory and legislative framework is transformed to facilitate the new modes of working.

My Government has accordingly initiated reforms in local government and labour relations; it has accelerated reforms in education in some arenas exceeding the parameters of the OECS education reform effort; it has sought to reform health, culture, and sport. Additionally, My Government has extended and expanded the conception of and provision for basic needs. The establishment of the Poverty Reduction Fund, the James Belgrave Fund, the Rural Economic Diversification Incentives Project, the Program for Regularization of Unplanned Development all represent new institutional expressions of compassionate governance. Other projects such as the Rural Electrification Project have illuminated community and brought light to the most remote and neglected corners. These reforms have been underpinned and legitimized by the extent of people's participation in their conception and implementation. In every case, there has been public consultation of varying modalities. This has contributed to the enlargement of democratic space and the deepening of the institutional presence of civil society in the structures of governance.

If these have been accomplished by My Government in a period widely recognized as a time of structural change, how much more could have been accomplished in times of plenty?

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

In addition to our own local adjustments, the time is now ripe for a reaffirmation of the role and importance of the OECS and other forms of regional integration as an important pillar in our strategy for survival. The accelerated moves towards the Caribbean Single Market and Economy

as well as the new strides towards the realization of the Caribbean Court of Justice provide a new challenge to our commitment to regionalism.

Those among us who might have had misgivings about the value of OECS integration may wish to reconsider those doubts. Indeed Mr. Speaker, in recent times, we have been twice blessed and vindicated in our commitment to the OECS. St. Lucia had taken a leadership role in the promotion of telecommunications reform in the sub-region and at the decisive moment of reckoning, the OECS closed ranks in a truly admirable display of regional solidarity and self-determination. Similarly, our regional approach to the negotiations with cruise ship operators some four years ago on the appropriate taxation level, was resolved satisfactorily as a direct result of the regional approach which was adopted towards these negotiations. These successes cannot be divorced from My Government's effort to enforce the timely payment of contributions to regional institutions to facilitate their effective functioning. Whilst, many have misunderstood My Government's public pronouncements and posture on this issue as calculated to undermine the viability of important regional institutions, the wisdom of our stance can be seen in the renewed vigour which attends the question of regional integration.

The accelerated effort towards the establishment of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy will increasingly require the exercise of such resolve by all Member States and it is a scenario in which we have no options but to walk the road as a united and determined region.

TOWARDS A NEW CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, whilst we have made tremendous strides in modernizing our economic and institutional and regional structures, we must be frank and candid in recognizing and admitting, as a people, our failures in strengthening the cultural underpinnings of our society. My Government has sought to rectify this sin of cultural omission by establishing new standards for the recognition of persons who have made sterling contributions to our cultural growth and development. Our widely acknowledged and beloved Queen of Culture, Sessenne Descartes, was recently elevated by Her Britannic Majesty to the status of Dame – the first cultural activist to be recognized at that level for outstanding contributions to culture. My Government also provided Dame Sessenne with a new residence befitting the dignity of her contribution and status, which will -- in the future -- become a museum of folk culture.

It is shameful that the role of Derek Walcott in shaping our intellectual culture has been lauded internationally, whilst his own homeland continues to grapple with the most appropriate way of extending tribute. The time has come to give this extraordinary son the recognition that he deserves. Firstly My Government will seek to purchase the home of the Walcotts now occupied by Lithographic Press and seek to recreate the environment in which both Derek and his twin brother Roddy were nurtured. Negotiations towards this end are expected to be finalized this year.

The time has also come to establish a National Theatre Company. We have moved from the virtual renaissance of the 1960s with the St. Lucia Arts Guild to a barren decline of the theatre and performing arts. The cultural foundations laid by the work of so many talented cultural

activists is now endangered if we do not act to restore the arts to a position of populist respectability. My Government is firm in the belief that the decline of the arts as a humanizing and civilizing force has further contributed to the rise of indiscipline, and uncivilized conduct. In the coming financial year, My Government will therefore be entering into dialogue on the modalities of establishing an indigenous world class theatre company with the Hon. Derek Walcott so that the patrimony that the Walcotts and the Arts Guild of yesteryear bequeathed to St. Lucia can be enjoyed not only by St. Lucians but by the people of the world.

At the first session of this seventh Parliament, My Government announced its philosophical acceptance of St. Lucian Creole as a legitimate language of national expression and the embodiment of the St. Lucian spirit. The time has come to bring this recognition to a different platform of acceptance. My Government has made provision for and will be establishing a Kweyol Commission that will serve as a focal point for research, promotion and further development of the language. The Commission will bring together language activists, educators and distinguished linguists to guide this process and My Government is honored that our Governor General has graciously accepted the invitation to be the Commission Patron.

I ni 4 an dépwé langaj kwéyòl-la touvé aksèpté an Kay Konsit sala paski Gouvèdman konsidiwé langaj pèp-la asé enpotan pou ba li lavwa an pli ho enstitusyon péyi-a. A pati di lanné sala, péyi-a kay pwan an lòt demach pou fè pli twavay wéchéch an Kwéyòl-la pou endé tout moun apwésyé'y, épi sevi'y an sèvis tout manm piblik-la, sitou sé moun-lan ki ka santi kò yo pli a lèz an Kwéyòl-la.

In preparation for a renewed sensitivity towards public service and customer sensitivity, My Government has also agreed to the provision of Kwéyòl language classes for public servants in service intensive ministries so that their capability to serve the Kwéyòl-speaking public can be enhanced. Prototype classes started this week at the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth & Sports with 98% of the staff registered.

EXPANSION OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

One of the fundamental challenges of this new age is the struggle to overcome disparity in the enjoyment of the cultural heritage of the human race and the provision of the means by which people can not only receive and enjoy but create culture and knowledge. That is the essential premise of the UNESCO Commission on Education for the 21st Century. My Government has completed the discursive and participatory process of elaborating an Education Sector Development Plan and it is expected that the completed Plan will be tabled at a special sitting of Parliament.

A central pillar of the new Education Sector Development Plan to which My Government has committed itself is the attainment of Universal Secondary Education. The imperatives of the new global order and the demands of economic modernization have raised the minimum educational requirements for survival. In the year 2001, a primary level education can no longer be considered adequate for effective functioning in the changing economy and so the move to guarantee a place in secondary school for every child of secondary school age is a

necessary step in the modernization of our social infrastructure.

M. Pwézidan, M. Speaker, an ling di lendikasyon, Gouvèdman mwen detèminé pou wè ki tout manmay péyi-a ni an chans pou alé lékòl sékondè. Sé jou sala, pèsonn pa sa kontanté kò yo épi an endikasyon lékòl primyè sèlman. Pou nou sa fonksyonné an lékonomi nèf la; pou nou sa modènizé lékonomi nasyonal nou; pou nou sa modènizé sé enstitusyon nasyonal nou an, sé fo nou fè mannèw pou asiwé yon lendikasyon sékondè pou chak jenn moun péyi-a.

Taken in total, the Education Sector Development Plan with universal secondary education as its centerpiece, represents nothing less than the redesign of our social architecture. My Government is currently in the process of concluding negotiations with the World Bank for a new project – the Secondary Education Reform Project.

This project embodies a holistic approach to universal secondary education that will ensure not only quantitative but qualitative improvement. It will ultimately involve:

- The construction of four new secondary schools;
- The rehabilitation of existing secondary schools to ensure that adequate facilities (such as science laboratories, computer facilities, specialist rooms) are provided;
- Expansion of selected existing secondary schools to increase school places within institutions perceived to be striving for excellence;
- The reform of the curriculum of existing secondary schools so that a comprehensive package of core subjects including science, mathematics and information technology are made compulsory;
- Provision of training for teachers in curriculum support and implementation of the new curriculum;
- Extension of the Education Management Information System to all schools;
- Systematization of school improvement planning;
- Strengthening the capability of District Education Offices;

Associated with this major reform in secondary education will be related changes to our system of examination and assessment to replace the Common Entrance Exam with a system of continuous assessment that will focus on readiness for secondary education and proper remediation.

LEGISLATING FOR CHANGE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, when I last addressed you in this honourable chamber I intimated that My Government was not satisfied that our laws reflected the cardinal virtues of certainty, cohesiveness and ease of access to the levers of justice and, in consequence, would accelerate its programme of law reform and law revision. My government is firmly convinced that legislative change is a fundamental part of the strategy for modernizing, re-structuring and re-orienting our society and has accordingly set itself the ambitious task of deepening the programme of legislating for change. Today, I am pleased to inform that significant progress was made in this regard.

During this new financial year My Government proposes to focus, in addition to its normal programme of legal support for stated government policies, on certain specific legislative interventions.

Intellectual Property

During the period 2000-2001 Saint Lucia enacted seven pieces of legislation pertaining to the promotion and protection of intellectual property viz:

- (a) Geographical Indications Act, 2000
- (b) Lay-out Designs (Topographies) of Integrated Circuits Act, 2000
- (c) Copyright (Amendment) Act, 2000
- (d) Protection against Unfair Competition Act, 2001
- (e) Industrial Designs Act, 2001
- (f) Trademarks Act, 2001, and
- (g) Patents Act, 2001. The last mentioned Act is about to receive the royal assent for publication in the Gazette.

This legislative initiative has enabled Saint Lucia to make an impressive showing at the Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Services (TRIPS) panel review, of the World Trade Organization, currently being conducted in Geneva. Saint Lucia's presentation to the panel, which was made by the Attorney General earlier this week, was described by the Chairman of the review panel as "an impressive achievement" and Saint Lucia received commendations for its effort from the representatives of the Governments of the United States of America, Switzerland, Canada, Barbados, Japan, and the European Union.

My Government intends to continue this legislative process during this year with the enactment of the Plant Varieties Bill and the Undisclosed Information Bill among others.

Law Revision

Throughout last year My Government initiated discussions with an English firm with a long record of printing and publishing laws in many Commonwealth countries towards the conclusion of a contract for the revision of the entire body of the Laws of Saint Lucia. Because of the length of time since the last revision in 1957, the task is of gargantuan proportions and of significant cost. I am therefore pleased to announce that a creative solution has been found, following several rounds of negotiation between the firm and the office of the Attorney General, which will permit:

- (a) the complete revision of the Laws of Saint Lucia; and
- (b) the production of Annual Supplements to the revised Laws for a period of seven (7) years following the completion of the revision exercise.

The firm, Eyre and Spottiswoode, will establish a law revision and law publishing office in Saint Lucia, which office will constitute the regional base for the firm's operation in the Caribbean region. Through this approach, a number of Saint Lucians will be involved in this process thereby ensuring that local professionals will develop a capacity for law revision utilizing new technology.

Subject to Cabinet's subsequent approval, My Government hopes to sign a contract with Eyre and Spottiswoode by month end so that this vital activity can commence in early June.

Tourism Legislation

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Tourism, as well as the hospitality business in general, has rapidly become the fastest growing sector of our economy. In recognition of this, My Government is concerned that the tourism industry be supported by an enabling legislative environment, which permits speedy and flexible decision making with enough certainty to permit investors in that sector to make knowledgeable investment decisions.

Representations in this regard have already, been made by the Minister with responsibility for Tourism and My Government in response to these representations intends to conduct a thorough review of all existing laws relative to the tourism sector with a view to creating a more efficient, transparent and effective legal regime for the further development of this sector.

This review will affect the Tourism Incentives Act, and will include the enactment of new laws to better regulate the yachting and transportation sub-sectors. In keeping with My Government's style of governance, this review process will be broadly consultative and participatory.

Aliens Licensing Regime

The current Aliens Licensing Act provides, as did its predecessors, inter alia, for a licensing regime regulating the acquisition of land, or interest in land, the acquisition of shares and directorships in local companies by persons falling within the definition of "alien".

In recent times My Government has been reflecting upon the provisions relating to the acquisition of shares in and directorship of local companies. In a liberalized and competitive commercial environment, the new realities of globalization make it highly questionable whether our best interest are being served by a regime that restricts positive business developments. Indeed, my Government is on record as a strong supporter of investment flows into Saint Lucia through the medium of joint ventures. It is doubtful whether a restrictive licensing regime assists this policy.

As a result, my government intends to initiate discussions on aspects of the aliens licensing regime with a view to finding the legal means to facilitate greater involvement of foreign participation in local business ventures while extending reasonable and necessary protection to local interest. It is my government's hope that this activity and the necessary legislative changes can be completed before year-end.

These measures, which represent only the most important of the new legislative initiatives to be undertaken by My Government, will continue the exciting programme of creative legislative changes designed to facilitate the tremendous task of societal transformation which My Government has set itself.

Work Permits

With the advent of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, and in light of the difficulties that employers have been experiencing, My Government will be completely reviewing and modernizing the work permit legislation. My Government was being assisted in this effort by a Committee headed by Mr. Peter Devaux – prominent businessman, Mr. Michael Gordon – lawyer and proprietor of the Voice newspaper and Mr. Lawrence Poyotte an experienced trade unionist. My Government is grateful for their voluntary goodwill in re-shaping this vital mechanism. While protecting the birthright of St. Lucians to employment in their own land, we need to simplify procedures and improve the efficiency of the process. The pace of market liberalization necessitates freedom of movement within a wider economic space, opening new opportunities for all.

My Government is committed to ensuring that, St. Lucian entrepreneurs are well positioned to take full advantage of whatever advantages are to be gained from the widening and deepening of the regional single market. This resolve will have to be matched by a more innovative, and competitive approach and a willingness to take greater risks.

Transformation of NDC

My Government will be preparing the necessary legal instruments to facilitate the transformation of the National Development Corporation as the front door to investment in our economy. The National Development Corporation will be redesigned to focus exclusively on investment promotion. The intense competition for international capital and foreign investment have made it imperative that institutions such as the NDC operate with greater speed and latitude of operation. Its transformation into a one-stop agency in which an investor can bring the entire investment cycle to full and satisfactory fruition is what will provide it with the competitive leverage to function successfully in the new economic climate.

CONCLUSION

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, Sen Francis d'Assisi té ekwi an ti lapwiyè koté i ka mandé Bondyé pou ba li sajès-la pou konnèt diféwans-la ant sa i sa kontwolé épi sa ki hòd kapabilité'y. Sé ti lapwiyè sala mwen ka mandé tout moun péyi-a pwédé an lavi pèsonnèl yo kon an lavi piblik yo an sé tan-an ki ka vini an. Tan-an ka apwoché ankò lè nou kay envité pèp Sent Lisi pou chwézi Gouvèdman péyi-a. Mwen ka plédé épi tout Sent Lisyen pou konpoté kò yo épi wèspé épi dignité. Mwen ka mandé'w pou wèspèkté lopinyon ében chwa lézòt menm si ou pa dakò épi yo. Pa potjiwé kò'w ében lézòt dézagwéman. Pa détwi wépitasyon péyi-a. Sé sel léwitaj nou ni vwéman. Tjenn li senn é sòv. Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker, nou apwann di ki lavwa di pèp sé lavwa di Dyé. Alò sé épi lasiwans sala mwen ka pwiyé benediksyon'y asou nou tout an tan-an ki ka vini an.

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi --- the wish that the people of St. Lucia would enjoy the gift of discernment in this period to be able to identify reality from rhetoric, fact from fiction, what can respond to human interference and what is beyond our capacities to influence, and the wisdom to know the difference, remains an important guide to the way we should conduct our

public life in this period. It is my sincere hope that we guide ourselves by the directives of this great theologian as My Government continues to fulfill its democratic mandate. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, as the time approaches when the Public Will must again be formally consulted, the watchwords of unity, tolerance, fairness and justice which has guided our public life, must continue to guide us in these moments when the public debate, argumentation and differences of opinion will, as expected, become more pervasive and intense as we broaden and deepen the boundaries of our democracy.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, it is now my distinct pleasure to declare open the Fifth Session of the Seventh Parliament of St. Lucia.