



GOVERNMENT OF SAINT LUCIA

THRONE SPEECH 2003

By

Her Excellency Dame Dr. C. Pearlette Louisy

on the Occasion of the Opening of the Third Session

Of the Eighth Parliament of Saint Lucia

April 8, 2003

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Mr. President and Members of the Senate
Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly

Even as we meet to once again conduct, in an orderly tradition, the solemn business of our people, the fog of war has descended abroad and we stand transfixed before the daily images of death and the unfolding spectacle of a world in transition. It is not just the outcome of the current battles that is at stake, but the consequence of the war. For in declaring war ahead of the consensus of the international community, long term stability may well have been sacrificed for short-term security. Only history will determine whether this focus on a clear and present danger was prescience or shortsightedness.

All of this might seem far removed from us and our simple insular reality but the world is now truly a global village and within the safety of our living rooms we can view in real time the destructive wrath of war. Every day that this conflict is prolonged deepens the uncertainty of the stock market and the volatility of oil futures. A prolonged war will have an adverse effect on the world travel market with serious implications for our tourism industry. Even at a diplomatic level the present conflict will place Saint Lucia under intense scrutiny and pressure as Saint Lucia assumes the Presidency of the United Nations General Assembly later this year. To our country therefore will fall the onerous responsibility of navigating the troubled waters of multilateral diplomacy to steer the UN back on a course of dialogue, mutuality and respect for the sovereignty of all states.

A VORTEX OF ECONOMIC FORCES

Mr. President and Members of the Senate
Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly

A vortex of international proportions is conspiring against the self-determination of small states and economies. The winds of international trade liberalization, globalization and competition are posing major challenges to the economic sustainability of this nation, to a magnitude that has never been experienced in the past. In fact, this nation will have to adjust to three different pressures that currently exist within the global environment. Firstly, the projection of a sharp short global economic recession has not materialized, and therefore small countries such as Saint Lucia have suffered the adverse impact of a more prolonged decline in demand for international leisure travel. The daily news from the developed world is punctuated with numerous incidents of corporate bankruptcies and job losses, epitomizing the prevailing world economic circumstances.

Secondly, the Iraqi War will amplify the many problems that Saint Lucia and other small countries are grappling with. The uncertainties over the duration of the war will undoubtedly further dampen the prospects for an early recovery in the global travel market, diminish confidence in the prospects of global economic recovery, and lessen investment within the domestic and the international economies. The news of a slump in

the value of securities exchanges worldwide, the recent volatility in oil prices, and evidence of diminished business confidence, are testament to the prevailing economic environment.

Thirdly and more significantly, is the rising tide of trade liberalization and negotiations for membership into regional trading blocks, which are redefining the modalities for trade in this new era. The ongoing negotiations of the EU-ACP and WTO agreements, access to FTAA and the move towards the CARICOM Single Market and Economy will all have significant implications for Saint Lucia in the near and medium-term. In every sphere of these arenas of negotiation, the common thread is towards the ultimate removal of preferential access to markets for goods and services, subsidies and other barriers to trade. For instance, the year 2008 marks the horizon for the current preferential arrangements enjoyed by the banana sector. It is our collective responsibility to do what is necessary to survive in the post preferential access era. The compliance requirements of the EU-ACP and FTAA and WTO agreements will unquestionably erode the current revenue base of the public sector. We will therefore have to find alternative measures to continue to finance the development process.

In light of those developments, there will be a need for strengthening of the planning process and incorporation of all social partners in the development thrust, improvements in productivity in both the public and private sectors, and heightened capital formation. Having already established the National Economic Council towards this end, My Government eagerly awaits the Council's recommendations. Within the ambit of a wide-ranging Memorandum of Agreement with the University of the West Indies St. Augustine, we have also received the offer of high-level regional expertise to assist in the development of a national plan that will take account of the exigencies and volatility of today's world.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker

Nou vini ansanm ankò an kay konsit péyi-a pou pwézanité sé plan-an gouvèdman mwen an ni pou lanné-a ki ka vini an, pou défwiché adan sé pwòblenm-lan nou kay ni pou lité kont lan, épi pou ankouwajé tout moun péyi-a pou fè tout sa yo pé, pou fè fòs kò yo pou asiwé ki Sent Lisi fè kalité pwogwé-a nou ni pou fè a pou éwisi an sé tan twistès sala.

Nou pa sa kontiné konpòte kò nou akwèdi sa ki ka fèt oliwon latè-a sé pa zafè nou, ében i pa ka afèkté, swé di byen ou di mal, lavi nou ében dévlopman péyi-a. Gadé pa ègzanmp, sa ki ka fèt oliwon latè-a sé jou sala. Touléjou, nou ka tann nouvèl di biznis lot péyi, ni go ni piti, ki ka fèmé, ében ki an fayit; hototo moun ka pèd twavay yo; pwèskè tout lékonomi latè-a an déklinan.

Tout lajouné, nou ka tann épi nou ka wè sa ki ka fèt épi ladjè-a ki ka pwan kou an Iraq-la. Tout moun vlé wété pwé kay yo; moun pè voyagé lwen péyi yo. Pwi lwil machin ka hosé jòdi, ka bésé denmen. Valè lajan épi linvestisman ka mouté, i ka désann. Tout moun ka èspéwé wè ki mannyè ladjè-a kay afèkté pa Iraq sèlman, mé tout laté-a. Tout moun antjèt: ni gouvèdman, ni jan biznis, ni twavayè.

Epi apa di sa, Sent Lisi ka touvé kò'y an plenn négosyasyon avèk kat diféwan òganizasyon tout alafwa. Pwemyéman, nou ni sé diskisyon-an ki ka pwan kou ant sé péyi Europe-la épi se peyi Afwitjen, Kawibéyen épi sé péyi Pasifik-la. An menm tan-an nou ni WTO-a asou do nou; pa palé di FTAA-a, sa yo ka kwiyé Free Trade Area of the Americas-la ki ka koumansé dépi Alaska wivé jis about Améwik di Sud-la. Epi an pa lapòt nou menm, nou ni CARICOM. An tout sé négosyasyon sala, sé yon sèl vwa ki ka palé. Ki sa'y ka di? Pa depan ankò asou potèksyon pou podwi nou ében sèvis nou asou laplas wéjonal-la épi intènasyonal-la. Apwé 2008, pa ègzanmp, lendoustwi fig péyi-a kay ni pou wè pou kò'y.

M. Pwézidan, M. Speaker,

Sé kont sé kalité pwoblenm sala, épi sé twakasan sala nou ni pou lité pou dévlopé lékonomi péyi-a. Sé fo nou byen konpwann sa ki ka fèt oliwon latè-a pou nou sa apwésyé wèspansabilité chakan di nou an gwan twaway sala nou ni douvan nou an.

MODERNIZING OUR SOCIETY AND INSTITUTIONS

The vision articulated by My Government has always recognized that the modernization of our society and its institutions constitutes a fundamental responsibility of our generation. The mandate and functions of key public institutions must be revisited in light of the new challenges and very different conditions that render them virtually obsolete in the current social environment.

In too many cases, our social institutions and in particular those agencies charged with the public welfare, have over the years simply continued to perform the essential duties delegated to them, without a pause for reflection on the rapidly changing environment and the even more dramatic transformation of the needs that they address. The ensuing disconnect is therefore not simply the result of institutional ageing but also the mismatch between capacity and demand. Time and tide have brought us to this inescapable moment when immediate and decisive action is required.

This is the process that necessitated the construction of a new prison so that both the humanity of prisoners and the public safety could be preserved. This is the reality that has spurred the establishment of new sporting facilities around the island. These new facilities represent far more than their immediate functions as a national stadium or a national cricket ground. They constitute a new infrastructure around which healthy lifestyles can coalesce and an opportunity to rise to new international standards of sporting competitiveness.

The renovation of our social infrastructure will necessitate two further capital investments by my Government - a new psychiatric hospital financed by the People's Republic of China and a new general hospital financed by the European Development Fund. While this investment represents a decisive commitment to improving the health of our people, My Government understands clearly that ultimately the well-being of the nation is not simply a function of the infrastructure, but depends on the adoption of proactive and healthy lifestyles. Governmental agencies will therefore be required to

work more collaboratively on common agendas. The convergence of the Ministry of Commerce's Buy Local Campaign with the thrust by the Ministry of Health for greater consciousness of local nutrition, the teaching of food and nutrition in our schools and the student competitions using local products only is a good example of the approach that we need to take in the coming period.

My Government has responded to the cry of our disciplined personnel for better working conditions by completing a comprehensive rehabilitation of both working and residential facilities around the island used by the Police and by a construction program for the extension of the Fire Service in areas of major demographic growth.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the ultimate test of the capacity of any society is its general level of education. And indeed successive administrations have made education a national priority. My Government has sought to build and extend on this tradition by conceptualizing a comprehensive Education Sector Development Plan and by assiduously proceeding to implement it. The modernization of education is an inescapable element of the modernization of society itself. My Government has reached the stage in accordance with the provisions of the Education Sector Development Plan for the attainment of universal secondary education. A place in secondary school for every child achieving the readiness for secondary education.

Universal Secondary Education will change the face and character of Saint Lucian society by opening new doors of opportunity for unprecedented numbers of our children.

In effect we are modernizing the pillars of our society. But one sector is crying out for reform, and that is health.

MODERNIZATION OF HEALTH

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

My Government admits that the health care system – as currently constituted – is not providing quality care and service to our people. Despite strenuous efforts in the past few years to change this situation, progress has been textured rather than universal. At the heart of the problem is financing. Over sixty percent (60%) of Saint Lucians do not pay their medical bills to the public sector institutions. Some clearly cannot pay; others can but will not pay. The burden of payment is therefore carried by some and this is manifestly unfair.

My Government has appointed a Task Force under the chairmanship of Ms. Emma Hippolyte to look into this vexing dilemma of health care financing. The Task Force will, in the course of this financial year, engage civil society on the options available. My Government will also appoint a Commission to inquire into and report on the terms and conditions of employment of nurses and doctors. The Commission will be required :

- To conduct an assessment of payment mechanisms of health providers currently being used in Saint Lucia to ensure appropriate differentials in compensation, taking into account the significant differences in the levels of responsibility between one practitioner and another ;
- To examine existing incentives within the system and assess their influence in achieving declared social and health sector goals ;
- To identify options for modification and assess them relative to Saint Lucia's policy priorities, technical, legal and institutional feasibility ;
- To identify specific conditions that are required for the implementation of modifications in payment mechanisms to health providers.
- To review the existing policy of dual (private/public sector) employment status of health care professionals specifically:
 - To examine hours of work vis-à-vis compensation
 - Quality assurance – the number of patients seen vis-à-vis the number of expected clinical hours engaged
 - To determine potential areas of conflict of interest

- To make recommendations to Cabinet on modifications in payment mechanisms to health providers taking into consideration the economic resources to Saint Lucia in the prevailing economic circumstances.

My Government expects that these potentially contentious issues will be examined in full dialogue with all stakeholders and that the recommendations of this Commission will reflect the best interest of all affected.

The problems and challenges facing us in the health sector must be corrected before we arrive at the stage of operationalizing the new hospitals so that the problems of the past are not carried over into the infrastructure of the future.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker,

Si sé pou nou modènizé sosyété nou an, sé pou nou pawé pou fè sé chanjman-an ki méwité fèt la an sé institusyon-an épi sé sèvis sosyal péyi-a. Paski byen défwa, sé sa ki ka annékòz anchay sé pwoblenm-la nou ka wankontwé-a. Si nou dépanse lajan pou bati an pwizon nèf, sé pa pou sitiye moun ki ka konmèt kwim épi dèt pasdwa, mé pou potéjé sékourité piblik péyi-a. Sé dé stadium nèf-la an Vyé Fò épi Beausejour, sé pa pou fè bèl fas, mé pou ankouwajé pèp péyi-a pou pwan pli pokosyon épi santé yo, épi dévlopé talan yo an ling di spò, pou endé yo patisipé o nivo intenasyoanl kon lézòt.

An sé tan-an ki ka vini-an, Gouvèdman kay bati dé lopital nèf: yon lopital généwal épi an lopital sikiyatrik ki kay wamplasé lopital LaToc-la. Gouvèdman kay pwan démach sala paski i dako ki nou pòkò ka ofè kalité sévis sante-á nou méwité-a. Mé sé fo nou asèpté wèsponsabilité nou pou soutni kalité sèvis-la nou vlé-a. Plis pasé swasant pousan St. Lisyen pa ka péyé lajan yo ka dwé lopital piblik. I ni sa ki pa sa péyé, mé i ni osi sa ki sa péyé, mé ki wifizé péyé. Sa pa dwèt !. I ni lòt démach ki kay konsidiwé pou anméliowé

sèvis santé péyi-a, épi nou kay vini oti'w pou wékonmandasyon'w. Sé fo nou mété tout sé bagay sala an plas avan sé lopital nèf sala ouvè.

Nou ka kontiné fè pwogwé an ling di édikasyon, épi touswit, nou kay sa ofè chak jenn moun an plas adan an lékòl sékondè.

Piti a piti, bagay ka maché. Epi pasyans èk détèminasyon, nou kay éwisi.

ISSUES OF GOVERNANCE

From its assumption of the mantle of national responsibility, My Government has confronted issues of governance as a major challenge in the redefinition of development. In this financial year, three major initiatives are planned.

The first is the reform of Cabinet to make it more policy oriented and to encourage greater devolution of authority to Ministers subject to appropriate rules of accountability. This measure will enable Cabinet to play a more proactive role in addressing strategic national concerns while exercising greater supervision on the apparatus of government.

Related to the first measure is the acceleration of the process of public sector reform. A Task Force on Public Sector Reform comprising some of the top public service managers as well as representatives of the private sector and the public service unions is already in place. It is charged with the responsibility of guiding the reform process and ensuring that every public servant is challenged to play an active role in that process. My Government is clear that public sector reform is not a top-down process but one that requires the broadest and widest participation of all public servants in identifying the bureaucratic and other bottlenecks that impede progress and in shaping solutions for greater productivity and public accountability.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, My Government firmly believes that a platform of sound laws capable of sustaining an orderly socio-economic environment is fundamental to peace, prosperity and good governance.

With this in mind we will continue to pursue an aggressive agenda of law reform and law revision and to enact new laws to empower this nation to respond more effectively to recent events which threaten the peaceful development of all democratic nations.

During the year just passed, work on the revision of the laws of Saint Lucia continued on schedule and I fully expect that this vital project will be completed on time, according to plan. It will indeed be a great day, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, when policy makers, judges, magistrates, legal practitioners, law students and the general public can be assured of an up-to-date set of laws in the conduct of their business.

Also, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, another vital project, the modernization of our civil law, is well underway. During this session of this Honourable Parliament the first phase of the Civil Code Reform Project will be completed and the process of drafting a new draft Civil Code should commence early in the year 2004. My Government expects that broad public consultation on the draft Code will commence during the second half of that year.

In this new Session of Parliament, in addition to completing the enactment of certain laws carried over from our previous Session, My Government intends to pay particular attention to the following areas:

- (i) laws affecting regional and international trade;
- (ii) laws to deal with the threat of terrorism;
- (iii) laws to offer greater and more effective protection to our children and juveniles;
- (iv) laws to introduce greater efficiencies in the administration of justice.

Laws to Operationalize CARICOM

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker

The CARICOM Single Market and Economy is about to become a reality following the signing and ratification of the Revised Treaty of Chagaramas by various members of CARICOM.

This development is germane to our ability as small states to continue to survive, and even thrive, within a less accommodating international order. But in order for the C.S.M.E. to become an effective vehicle for survival, an appropriate platform of laws is imperative. Equally imperative is the creation of appropriate institutions to facilitate orderly resolution of trade disputes and authoritative interpretations of the revised Treaty. Early in this new Session of Parliament therefore, my Government will introduce legislation to give effect to the Caribbean Court of Justice Agreement, thereby replacing the British Privy Council with the Caribbean Court of Justice as Saint Lucia's highest, and final, appellate court.

My Government will work assiduously with the newly established Legislative Drafting Facility of CARICOM and the OECS to ensure speedy enactment of the legislation required to support the C.S.M.E. These include laws concerning consumer protection, fair trading, aliens licensing, dumping and countervailing duties, and domestic financial services laws.

Terrorism

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, following the shocking events of September, 2001 (9/11) very few nations on this planet needed to be actively persuaded about the necessity for

strong counter-terrorism measures domestically, and effective international cooperation thereupon.

My Government has already taken certain measures in response to the potential use of our beloved country by those seeking to destroy other nations' citizens. These measures must be supported by effective legislation designed to strengthen the capacity of our local law enforcement personnel to monitor, investigate, apprehend and bring to justice any person who attempts to use Saint Lucia's soil to commit an act of terrorism, whether within Saint Lucia or on foreign soil.

In this regard my Government will be enacting three important pieces of legislation during this Session of Parliament, viz., a Terrorism Act, an Interception of Communications Act and a Civil Asset Forfeiture Act.

Saint Lucia will continue its diligent efforts, to establish a well-managed Financial Intelligence Authority, within the framework of a national system for collecting, analyzing and acting upon sound intelligence.

Protection of children and juveniles

A society cannot consider itself civilized or lay claim to decency and humanity if it does not take every measure to ensure proper protection of the most vulnerable in its midst. Among the most vulnerable are our children. The Hon. Prime Minister has already announced that this year will be recognized as the year of the Saint Lucian child. To support this initiative the Attorney General has concluded discussions with a regional drafter of considerable experience to assist in the preparation of a suite of laws designed to promote a safe and nurturing environment within which our children may grow.

The laws relating to the protection of children and juveniles, adoption, and foster care will all be radically revisited during this exercise.

Improving the Administration of Justice

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker,

One of the pillars of a sound economy and stable social relations is a properly functioning justice system. The very best fiscal and economic policies and the most progressive social policies will all eventually fail to produce the good life that we all long for, if the justice system is dysfunctional. It is therefore a cardinal responsibility of those charged with the management of that system to ensure this functionality.

In Saint Lucia, one of the more significant areas of deficiency in the justice sector is the criminal justice system. The weaknesses herein are many and they result in frustrating delays and frequent injustices.

My Government recognizes that our Constitution provides for a shared management of the justice sector: on the one hand certain powers and duties are reserved exclusively for

the Supreme Court while in other respects, authority is reposed in the arms of the Executive. Concerns about definition of responsibilities between the Executive and the Judiciary, public trust and confidence in the Judiciary, efficient delivery of judicial services and technological modernisation of the Judiciary prompted My Government to propose to the Government of the other OECS States that a Judicial Review Commission be established to assess the effectiveness of the justice system. Notwithstanding the full agreement by Heads of the OECS this initiative has so far failed to move forward positively. In fact, it is a pity that the efforts being made by My Government along with the other Governments of the OECS to re-engineer systems, processes and structures within both the Supreme Court and the Magistracy are not generally known.

My Government has nevertheless decided that in light of the pressing need for fundamental reform of the criminal justice system in Saint Lucia, it cannot stand still. We will therefore in this year put in place the various measures necessary to establish a Criminal Division of the High Court. This will have the effect of ending the system of periodic assizes and provide for year-round hearing of criminal cases by the High Court.

Naturally this initiative will require proper planning and adjustments on the part of all parties in the system but My Government is convinced that the merits of this approach will be appreciated and a vigorous effort will be made by all to implement this valuable initiative.

Constitutional responsibility for the management of the affairs of the District Court rests with the Executive and in obedience to its duties under our Constitution My government will continue to redouble its efforts to provide the people of Saint Lucia with a Magistrates Court that can deliver justice freely, fairly and in an efficient manner.

My Government believes it is critical at this juncture that the District Courts Ordinance be reviewed with a view to its reform, in the interest of a more robust, responsive and accountable magistracy.

Further My Government has requested of the OECS/CIDA Judicial Reform Project that Saint Lucia become the pilot site for a study on ways to integrate Justices of the Peace into the justice system. The Justices of the Peace Association has long signaled its desire to work closely with the District Court to facilitate speedier and greater access to justice.

I expect that a small committee will soon be established to conduct this study and my Government eagerly awaits its findings. Without prejudice to those findings, My Government must indicate its desire to see suitably selected and trained Justices of Peace assisting in the dispensing of justice in matters such as uncontested traffic charges, use of obscene language and damage to property cases.

Allow me to conclude my remarks on this subject by alerting you, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that in the course of this session, this Honourable Parliament will also be asked to enact new laws relating to the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force. A draft Police Service Bill is already in existence and following further refinement by the Attorney General's Chambers, it will be circulated for discussions. In addition draft police

regulations concerning discipline, governance and promotions are expected to be completed early in the month of May. My Government is determined that the current efforts to reform the management and operations of the Police Force will be supported by the appropriate legislative infrastructure.

YEAR OF THE CHILD

As indicated earlier, My Government has expressed concern about the treatment of children in our society and it is its intention to declare the year starting November 20th 2003 - 2004 as the Year of the Child. November 20th is the International Day of the Child, and such a designation will serve to give expression to the reality that our children are our collective responsibility, and that the care and protection of children ought to be a national priority. Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the care and protection of the child is about action and collective responsibility. Our actions with respect to the designation of the Year of the Child must be to put strong legislation in place to protect children's rights; it must be about developing a coalition of social forces inclusive of Churches, Non-Governmental Agencies and social clubs that act on behalf of children's needs and interests; it must involve ensuring that the social welfare apparatus of government is retooled and reenergized to safeguard and protect children.

We must all be clear however that putting our children first is at once an individual and collective responsibility and that while government has a central role to play in this process, none can escape the judgment of accountability.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker,

Mòdènizé sé institusyon épi sé sèvis sosyal péyi-a san mòdènizé sé lwa péyi-a sé lavé lanmen swiyé atè. Sé pou wézon sala Gouvèdman ka mété tèlman inpotans asou modènizasyon sé lwa péyi-a. Diwan lanné-a ki ka vini an, twavay kay kontiné asou sé lwa sivil péyi-a. Mé nou kay antanmé osi lwa ki kay wéglé biznis wéjonal épi intenasyonal; lwa ki kay wéglé zafè terroris; lwa ki kay bay manmay épi jenn moun pli potèksyon, épi sa ki kay wéglé ladministwasyon sistenm jistis péyi-a.

Ou ja tann palé di démach ki ka pwan kou pou lonmen lanné 2003-2004 Lanné Manmay Sent Lisi. Gouvèdman kay pasé sèten lwa nèf ki kay bay manmay péyi-a pli potèksyon kont tout sé maltwètman-an yo ka soufe-à anba lanmen manman, papa, fanmi, étwanjé, pa ègzanmp. Nou ka kwiyé asou tout moun – asou légliz, asou tout òganizasyon sosyal - pou twavayé épi yonnalòt pou endé manmay péyi-a jwi pitites yo épi linosans yo.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker,

Nou pa sa palé di lwa si nou pa palé di sistenm jistis péyi-a. La, malèwézman, bakay pòkò ka maché konm i fo. Diwan lanné-a ki ka vini-an, nou kay wè yonn dé chanjman an ling di ladministwasyon sistenm jistis péyi-a. Nou ka tjenn Konsèy, pa ègzanmp, diwan tout lanné-a; pas sèlman twa fwa pa lanné. Nou kay ègzaminé mòd majèstwa épi avoka

ka tjenn lodyans pou wè ki mannyè nou sa fé zafè jistis péyi-a sa maché pli vitman, san sé halékasé-a ki ka pwan kou atjwèlman-an.

Misyé Pwézidan, Misyé Speaker

Nou ja pasé anchay twakasan, anchay soufwans, anchay sò an lavi péyi nou-an, mé nou ja apwann kouman pou tjenbé wèd épi pousé douvan. E sé sa nou ka kwiyé pwogwé; sé sa nou ka kwiyé dévlòpman. Sé wèsponsabilité chak généwasyon pou wanfosé twavay épi kontwibusyon ayèl yo; pou éwisi koté ayèl yo pa té éwisi; pou doubout pli dwèt, pou visyé pli lwen, pou pousé pli lwen. An fon tjè mwen mwen sav sé sa tout Sent Lisyen ka avodwé wè, ka avoudwé fè. Konsa mwen ka pwan’y asou kò mwen ankò pou invité tout moun péyi-a pou ègzamine tjè yo èk konsyans yo, épi pwan disisyon-an apati di jòdi-a pou mété diféwans nou asou koté an lantéwé péyi-a. Mwen ka pwédyé Bondyé souvan pou gidé nou tout pou nou sa konpwann ki sé nou ki ni pou lévé péyi nou an anlé; pou bay péyi nou an valè; pou bay jan péyi nou an valè épi wèspe-a yo méwité-a. Sé sèl sa ki kay sovè nou an kalité tan twistès-la épi difikilté-a ki ka vini-an.

CONCLUSION

Mr. President

Mr. Speaker

We have been through challenging times as a country and as a people and we have demonstrated an unshakeable steadfastness in the face of all that fate, history and circumstance have thrown at us. If one is to judge us through the things that we say about each other in the public arena, then history will record that we have been particularly harsh in our assessment of others. If we are to be judged by the accomplishments of our finest sons and daughters, then posterity will affirm that we are a people of great talent. If we are to be judged by our daily indiscretions and common failings, then mediocrity will be our downfall.

Next year 2004 will mark the twenty-fifth (25th) Anniversary of our National Independence. A quarter Century is only a short note in the long groan that is history but it nevertheless marks a milestone in our journey towards self-definition and self-determination. Our preparations for this event should include an intense process of critical reflection at the personal as well as the social level and thereby lay the basis for greater resolution of purpose by every Saint Lucian and by the nation as a whole.

The great challenge of history for each generation is to stand on the shoulders of its predecessors dwarfing their accomplishments, overcoming their indiscretions, and towering beyond their limitations. It is to stand taller, to see further, to walk further and to dream larger.

That I believe is also the heart-grown desire of every Saint Lucian in the quiet moment of their conscience. As Governor General, it is the privilege of office to seek to embody these aspirations and to be a focal point where differences dissolve and the common

humanity of the national circumstance prevails. I pray often that God in His infinite wisdom will guide our leaders and Saint Lucians of all circumstances to that apex of conscience and understanding. As we face the uncertain future of a world made infinitely more unstable in its economic turbulence, and made regrettably more inhuman by fanaticisms of religion and politics, it will take an even greater resolution of will on the part of all of us to prevail.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, it is now my distinct pleasure to declare open this Third Session of the Eighth Parliament of Saint Lucia.