

A BETTER WAY TO BUILD A JAMAICA THAT WORKS FOR ALL

A Contribution to the Budget Debate for Fiscal Year 2019/20

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Section 1: Acknowledgements

Mr Speaker,

None of us get to this House to make our contribution without the support, guidance or encouragement of others.

So, at the very outset, I would like to give thanks to those who have made it possible for me to be here and to participate once again in this Budget Debate.

First, much thanks and respect due to the people of East Central St Andrew, who have returned me as their Member of Parliament over the last twenty-five years.

I thank Councillors Nenna Wilson and Dennis Gordon, who represent the Hagley Park and Maxfield Park Divisions respectively, for their continued support as well as Waynette Strachan who leads our efforts in the Cassia Park Division. I am also indebted to all the members of the constituency executive and the divisional executives and the workers of the People's National Party in East Central St Andrew for their sustained love and support.

I would also like to thank my colleagues and comrades in the People's National Party – both those in the Parliament and those outside whose continuing guidance, support, encouragement and prayers have been of invaluable source of strength to me over the past years.

I would also particularly like to express my appreciation to my family. My wife, Sandra, is unable to be here today in person as she is overseas on business. Consequently, in addition to my son Mikael, who is always here with me, the family is represented by Luke, another son. Without the love and support of my entire family, the task I have taken on would be infinitely more difficult.

My other sources of personal support include my household staff and members of my security detail. As Leader of the Opposition, I am particularly indebted to my fellow Parliamentarians, Shadow Cabinet, the team at my office led by Imani Duncan-Price and at the Headquarters of the People's National Party, led by the General Secretary.

A special place is reserved for the thousands of Jamaicans who offer their prayers and their guidance for my success. They express their hopes and aspiration for our mission through personal conversation, emails, letters, messages, and the like.

To you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Clerk of the House and her staff, thanks are also due.

At every stage of my life, whether as a high school student; a young Rasta man; a Black Power militant; a lecturer at the University and especially as an elected representative of the people; and now as the leader of this great Party, the People's National Party, I've always been motivated to serve my fellow Jamaicans. Service has meant sharing their lives and helping them in every way possible to realize their hopes and aspirations.

Together, we will continue to work to build a Jamaica in which every citizen, regardless of class, colour, race or religion has access to the same opportunities for personal upliftment and for the fullest realization of their individual talents.

SECTION 2: The Official Narrative vs The People's Experience

As I listened to the Minister of Finance last week, I found myself reflecting on the discussions I've been having with the Jamaican people on my many walks in their districts, communities and through town centres across our beautiful island.

I listen to their concerns as they relate the stress of daily life, the worry about not making ends meet. I hear the same concerns from our teachers, the police, and women and men selling in the market.

I see the despair in the eyes of our farmers, the young men who see no options, small business owners who are struggling to survive, single mothers who shoulder life alone for their children.

My presentation today is for them.

It is a duty to be the voice for those Jamaicans who are excluded from much of the Minister's "official narrative".

- The Budget presented by the Minister of Finance brings to mind the first lines of the novel "The Tale of Two Cities" by the celebrated writer, Charles Dickens, "**it was the best of times, it was the worst of times**".
- The official story, given by the Minister, would say in effect that this is the best of times. But at best it is incomplete, and at worst, it is a distortion of the reality experienced by far too many of our people.
- Therefore, my presentation will concentrate on the people's experience.

Commendations

- However, let me first commend the present Administration for maintaining fundamental aspects of the Economic Reform Programme which they inherited from us.
- This matter was extensively and brilliantly dealt with by our Shadow Minister for Finance and Planning, the member from the South St. Andrew, on Tuesday.

- The progress made by the Economic Reform Programme, which started in 2013 has continued in the following areas:
 - The debt is further down
 - Job creation has continued
 - Some economic growth has been sustained
 - Revenues are up
- I note with particular satisfaction, the increase in revenues that have come as a result of the much-needed comprehensive tax reform we put in place, which is now bearing fruit for Jamaica as we expected.
 - We strengthened the administrative powers of the Tax Administration of Jamaica (TAJ)
 - We passed legislation for access to “third party” information and introduced transfer pricing rules.
 - We put in place measures to incentivize the productive sectors and improve the rate of return on investment.
 - An amendment was made to the Customs Act, which reduced duties on commodities and eliminated duties on all production inputs.
 - We reformed incentives to level the playing field for all sectors of the economy.
- **We must now examine whether the budget presented will use these increased revenues to improve the quality of life for the majority of Jamaicans.**

- **A careful reading of the budget presented by the Minister of Finance shows a lack of understanding of the workings of the economy, and even more painful, a lack of appreciation of the day-to-day realities of ordinary Jamaican people.**
- The Minister announced a \$14 billion tax give-back as the major component of a stimulus programme.
- The question is, who will get the tax give-back?
- Will it be the majority of those who made the sacrifice six years ago to initiate the Economic Reform Programme, which enabled these increased revenues?
 - the public sector workers whose sacrifice included a five-year wage freeze.
 - the financial sector
 - the pensioners, whose contribution can be likened to the “widow’s mite” for the fact that it represented what they could scarcely afford.
- Those who made these sacrifices should be the ones placed on the priority list.

The benefits that derive from the national economy should be shared by ALL the people and not given out as a “friends and family discount”.

The Economic Reform Programme and the Sacrifices

- The role of the Economic Reform Programme, together with the sacrifices of the Jamaican people to restore Jamaica’s financial stability, should not be taken lightly.
- I still recall the situation that existed before we embarked upon the Economic Reform Programme.
 - Jamaica had experienced 12 consecutive quarters of negative growth.

- Debt, which was 107 per cent of the GDP in 2007, was climbing
 - The then JLP Administration had effectively abandoned the 2010 IMF agreement after just one year.
 - They missed the majority of deadlines and structural benchmarks thereafter.
 - Poverty levels had doubled from 9.9% in 2007 to over 18% in 2011.
 - Jamaica lost credibility in the international financial markets.
 - Jamaica was deemed to be on the way to becoming a failed state.
-
- The road to the beginning of the Economic Reform Programme was particularly difficult.
 - I had to face the IMF, the IDB, the World Bank and the others who had scorned Jamaica.
 - Then there was the loneliness I often felt while negotiating the best deal for Jamaica while others kept urging me to sign whatever was being offered.
 - After successfully re-negotiating the IMF agreement, and re-establishing Jamaica's credibility by consistently passing the IMF tests, critics began belittling this achievement by saying all we could do is "pass IMF test".
 - Could we have gotten where we are today without passing those IMF tests?
 - Look what I live to come see! Those who were criticizing yesterday are the same ones reaping and rejoicing today.

- As we reflect on the period, it is clear that the critical factor in the success of the Economic Reform Programme was the support of the entire nation.
- We were able to mobilize this national support in 2013 because of the confidence the people had both our commitment and capacity to deliver.
- While all segments participated, let there be no doubt that it was the workers, the pensioners, and other consumers who bore the brunt of the tax packages that were then imposed. And the poorest bore the greatest burden.
- In light of this, it is a travesty of justice that those who sacrificed the most in the Economic Reform Programme are not getting any of the direct benefit.
- The budget presented by the Minister of Finance, “Santa Clarke”, gives us little comfort in the fact that it excluded the majority of Jamaicans from the Minister’s give back.
- This is NOT building a new Jamaica that works for all.

Section 3: The People’s Reality

In sharp contrast to the Minister’s official narrative of the “best of times”, the reality is that:

- The hospitals are overcrowded and under-equipped, and too many of our people, old and young, have died from the mismanagement of the dengue epidemic.

- Food prices are becoming increasingly unaffordable:
 - In the cook shop, like the one Ms. D runs. The size of the box lunch is being reduced to keep prices at the same level. The official inflation narrative does not reflect this reality.
 - Tanisha, a nurse, tells me at the supermarket, the dollar can't stretch – as she reaches the cashier, she is embarrassed as she has to put things back. Maas Harry, a pensioner, faces the same challenge.

The “**official narrative**” won't tell you that:

- Gas prices for motorists are higher today even though oil is at US\$55 per barrel today, almost half of what it was in 2013 when oil was US\$98 per barrel.

The “**official narrative**” won't tell you that:

- Last year Jamaica had the fifth highest murder rate in the world. Our people do not feel secure.
- Half of the City of Kingston is regularly without adequate water supply.
- On top of all of this is the reality of **Mismanagement and Corruption**.

In this Debate, Mr. Speaker, we have to recognize the experiences of the overwhelming majority of Jamaican people, who every day are struggling to make ends meet.

We must do this because the official narrative, your narrative, leaves them out!

There must be a Better Way!

The Minister's "**official narrative**" won't tell you that:

- Marcia, a bank teller, finds it hard to get to work and to get her children to school like so many Jamaicans, who have to contend with the increasingly ramshackle transportation system islandwide.
- It won't tell you that of those employed, over 700,000 are near or at the minimum wage, and are quickly losing hope of the prospect of a "Livable Wage". And these persons have families that depend on them.
- We can all easily agree that some work is better than no work. But when we look closely at the employment numbers what we find is that a significant part attracts very low wages relates primarily to "Other Community, Social and Personal Activities" like window wipers, vending, car washing. We can call this the "Hustling Sector" in Jamaica.
 - Those are not the signs of the sort of economic development that are usually relied on, or that give people meaningful income. We have to look beyond the figures.
 - It is also of significance, as was highlighted recently by former Prime Minister Bruce Golding, that a sample taken of recent UWI graduates indicates that the average wage earned by 25 per cent of the graduates is \$50,000 and 75 per cent earned under \$100,000 per month. How do they start life? Raise Families?

- Even some who are working, the working class, are one prescription bill or one kidney dialysis, or one medical event away from abject poverty.
- Now, while some jobs have been created, let us not lose sight of the reality of the 474,350 who are not working nor looking for work. They seem to have given up hope.
- While Johnny and Marie might get a short term job, Mikey and Dotty are outside the labour force. Where are they in this budget? Where are they in the Minister's official narrative?
- All these people were hoping that the Budget, presented by the Minister, would have better explained their present hardships and presented real opportunities to better their lives.

Simply put, their lives are NOT heading in the right direction.

There must be a Better Way!

What Growth?

- Not only is your official narrative out of touch with the people's reality, it is also woefully out of touch with your own growth projections. **No matter how you want to nice it up!**
- **If 5 in 4 was abandoned last year, this budget buries it!**
- We are now in year 4! And you a talk about 1.5% growth!

- No better proof exists of the failure of the Holness Administration to deliver meaningful growth than the abandonment of its own 5 in 4 mantra!
- Your failure to grow the economy is also being confirmed in the international community. In this regard, the observations made by the Shadow Minister of Finance and Planning, are well worth repeating for emphasis, because many of the gains previously made are being squandered.
- Over the past year, Jamaica's ranking has fallen on critical Global Indices that measure enabling factors for growth.
 1. The World Bank Report on the 'Ease of Doing Business' rank, Jamaica fell from 70 to 75.
 2. This decline is also reflected in the Forbes 'Best Countries for Business' Report, which shows Jamaica falling from 72 to 80
 3. Jamaica fell from 68 to 70 on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index
 4. And World Economic Forum's Global Competitiveness Report points to Jamaica falling from 70 to 79.

This is NOT heading in the right direction.

Section 4: GOVERNMENT MISMANAGEMENT: MAKING LIFE HARDER FOR THE MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE

So, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the hardship the majority of Jamaicans face, and the likelihood that growth will remain anemic, the epic mismanagement or as we say in some quarters “**damagement**” by the government has made life even harder for the majority of the people. **They simply don’t know what they are doing!**

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Speaker

- We left a financed programme of road construction, together with a process for consultation and coordination to facilitate an implementation process with minimum disruption.
- This process is what made the implementation of the Portmore Highway a model with minimal disruption and every consideration for the travelling public and all commercial enterprises, large and small, including the fishing village.
- Under the Holness Administration the implementation of the road construction programme has become an albatross around the necks of both the travelling public and businesses alike. This is not management.
- This is **Damagement!**
- Who would contemplate locking down almost every major thoroughfare in the Corporate Area at one time?

- And when the decision was taken to lock them down there was neither provisions for notices for pedestrians, or motorists, nor dialogue with business operators in the areas affected to benefit from their views on how the pressures could be ameliorated. **More Damagement!**
- And to make matters worse the required coordination between the National Works Agency (NWA), as the Implementing Agency, the contractors and the other affected agencies seems to be non-existent.
- Imagine the inconsistency of trying to secure economic growth, and simultaneously closing down the businesses along Constant Spring Road, Hagley Park Road, Three Miles and around the Portia Simpson-Miller Square.
- Employees have had to be getting to work, arriving tired and frustrated, as a result of the inept scheduling of these projects to take place all at the same time.
- The road repairs and construction have been uncoordinated, with no thought given to mass transit. JUTC's buses cannot make the cycle trips required to move the commuting public, and there are long delays and traffic pileups.
- The daily dust bowl on Constant Spring Road affects everyone, especially the asthmatic!
- Mr. Speaker, this has become a classic example of the wisdom in the Jamaican proverb: "**Haste Mek Waste**"!

Damagement!

- Gas stations have closed, businesses have had to relocate, doctors' offices and other businesses have had to operate on an itinerant basis all because:
 - Their telephone services are down
 - Their internet is down
 - Water supplies disrupted
 - Their customers cannot access their premises

More Damagement!

Well, do I recall, the hell Roger Clark, of blessed memory, got for cutting down one (1) Guango Tree in Liguanea and the dislocation it was said to have caused. In contrast, there has been no apology from this administration for all the chaos and “damagement” they have visited on the Jamaican people.

Too many people are faced with emergencies, including medical emergencies, in this gridlock and nobody seems to care. And you telling Jamaica you're heading in the right direction?

This level of mismanagement represents an all-time high! Damagement!

It is not the first time that we are building roads in Jamaica.

When I was Minister of Transport and Works, we did Boulevard to 6-Mile, we did Hope Road, we did Washington Boulevard and so much more without the kind of chaos that we have to contend with today.

Let us not forget that the buck for this level of mismanagement stops at the Office of the Prime Minister!

Water: The Consequences

The **damagement** of the road programme also has other consequences.

- The lack of coordination has left hundreds of thousands of residents in the corporate area without regular access to water.

Why?

- Because in putting up an overpass the contractors ruptured the water main coming from Spanish Town to Kingston. Reports like that bring shame to Jamaica that has had a reputation for competence. **Who is in charge here?**
- To add insult to injury, the contractors again ruptured the pipe in the course of repairing the first rupture.
- But, Mr Speaker, I feel all of this particularly intense because Hagley Park Road business people are part of my constituency and the residents have been without adequate water for months.

- I want to thank the National Water Commission for having tried in difficult circumstances to respond to our pleas. Their assistance in trucking water to some of the areas is appreciated.
- But, I don't think the problem rests with them.
- This lack of coordination and Ministerial oversight seems to be common to the multiplicity of agencies, including Water and the Works Agency, which form part of the inflated Ministry of Economic Growth and Job Creation created in the Office of the Prime Minister.
- One would have assumed that a Ministry run by the Prime Minister and with oversight for ALL the agencies involved in the project would have been able to do a better job of coordination.

Damagement!

JUTC

- Mr. Speaker, in this catalogue of mismanagement forgive me if I single out what is apparently a deliberate attempt to destroy the Jamaica Urban Transit Company (JUTC).
- But this is one I know a lot about, having established it.
- This government seems content to subject the citizens of the capital city, once again, to an inadequate and demoralizing transport system indicates a callous indifference to the welfare of the people.

An indication of the deliberate depletion of the JUTC is that over the past two years:

- More than 100 buses have been taken out of service for lack of maintenance
- Fare revenues have fallen by over \$1 billion in the period between 2016-2018
- Projected losses of the JUTC for 2019/20 amount to \$9 billion – this is at its highest level ever.
- At the same time, the government without any plan for organized urban transport has simply put more and more taxis on the road to compete with each other and place the lives of the travelling public at risk.
- The taxi operators justly complain that the programme of urban physical infrastructure has not provided the parking facilities and other amenities, to bring some order to the service they provide.
- Barbican Square is a case in point!

We are returning to the period before the JUTC was established.

- The days of no ‘schoolers’ when our children had to fend for themselves on the buses resulting in death and injury.
 - Raymond, who was a student in those days, reminded me of the equalizing effect and dignity achieved for students when JUTC was introduced with buses just for students.

Damagement!

Mr. Prime Minister, please, on behalf of the people of Jamaica gives this disgraceful matter some urgent attention!

- The growth agenda will not be realized with public transportation in its present state of disarray.

Mr. Speaker, there must be a Better Way!

HEALTH

Health is yet another area of mismanagement. The result of poor health care delivery threatens the lives of ordinary Jamaicans every day.

- Health care delivery at the Cornwall Regional Hospital is well below acceptable standards.
- At the Bustamante Children's Hospital, there have been approximately 200 less procedures done in 2018, than they did in 2016. Just for clarity, it's not because of 200 less cases, it's because there was an inability to execute anymore.
- The Kingston Public Hospital (KPH) is now operating at 110 per cent of bed capacity – **that means that approximately one in every ten patients at KPH doesn't have a bed.** Patients have been sleeping in wheelchairs, on benches and even on the floor.

- This is not only happening at the KPH. We are hearing about it also happening at the Savanna-la-Mar Hospital, May Pen Hospital and the St Ann's Bay Hospital, and it may well be happening in other hospitals.

Damagement!

- **Mr. Speaker, there must be a Better Way!**
- All across the health system we see evidence day after day, that the "Free" health care policy is just an illusion.
- Were it not for the patriotism and professionalism of the doctors, nurses, medical professionals and health workers, and their commitment to delivering health care under **ALL** circumstances, the system would have completely collapsed.

Mr. Speaker, there Must be a Better Way!

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURE

- Another area that highlights the gross mismanagement of the Holness Administration is agriculture.
- For us on this side, a fundamental weakness of the budget presented is the failure to recognize that the re-building of the rural economy is the cornerstone of inclusive economic growth.
- It is also the pathway to wealth creation for rural families.

- Today, Jamaicans living in rural Jamaica will face the greatest levels of hardship and poverty since Emancipation.
- The collapse of export agriculture and in particular sugar, and the failure to modernize domestic agriculture has left the majority of Jamaicans who live in rural Jamaica facing poverty and has opened the doors for the proliferation of crime.
- Agriculture accounts for some 250,000 jobs and 7.5 per cent of GDP.
- When we add the families that these salaries provide support, we get a far more complete picture of the devastation and threats to Jamaica's progress.
- In the official narrative we are told that Agriculture is humming, with a 5 per cent growth. However, this is way below the potential of the sector.
- Incredibly, neither agriculture nor rural development are priorities in the Minister's economic model.
- How relevant can this economic model be in a country where the food import bill is surging to US\$1 billion (J\$127 billion), annually even as the quality of life in the farming communities is declining?
- This represents the biggest transfer of wealth from Jamaicans families to farmers overseas!
- All our major export crops are in crisis

This is not going in the right direction! There is a better way!

SUGAR

The crisis in the sugar industry is deepening.

The closure of Monymusk has resulted in some \$30 million dollars less spending in the neighbouring towns, which has reduced the economy of Southern Clarendon to shambles.

Westmoreland, the other major sugar producing parish, is also in crisis.

It is hardly a coincidence that the parishes of Clarendon and Westmoreland, where the decline in agriculture is most evident, have now become major centres of crime. As local economies in those parishes plummet, crime surges!

Indications are that the crisis will deepen with reports that Seprod is going to close their Duckenfield sugar factory in St. Thomas.

COFFEE

Look at Coffee. Three years ago, farmers were getting \$12,000.00 per box for Blue Mountain coffee beans. The last crop coffee was being purchased for \$3,000.00 per box. Clearly, our farmers cannot buy fertilizers, pesticides and all that goes into producing a crop if they only earn \$3,000.00 per box.

Nor can they take care of the education, health, shelter and the protection of their families with this reduced income.

While there has been some response from the private sector, there has been no response from the government, and no indication that it plans to intervene in the market to even-out prices to the farmers.

The government's indifference to rural Jamaica is much the same as how it treats the commuting public in urban Jamaica.

Under this Administration Jamaica still imports coffee beans for 'non-specialty coffee', while our farmers have beans rotting in the ground.

It is under this Administration that, little or no effort, has been made to give rural Jamaica an opportunity to grow with the tourism industry. It is this Government that finds it hard to ensure that only Jamaican Blue Mountain Coffee is served in hotels to expand the market for the product.

COCOA

When it comes to Cocoa, we have the same story of mismanagement.

Jamaicans know that our cocoa is among the best cocoa in the world. In fact, Jamaican cocoa is designated as "fine flavour" in the international market, which sets the stage for a premium price as compared with that which comes from Africa.

Over the past three years there has been further indications of government's gross mismanagement of the cocoa sector.

Damagement!

Mr. Speaker, let me repeat, without the modernization of agriculture as the cornerstone of rural development and inclusive growth, none of our growth targets will be met.

With the continued decline of the agricultural sector there will be even less opportunities for the present generation. The result of the decline in agriculture has been that many of our brightest young people have turned to illicit activities, such as scamming and worse. While tourism continues to grow, the ownership is not sufficiently broad-based to compensate for this significant falloff.

Section 5: CORRUPTION

Well, as bad as the mismanagement of the road construction programme is, as bad as the JUTC service has become, and as bad as in health services have been; they all pale in comparison to the rampant levels of barefaced **corruption, corruption and corruption in several State agencies that are taking place simultaneously.**

The news over the last year has detailed the gross mismanagement and corruption taking place in PetroJam, and the associated agencies of the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology, including the National Energy Solutions (NESoL) and the Universal Service Fund (USF).

The dimensions of the PetroJam scandal, itself are just absolutely mind boggling.

- \$18 billion for oil losses
- Directors reimbursed millions of dollars for travel, not taken
- Nepotism in the hiring of staff

- The breach of the procurement rules, resulting in overspending – nearly \$100 million for a wall that was initially estimated to cost \$29 million
- The country still can't get over the **4-tiered, Topsy Turvy, chocolate cake for US\$1000**

So, this Topsy Turvy cake was in early 2018; then it was followed by the infamous Wakanda Party with dancing girls and all.

Prime Minister, how many of your Ministers attended those parties? Not even one came back and told you, “boss this nuh right! “All like how so many people a suffer whilst they're living like billionaires at Taxpayer's expense”?

- Then there's the case of an employee with more political connections than qualification, was terminated with a “golden handshake” despite her poor performance. Was this payment “hush money”?
- Misrepresentation of the facts to the Parliament, regarding this same Golden Handshake for the infamous Human Resource Director.
- Misrepresentation of the facts to the Parliament regarding the plans for PetroJam (including its valuation)
- The list goes on and on

When you think about the harsh reality of life faced by the majority of Jamaicans, any government that oversaw the travesty, where:

- \$35 M was paid to one individual who was not qualified for the job; and
- \$35 M was found under the bed of an employee of NESoL, and there have been multiple arrests at NESoL

is just callous and uncaring.

And that's \$70 million between two people, Mr. Speaker!

It is particularly reprehensible, as these hundreds of millions of dollars that have been corruptly diverted could have provided:

- More beds for the hospitals (instead of having patients sleeping in wheelchairs)
- More vehicles for the police force to fight crime; and
- Provide better facilities for our schools

Instead of being diverted into the pockets of a minority of Jamaicans for their own personal prosperity.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, the PetroJam scandal is only the most spectacular, and perhaps just the worst up to now.

And you know, there is more to be unearthed!

But we should not forget all that has transpired over the three years that this government has been in power.

- It started before Year 1 had been completed with the Bushing scandal (\$800 million)
- There was the Police Used Cars scandal (\$241mn)
- Then the Firearm Licensing Authority Scandal
- The \$17 M Welcome sign in Montego Bay
- The Stolen Funds at Dunn's River Falls Scandal
- The Misuse of funds at the Students' Loan Bureau

You know, Mr. Speaker, I ask myself all the time, why is only the Scandal Bag that the Holness Administration banned?

The country need a ban on yuh one bag a scandal!

It is so bad that international agencies are taking notes. Just last week, the review team from the IMF found it necessary to publicly comment on the levels of corruption in the country. This is unheard of.

Yet you say we're going in the right direction!

The tiefing and mismanagement of public funds must stop!

Mr. Speaker, these scandalous activities are taking advantage of the people of this country and they must stop!

The Jamaican people are tired of being taken advantage of and ABUSED. You know, Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't be surprised if that American television production company, Lifetime TV, were on their way to Jamaica to produce a TV show called "Surviving the JLP".

BERNARD LODGE

Let us look at what is being proposed at Bernard Lodge.

In the 1980's, these lands were part of the Agro 21 Project. Extensive underground irrigation infrastructure was put in place with the assistance of USAID as part of the drive to get Jamaica into the winter vegetable production. This infrastructure is now valued at over tens of billions of dollars. The irrigation wells were rehabilitated a few years ago at a cost of \$6 billion, which was born by Jamaican taxpayers.

For over a decade, over 200 farmers, some with lease agreements and some who occupy lots with the knowledge of the National Land Agency, have been farming these lands.

They are now being told that they will be removed to make way for a chosen connected few who will be the beneficiaries of a new 'Bernard Lodge Development Plan'.

One of the 200 farmers is 25-year-old Pucci Williams. He maintains 140 acres in production from which he supplies calloo to an agro-processor for export, and onions which he sells to a mother farm. He recently signed a contract with Red Stripe to supply cassava. He had just cleared the land to plant the cassava when he was given notice to quit. He will now be uprooted.

This is the action of an Administration that presents a budget, which it claims supports agriculture and helps farmers to grow.

Mr. Speaker, what is being done with Bernard Lodge raises profound issues of policy and procedure.

- We know that the Development Plan was prepared without the participation of the farmers.
- The divestment of the property was not advertised.
- And the lands were sold before any land agreement has been normalized
- And without any tender process
- We understand a large part is to be taken out of agriculture and used for housing and commercial purposes

The 1997 Divestment Policy guidelines of the National Land Policy, where they deliberately changed to facilitate this transaction?

The public demands to know, the names of the connected few to whom these prime lands were sold and the conditions of sale.

The next thing we want to know is, what was the role of NEPA in all of this?

- In the past when private developers applied for housing permits on these lands, NEPA always objected on the credible basis of the environmental hazards, including damage to the water table, and the threat of salt water intrusion.
- Yet, to facilitate this Bernard Lodge development, it seems that NEPA changed its position despite the objection of Jamaica's foremost hydro-geologists.

Mr Speaker, what is happening at Bernard Lodge is a travesty!

You cannot create an economy that is more inclusive, by marginalizing innovative people from the mainstream of economic life over the years. These are the very people to be encouraged.

- The course of action on which you have embarked degrades the environment and pollutes the underground water supply of the country.

Bernard Lodge Plan confirms that the policy of this Administration is prosperity for a connected few at the expense of the majority.

Let me serve notice that the Opposition will be responding positively to a request from the farmers that we support their demand for justice and fair play.

- We are making a formal demand that the Government remove the road blocks denying the farmer's entrance to their farms.
- Reverse the decision taken to transfer the property to a chosen few.

- Invite the fullest participation of the farmers in the preparation of a new Development Plan.

We can observe a pattern of behaviour in this Administration's attitude towards who can't defend themselves against the state.

- We see it in the treatment of the vendors of the Constant Spring Market.
- We saw it in the destruction of the coffee crops in the Blue Mountains in St Thomas
- We saw it in the same callous treatment with over 100 farmers in Central Manchester.

This pattern of behaviour separates them from us.

We believe in the process of participation and involving the people in the decisions that affect their daily lives.

Section 6: SECURITY OF OUR CITIZENS

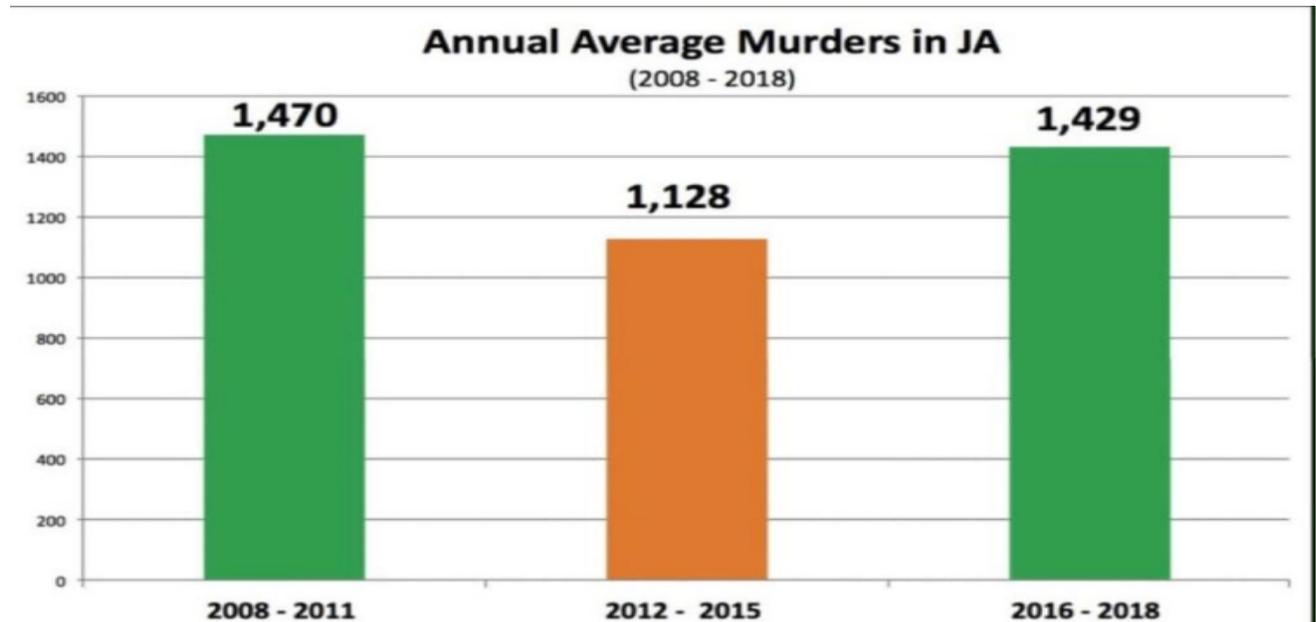
CRIME AND VIOLENCE

Mr. Speaker, the increase in murders over time is matched by the increase in corruption and mismanagement.

It is commonplace that in societies like ours, corruption feeds crime, and mismanagement has been often a cloak for corruption.

Under this JLP administration, all three have grown, hand in hand.

If we look at murders over the last 10 years, we see that during the JLP Administration 2008-2011 there were 1,470 murders on average per year. We took office in 2012 and during our tenure the annual average during our tenure was 1,128. Murders under this Holness Administration so far has again increased to average 1,429 per year, or 27% over the PNP years.



Why is this so?

This Administration has consistently refused to resource the police force adequately.

When the mobility of the Police Force became a critical factor in crime fighting, the response of the Holness Administration was to provide them with Used Cars.

- We told them that the Force needed more cars than the numbers they had been proposed to purchase, and no Police Force in the modern world was equipped with used cars for this kind of work.

- You went ahead and used what turned out to be a corrupt process to acquire these Used Cars. Those that have been supplied, as we told you, have proven to be unsuitable for police work. The rest is yet to be supplied.

As a result, the crime wave which came in 2017 found the mobility of the Police Force compromised.

After compromising the mobility of the Police Force, the Holness Administration then dealt a further blow to the Police Force by their handling of the public sector wage negotiations which began in 2016.

We advised you to take the JCF out of the standard line of public sector wage negotiations and bring them to the front given the urgency of the national crime situation. Our advice was not taken.

Instead, the JCF was left to the very end and asked to work way in excess of their normal hours, which left them for over 2 years without any increase in compensation.

Even as the crime wave placed the lives of Jamaican people at risk, your priority was not to use the available funds to adequately equip the police force.

Instead, your priority was to finance the 2016 election promise of the so-called tax break to give \$18,000 a month additional income.

The marginal increase in the 2017 budget was negated by inflation. So in real terms there was no additional funding.

Having demoralized and run down the police force, the budget increases in 2018 and 2019 are too little and too late.

Herein, lies the reason for the increase in murders under your watch.

Given the improved availability of resources in 2018/19 of which the Minister speaks, how does he explain the present low numbers of security forces deployed on the ground to combat the present crime wave? Why is the Holness Administration not using ZOSO in the crime affected areas of Westmoreland, St. James and Clarendon?

Mr. Speaker, ZOSO provides for:

- Deployment of joint security forces, police and soldiers together on the ground
- It gives the Security forces the same power of a State of Emergency to detain suspects, search and cordon etc.

The **only additional power of the State of the Emergency** is the indefinite detention of Jamaicans with no recourse to the courts.

And we contend that the abuse of human rights only creates animosity and division between the security forces and the community.

Since December last year, we have urged them to use the power of ZOSOs in the crime affected areas. To-date, ZOSOs have only been used in Mount Salem and Denham Town.

Prime Minister, you need to expand ZOSOs immediately!

However, in addition to ZOSO, Jamaica urgently needs a more effective crime fighting plan which includes amending the legislative framework and building the national consensus.

Unfortunately, on both counts this Administration has been painfully delinquent.

Notwithstanding your divisive and partisan comment that “a vote for the PNP is a vote for criminals,” we agreed to meet with you because we are committed to the safety and security of ALL Jamaicans.

When we met at Vale Royal on January 7, 2019, we had agreed that the Attorney General and the Opposition Spokesperson on Justice would meet to look at possible legislative measures that would support the fight against crime. That date was only set on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 (2 days ago!).

- At that meeting, we further agreed to meet on January 16, 2019 with other stakeholders, with a view to finding a way to build a consensus.

- This meeting was cancelled, and no new date has been given, despite repeated requests on our part for a new date. As a result, the national dialogue with:
 - The Churches
 - The Private Sector
 - Human Rights Groups
 - The Trade Unions and
 - NGOs

is yet to start.

Mr. Prime Minister, set the date! Put the security of the people first!

To make matters worse, the Shadow Minister of National Security, Member for S. St. Catherine, sought and received assurances from the Commissioner of Police that the Security Force's presence would be maintained at the level that had existed in St. James and the other areas of the SOE following the ending of the statutory period.

This was in keeping with our view that the essential ingredient for the continued public safety was the level of security force present, boots on the ground, and the intensity and frequency of their operations against the identifiable criminal networks in the areas

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, I must report to this House that my information is that the JDF presence today in the parish of St. James is nearly 50% lower than it was during the State of Emergency (46% to be exact).

No wonder, there is an upsurge in criminal activity in the Parish.

While the people of St. James are being left without adequate protection from the security forces, we have a Minister of National Security whose priority seems to be to impugn the motives of the PNP. This crude politicizing of national security must stop.

The budget makes it clear that you have the resources!

You have the powers of ZOSO to put the joint troops on the ground!

You can further amend Section 9 of the Jamaica Defense Act to give more powers to the JDF if that is required.

But most of all, as the Government, you have the responsibility!

Don't play politics with people's lives!

We stand ready to give our support to any measure that will enhance national security. Therefore, let us build a national consensus around an effective crime plan and Unite to Change the reality for the people of Jamaica.

Section 7: THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM – PERSISTENT INEQUALITY

So, Mr Speaker, I now turn to the root of the problem which is the persistent inequality in our society.

This inequality must be confronted, and defeated, if we are to achieve the levels of inclusive growth needed to improve the quality of life for all Jamaicans.

An objective assessment of the budget shows that it allocates the available resources in a manner which deepens and not reverses this inequality in the country.

It provides less than what is required to build a Jamaica that works for all.

We on this side, are committed to building a more equitable society, in which poverty and social marginalization will no longer be the reality of the majority while a chosen, connected few enjoy “prosperity”.

And there lies the distinction between an administration led by us on this side, or otherwise.

1. It has always been the Mission of the PNP – beginning with Norman Manley and carried more passionately during the premiership of Michael Manley and sustained by the succeeding leadership – to create a more equitable society.
2. Equality and social justice have been the guiding light of the People’s National Party; and it remains so today.

We have spent time since 2016 carefully reviewing our experiences as we sought to develop the policy framework and programmes to overturn the accumulated inequalities, which have been part of our history for centuries.

LAND OWNERSHIP

There needs to be a direct policy assault on the inequalities of **ownership of land**, which has been around for more than 180 years.

The so-called 700,000 squatters of today’s Jamaica are not worthless people who are not trying, rather they are the descendants of those who have never been compensated or given a supporting hand for having suffered the ills and tribulations of their enslavement.

I note with satisfaction that in the Throne Speech, the Government relented from its position of the previous year and finally decided to undertake a study on squatting.

Let me again repeat, that the next PNP administration will, through a combination of legislative changes and administrative innovation, launch the most comprehensive programme to address the plight of the landless in Jamaica.

The time has come now to put an end to the degradation of fellow Jamaicans, which has been a feature of Jamaican life for nearly two centuries. The time has come for Jamaicans to no longer be wanderers in the land of their birth.

Mr. Speaker, our determination to proceed on this path is not simply a moral consideration. Neither is it welfare. It is fundamental to economic development and the cornerstone of social justice.

The truth is, we will never secure the rates of economic growth that we seek, deliver on the social justice that our people deserve and enjoy the social stability we so urgently need if we don't squarely confront the problem of landlessness.

EDUCATION

Similarly, the **abolition of the Apartheid, which** defines our educational system cannot be a gradual one. An urgent transformation is needed.

This is what I expected from the budget given the improvement in revenue collected. There can be no higher priority than investing in the capacity of the children of those who sacrificed over the years.

Unfortunately, the budget for education remains essentially flat.

When we left office, a programme was being implemented to bring an end to the shift system by 2017. This deadline has not been met, and worse, there is no provision in the budget, which makes it a priority for this fiscal year.

Equally urgent is a programme to improve the outcomes in underperforming schools in the secondary system. This will require the kind of national mobilization which enabled JAMAL to blunt the scourge of illiteracy island-wide.

There is a Better Way!

“Trickle Down” Has Never Worked and Will Not Work

Another distinguishing feature between ourselves on this side, and those on the opposite side is that we do not subscribe to the “trickle down” theory of development.

This theory, simply put, states that if we create the enabling environment, the country will be taken care of by the big investors and that over time the flow will “trickle down” through the tide of development. In other words, if the big keep getting bigger and more prosperous, some crumbs will eventually fall off the table.

But that is not our view!

Let me make it clear.

Jamaica needs investors of all sizes – big and small – and it is for this reason that I worked so hard to create a more favourable environment for local and foreign investment.

Nor am I advocating a departure from the fiscal prudence – that I worked so hard, and I dare say suffered much, to establish.

However, building a Jamaica that works for all won't happen in a “trickle down” economy.

It was not trickle down that gave the people of Jamaica workers' rights or improved wages in 1938.

It was the intervention of people like AGS Coombs, Norman Manley, Alexander Bustamante, Ken Hill and others on behalf of the masses.

It was not "trickle down" that gave them the wave of social legislation of the 1970s – minimum wage, maternity leave, right to a pension, equal pay for equal work.

It was the intervention of a caring and visionary administration.

Where are we today?

And what kind of action is required to take us forward at the pace we need to go? What we know for sure is that the "trickle down" approach of this administration won't cut it.

In 2019, "trickle down" will not stop employers from denying Jamaicans their rights under the false premise of contract work.

"Trickle down" will not put the 700,000 squatters on a pathway to home ownership.

"Trickle down" will not alleviate the poverty being experience by the 248,000, or 54.4%, of all primary and secondary students who are on the PATH Programme.

However, the "trickle down" approach of the JLP administration is based on them intervening at the top.

Therefore, the questions we need to ask are:

- Who will be getting the lands at Bernard Lodge?
- Who were the recipients of the PetroJam contracts?

In sharp contrast, the People's National Party stands for the expansion of entrepreneurship, which will result in the growth of micro, small and medium sized businesses to drive inclusive growth.

For us, a major step towards equitable growth would be an enhanced role for the **Jamaica Stock Exchange** in the expansion and widening of ownership of the Jamaican economy.

Our Stock Exchange was ranked number 1 in 2015 due to the confidence that followed the successful navigation of the Economic Reform Programme we implemented.

I would like to congratulate Marlene Street Forrest, and her team at the JSE for the work done in making Jamaica number one in the world again in 2018.

Unfortunately, despite all the work she has done, there are only 196,000 individuals and companies registered as owning stocks on the Stock Exchange.

This leaves the vast majority of Jamaicans on the outside of the Stock Exchange, as mere bystanders to the economic dynamism taking place in the country.

These employed Jamaicans, who number over one million, have never really been encouraged to participate and so remain excluded from the stakeholder society.

If Jamaica is going to work for all, we have to be more deliberate in charting effective pathways to let these people in. They deserve the opportunity to participate, given the

sacrifices that they made and are still making to improve confidence in Jamaica. This would lead to:

- More broad-based ownership
- Sustained prosperity
- And ultimately a **Jamaica That Works for All**

That will be a main goal for the next PNP administration.

An Administration that wanted to accelerate this process would accept our recommendation to:

- Use the Stock Market to divest public assets.
- Stop giving away public assets to a connected few.

Let us choose the better way!!!

CONTRACT WORK

One of the areas where the inequity is most stark is the situation with the workers of the country. The widespread practice of substituting “full time employment that comes with real benefits” with so-called “contract labour” which comes with none deepens the inequity in our society.

We all know of the situation which exists in relation to the government service – like hospital ancillary workers, porters, etc., and in the security sector with the security guards. This has become more widespread in the tourism sector and has even extended into the manufacturing sector.

Some of these so-called contract workers have been employed for up to five years, or more, according to some reports.

I want to quote the following observation from an officer of the BITU:

“Contract work doesn’t make sense. Contract work is only supposed to be there when you have a short-term project doing”...”so nobody working in a hotel and as a security guard – unless you plan to close down the company tomorrow – not supposed to be working on contract”.

As I have said before, the fact is, that contract work denies the workers of the rights and benefits that have been won for them by the Trade Union Movement, dating back to the days of Bustamante, Ken Hill, Michael Manley and Hugh Shearer, and others too numerous to mention.

- Contract workers don’t have vacation leave. So, cannot afford to rest.
- Contract workers don’t have sick leave. So cannot afford to get sick.
- Contract workers have no stipulated working hours so cannot afford to take a lunch break.

- They have neither have collective bargaining rights nor do they have the protection against wrongful dismissals, so cannot afford an opinion.
- They will have no pension when they retire.

Yet, in every other respect, they are expected to be as productive, as invested, and as effective as regular, full-time employees.

The next PNP Administration will bring an end to the use of the contract system to abuse our workers.

The Holness Administration, had it been so minded, could have initiated some action on this front, by dealing with the issues revealed in the Labour Market Reform Commission report. It is almost 2 years now since the report was released and nothing has been done!

Prime Minister, it's time to dust it off!

Jamaica's situation requires both urgency and fixity of purpose.

- PATH is an important social safety net, but what kind of country do we live in where more than half of our children depend on this social safety net to get to school?
- What kind of economy do we have that condemns 60% of the labour force to live at or about the minimum wage?
- What level of productivity can we expect from a labour force where 70% have no certification?

- We must admit that Jamaica today is not a country ready to take its place among the developed nations of the world.
- We must admit that Jamaica today is not a country in which the dream of every Jamaican for a better life is being realized.
- We need to change both pace and direction!

Section 8: OUR PROPOSALS FOR INCLUSIVE GROWTH

And it with our proposals for **inclusive and sustained growth** that I will end my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, the Shadow Minister of Finance has already exposed the inadequacies of the budget presented, as far as Jamaica's inclusive growth agenda is concerned. He also identified the additional burdens that the budget has placed on those least able to bear them.

I've often been advised that an Opposition should not offer prescriptions to government. However, Jamaica is at such a critical stage that we can no longer stand by without informing, both the public and the Administration as to where Jamaica is headed in the wrong direction and show that there is **A Better Way**.

This Debate does not allow for a full presentation of the PNP's Development Agenda for Jamaica, but I would like to share our thinking on some critical elements on the way forward.

Recommendations

Economy

Mr. Speaker, frankly speaking, the budget that was presented is based on an inadequate understanding of the Jamaican economy, and what is required to stimulate the levels of growth that Jamaica needs.

1. First, a fundamental weakness in the approach of the Holness Administration to economic development is the failure to recognize that, the **re-building of the rural economy** is the cornerstone of inclusive economic growth.

The collapse of export agriculture and in particular sugar, and the failure to modernize domestic agriculture has left the majority of Jamaicans who live in rural Jamaica facing poverty and has opened the doors for the proliferation of crime.

The PNP's plan for re-building rural Jamaica calls for the national mobilization of resources, to provide for quality education and training in order to create the kind of labour force that can:

- Modernize agricultural production, with coffee, cocoa, cannabis and other high value crops
 - Expand economic opportunities with agro-processing, community tourism, music, sports and other creative industries in which Jamaica has established unique brand and advantage
 - Provide jobs through Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation
 - Add jobs in the knowledge and innovation industry of the new economy,
2. Secondly, as I stated in last year's budget debate, the next PNP Administration will embark upon a massive land-titling programme to allow for easier, speedier and more affordable ownership. This is what will make the announced reduction in the transfer tax truly work for the majority of the Jamaican people.

The land titling programme will also be a critical plank in the re-building the rural economy. This will facilitate the expansion of small enterprises for some 60% of those who work the land, have no title to their land. For, without a title, there is little or no access to credit.

Our comprehensive land titling programme will proceed simultaneously with enhanced access to finance so these small farmers can enter the mainstream of the national economy and reap the benefits.

3. Third, it is a fact that **private consumption drives 80 per cent of Jamaica's GDP**. Hence, the priority should be to reduce tax on consumption if the objective is to stimulate real growth.

By reducing the GCT, we would also reward the ordinary consumers who shouldered the major part of sacrifice to save Jamaica from going over the brink of bankruptcy in 2013. They should benefit now.

Remove the Gas tax that was imposed in 2016!

And since the money collected for the hedge is no longer being used for this purpose, it should also be removed.

4. Fourthly, we will **pass legislation requiring employers to treat so called 'contract workers' as full-time employees**. We will bring an end the abuse of contract workers who currently have no right to collective bargaining, and benefits in relation to health, paid leave and pension.
5. Mr. Prime Minister, here's one for you! Immediately take action to have the Parliament consider and implement the report of the Labour Market Commission. After 2 years gathering dust, it's time to activate it.
6. We will immediately **restore the policy to prioritize the export of alumina** and cut down on the export of raw bauxite, in order for Jamaica to get the value-added from

this diminishing resource. The value-added that Jamaica gets producing alumina is 3 to 4 times, producing that of raw bauxite.

We will **reverse the present policy of expanding the bauxite reserves of companies that have no intention to process alumina in Jamaica.**

We will seek a **return to the Bauxite Levy regime** as a critical source of income.

By substituting profit sharing for the levy regime, with one company alone Jamaica's declined by \$4 billion over the last two years.

What could \$4 billion have done for Jamaica's social services?

SOCIAL SERVICES

I now turn to Education and Training. I will indicate some critical steps that can be taken to relate education to the country's development needs.

While a reduction in interest rates for payment is always helpful, it does not deal with the fact that too many of these students remain unemployed after graduation.

And even where they are employed, a large number are not earning enough to re-pay the loans and live a decent life.

Given the relationship between tertiary education and development, we need far bolder action to be taken than the Minister proposes.

The next PNP government will:

7. Implement the decision to also establish the **"First in Family Scholarship" programme.** This programme will provide full scholarships (tuition and

expenses) for the first child of every Jamaican family to enroll in a tertiary institution.

8. **Abandon the requirement for a Student's Loan Guarantor.**
9. Repayment of student loans will only begin when the graduates are employed.
10. The monthly repayments of student loans will be **capped at a percentage of income.**
11. Prioritize investments in high schools to provide space for the over 20,000 students that are presently enrolled but are accommodated under unsatisfactory conditions.
12. Expand the teacher training programme to global standards to provide a trained teacher in every classroom in the shortest possible time.
13. Incentivize employee training by providing tax relief for Companies that invest in certified training programmes for their employees. This is critical if the country wants to benefit from higher value-added jobs.
14. Invest at least an additional \$100 million in the Health Services budget to bring an end to the present situation where patients are sleeping in wheelchairs and on benches. This could also be achieved by cutting the advertising budget of various Ministers. Beds over PR!

CONTAINING CORRUPTION

Corruption in public life has become an albatross around the necks of the Jamaican people. We have 5 recommendations here:

15. Prime Minister, it is full time to put a stop to the tiefing!
16. Take action to cover the funds from those who are culpable in the Police Used Car Scandal!

17. Reverse the sale of the Bernard Lodge Lands. Too many public assets, like Bernard Lodge, are being siphoned off to a chosen connected few without due process.
18. Begin the process of re-building public confidence in the political process by establishing civil society oversight to prevent the use of public funds being used for political purposes. To this end, we will invite the participation of institutions such as the National Integrity Action and churches in providing this oversight.

The agencies that readily come to mind that should be monitored are TEF, CHASE, CAA, USF, etc. The investigations at PetroJam shows the extents that funds in these institutions can be used as ‘slush funds for the benefit of political purposes.

19. Utilize the best talent available for public administration by appointing non-partisan, qualified persons to sit on the Boards of Selected Public Enterprises as a matter of policy.
20. We must insist that MOCA honours its responsibility as the last line of defense against corrupt practices. Whether those involved are in the Cabinet, the public service or state agencies, people want to know that the guilty will go to prison for all this corruption!

Section 9: Beware of Holness’ Promises

Mr. Speaker, the Finance Minister has alerted us to the fact that the Prime Minister in his budget presentation next week Tuesday will be coming with a bag of goodies.

These goodies, no doubt, are intended to influence the outcome of elections. Let me remind the Jamaican people that the Prime Minister’s record of keeping promises is not a good one. Much has been promised but not delivered.

The people have taken notice. It is very well documented that some 139 promises made by the Prime Minister in the last General Election have not been kept.

- Holness promised to establish, within the first year of office, 30 police posts in crime “hot spot” areas to place the police closer to the communities where they are most needed.
 - The promise was repeated in 2017.
 - **Still Not Delivered! And you say you’re serious about crime fighting.**
 - The promise that every Minister will be given a job description letter with clear performance targets.
 - The case of Minister Wheatley shows the extent to which this promise was honoured in the breach!
 - **Promise Not Delivered!**
-
- The unkept promise that came down heaviest on the backs of Jamaican people was the one to put \$18,000 a month in your pocket.
 - Instead of a net \$18,000 in your pocket what we ALL got was a whopping \$31 billion tax package.

Prime Minister Holness has gone on to make more promises since then. The 139 unkept promises does not include the promises he made each year in his budget speech or in the recent by-elections.

- In the 2018 Throne Speech, they made the promise to establish the Police Civilian Oversight Authority. The promise was repeated in 2019.
- The Holness Administration promised that the security forces would NOT be reduced in St. James.
- Unbelievably, in a parish that is one of the hotbeds of crime, JDF security personnel have been cut by almost 50%, leaving far less boots on the ground.

So, the people will need more than a grain of salt to take these promises. They might just need a bag full.

Section 10: Conclusion – A Better Way!

In closing, Mr Speaker,

Despite the “official narrative”, the people of Jamaica are waking up to the fact that the budget presented does not serve the interest of the majority of the Jamaican people.

The direction that the Holness-led Administration continues to take on this critical fourth year deepens the inequities and makes more extreme the marginalization of our teachers, nurses, police officers, and other civil servants.

It does not sufficiently ease the burdens of Tertiary Students.

It provides little hope for emerging professionals.

There are no real prospects for growth in the micro and small business sectors.

The reality is that this budget does not offer much relief to the middle and working classes.

Yet there is A Better Way!

I stand here to confirm, on behalf of those patriotic Jamaicans, who work hard and look forward with aspirations to live in the country of their birth as stakeholders in the nation’s success, that:

There is a Better Way!

That better way would fight the scourge of crime on three fronts:

1. Lessening of inequity
2. Expansion of opportunity
3. A more effective crime plan

That better way prioritizes the micro, small and medium sized enterprise sector.

Jamaica can only take that better way with a government that prioritizes rural development and our farmers.

That better way provides meaningful, inclusive growth that yields better salaries with real benefits and prospects for personal growth, health, wealth and development.

A better way can only be taken by a moral leadership willing to take on the scourge corruption and hold itself accountable.

By the grace of God and the support of the people, we will take that better way and build the national consensus for inclusive growth and replace the “trickle down” approach.

Together, we can build that Jamaica that works for ALL; and not just a few.

Together, we will chart a better path to a nation where equality, justice and fairness are the foundations on which lasting prosperity is built.

Thank you and God Bless Jamaica, Land We Love.