

GOOD TIDINGS AMIDST CHALLENGES AT INDEPENDENCE 2010

BY

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Our nation celebrates its thirty-first anniversary of Independence on October 27, 2010, at a most challenging time occasioned largely by economic, financial and climatic events internationally, not of our making. Yet, our small nation with limited natural resources save and except the resourcefulness of our magnificent people, at home and abroad, has not only been weathering calmly the ill-winds from abroad but it has been making admirable progress on several fronts. So, there are good tidings amidst the challenges at Independence Day 2010; much to be thankful for, much to rejoice about, but still we are not yet out of the woods and the road to be travelled holds perils.

More than ever, national unity around desirable and achievable goods is necessary despite the season of heightened political competition. As always, this effort demands an enhancement of our strengths and possibilities and a reduction, as far as is humanly possible, of our weaknesses and limitations. This national exercise summons from us that which is good and decent. Indeed, leadership is required to draw out of our people that which is good and noble and to do so even in those cases or circumstances where the people may not as yet know the full extent of their goodness and nobility.

This is not a time for excessive caution, despondency or learned helplessness. It is the time for boldness of action, creativity, optimism, and hopefulness grounded in the real condition of our people and our nation's circumstances. In moving forward we cannot await on perfect conditions in this imperfect world; we must be pro-active in the world as we find it and seek always to advance our nation's welfare in the interest of our people's humanisation. The sage Prophets of old have so advised us. In the Book of Ecclesiastes we are wisely counseled that: *"Farmers who wait upon perfect conditions will never plant; those who watch the clouds will not harvest"*.

Since 2001, the Unity Labour Party (ULP) administration has chalked up impressive accomplishments in all areas of public policy including: Job and Wealth Creation; Economic Diversification; Poverty Reduction; Education; Health; Housing; Protection of the Elderly; Promotion of the Youth; Sports and Culture; Telecommunications, Water, and Electricity; Roads, Physical Infrastructure and Airport Development; the Maintenance of Law and Order; Regional Integration; Foreign Policy; and Good Governance generally. We in the ULP government pledge to consolidate and further advance these phenomenal achievements over the next five years and beyond.

Unfortunately, because of an irrational political partisanship of an adversarial kind, there are some who scoff at or scorn these formidable achievements. Indeed, these persons, sadly, go further and verbally abuse or slander those who correct them. Such persons ought to heed the words of the Book of Proverbs and seek correction. It is well-known, thus, that "the way of the fool is right in his own eyes; but he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel." Let's opt for wisdom and not partisan foolishness.

My government has unveiled in recent times a series of practical initiative relating to the economy; the construction of the Argyle International Airport; One-lap-top-per-child policy; the "Lives to Live" Programme for the Mentally and Physically Challenged; the furtherance of Agricultural Diversification and Tourism Development; the Expansion of Telecommunications Services especially Internet Access; the further development of Early Childhood and Post-Secondary Education, the start-up of the implementation of the policy of making Health the focal sector for the next five years, including the phased relocation of the Hospital itself; and Sports and Culture. We still have much work to do together.

Our nation's history, geography, and islandness have fashioned us. We are worthy children of a noble Caribbean civilisation. It is true that we are not better than anyone else but it is equally true that no one is better than us. We can be and do what we want to be and do in accord with our goodness, potential, and God-given talents. The opportunities for our people, especially the young, are being enlarged as never before. They are the future of our land which we all love and cherish. We must lift them up as eagles and let them soar with their wings unclipped. In turn,

they must be cognizant of their obligations and treasure their parents, families, elders, and communities.

Our future is bright. We must be confident about that and work towards its true fulfillment. It is a great cause and great causes have never been won by doubtful men and women.

On this our 31st anniversary of independence we must thus rejoice amidst our many challenges; conquer the difficulties; and turn every attack into an advance, individually and collectively.

On behalf of my government, I wish us all a wonderful Independence Day. And may Almighty God continue to bless us and guide us, always!