

**NOTES FOR ADDRESS BY
RT. HON. P.J. PATTERSON, PC, QC, MP
PRIME MINISTER
AT THE
REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON VALUES AND ATTITUDES
ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1994**

Salutations.

It is a pleasure to be in Ocho Rios once again.

This morning, however, is different. We have all made a very early start this morning. I recognize faces from North Trelawny, from St. Ann, St. Mary and of course, a number of Kingstonians.

We are here this morning to participate in the second Regional Consultation on Values and Attitudes as a result of the recommendation of the National Consultation held at the Conference Centre earlier this year.

Kingston is not Jamaica. There are identifiable differences in the economic and social environment in the various regions of our island. I regard it as important to consult with community leaders on a regional basis.

We have a very important task ahead of us today. After the opening presentations, we will be following the format of our two previous Consultations and will break into a number of workshops from which will come recommendations for implementation. We all know how relatively simple it is to discuss issues. The real test comes when it is time for action.

I believe that today, as you interact with each other and examine the subject areas to which you are assigned, as you share experiences as you articulate your aspirations for building a better Jamaica, you will be imbued with a new energy and a new resolve to try even harder to make a difference.

One of the recurring themes in my communication with the people of Jamaica is the need for us to commit ourselves to restoring a sense of decency, to exercise discipline and to conduct our affairs based on the Christian principles of loving our neighbours as ourselves.

I remain convinced that I must keep carrying this message until it has been heard, understood and is acted upon. Until then, all our efforts at economic and social development will be in vain.

I make this connection – the impact of social mores and morals on economic and social development – as it may not at first sight be obvious.

I believe that everyone will agree that it is the role of the state to ensure that the economic and social environment permits each individual to reach his or her full potential. There must be rules and regulations that govern the way our society is organized. There must be law and order. There must be clear standards of conduct and a common understanding of the values by which the entire society can function. The attitude and behaviour of one individual or group of citizens can have a serious effect, for good or ill, on everyone in the community and the nation.

Tourism

Let us take as an example the tourism industry, acknowledged by all to be critical to the foreign exchange which our country needs and the very life blood of the North Coast where we meet today.

Apart from direct employment to some 27,000 persons, there are important backward linkages for our farmers who produce meats, fresh fruits, vegetables and engage in horticulture.

The single greatest threat to the growth of the industry lies in the unfavourable image of a destination which is violent and where visitors are subject to harassment.

While the number of crimes against visitors is low in statistical terms, they attract a level of external coverage which does great damage to Jamaica's image. If we continue on this path, we may end up doing irreparable damage to our reputation as an exotic, upscale destination.

If we continue to permit the small group of individuals who insist on harassing our visitors to continue unchecked, what will be the outcome?

We all know what I am talking about. They gather at the pier or at the air port and insist on pushing drugs, on offering sub-standard goods, on offering services at exorbitant prices. Far too many of our visitors who have saved up all year to come on their dream vacation leave with unpleasant memories.

The Government has now accepted, having regard to the expansion of tourism in the country, that the prescribed tourism areas are now too narrowly drawn and that sentences for offences which affect the tourism industry should be made more meaningful.

But legislative measures alone will not suffice. Those who depend on tourism for a livelihood and indeed all upright members of the community should resolve to eradicate harassment so that we can enjoy our fair share of the tourism market and benefit from the beauty with which Nature has so richly blessed us.

Squatting

Squatting has now become the most burning issue of the day. A reading of our history reveals that people in search of work have always moved to the areas of dominant economic activity. At one time it was sugar; then it was bauxite. It is now tourism.

One of our selling points to visitors has been our beaches and our lovely landscape. But all this beauty is threatened by the squatting now widespread in our main resort areas. It creates pollution, health hazards and is an underlying source of social instability.

In my recent Budget presentation I outlined a new initiative, Operation Pride, which acknowledges the Government's recognition that access to land, appropriately located and services for the majority of the population is critical to a safe, productive environment, the programme will seek to address the problem of the need for access to land in an orderly and systematic way. Pilot projects will include St. Ann's Bay/Ocho Rios.

Parish management Committees will be comprised of representatives of Government agencies, community-based organizations and developmental non-governmental organizations.

We will need the assistance of community leaders like you. I know it will be forthcoming, for I believe every Jamaican would wish to see an end to this problem which has so many adverse repercussions on our communities.

Industry – Manufacturing

In the area of manufacturing and export of goods, we encounter excessively high levels of smuggling, contamination of our exports by drugs, larceny; we have to pay more for additional security, higher insurance premiums – all of which add up to higher prices for our goods to local consumers and to our overseas markets.

We must therefore be concerned about the behavioural norms we accept. We must be concerned about the values that are being instilled into our children.

I remember many years ago, at what we can term today the beginning of the technological age, that the debate was all about how we would all be replaced by computers. The communication explosion which was seen to be coming, it was believed, would almost make humanity obsolete. We would no longer need to teach our children that one and one make two – the calculator would do that; and the computer would spell for them.

Many of the present generation of children, instead of having a story book read to them, or instead of playing a ring game, are simply put in front of the TV set to eat and to watch; instead of going to visit a friend or a relative, we send them to see a movie or to the video arcade. We took the humanity out of bringing up our children and I believe that some of the antisocial behaviour, the indiscipline, the lack of moral standards and the poor work attitudes we are experiencing today are a result of these changes in the way we raise our children. They are also, sadly, the result of the poor example we set as adults. Too many of us try to say to our children and those around us whom we influence: "Do as I say, not as I do!"

We must begin to put the human touch back into our lives; we must take personal responsibility for bringing up our children; we must return to the high standards which many of us were accustomed to when we were growing up. Home, school, and church must once again share the responsibility for the society we create and the environment in which we live.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not trying to turn the clock back. The world and this country have benefited tremendously from technology – indeed without its proper application our country will not achieve the economic growth that we seek.

But the time has come to achieve a balance. Today, you the leaders from your communities face an immediate challenge – how to take advantage of all the new that is good and marry it to the fine traditional qualities that make a good Jamaican and a good human being.

Crime

It is cold comfort that there has been a marked escalation of crime in countries with economies which are stronger than our own. We have to address our own problems quickly and decisively.

The Jamaica Constabulary Force came into being after the Morant Bay Rebellion of 1865. It was perceived as a semi-military force, and kept in constant readiness to maintain law and order, by coercion where necessary.

We now have society where law and social order cannot be maintained simply by the use of state-sanctioned force. The Police Force of today needs to be civil, humane, intelligent, and oriented to work with communities in finding solutions to the problems of our citizens.

There is no room for those who are corrupt, of those who target communities because of their political affiliation. To be effective, our police needs a level of professionalism that enforces discipline and commands public confidence.

Until recently, it was the practice to blame the Suppression of Crime Act for the breakdown between the police and the public. This point of contention no longer exists. The Jamaica Constabulary Force has been given legal authority to respond to sudden upsurges in criminal activity. The police can only succeed with effective community support.

Conclusion

I have shared with you a few thoughts on the areas which I have identified as being of primary concern to the nation. With your reservoir of knowledge of your community's concerns you have an equally important contribution to make in this Regional Consultation on Values and Attitudes.

Today, you will engage in constructive discussions as to how we can adapt and change, maybe even discard, some of our current ways of doing things in order to instill in every Jamaican those timeless values of truth, integrity and respect for each other.

I wish you a constructive and stimulating day.