

Address by
Prime Minister
Rt Hon. P. J. Patterson P. C., Q. C., M. P.
to
Regional Conference on Values and Attitudes
at
Cecil Charlton Hall, Mandeville
on
Tuesday April 26, 1994

Statatations

First in a series of Regional Consultations being held as part of the process to build on the momentum started by the National Consultation held in Kingston on Shrove Tuesday.

Welcome participation from St. Elizabeth, Manchester and Clarendon — Custodes, the Clergy, Members of Parliament, Mayors and Councillors, Justices of the Peace, Representatives of the farming and business sector, educators, social workers, members of the police force, community leaders, trade unionists, journalists, artistes, lawyers and students.

Acknowledge continuing interest, and support of National Committee

- The exercise will benefit from their evaluation and continued guidance.
- Thank Regional Planning Committee, public officers and volunteers who have worked so hard to ensure a successful outcome to our deliberations here today.

Every well thinking Jamaican today is greatly concerned with the decline in positive values and attitudes in our society. There are those who believe there is nothing we can do to stop it, or that the change must come in everyone else apart from self. There are those like you who gather here today in the firm conviction that not only is there something we must do to stem the rot, but that our own example and individual contribution will make the critical breakthrough, "Let it begin with me."

Our launch of the national programme to promote better values and attitudes throughout the Jamaican society is already arousing considerable international interest. Enquiries about the preparatory work, its organization and objectives are already pouring in from a number of international organizations, universities and regional institutions.

The level of external interest, so soon after an initial effort, serves to confirm that attitudinal problems and the deterioration of social standards are not confined to Jamaica, whatever our worst detractors would have us believe.

In the global village of today's world, the social environment is being affected, wherever there is an open society, by the flood of information as events unfold.

- Atrocities in Somalia
- Savagery in Bosnia/Herzegovina
- Brutality in Rwanda
- Violence in South Africa
- Gangs/Street Violence
- Drug Pushing/Dons
- Promiscuity/AIDS

Are part of the global phenomenon — with a damaging local impact.

The entire world is changing rapidly and profoundly. It is up to us as a nation, that we do not simply allow changes to occur here as part of an imported pattern, but that we determine what are the positive changes we want and then work to make them happen.

We cannot be content to be victims of negative change who simply offer no resistance. Instead we must be active agents of positive change.

In short, there must be a change of national attitudes, for the remedy lies within us.

And so, we need time to reconnect with our core beliefs and values.

And so, we need to formulate a programme of social renewal, to succeed, we must:

- Restore a focus on the family unit. Parents have to assert their responsibility in the transmission of values and high self-esteem. To do this, will require a new orientation of the parents themselves.
- Make more relevant, revitalize and strengthen the critical agents of socialization — the community, the school, our youth clubs and civic organizations.
- Make children and our young people that element of the population which attracts top national priority.
- Involve all sectors of the society in a truly national effort — the church, all aspect of the mass media, the private sector, the public sector, the voluntary sector and the average citizen.
- De-tribalise the political system in order to support community building rather than remain a source of community tension.

We know what needs to be done. The question is, "How do we divide the labour?"

The role of Government at this time is to facilitate the empowerment of people to be agents of their own development. This involves the provision of the legislative and administrative framework, as well as the pursuit of policies and programmes for sustainable development.

With this consciousness, we are concentrating resources on several of the key areas concerned with the development of our children and youth.

Even in this time of resource constraints and the imperative of balancing the Budget, we have given Education and Culture a very impressive allocation, the largest percentage outside of the Ministry of Finance.

A great deal of thought and energy is being given to the reform and rationalization of the entire system of education and training.

In the last three years we have been pursuing an integrated approach, emphasizing the home-school-community linkage as well as the partnership of public sector, private sector and community in the sharing of responsibility for education.

New opportunities of self development for young people have been provided by the Youth Empowerment Programme which started on a pilot basis last year. They will be expanded this year.

I am particularly excited about the Youth in Agriculture Programme which is being introduced to revitalize the agricultural programmes in schools and help our young people to pursue income-generating projects.

We also continue to encourage the promotion of sports as an important vehicle of social development.

We will help to revitalize uniformed groups; cadets, scouts, girl guides and other groups for young people.

CRIME AND SECURITY

Needed at this time:

- Unity in fight against criminal element
- Recognition of linkages between drugs and violence, domestic violence and disrespect for human life
- Obedience to law and enforcing realistic penalties without exception
— No offence is too trivial to be overlooked
- Repeal of the Suppression of Crimes Act opens possibilities for new relationships between police and citizens

These Regional Consultations are not intended to be a smaller replica of the National Consultations.

They recognize that no superstructure can last if not built on sound foundations.

They seek to contribute as part of a dynamic process in:

- Mobilizing State and voluntary institutions at the regional level in a fresh effort to restore the social fabric of our communities on the basis of better values and attitudes.
- Rationalizing the services of existing organizations and making best use of the human resources and financial allocations.
- Sensitizing communities for such programmes as the Comprehensive Land Use Development (to come) and its potential for replacing squatter settlements with communities of home owners.
- Stopping the vandalism and creating a better attitude to socially owned property.
— From here I expect to be undertaken further programmes at parish levels.

COMMUNITY LEVELS

Targetted to specific community problems and objectives.

Sectoral e.g.

- Productivity and work attitudes
- Transportation — road safety programme
- National Year of the Family
- Education curriculum
- Media, entertainment, etc.

Following the meeting on Shrove Tuesday, the Government has already commenced action to implement by:

- Budgetary allocations to be spelt out in debate
- Continued efforts to improve customer services
- Accelerate institutional changes and system of accountable management.

The fulfilment of the purpose which brings us together in Mandeville today, requires concerted action.

It is true that I have taken this initiative and will also be expected to contribute to its success. But it is not a partisan exercise it has to be seen as a national challenge and to make it work, we all have to be fully involved.

Once again, I pray that we will "put our hand in the hand of God and it will be better than a light and safer than the known way."

Once we do, I have no doubt that we will not fail but we will be well prepared to be on the cutting edge of the years ahead.