

## Remarks at opening of St. Augustine South Campus

### Greetings

First, I wish to thank you Madam Prime Minister for your presence and through you the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for providing this land and the necessary resources to establish this St. Augustine South Campus of the University of the West Indies at Penal/Debe. I am pleased to be able to honor the commitment I gave to the Minister of Tertiary Education at our Graduation ceremony last year to be present at the ceremony inaugurating this Campus.

Please also permit me to say a special word of welcome to his Excellency the President who has witnessed and been architect of so many of the developments of the St. Augustine campus.

Allow me also to give the regrets of the Vice-Chancellor at not being with us today, but he sends his best wishes for the inauguration of this South Campus.

I wish to thank the Principal and his colleagues for the hard work in getting us to this stage. He has spoken of the steps taken and the University processes followed to ensure the academic correctness of the occasion. He will have given details of some of the justification for the expansion in term of student numbers and programmatic needs.

This is an important step in our history, and I wish to comment on this happy occasion from a slightly different angle and relate it to the development of the University as a whole and our relations with our governments. Perhaps I do have a certain advantage as I am a proud alumnus of this University, was an early graduate and I have seen the University as student, faculty member, member of Council and now as Chancellor. I never ceased to be impressed at the manner in which we have faced and faced down the challenges of change.

It is trite but true to say that at a global level we have seen changes in the nature and functioning of Universities in the past 50 years that would have been thought impossible. We have seen massive expansion of Tertiary Education in the Caribbean as in the rest of the world. I witnessed the expansion from a cozy, little residential institution at Mona to the campuses in St. Augustine and Cave Hill and -more recently a fourth campus. This has been a response of the University to the new order.- the fourth age. Our civilization has passed through the Renaissance, the age of discovery, the industrial revolution and now we are in the age of knowledge. Knowledge is the capital essential for humans to acquire the elements necessary for the exercise of our essential and existential freedoms-knowledge is the essential ingredient to fomenting the competitiveness which is critical for our survival as a people and as a region.

Universities have had a few choices in their response to the new imperatives of an age of knowledge and interconnectedness. One option is not to change and remain stuck in the orthodoxy of yesterday and follow the inflexible law of nature –those that do not change and adapt die. They could have gone totally virtual- and some have, but our University chose to change by expanding its campuses

and its offerings with the belief that there is still some intrinsic value in a physical locus as the center for collection and dissemination of information and as a locus for the human interaction which is necessary for human development. This expansion here must be seen in this light and I predict other expansions to other campuses in and outside of the Caribbean.

Although we have not become entirely virtual, you will see that we have adapted to the different forms of instruction. The transmission of information before the Renaissance was essentially in the nature of an apprenticeship system and until fairly recently ancient professions still followed this mode –lawyers were clerks and solicitors were articulated to a master. Then came the change to the classroom with the master lecturing or reading to the disciples-and now this campus and the university as whole is increasingly embracing the model of the teacher being more of a coach.

But finally one of the more significant changes has been in the relation of governments to the University. Governments wish to see more and more of the young acquire knowledge; in Trinidad and Tobago your aim is to have 60% of the eligible cohort in Tertiary education. But still they give tremendous latitude to the student as to the form of knowledge acquired. It is refreshing to note that our governments, although making it clear as to the societal needs, have not forced on Universities the choice between considering knowledge as intrinsically good or as strictly utilitarian-a distinction which in my view is not helpful. But in terms of relationship, we note a change from what could have been seen as one of principal/agent to a stewardship type of arrangement in which there is more of a partnership, in which the Governments and the University share in a grand enterprise of creating and dissemination the information needed for our modern Caribbean society. This change of course implies that there will be other partners beside government in this enterprise.

Mr. Chairman, the flagship faculty and the first to be established here is that of law, in great part because of the demand for that discipline. The University has gone to great pains to ensure the common curriculum across the campuses in this discipline. Perhaps the establishment of the faculty of law here is recognition of how law was practiced in ancient times. Before the Roman Emperor Claudius allowed it, lawyers were not allowed to charge fees, but practiced rhetoric for the love of it. Thus this campus and the faculty may be a demonstration of social generosity and its students will be encouraged to return to the pre-Claudian era and not charge fees. Or it may be because of the recognition of the preeminence of law above other forms of training, for as the famous politician/philosopher Edmund Burke said of law; ***“a science [the law] which does more to quicken and invigorate the understanding, than all the other kinds of learning put together.”*** Maybe also Mr. Chairman, that may have been the reason why Dr. Eric Williams at the establishment of the St. Augustine campus 51 years ago envisaged that it would not be complete without the teaching of the Law.

I wish this campus well and am sure it will be a magnificent addition to the facilities and possibilities of the Main campus at St. Augustine and to the University of the West Indies as a whole. I believe that what we do here today is an earnest of the good that is to come. This land which was watered by the sweat and blood of the fathers and mothers of many of you here today will one day be populated with beautiful buildings, beautiful trees and will echo the voices of young people arguing and

debating and pursuing that knowledge which will be their trampoline to individual progress and fulfillment.

I thank you

George Alleyne

Chancellor

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