



THRONE SPEECH

BY

Her Excellency the Governor General

Dame Dr. Calliopa Pearlette Louisy, GCSL, GCMG, D.ST.J, PH.D, LL.D. (HON)

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

OPENING OF THE FIRST SESSION

OF THE NINETH PARLIAMENT

OF SAINT LUCIA

Tuesday, January 9, 2007

Madame President, Madame Speaker

Honourable Members of the Senate

Honourable Members of the House of Assembly

We assemble here today, not only at the dawn of a New Year, but also at the dawn of a new day for the people of Saint Lucia who a mere four weeks ago, in a voice that was loud and clear, entrusted you with the destiny and direction of our homeland; a responsibility which I am sure that you will discharge in a manner which will do credit to you, and bring lasting benefits to the people of Saint Lucia whom you have the honour to represent.

Let me begin by noting the historic decision of Honourable Members, of electing you Madame Speaker, as the first person of your gender to preside over the proceedings of the House of Assembly of Saint Lucia .

I congratulate you, Madame Speaker, and I applaud the Honourable Members of this House for the wisdom of their choice. I am assured that Honourable Members will give you the necessary support as you seek to preserve the dignity of the proceedings of this Honourable House.

History is being created in Saint Lucia, and Saint Lucians can proudly demonstrate to the world that our women folk have emerged from the shadows and have taken centre stage in the affairs of our nation and set an example to others. The three most prestigious offices of this nation are being filled by three ladies who have earned distinctions in their separate fields and in their own right.

Our women folk can now demand the respect and dignity which has been always theirs but for so long denied.

You, Madame Speaker and you Madame President, in particular - important as your roles may be, are not the main actors on the stage. This role is allotted to you Honourable Members of the House and the Senate, who by election or selection, are charged with passing the laws and approving the resolutions which set the direction of our country. I congratulate you for having earned a seat in the respective Chambers of the Parliament of our country. Judging from the enthusiasm displayed by the people in the recent general elections, in you much of their hopes and dreams have been reposed, and therefore from you much is expected.

My final and most profound congratulations go to the people of Saint Lucia, who amidst all the shouting and tumult, in the end, performed their civic duties by electing, in a peaceful and orderly manner, a Government of their choice. Their conduct throughout this process shows the degree of political maturity and sophistication which has done much credit to our country. We choose and we change Governments, and we do it in a peaceful and orderly manner. They, the people, have set an example which you, Honourable Members, can do no better than to follow. Congratulations Saint Lucia and Saint Lucians.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, mwen ka pwan lokasyon sala pou félicité tout pèp Sent Lisyen pou mannyè-a yo konpoté kò yo diwan tan ilèksyon-an ki pasé-a. La té ni hototo dézòd, épi tout kalité anmizman pami lépatizan chak

pati, mé tout sa pasé an lapé, san trop twakasan, san violans. Nou moutwé tout moun ki nou sa chwézi Gouvèdman-nou, nou sa chanjé Gouvèdman-nou an lapé. Félicitasyon Sent Lisi, Félicitasyon Sent Lisyen. Atjwèlman, mwen ka kwiyé asou tout manm Kay Konsit onowab sala pou swiv lègzanp sé moun-lan ki mété yo an posisyon-an yo yé jodi-a. Sonjé sa ou té pòmèt pèp péyi-a lè ou té ka pèsouade yo pou mété konfyans yo an wou. Ou té palé souvan di lanmou-a ou ni pou yo, pou péyi-a épi twavay-la ou té kay fè-a pou anméliowé situasyon lavi yo. Sé akòz di sa pep péyi-a mété tout lèspwa-yo, tout konfyans-yo, tout lafwa-yo an wou. Ou pa sa dézapwenté yo. Ou ja sèmanté pou mété lentéwé Sent Lisi avan lentéwé pati politik-la ou ka sipoté-a, épi menú avan lentéwé ou menm. Konsa, mwen ka envité'w, mwen ka plédé épi'w pou tjenn pawòl ou. Mannyè-a ou kay konpoté kò'w, andidan kon andèyò Kay Konsit sala ni pou moutwé dédikasyon sala, épi sèman sala ou pwan-an douvan yonnalòt épi douvan pèp péyi-a.

Now that the people have spoken, it is for you Honourable Members to proceed with your duties and discharge your responsibilities, which will reflect that dedication to country which you professed so loudly and so often, when you sought to persuade the people to put their trust in you. Your conduct, both within this Chamber and outside, should reflect your dedication to this country and to the welfare of our people. Let us during these challenging times, live by the credo of "country before Party and before self". If we live up to this credo, then you will live the words of our national anthem, and at last a bright new day would have dawned.

There is one aspect of our election which can severely compromise the purity of the entire process, and it is a concern which has been expressed by both political Parties represented in this Honourable House and by the public at large. This relates to the apparent high cost of election campaigning. Unless this is brought under control, unsavory elements may see an opportunity for corrupting the electoral process and influencing the direction of our country. This will be most unfortunate for our country and our people.

This is a matter of concern not only in Saint Lucia, but indeed throughout the entire Commonwealth Caribbean. My Government will therefore, at the earliest possible opportunity, raise the matter in a CARICOM forum to see whether a common position can be taken in respect to election campaign financing.

To ensure that our people reap the rewards of their electoral triumph, my Government will strain every muscle, knock on every door, pursue every lead, which can improve the good and welfare of our people.

Our efforts will be severely hampered, if not completely negated, unless we remove the elements which impede our efforts. The high incidence of crime and criminal activity is of grave concern to my Government. To reduce, and ultimately to remove, this blight on our society, my Government will mobilise all our resources – financial, human and intellectual – in this battle, because unless it is won, our economic and social progress will be seriously retarded.

Because crime is a manifestation of indiscipline, in this battle, my Government will fight the causes of crime – indiscipline in our schools, indiscipline in our streets, indiscipline at our places of entertainment. In many cases, these

instances are brought about by unemployment – particularly amongst the young – poor housing conditions, and the apparent laxity in the pursuit of those who prey on our young people through the trafficking and use of drugs. These causes my Government will address with all the resources at its disposal.

To ensure success in this fight, the resources of the Royal Saint Lucia Police Force have been significantly strengthened by the introduction of British Police Officers, whose experience and expertise my Government intends to use to its advantage in addressing the problems of crime.

The ability of our Security Services to deal with crime, indiscipline and anti-social behaviour will be severely tested when Saint Lucia will be host to thousands of visitors during the ICC Cricket World Cup. Our Security Services will be called upon to deal not only with local violators, but in these days of international terrorism, to be prepared for those who may see an opportunity to disrupt this international event. Our security forces must therefore be prepared for any eventuality. To assist in ensuring that this event goes to the credit of our country, the Office of the Governor General has endorsed the formation of a Corps of Volunteers and I take this opportunity to thank those who for love of country, volunteered their services for this purpose.

Our country is a peaceful one, and we seek to avoid international entanglements which may lead us into unfamiliar waters as we chart the course of our development. The only wars we seek, are the wars against the ancient scourges of Ignorance, Poverty and Disease.

Our war against poverty will be fought primarily with the weapon of education. Our motto will be, "To liberate, we must educate". To this end, my Government will create a special Task Force under the Minister in the Ministry of Education, to present a comprehensive plan for every aspect of education. Urgent attention will therefore be given to the plan for Universal Secondary Education, in ensuring that each child is given an educational opportunity to fit his or her ability and in accordance with the developmental needs of our country. A comprehensive statement will be made on this subject, when my Government presents its annual budget, in a few weeks time. This plan will be guided by the famous words of Sir Arthur Lewis that "The fundamental cure for poverty is not money but knowledge", and will expand on this by acknowledging that the fundamental cure for the eradication of crime is the eradication of poverty through education, because ignorance, poverty and crime are inextricably linked. All these aspects must be tackled simultaneously. And this, Government is determined to do.

Linked to poverty is disease, and my Government, through the Universal Health Care Programme, will address this problem as a matter of urgency. For this purpose, my Government will mobilise a team of experts, both nationally and internationally, to draw upon the experience of other countries, thus avoiding the pitfalls which have led to the failure of this important initiative in other countries.

My Government will review the performances of those Statutory Boards which are intimately involved in the developmental process and, if necessary, will introduce legislation to ensure that these Boards and Corporations play the part which they were originally intended to play.

As our economy changes from one that was driven by the production of goods - primarily agricultural and manufactured products - to one of services – primarily tourism, the method of solving the problems of industrial relations which inevitably arise, changes from confrontation and conflict to one of conciliation and compromise. For this reason, previous Governments have sought to adapt the framework of laws within which such problems are solved. Such laws must take into account the concerns of all stakeholders, to ensure that the end result provides the environment in which jobs will be created through conciliation and not lost through an environment of conflict.

My Government will therefore return the Labour Code to a committee on which all the stakeholders – Government, employers and employees - are represented. We are committed through this Code to providing the environment which will promote investment in our country and help us reduce the rate of unemployment to a tolerable level.

Madanm Pwézidan, Madanm Speaker, sèsyon Paleman sala pa ka diwé lontan, paski nou ni pou witounen touswit, an twa mwa, pou pwézanité Budget péyi-a pou lanné 2007/2008. Mé anatandan, nou ka koumansé twavay pou wabat kwim, pou wabat povté épi maladi. Konsa nou kay fè tout sa nou pé pou wè ki Gouvedman tjenn pòmèt-li pou chanjé pou li byen situasyon sosyal épi ékonomik péyi-a.

Honourable Members will no doubt be aware that because of the presentation of the annual Budget due in a few weeks' time , this session of Parliament will be

significantly shorter than usual. The legislative programme has therefore been adjusted accordingly. A more comprehensive programme will be presented to Honourable members at the next session of Parliament.

Madame President, Madame Speaker, Honourable Members of the Senate and the House of Assembly, you must now proceed, with love of country, to do your duty to the people whom you have pledged to serve. It is now my pleasant duty to declare open this ninth and historic session of the Parliament of Saint Lucia and I pray God's guidance on your deliberations. Madame President, Madame Speaker, you may begin your work in the service of our dear country. Thank you, and may God bless our homeland forever.