



NATIONWIDE

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LONDON LAUNCH FOR DISCOVERY'S PORTRAIT OF ST LUCIA



Minister for Tourism Philip J Pierre presents Gerred Mankowitz with a carving by portrait subject Vincent Eudovic while Patricia Charlery of the St Lucia Tourist Board in London looks on.

The beauty and cultural diversity of St Lucia took centre stage at the London launch of Discovery at Marigot Bay's *The land, The People, The Light: A Portrait of St Lucia*.

The photographic exhibition by world renowned British photographer Gerred Mankowitz, was unveiled at the St Lucia High Commission in London's

Collingham Gardens in the run-up to this year's World Travel Market receiving rave reviews from the numerous journalists, travel industry representatives, and other specially invited guests who attended.

Mr Mankowitz, whose photographs hang as works of art in some of the most prestigious galleries and private collections in the world, is famous for his portraits of rock legends such as the Rolling Stones,

Jimi Hendrix and Marianne Faithful. His high profile career spans 35 years and all of his photographic exhibitions attract widespread international media attention. A Portrait of St Lucia has proved no exception.

Speaking at the exhibition opening, Minister for Tourism Philip J Pierre praised Doubloon International, the developers of the five-star Discovery at Marigot Bay Re-

sort Spa and Marina, for spearheading the initiative and for bringing Mr Mankowitz to the island.

"This is a remarkable collection of photographs," Mr Pierre said. "Mr Mankowitz has truly captured the essence of Simply Beautiful St Lucia—its beauty, culture and people."

The Minister continued by saying the exhibition was a credit to all those involved in seeing the project through to fruition, adding that it was a valuable tool in marketing all that St Lucia has to offer and for promoting the island as much more than a sun, sea, and sand destination.

"I would like to personally thank Discovery at Marigot Bay, in particular Judith and John Verity, for making this exhibition possible and also Mr Mankowitz for taking the time to learn about our island and creating these wonderful images."

For his part, Mr Mankowitz said A Portrait of St Lucia had been one of the most challenging yet rewarding photographic projects he had been involved in. "St Lucia is a beautiful and remarkable place and I feel honoured to have been able to meet these amazing people and to capture a little of who they are."

Speaking after the launch, Discovery's Public Relations and marketing Manager, Molly McDaniel said: "We are delighted about how the exhibition launch went. A Portrait of St Lucia has generated a great deal of media attention. It has already been featured by the BBC and Black Variety Television, with GMTV, the Sunday Times, Islands Magazine and Caribbean Travel & Life, among others, expressing interest in featuring the exhibition in the future."

"We could not have done any of this without the support of the St Lucia Tourist Board. Not only did they provide accommodation, airfares and transport on the island during the photoshoot in June, but they were also instrumental in organising the exhibition's London launch sending out invitations to the press and getting the portraits to Collingham Gardens."

She added: "We would also like to thank the St Lucia High Commission for providing us with the perfect venue to showcase the portraits for the first time; The Frame Gallery in St Lucia for framing all of the portraits; and Virgin Atlantic Airways and Virgin Cargo for shipping the exhibition to and from London."

The London exhibition will run until November 24. A Portrait of St Lucia is expected to travel to New York early next year for its US launch before being debuted in St Lucia at the opening of the new Discovery Resort in the autumn of 2005.

A special catalogue, with stories by Molly McDaniel—former editor of The Star (St Lucia) and Tropical Traveller—has been produced to accompany the exhibition. Part of the proceeds from catalogue sales is being donated to the Grenada Red Cross to help in hurricane relief efforts. Sponsorship is being sought to transform the catalogue into a quality coffee table book.

Judge says coverage of Helenites Building affair was: "SCURILLOUS AND CRUEL!"



Justice Albert Mathew

Retired judge, Justice Albert Mathew, says some of the coverage of the Helenites Building affair was scurrilous and cruel and he did not allow it to influence his findings.

The retired judge was appointed by the Government to investigate the circumstances surrounding the change of ownership of state property and facilitation of a mortgage for that purpose.

The retired judge heard witnesses locally and also traveled to New York to talk to other witnesses there.

The sole investigator issued a 25-page report, in which he outlined the procedure employed in his probe, what he found and what his recommendations were.

Among other things, Justice Mathew looked at the "circumstances involving the attempted transfer of title to the property and facilitation of a mortgage of \$150,000." He also examined "the behaviour of parties involved in these matters."

On the behaviour of the parties involved, the Judge in his report dated October 25, 2004 said, "In the course of the investigation, both in St. Lucia and in New York, I was shown and referred to various printed

matter commenting on the matter under review."

"Some of these", he added, were "scurrilous, biased, misinformed and cruel to some of the parties involved in these matters."

However, the investigator said, "I shall not allow them to influence my findings."

Unlike some of the conclusions arrived at in the press and in the Internet chat-room of at least one local newspaper, the Judge found that there was no criminal intent.

The Judge's main conclusion was that "top officers of the administration who wield tremendous power and influence must realize that they are agents of the Government and must in all matters of policy and substance follow the instructions of their principal."

The investigating, former judge's full report is available on the website of the Government of St. Lucia's website at st-lucia.gov.lc



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Anse-La-Ray residents pleased with planned drainage works

The Special Projects Unit of the Ministry of Works has said that flood mitigation designs for the Anse-La-Ray district have met the expectations of residents. This conclusion was drawn after the Unit held a meeting with residents last Thursday, on the works to commence in the village to bring a solution to the flood problems there.

Government is undertaking the project through financing from the Caribbean Development Bank. Contacts for the works were only recently signed among three contractors from St. Lucia, Martinique and China, and the Special Projects Unit is ensuring that Anse-La-Ray residents and those within the Gardens area, where works are also due to start, are very much involved in the process.

There were many residents, who were giving their ideas as to what they thought would be the most effective design and that confirmed the scheme, which the government came up with.

“There were very few concerns about some localized scenarios, such as near people’s homes, how they are going to be affected, the traffic in the area, etc.”, informed Engineer with the Special Projects Unit of the Ministry Works, Chamberlain Emmanuel.

Mr. Emmanuel however, said the Special Projects Unit would at all times maintain a high level of consultation with the residents, who will be affected by the works due to start in early December: “There will be a series of programmes through the media and other means; to the schools, to the community through those same meet-



Corner of Bridge Street and Jeremie Street

ings, and we’re going to be procuring a specialist PR consultant, through the help of GIS an other means, as well as continuous feedback to them as the works proceed to find out whether there are any problems, and whether things are going smoothly, according to their satisfaction”.

One of the main components is the construction of a bridge spanning twenty meters, near the new police station. The old Bridge be demolished and this will necessitate a bypass to ensure the smooth flow of traffic along that part of the West Coast Road, according to Mr. Emmanuel.



The team of the Rodent Control Unit

The Saint Lucia Solid Waste Management Authority (SLWMA), has said it will do all it can in order to reduce the rodent population in

Castries. Speaking to the Government Information Service, Operations Manager of the Saint Lucia Solid Waste Man-

SLWMA joins the fight against rodents

agement Authority, Mr. Laurianus Lesfloris said, while poor garbage disposal serves as a food source for rodents, the problem is further complicated by street persons, who delve into the bins. As a result the Authority is reviewing the garbage collection schedule for Castries.

TRCK: 10 “The way we can play a part on that committee is in terms of the waste collection that takes place within the city of Castries. Presently, waste is collected on a daily basis from Monday to Saturday within the city of Castries. The old CDC complex receives a collection in the morning while the new CDC Complex gets a collection in the

evening. We are currently looking at the possibility of undertaking the collection in the evening”, Mr. Lesfloris said.

This is a strategy that the SLWMA hopes will reduce the likelihood of rodents finding food in the bins at nights. Mr. Lesfloris said some CDC residents have indicated a preference for the removal of communal bins; however, the Authority is carefully assessing the implications of this suggestion. One of the implications is whether persons will comply with the rule to only place their garbage out on garbage disposal days.

Anse-La-Raye community to march against gender-based violence

The newly formed Anse-La-Raye Gender-based violence Community Response Team will march throughout the village on Thursday, November 25, protesting violence against women. The march is in observance of International Day of Protest Against Violence Against Women.

The purpose of the march is to sensitise the community and increase the level of awareness on issues of gender-based violence and its impact, not only on the family, but society as a whole.

The march, which will commence at 9:30 a.m. at the Anse-La-Raye Playing Field, will see students from all the schools taking part, including the infant and primary schools, CARE, and the two preschools. Representatives of other community organizations are also expected to participate.

The Anse-La-Raye Gender-based violence Community Response Team (CRT) is an initiative of the Division of Gender Relations in the Ministry of Health. The Anse-La-Raye CRT is made up of approximately 20 community volunteers, who were trained in crisis intervention, and equipped with mediation skills to provide assistance in situations of gender-base violence.

There are five (5) other Community Response Teams, one each in Canaries,

Choiseul, Dennery North and South, and Laborie, each of which will be or-

ganizing community activities to mark the November 25 International Day of

Protest, condemning Violence Against Women.

Increase in reported cases of sexual abuse of women causing concern

“approximately 67% of clients coming to the centre complained of being both physically and sexually abused”

The increase in cases of physical and sexual abuse of women reported to the Women Support Centre is becoming a serious cause for concern, particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS infection. The Women Support Centre is an institution for battered women under the supervision of the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations.

According to Marcia Synthorien of the Division of Gender Relations in the Ministry of Health, for the three years the centre has been in operation, this year has shown a significant increase of sexual abuse cases.

Speaking on GIS’ Issues and Answers programme on the topic HIV/AIDS and Domestic Violence, Ms. Synthorien said that approximately 67% of their clients complained of being both physically and sexually abused: “It sort of allows us to understand better, this issue, because they don’t feel that they are able to negotiate with those persons, safe sex practices - put on a Condom, I don’t want to have sex with you if you are not going to protect me and so on. So, most times it’s forced sex. They are physically abused and then sexually abused. We are now having a new concern at the shelter, which is really beginning to raise the question of infections and HIV.

Director of the National HIV/AIDS

Programme in the Ministry of Health, Nahum Jn. Baptiste said that what needed to be done now was to help particularly, the less privileged women in the society to overcome their vulnerability: “I mean do they have a job, are they able to support themselves economically. What about the level of education? Now it’s true, we have been talking about these things for quite a long time, now we need to focus on it a lot more and look at its role, empowering women more. We need to work more with the groups, like the Uptown Girls Centre. I think that our programmes are not necessarily meeting the women, particularly the rural women down on the ground, and we definitely need to work a lot more with these groups, to enable them to empower women.

However, Mr. Jn.Baptiste said this called for a need to have more HIV/AIDS specialists here, to help address HIV/AIDS and Domestic Violence.

T&T puts \$100M in an effort to reduce regional trade imbalance

• CAIC to play major role



Hon. Philip J. Pierre

An initiative to redress the regional trade imbalance between Trinidad and Tobago and sister CARICOM states was launched at a breakfast ceremony here last week.

Called the “CARICOM Trade Support (CTS) Programme” after the Trinidad and Tobago government decided to establish it in February 2003, the CTS’ primary component is a revolving loan fund of TT\$100 million.

The fund is focused on the private sector and will be disbursed in three annual amounts between 2005 and 2007, to qualified firms in CARICOM member states outside of Trinidad and Tobago. The loan is interest-free and will be used to procure regional consultancy services to diagnose their operations and business development projects, and make appropriate recommendations.

Head of the CARICOM Trade Support Programme, Ambassador Jerry Narace of Trinidad and Tobago said,



Guy Mayers

“Trinidad and Tobago is by no means comfortable with a balance of trade with our CARICOM partners that is too heavily balanced in our favour. We feel that we have a responsibility to correct that situation for the long term benefit of regional development. This is the motive propelling this initiative.”

St. Lucia’s Minister for Commerce, Tourism, Investment and Consumer Affairs Hon. Phillip J. Pierre was pleased with the CARICOM Trade Support Programme: “The government of St. Lucia is encouraged by the decision of Trinidad and Tobago, our fortunate oil producing neighbour to initiate this crucial programme, and to provide the initial funding of TT\$100 million for its establishment. We are pleased to note that the CTS is as a result of the collaborative effort of the Trinidad and Tobago public and private sectors. We are of the firm conviction in St. Lucia, that the public/private sector partnership is an essential element in fostering



Patrick Manning

social and economic developments.”

Another component of the CTS programme will be the provision of technical inputs from private sector organisations of member states, through the Caribbean Association of Industry and Commerce (CAIC).

Vice President of the CAIC, Guy Mayers said, “The CAIC as the main umbrella private sector organisation in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) will have a dual role to play. Firstly, CAIC is represented on the Facilitation Committee, which is one of the two advisory committees put in place to assist with the process. CAIC will therefore, play a major role in defining the strategic industries and key growth sectors in the Caribbean, that the CARICOM Trade Support programme will be targeting.”

St. Lucia’s Minister for External Affairs, International Trade and Aviation, Senator the Hon. Petrus Compton feels the CTS must be measured within the



Petrus Compton

context of the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME) and global change.

“The CTS programme and its support mechanism, the CTS Fund can become a powerful lever to produce a changed business environment, characterised by increased competitiveness, greater flexibility and an enhanced export capacity. Through the appropriate technical assistance and the facilitation of mutually beneficial strategic alliances, businesses in St. Lucia and the OECS can acquire the much needed capacity to compete more effectively, within the new economic environment being created at the regional and global levels,” he said.

The CTS is expected to enhance the level of competitiveness among private sector firms in CARICOM member states and aid in stimulating economic growth and recovery from the adverse economic effects of globalisation and recent natural disasters.

Sir Dwight makes prescription for full regional integration

Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB), Sir Dwight Venner has made a call for the region to subscribe to a process similar to the European experience, in order to arrive at a common currency and common central bank.

Sir Dwight made this submission in light of the region’s efforts to facilitate the financial integration of both the OECS and Caricom member states. He said the process would be the key in mapping out the road ahead for the full financial integration of the Carib-

bean region.

Addressing bankers at the Caribbean Association of Indigenous Banks’ Annual General Meeting here recently, he commended the OECS for being at an advanced stage of financial integration.

“The OECS through the eastern Caribbean Currency Union”, Sir Dwight said, “is already far advance on the road to financial integration, one currency and central bank, and a regional stock exchange; a regional government securities market, a regional inter-bank

market and a regional market for secondary mortgages.”

Sir Dwight also highlighted several other regional entities which embraced the integration concept. “Institutions such as the RBTT, FCIB, Sagicor, CLICO and Grace Kennedy”, he said, “are already operating in a broad regional context. The question then becomes: can these two manifestations of regional activities be smoothly and effectively incorporated to provide an optimal solution to the integration of regional financial systems?”



Sir Dwight Venner

Consumer Affairs Department protects consumers

The Consumer Affairs Department engaged the Asian section of the business community last week, in dialogue on the issue of consumer protection. The exercise at the Auberge Seraphine was part of a series of meetings being conducted with various groups within the business community on the subject.

The Department recently conducted a similar activity with the banking sector and described that exercise as being highly successful.

Director of Consumer Affairs, Phil-
lip Mc Lauren said the aim of the initia-

tive is to increase the awareness of, and sensitisation to the sector on the importance of protecting the consumer.

“We are trying to meet with different groups to raise issues, to see how best we can achieve one common goal: that you have a satisfied consumer. A satisfied consumer means repeat business; a satisfied consumer means less conflict between business and consumers”, Mr. Mc Lauren said.

The Bureau of Standards is also assisting in lowering the huge numbers of complaints from the public, by ensuring that businesses comply with stan-

dards specifications for products sold on the local market, giving specific attention this year, on the sale of Christmas lights. Director of the Bureau, Dr. Allison Plummer said that many stores were still ordering 120 volt electronic items for sale on the island, when the required voltage was 220.

“If you are importing fans, make sure you have a responsibility to ensure that you know what you are importing, and somebody is not just packing a container, closing it and shipping it to your shores, and assuming that it can

be sold”, she stressed.

Over the last three years complaints from members of the public on transactions made at businesses belonging to the Asian Community have risen steadily. Some 17% of all complaints registered up to August of this year, came from the Asian business sector, and the Consumer Affairs Department expects that figure to increase especially, as we are now in the Christmas season. The complaints against the Asian business sector this year are up on the recorded 15% of total complaints in 2001.

Bananas: A conti

PM in conversatio



Dr. Kenny D. Anthony

Good Morning St. Lucia Bon-jou Ankò Mésyésédanm. Every now and then, you hear the claim that “Labour Kill Bananas” or “Kenny mash-up the banana industry” or “the Government make things hard in the banana industry.” Amazingly, this kind of talk is even expressed by a few individuals who are charged with the responsibility of implementing Government’s programme for the recovery of the industry.

I guess there are those who will always refuse to face the reality that confronts us. They refuse to understand that we no longer have the British market to ourselves, that we are producing bananas at a much higher cost than our competitors, that we cannot control the price of inputs for the industry, or the prices paid by supermarkets for our bananas.

Let me tell you what intrigues me the most. How do these individuals explain to St. Lucians that Grenada has virtually gone out of bananas, that production has fallen drastically in all the islands, yet St. Lucia’s overall share of exports from the Windward Islands as a whole has actually increased? If, as they claim, this Government has no interest in the banana industry, how then do they explain that this same Government has invested over EC \$140 million in the industry over the past seven years? How do these individuals explain that St. Vincent, for example,

did not fully adopt our approach to restructuring their industry, their farmers continue to abandon the industry, production continues to decline and their debt continues to climb. How do they explain these objective facts? Talk about facing reality!

In my view, it is better to share the truth with our farmers, to explain the full reality we face, rather than feeding them with lies, half-truths and nostalgia. Where the banana industry is concerned, “the best politics is no politics at all.”

Increased banana production

Never mind the decrease in production over what it used to be in the distant past, Saint Lucia still remains the leading producer of bananas in the Windward Islands. In fact, the good news is that banana production has again increased in the past six months.

Prior to the passage of Hurricane Ivan, Windward Islands exports increased by 25% compared to 2003 levels, with Saint Lucia leading this increase. In fact, for the first half of 2004, exports of bananas increased by 22.3%, in contrast to a 30.9% decline in the first half of 2003.

One of the primary factors behind this increase was the level of rainfall in the first half of the year. Another important factor was the harvesting of tissue culture fruit planted in July and September of 2003. This strong showing has been helped by the technical

support and guidance provided by the Banana Emergency Recovery Unit (BERU) and the improved quality of our fruit.

This is a timely reminder to all of us that the banana industry is not dead. Fig-la Pa Mor; O kont-were, Fig La Vivant! And it remains the main revenue earner for the agricultural sector. It is also a timely reminder to all of us that as farmers continue to take more control of their affairs through commercialization, the industry is proving its resilience. The banana industry is part of our life and all of us in the country benefit when St. Lucia records these increases in production and export. Fig-la se sa nou toute; ek nou toute ka pofi leur industry-a ka faire bien!

We must all continue to support our courageous banana farmers who keep the industry alive.

I understand the challenges our farmers face. I plant bananas. I tend and reap them for export. I know about the increasing cost of production and the losses sustained because of situations we do not have control over. For example, the Government has removed the Duties and Consumption Taxes on inputs for the banana sector, yet prices continue to rise, because we have no control over the prices our suppliers charge for these inputs. To compound the situation, is the cost of fuel. This has led to a worldwide increase in the cost of shipping, and indeed, in the cost of producing goods and services.

Emerging threats

But even while we welcome the good news about increased banana production, there are some threats on the horizon.

The problems of Leaf Spot management will continue to affect the quality of our bananas. Today the fruit is packaged on our farms, shipped to the United Kingdom and transported directly to the supermarkets for placement on their shelves. Our bananas continue to get good reviews from the British consumer. But we must continue to manage our quality if we are to maintain our place in the market.

Now too, we must be preoccupied with the new banana regime proposed by the European Union.

Approaching Deadlines

In 2006, the protection we enjoy for our bananas entering the European Union market will expire. We will then have to face and compete with the producers from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific states, and also from Latin America. In this scenario, the question then becomes how do we protect our market share?

Looming battle over tariffs

The issue is not entirely in our hands. Our future depends on the European Union, the banana producers in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific and – remotely – our diplomatic skills.

As I said earlier, the European Union has proposed a tariff of 230 Euros per



Continuing challenge! on with the nation

metric ton for bananas entering the European Community. But first, let me explain this word “tariff”, because this is a word you will hear a lot about in the coming weeks.

Basically, a tariff is a duty on a particular class of imports or exports. Put differently, we can regard a tariff as a tax that Government collects on goods entering or leaving a country.

So, since our cost of producing bananas is so high, we need special protection because we simply cannot compete with other suppliers. To protect our fruit, the European Union, as I indicated, proposes to tax fruit from other suppliers at a rate of 230 Euros per metric ton.

Most industry analysts point out that this is a negotiating rate and in any event, it is too low. A rate of 270 Euros per metric ton would have offered us better protection. So, in the next few weeks, I expect intense diplomatic activity in Europe.

To protect our interests and to argue our case, the Governments of St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica have engaged the services of the well-known St. Lucian diplomat, Ambassador Edwin Laurent.

The situation is exceedingly complex because other Caricom producers such as Belize and Surinam insist on the route of tariffs, while we would prefer the status quo. In a sense, we are alone and we have to fight every inch

of the way. En battai sala, nou pa ni jean; nou ka gumen pa kor nou!

Tiredness among allies

There is too, an increasing sense of tiredness among our allies in Europe. According to an industry analyst, and I am quoting him,

“The United Kingdom used to be a strong defender of the EU’s tariff-quota banana regime. However, since the mid-1990s its firms, Geest and Fyffes, have divested out of bananas, so its pecuniary interests in bananas are weak. Coupled with the liberalization philosophy of the Government, there has been a move to oppose higher prices arising from EU policies. France, Spain and Portugal remain strong supporters of a high tariff, not out of solidarity with the Caribbean per se, but to minimize the extent to which deficiency payments would have to be paid to their producers under a low tariff.”

No strangers to threats

We are no strangers to threats, be they man-made or Acts of God. We have lost much time in the past because those who were responsible at the time to prepare us for Britain’s joining of the European Union were afraid to face the truth – and its consequences. Since those were the days when bananas were “Green Gold”, the leaders at the time did not have the courage to paint the real picture of the future. We did not take “a stitch in time” to save the industry. They failed to encourage



Farmer attending to banana bunch

diversification. When the crunch came and prices started to fall, they blamed local opposition politicians and banana farmers for what they very well knew was not of our doing. The eventual entry of Britain into the EU was followed by the steps taken by the US in support of the Latin American companies at the WTO. The rest is history.

But all of that is spilt milk over which we should not cry. Instead, we have to continue to persevere and look positively to the future.

Encouraging prospects

I am encouraged by some of what I see happening in the industry today. The work on Tissue Culture is ongoing, but the recent heavy rains have caused a temporary setback. Nonetheless, we have been able to prepare 400 out of 500 acres of land for Tissue Culture plants and our farmers have appreciated the importance of this new approach to maximization of production. People can see the difference and farmers are satisfied that this will certainly result in increases in yield per acre.

Drainage and irrigation is also progressing satisfactorily, especially at Roseau, where farmers have formed themselves into a group to manage the infrastructure which has been made available.

On another positive note, some 300 of our farmers who are among the Fair

Trade producers arrangement, had a very successful meeting last Sunday. I am informed by the Minister of Agriculture that they discussed how to make the best of this positive initiative. He also reported that, on their own initiative, using the funds made available through the Fair Trading process, they have been establishing and promoting and implementing community projects in their districts.

All of this gives me hope. We all know that the road ahead is tough. It is a long, narrow and winding road. We know we shall overcome, but it will not be overnight.

To our farmers I say: congratulations on your recent successes and please rest assured that the Government will continue, as always to seek the best for you, every day and everywhere.

Conclusion

As I close on this St. Cecilia’s Day, I wish to hail and salute all of our musicians and to encourage them to continue to make us proud in whatever their endeavours. If I may borrow a well-known phrase, let me say to all of our musicians in St. Lucia: “If music be the food of life, then play on!”

Once again, I wish you all a pleasant week. Until next Monday, May The Good Lord God, Bless And Keep You.



Banana reception depot at Odsan

Report of the investigation into the circumstances relating to the “Helenites building” located at 438 East 49th Street, Brooklyn, New

The Centre has served as the meeting place for many St Lucians and St Lucian organizations

By letter dated August 24, 2004, Dr James Fletcher, Cabinet Secretary, informed me that he was directed by you to invite me to conduct an investigation into the circumstances relating to the “Helenites Building” located at 438 East 49th Street, Brooklyn, New York.

The terms of reference given were: (a) Enquire into the circumstances surrounding: (i.) The attempted transfer of title to the property situated at 438 East 49th Street, Brooklyn, New York; and (ii.) The facilitation of a mortgage of U.S. \$150,000 on the said property. (All other amounts to be read as US dollars) (b) Determine whether the behaviour of the parties involved in these matters constitutes criminal misconduct, acts of corruption, or other acts of impropriety, misfeasance or illegality. (c) Make recommendations as may be deemed appropriate, arising from the investigation.

I was instructed that the Cabinet had mandated that the report be submitted within the shortest possible time, but in any event, no later than 30 days.

I commenced the investigation in St Lucia from October 1, 2004 to Saturday October 9, 2004. During the period I interviewed persons from a list provided by the Cabinet Secretary. The list contained the senior members of the administration, both politicians and civil servants, who in some way were, or should be, concerned with the “Helenites Building” in New York.

I obtained previous written statements from some of the members I interviewed. I was given or referred to quite a bit of written material touching on the subject of the investigation.

On Sunday October 10, I traveled to New York and there, from Monday October 11, 2004 to Friday October 15, 2004 at the St Lucia Mission in Manhattan, I interviewed some of the staff members of the mission and other private citizens. I proceeded to Brooklyn to interview a lawyer from Grenada who practises in the United States. I interviewed the managing director of a Management Consulting firm by telephone and I received from him a telefax concerning the “Helenites Centre”. I received lots of written material from the persons interviewed. I left New York on Saturday October 16, 2004.

The list of persons interviewed is in Schedule 1 and the telefax about which I spoke above is in Schedule 2.

Circumstances surrounding the attempted transfer of title to the property and facilitation Of mortgage of \$ 150, 000

On November 22, 1978, the Helenites Association of St Lucia Inc, which is one of five known associations of St Lucians in New York, was registered as a charitable trust or charitable corporation.

As per indenture dated September 24, 1982, the Association purchased what was a Jewish Synagogue from YOUNG ISRAEL OF RUBY INC, the portion of land in the Borough of Brooklyn, County of Kings, City and State of New York located at No. 438 East 49th Street for the price of \$54, 000 and on the same day entered into a mortgage with the vendor in the amount of \$34, 000. The transaction is referred to as a purchase money mortgage.

The records indicate that between March 24, 1983 to September 24, 1984, the Association raised various sums to pay off the mortgage. But there is a query about the Association’s title to which I will refer later.

Between 1983 and 1989 the Centre served as the meeting place for many St Lucians and St Lucian organizations. The Association held a number of activities to raise funds and was able at first to pay its bills which included taxes on the property.

In 1990 the City of New York reassessed the building and the land. The class registration code of both was changed and that resulted in the payment of back taxes from 1982 to 1990. The assessed value of the building was changed to \$45, 000 and that of the land to \$67, 000.

The tax burden became too heavy and the members of the Association decided to place the property for sale on the market. They were offered \$275, 000 for the building to which they agreed, but because of a religious clause in the sale agreement between the original vendor and the Association, the buyer withdrew his offer.

However the Association felt that the sale of the building would be detrimental to the St Lucian community in New York and their next option was to ask the Government of St Lucia to assist.

Thereafter the Association made the following proposals to the Government of St Lucia: (a) The Government purchases the property for a small fraction of the appraised value of \$300, 000 which would include the amount of taxes. (b) The Government assists in paying off the delinquent taxes and then purchases the building for \$1. Make use of the building as an extension of its Consulate. (c) Once the property was in the Government’s name, it would obtain a tax exemption and there would be no further taxes. (d) The Government would now own a sizeable bit of equity in a U.S. property which would serve the community. ”

It does not appear that any response was given to these proposals.

Things did not improve with the Association. On July 10, 1995, the President of the Association wrote to the Ambassador at the time, seeking the Government’s assistance and asking the Government to buy the property at 75 – 80 % of the market value of \$275, 000 for the St Lucian community in New York. In his letter, the President stated that the Centre had become a strain on the limited resources of the Association because of the high taxes that were assessed.

The Ambassador replied on July 19, 1995, stating that the proposal seemed quite feasible and that he would put the matter before the Foreign Minister in St Lucia. The Foreign Minister thought the proposal was certainly one the Government should pursue even as he observed that Government’s financial resources at the time were extremely

limited.

In a further letter to the President of the Association dated August 11, 1995, the Ambassador told him that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had given the green light for the Mission to proceed with the presentation of a firm proposal.

The Ambassador at the time left office suddenly and nothing further is heard of the idea of the purchase of the Centre by the Government of St Lucia.

In 1998 the situation became desperate. The Association owed taxes to the amount of \$59, 000 approximately. On April 24, 1998, the Department of Finance of the City of New York sent a “Delinquency Notice” to the Helenites Association indicating that the total remittance due was \$58, 461.02. On May 7, 1998, the City of New York sent a “Notice of Intention to sell Lien” to the Association in which they stated that to prevent the sale of the lien or the property, payment in full of the amount due would need to be received by the Department of Finance no later than June 12, 1998.

A telefax marked “URGENT” was addressed to the Honourable Prime Minister, Dr Kenny D Anthony, with a list of taxes and interest due, amounting to \$58,692.97.

By Cabinet Conclusion No. 401, Cabinet had already approved in principle the purchase of the Helenites Centre in New York. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance, because of the time constraint, by correspondence dated June 11, 1998, made arrangements with the President of the St Lucia United Association to pay \$45, 000 to the Comptroller of New York City as part payment of the delinquency taxes. That was done. The balance was supplied by the St Lucia Mission in Washington. Thus the Centre was saved.

According to the Minister of External Affairs the Government in 1998 decided to purchase the Helenites Centre, declare it a trust and place it in the hands of trustees in New York who would manage the property.

The Accountant at the Mission was of the same view. He stated that the purpose of the Government of St Lucia acquiring the building was to ensure that the St Lucian community in New York and the surrounding areas would continue to have a place to meet and gather to maintain a St Lucian connection.

He said that upon official title of the building being registered in the name of the Government of St Lucia, tax exemption was to be acquired from the Authorities and a trust was to be established to handle the operation of the building, relieving the Government of the day-to-day running and financial obligations for maintenance of the building.

Whilst the Government was seeking to have the Centre properly registered in its name, two letters were written on the matter. One by the Prime Minister to Michael Bartlett dated July 23, 1998, stated among other things, that the Government urgently required the preparation of the deed of sale and transfer of the property from the Helenites Association to the Government of St Lucia as well as the preparation of a draft trust deed in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, setting up a Board of Trustees to be appointed

by the Government of St Lucia to manage the property.

Another letter dated November 3, 1998 was written by the Attorney General to the Ambassador pertaining to the purchase of the building. In that letter the Attorney General sought the intervention of the Ambassador and asked him to contact Bartlett to secure agreement on the way forward.

In September 1998 the Ambassador contacted the executive members of the Association to discuss the transfer of ownership from the Helenites Association to the Government of St Lucia. An attorney was retained. He outlined the measures necessary, stating that it would take four to eight months to conclude the transaction. On February 15, 1999, the legal documents for the transfer of ownership were signed and filed with the Real Title Agency which was then responsible for filing the deed with the Registrar’s Office. On April 12, 2000, the Mission received from the Office of the City Registrar the certified copy of the deed showing the new owner of the building as the Government of St Lucia.

On April 27, 2000 the Ambassador wrote to the Honourable Attorney General of St Lucia enclosing copies of legal documents from the City of New York, Department of Finance, for the transfer of ownership of the Helenites Centre to the Government of St Lucia. On May 12, 2000 the Attorney General wrote to the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance acknowledging receipt of a certified copy of a document registered in the office of the Registrar, Kings County, City of New York, which documents transfer to the Government of St Lucia from the Association the property described as 438 East 49th Street, Brooklyn, New York.

The Attorney General in conclusion wrote: “There being nothing on the face of the document to suggest otherwise, I wish to advise that the transfer has legal effect and the Government of St Lucia should proceed to fulfill its part of the arrangement.”

The arrangement referred to by the Attorney General in paragraph 13 of his letter is no doubt the agreement by the Government of St Lucia to pass over the property to an appropriate body representing the interests of all St Lucians in New York.

I heard evidence from one person that the agreement was that on condition that the Government paid the taxes in arrears, the building would be passed to the Government who would then arrange to place the building as a trust for all St Lucians and there would be a board of trustees to manage the trust.

Evidence from another source is slightly different. That source said that the Government decided to assist with the payment of the taxes on condition that it received title to the property so that the property could be turned over to a not-for-profit organization which would be exempt from taxes and which would continue to make the property available for use by the St Lucian community in New York.

As indicated above, the Government of St Lucia paid the arrears of taxes and received title to the property from the Helenites Association. By whichever account, the transfer of the building from the Government to the trust or not-for-profit organization did not take place expeditiously and it is this default which is partly the cause of the present problem.

Continued in the next issue

Caribbean Public Finance Management Officials Meet in St Kitts

More than seventy public finance management officials from nineteen CARICOM countries are in St Kitts to attend the first annual conference of the Caribbean Public Finance Association (CaPFA), which takes place at the Marriott Hotel from 23-25 November 2005.

Formed in 2003, the Caribbean Public Finance Association provides a forum for public finance officials to exchange ideas and experiences and to discuss current developments and best practices in the profession. Its objectives include: to increase public finance professionalism in the region; to foster networking between members and cooperation between governments; to facilitate dissemination of information, exchange and training throughout the region; and to increase public awareness of the importance of sound and transparent public finance management to the delivery of government programmes and services to the community.

The conference whose theme is “Strengthening Public Finance Management in the Caribbean”, will feature Caribbean and international presenters. During the two days, participants will discuss budget development within a macroeconomic framework; new directions and issues in public finance management and audit issues. The association will hold its first annual general meeting on the final day.

Mr Wendell Lawrence, Financial Secretary for St Kitts and Nevis, will present the feature address at the opening ceremony of the conference, which is sponsored by the Caribbean Regional technical Assistance Center, (CARTAC), the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Efforts to control Leaf Spot or the Yellow Sigatoka Disease intensifies

Efforts to control the spread of the Leaf Spot or the Yellow Sigatoka Disease is expected to be intensified, in order to avert a repeat of the losses the disease caused to the industry last year, and earlier in 2004.

This commitment came out of a recent meeting involving the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the directors of local banana shipping companies and the Windward Islands Banana Exporting Company (WIBDECO).

The Chief Executive Officer of WIBDECO, Mr. Bernard Cornibert said the

Disease was a burning issue, occupying the attention of stakeholders at all levels of the industry.


“Towards the back end of last year and coming into the beginning of this year we had a leaf spot problem, which cost the industry a lot of money in particular, WIBDECO. We have had to bear the brunt of the cost and it is in the interest of all of us to try to avoid a similar situation from happening this year”, Mr. Cornibert said.

He further explained that the leaf spot fungus severely limited the production levels of bananas, aggravating

an already acute cash flow problem in the industry, particularly the availability of funds to procure inputs.

Mr. Cornibert said, “However, at the beginning of this year when we sustained all the leaf spot and huge losses, this had a very negative impact on our cash flow and therefore, when you are faced with that kind of situation you have to tighten up.

One a brighter note the WIBDECO CEO said that there had been a gradual improvement in the area of procurement of supplies for farmers.



Banana field

Repairs will take millions – Dominican PM

Dominica’s Prime Minister, Roosevelt Skerrit, says that, although he cannot call a “round” figure as yet, it is going to take millions of dollars to repair the damage done to his country by the earthquake which shook the 289.9-square mile island at about 7:40 on Sunday morning. Dominica was the epicentre of Sunday’s earthquake.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with Caribbean Net News following a lengthy meeting with emergency services officials Monday, the Dominican leader said many individuals have had to evacuate their homes as a result of the severe structural damage done to many buildings and dwelling places.

“I can tell you that we were forced to move the patients from the Portsmouth Hospital into another building and we are now awaiting word from our engineers to see if we will have to demolish that building and build a new hospital.

“Even though the people of Dominica are settling down and endeavouring to get their lives back to normal again, the situation is indeed serious and, from what I have seen, it is going to take millions of dollars to repair the damaged areas.”

Skerrit said that there were over 18 landslides that has caused serious problems with the road network and “there is one village that has been totally cut off from the rest of the country and there is also another village called Grand Fonds that has been locked in since last week Thursday,” he said, adding there are over two and a half dozen severely damaged building, including three damaged churches.

Skerrit said his government has received assistance from the Barbados-based Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA) and they will be using a helicopter from the Barbados military to airlift food packages and aid supplies to the residents in those areas that have been cut off from the rest of the country.

Meanwhile, follow-up telephone contact with some of the southern Caribbean islands revealed that one person died on the French-speaking Caribbean island of Guadeloupe.

Authorities in Basse-Terre told Caribbean Net News that a three-year-old boy died as result of being crushed when the side wall of his house collapsed. His mother and sister escaped with injuries.

The incident is the only known fatality thus far and took place in Trois-Rivieres, located on Guadeloupe’s southern corridor.



Caption



Caption

NEMO warns public of weather condition

The National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO) wants to draw the attention of the public to the weather condition over the past few days.


NEMO’s Deputy Director, Mr. Michael Dubois said that the public needed to be reminded of its responsibility in averting possible danger to life and property. The heavy rains experienced recently resulted in fallen trees, land slippage and flooding in some areas.

“Other than the swollen rivers and so on, we have not gotten any reports of any major difficulties suffered by persons, but we want to take this opportunity to implore residents and citizens to take heed and be cautious about venturing into flooded areas, and take precautionary measures against flood-

ing in itself”, Mr. Dubois said.

According to Mr. Dubois, the improper disposal of garbage has resulted in some cases in clogged drains, thereby contributing to the problem of flooding.

NEMO, he said, is continuing to work with the Solid Waste Management Authority in implementing additional mechanisms for debris management. However, he added that the business community and the wider public must appreciate the need for proper disposal of garbage.



Statement by:

Hon. Menissa Rambally

Minister for Social Transformation, Culture & Local Government



Hon. Menissa Rambally

In my capacity as Minister responsible for the National Conservation Authority (NCA), my attention has been drawn to repeated media allegations concerning the administration of the NCA and, in particular, the stewardship of its General Manager.

I note that the General Manager, Mr. Henry Charles, has invited a full-scale inquiry into the financial affairs of the NCA.

It is important that the financial integrity of the NCA or any institution of government be seen and perceived as impeccable. The undermining of public confidence in the management of the affairs of the NCA is not in the na-

tional interest and therefore ought not to be encouraged.

I have therefore commissioned a full-scale inquiry into the management of the NCA from the period 2001 to present. The investigation will not only enquire into allegations leveled against management but will also seek to determine whether the board of directors of the NCA has effectively exercised its mandate in accordance with the provisions of the Act which governs the NCA.

The probe into the operations of the NCA will be spearheaded by an independent person who will benefit from the full institutional support of the Ministry of Social Transformation, Culture and Local Government, as well

as other departments of government that could be helpful in the efficient and effective conduct of this assignment.

It is my hope that members of the public and the media would support the Investigating Officer in the execution of his duties and would make all useful and relevant information available to that office.

It is my hope that within eight weeks from today's date, I would be in a position to report to the Cabinet of Ministers and to the country, the findings of the investigator and the steps, if necessary, that will be taken to maintain full public confidence in the management of the affairs of this most vital public institution.

Dr. Rose-Marie Antoine is Patron of Salvation Army

• Launches Kettle and Letter Appeals



Dr. Rose-Marie B. Antoine

The Salvation Army is once again doing its part to ensure that the Christmas cheer is spread to the poor and underprivileged in society. Patron of the Salvation Army, Dr. Rose-Marie B. Antoine said that the organization was a humanitarian effort that everyone should actively support.

Dr. Antoine, who said she was very honoured to accept the invitation to serve as the patron of an organisation for the first time, launched the Salvation Army's Christmas Kettles Appeal at the Derek Walcott Square on Tuesday, November 23, 2004, despite the heavy rains.

"I can think of no better organization, with which I would wish to be

associated, and with which I would like to make some sort of contribution, not just to the salvation Army but to the people of Saint Lucia", the wife of Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony said.

The fundraising effort will go towards helping the St. Lucia Ex-Service League on December 20th. This will be followed by a Food Parcels Distribution on December 21st at the Salvation Army Church on High Street in Castries from 11:00 a.m., and a Christmas Luncheon sponsored by the Sandals Group of Companies on the 26th of December at the Castries City Hall from 12:00 noon.

Among other speakers were Com-

manding Officer, Capt. Winston Brown and Malcolm Burns, chairman of the Advisory Board. There was Carol singing led by Lionel Ford and Dr. Antoine. Guy Angelo, as Master of Ceremonies closed the programme following a vote of thanks from secretary, Mary Bruce.

PM appreciates the sound of Pan on Saint Cecilia's Day as a 2-man band entertains at the Greaham Louisy Building which houses the Office of the Prime Minister



THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. Nov. 27th – Fri. Dec. 3rd, 2004

25 Years of Kaiso: "Composers & Critiques" Sat. Nov. 27th, 9:00 p.m.

· SPORTS IN ACTION: Curriculum Officer for Sports in the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development & Sports talks about the status of several schools' sports competitions currently taking place - Sat. Nov. 27th, 8:30 p.m.

· Discover Nigeria – A Land of Unlimited Business Opportunities - Sun. Nov. 28th, 7:10 p.m.

· The National Learning & Enrichment Programme - NELP. Discover the excellent services and opportunities provided by this one-of-a-kind programme – Mon. Nov. 29th, 7:10 p.m.

· The GIS discusses the disease DIABETES and ways in which persons suffering with the ailment can best cope with their situation – Tues. Nov. 30th – 8:00 p.m.

· Flavouring St. Lucia Cooking – An exciting adventure using local foods and seasonings to create high class dishes – Wed. Dec. 1st, 6:30 p.m.

· Human Rights in Haiti: A Work in Progress – Thurs. Dec. 2nd, 9:00 p.m.

· The Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange presents: "Transforming the Economic Landscape of the Currency Union" – Fri. Nov. 26th, 7:10 p.m.

Remember to tune in for:
· GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m.
· Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:
· Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :
· Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):
· Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).
Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)
· Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at www.stlucia.gov.lc and then click on the NTN icon.

www.stlucia.gov.lc

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