



NDM...Our Vision for a new Jamaica
Our Faith is in the Jamaican People

The National Democratic Movement has been a political party for nineteen years and we have been in the forefront in advocating for fundamental changes to Jamaica's political system to give our country the necessary breathing space to move forward.

We believe in the Jamaican people, in their inherent goodwill and in their capacity to achieve great things. We believe that the vast majority of Jamaicans yearn for a peaceful and stable society in which they can improve their lives through their own hard work. We believe that, with the appropriate changes, the Jamaican people are prepared to renew their faith in the institutions of government and those whom they entrust with the responsibilities of government.

We can do it!
Better late than never

Time is running out, but it is still not too late. We are a tough, resilient people. If we were not we would not have survived this long. But there is a limit to our endurance and we must act now before we reach a point of no return. We are still capable of great things. So often we have demonstrated our amazing prowess as a people. Our phenomenal success in sports and music and the outstanding achievements of Jamaicans all over the world are testimony to what we are capable of.

We are Jamaicans - Together, we can work it out!

Reclaiming our Country

The NDM offers the appropriate framework through which the Jamaican people can be mobilized to reclaim our country, restore our system of values, and recapture our sense of community and work together to achieve lasting peace and prosperity.

Rebuilding Our Future

We will rebuild our hope by renewing our dreams and recharting our course. We will create a new political framework in which power is restored to the people and those who exercise power on "behalf of the people are constantly and rigidly held accountable to the people. We will pursue a strategy which, within the context of a competitive politics, seeks consensus in defining long term goals and mobilizing national commitment toward their achievement. We will enshrine the fundamental rights of each individual and put in place effective measures to protect and defend them. We will create the mechanisms to ensure equality and justice for every individual in the eyes and application of the law. We will guarantee every child the opportunity for a sound primary education and post-primary education appropriate to ensure that he or she is equipped with life-sustaining skills. We will provide an economic framework which encourages savings and investment, enhances individual enterprise, creates jobs, and promotes the creation of wealth and equitable opportunity for all. We will ensure the efficient and impartial delivery of public services. We will create an environment in which all Jamaicans can once again be made to feel good about their country, will want to be stakeholders in its enterprise and will see their own prosperity as linked to the growth and development of the nation.

OPENING THE EYES OF THE PEOPLE

A New Political Order for Jamaica

The Need For Reform

The NDM believes that the problems that plague our nation are rooted in the political system under which we are governed. We reject the notion that the management of our affairs should rely on the reasonableness of men and women who so often demonstrate the propensity to be unreasonable. On the contrary, we believe that our political system should be so structured to demand and ensure good management by carefully balancing the powers of the State and by enforcing strict accountability on the part of those who exercise these powers on behalf of the State.

The Over-concentration of Power (an elected dictatorship)

The existing political system, the central feature of which is the enormous concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, has led to abuse and corruption. It has come to be characterized as a "fight for scarce benefits and political spoils carried on by hostile tribes, perpetually at war, dividing rather than uniting the nation". It undermines the real purpose of Parliament and deprives the people of effective representation. It is a system which eschews consensus and militates against national unity since dissenting voices are easily ignored.

Tribalism, Corruption Dependency and lack of Investment

The "winner-take-all" system provides the basis for political tribalism, garrison politics, corruption and the plundering of public resources which must be employed to support it. It produces a social and political environment which is hostile to investment not only because of its inherent volatility but also because it precludes the stability of policy which is indispensable to long term investment. Politics, as we

have—practiced it, fosters a culture of dependency through the extensive use of patronage. The virus of mendicancy which afflicts so many of our people is a direct consequence of this process.

POWER BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

Restoring the Sovereignty of the People

We reject the existing arrangement whereby sovereignty rests in a British monarch. Nor do we accept the notion that sovereignty should reside in Parliament. We are committed to the principle that the sovereignty of our nation resides in the PEOPLE and that it is to the PEOPLE that power belongs. We are committed to the principle that the PEOPLE, as individuals, hold certain basic, fundamental and inalienable rights.

SEPARATION OF POWERS

(dismantling the one man rule system)

We must have a strict separation of powers with direct election of our Prime Minister who will head the Executive arm of government, with a cabinet comprising potentially the best minds and most qualified persons to be ministers of government, rather than Members of Parliament who:

1. May not be qualified for the post.
2. Already have too many responsibilities to serve their constituencies, law making and other parliamentary committee functions.

MPs must be elected on separate ballots from the Prime Minister to give them independence and empowerment to be the people's true representative rather than being mere rubber stamps for the Prime Minister or Party leaders. We need to get the best Jamaicans to work for us whether they are here at home or in the Diaspora. Put them to work for Jamaica!

Structure:

THE PRESIDENT (TO BE APPOINTED or elected)

The President would be appointed for a term of 7 years on a resolution approved by a two thirds majority of each House of Parliament. `

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHOULD BE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE- NATIONALLY)

The Prime Minister would be responsible for the control and direction of policy, the Executive Management of State services and Budget preparation and implementation.

THE LEGISLATURE (REAL POWER FOR YOUR MP)

The Legislature, comprised of the House of Representatives and the Senate, would be responsible for enacting legislation, approving budgetary expenditure and exercising oversight functions on the Executive. It would have final authority in matters pertaining to the imposition of taxes and any increase

in the national debt beyond statutory limits. And MPs should live in the constituencies which they represent in Parliament.

THE JUDICIARY (SHOULD BE INDEPENDENTLY ELECTED BY THE PARLIAMENT)

The Judiciary is responsible for adjudicating questions of law and upholding the Constitution. Senior appointments should come before Parliament.

THE CABINET (LET'S EMPLOY OUR BEST BRAINS)

The Cabinet would consist of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and not more than 14 members nominated by the Prime Minister. Such nominations would be presented to Parliament for scrutiny but could only be rejected by a two-thirds majority of each House of Parliament.

THE SENATE (THE PEOPLE MUST HAVE "A SAY")

(Under the present system, senators, who are a critical part of the legislative process, should be elected not appointed. The NDM supports a modified approach where each party presents their List of proposed Senators prior to general elections. In this method Senators could be appointed on a proportional representational basis.

CREATING TRULY INDEPENDENT AUTHORITIES (REMOVING POLITICAL BIAS)

Sensitive areas of national life must be removed from political influence and control. Independent authorities whose appointment would require a two-thirds majority of each House of Parliament would be established for the following sensitive areas:

- * JUDICIAL SERVICES COMMISSION
- * POLICE SERVICES COMMISSION
- * PUBLIC SERVICES COMMISSION
- * ELECTORAL COMMISSION
- * INTEGRITY COMMISSION
- * CONTRACTOR GENERAL
- * PUBLIC DEFENDER
- * PROSECUTOR GENERAL
- * OMBUDSMAN
- * GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK
- * BROADCASTING COMMISSION
- * PUBLIC BROADCASTING CORPORATION
- * ALL STATUARY CORPORATIONS & EXECUTIVE AGENCIES

AMBASSADORS AND DIRECTORS OF PUBLIC CORPORATIONS (NIAD ACCOUNTABLE)

The appointment of ambassadors and directors of public corporations would be subject to the approval of Parliament.

CONTROL OF TAXATION (LIMITING THE CABINET'S AND MINISTERS' POWER)

We will abolish the Provisional Collection of Tax Act under which the Minister of Finance is able to raise taxes without prior notice to the public and without the approval of Parliament. No new taxes could be imposed without the approval of the House of Representatives.

PUTTING A BRAKE ON THE NATIONAL DEBT (LIMITING THE CABINETS' POWER)

A constitutional limit to the amount of public debt that could be incurred, expressed as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, would be established within that limit. Parliament would, by statute, prescribe the maximum amount of debt that may at any time be outstanding.

LEGISLATION (NO MORE RUBBER STAMPING BY ONE PARTY)

Legislation could be initiated by any member of either House of Parliament. Legislation could also be submitted to Parliament by the Prime Minister. All legislation would have to be examined by the appropriate parliamentary committee in public sitting before being debated and voted on by each House.

RESOLVING GRIDLOCK (BALANCING THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF POWER)

The chief argument against separation of powers is the possibility of gridlock. Gridlock is a good and necessary thing to prevent the abuse of power and the excesses of a constitutional dictatorship. But the frivolous use of gridlock must be avoided and the Prime Minister must not be frustrated in carrying out the mandate for which he or she was legitimately elected. We would minimize the risk of gridlock by providing the following:- If legislation submitted by the Prime Minister is rejected by either House of Parliament, it could be submitted once within that legislative year and, upon such resubmission, could be again rejected only by a two-thirds, majority in each House. If legislation approved by Parliament is rejected by the Prime Minister, it could be reintroduced in Parliament once within that legislative year and if, on its reintroduction, it is approved by a two-thirds majority of each House, it would become law with or without the approval of the Prime Minister.

TERM LIMITATIONS (PROVIDING NEW SPACE FOR NEW THINKING)

The Prime Minister would not be allowed to serve more than two consecutive terms. Members of Parliament and Senators would not be allowed to serve more than three consecutive terms.

FIXED ELECTION DATE (REMOVING THE ADVANTAGE OF A GOVERNING PARTY)

Elections would be held on a fixed date or period every 5 years.

IMPEACHMENT OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS (FOR NON CRIMINAL ACTS)

Provisions would be established in the constitution for the impeachment of public officials who are found guilty of negligence, abuse of authority or subversion of the democratic process.

ROOTING OUT CORRUPTION (A PROSECUTOR GENERAL WITH REAL POWER)

We will establish an independent Prosecutor General to investigate and prosecute corrupt public officials. We will introduce a tough anti corruption law with severe penalties to punish public officials found guilty of corruption.

SETTING PARLIAMENTARY SALARIES

We will limit any increase in the salaries of officials to the weighted average increase granted to public sector employees during the previous year.

PROVIDING EFFECTIVE CONSTITUENCY REPRESENTATION (REAL POWER FOR MP'S)

Members of Parliament are rendered impotent because it is the Ministers, not the MPs, who decide what is to be done in each constituency. Many constituencies are victimized for political reasons. Others are the victims of sheer neglect. We will establish a Constituency Development Fund to be financed by 5% of the annual budget. This will be divided among all constituencies. Each Member of Parliament will be required to submit a 5-Year Development Plan which, once approved by Parliament, will guide the expenditure under the Constituency Programme - which must include contingencies for emergencies.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (REAL POWER AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE)

Projects to be financed under the fund will be carried out by the relevant government agencies. All expenditure will be subject to review by the Appropriations Committee and fully audited by the Auditor General on an ongoing basis. A Consultative Committee that will include a representative of each political party as well as representatives of community organizations will be established in each constituency to monitor and advise on the selection and implementation of projects. The Committee will be required to report annually to Parliament as no funds can be spent under the sole direction/discretion of any MP.

ESTABLISHING REAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT (NOT CONTROLLED BY CENTRAL GOVERNMENT)

We will create a genuine local government system with complete autonomy from central government subject only to audit by the Auditor General. We will create a special structure for municipalities in which Mayors will be elected directly by all the people within each municipality not selected by any party bosses. The functions of local government authorities will be clearly defined and will be separate and distinct from those of central government. Local government services will be financed by the statutory remittance of 5% of recurrent revenue as well as by local rates and user charges.

A COMMON SENSE APPROACH

Jamaican needs no glossy Manifesto with election promises - many of which are forgotten after the elections. What is required to run a civilized and successful country are simply: visionary leadership ; good governance, inclusive of: a fair and efficient justice system; delivery of good education; security of life and property; healthcare; good roads, clean water and garbage collection a framework for a climate which is conducive and friendly to investments and wealth creation.

On the economic front, there is a whole lot that we need to have done. We are living way above our means as a country and I will guarantee you that the JLP/PNP will not come to the country with a credible debt reduction plan. Again the NDM will set the stage.

Without getting into specific figures, it is clear that we are spending more than we earn annually. It therefore means that we have to earn our way out of the problem and cut excess 'fat'. Let's deal with the fat first. The constitution mandates a minimum of forty five constituencies, but in our 'humble judgment' we have over-grown the number to sixty three. But was that increase necessary and in Jamaica's best financial interest?

We are in the information age and the world has gotten 'smaller'. More people can be reached a lot easier with cellular phones, internet access and highways. But, just exit the Norman Manley International Airport and you will be represented by Phillip Paulwell, and by the time you get to the Harbour View round-about, you are represented by Joseph Hibbert. Drive a little further down the road along Windward Road and you are back with Mr. Paulwell then turn up Mountain View and along Langston/Deanery/Elletson Roads you have Maxine Henry-Wilson to the right and Ronnie Thwaites to the left. Travel a little more to the West and there is another constituency represented by Bruce Golding, cross the road and you are in Omar Davies' constituency, over to his left is Portia Simpson-Miller and just across from her is Andrew Holness and to his right is Peter Phillips. There is also Anthony Hylton, Derrick Smith, Bartlett, Chuck, Samuda and Gallimore in relatively close proximity to each other and to the city centre.

COMMON SENSE SOLUTIONS

If we cut out and merge several of these constituencies, we could save a lot on pay and perks for MP's. And we should not forget that these constituencies also have several councilors. They are also paid and receive perks. We could also realign these constituency boundaries and remove the political fences to dismantle their garrison features and effect. Those costs put a large hole in our budget and fatten our debt. We should cut our ministries to the constitutional limit of eleven and streamline our bureaucracy into an efficient, lean, mean machine.

Our geographic location, smack in the middle of South America and the Pacific Region, has been advanced by many persons as an ideal location for a major transshipment point, and in line with Mike Henry's plan for the development of **Vernam Field** which should be a major priority for the country. The block of land spanning Kingston Mall, Marcus Garvey Drive, Hagley Park Road, Maxfield Avenue, Lyndhurst Road, Slipe Pen Road, Spanish Town Road back to Newport East could be fully industrialized with factories and transshipment storage. The residents could be re-located to under populated parishes and transported by train work in the many jobs created within the newly established industrial belt.

This would also rid the city of most of the non-productive, crime factories called 'garrison' constituencies and further reduce the amount of MPs by at least three (3).

There is much to be gained from this project. We could also add an international offshore banking centre here which could attract major capital from East to South.

Vernam Field, which was once used as a strategic United States air base should be marketed to China and the USA for its similar use. This would certainly cause concern for the United States and we should let them compete against each other for the use of the base, with a major pillar of our negotiation being to get the winning bidder to help pay off our entire national debt.

We should market the parish of Portland to film makers all over the world as the Hollywood of the Caribbean. This parish is ideally suited for filmmaking and could possibly employ thousands of people. This would add to our tourism product and the Marina there would attract many wealthy people. They usually spend lavishly and would certainly enhance the economy of Portland.

Why is *Disney* not in Jamaica? We are the most famous island in the Caribbean but we are allowing crime and harassment to drive our tourists away to the Bahamas. We need to beef up our security by putting more police personnel on the streets and enact serious anti harassment laws. We must fix this problem.

Las Vegas attracts over thirty million tourists each year. We are struggling to achieve three million. Port Royal with its rich gambling history could be our Las Vegas. There is no shortage of ideas for the development of this area. There was the Stephens' plan, among others but nothing has come to fruition. We need to appoint a task force to look at all plans on the table and to come up with new ones that will be placed on the fast-track for implementation. We need some action-oriented people to drive our economy.

Kingston, as the cultural Mecca of the country needs to have its mostly inner-city communities opened up and have major streets cut through them, running straight from east-west, from downtown to uptown. There are too many traffic jams because communities were built without proper city planning and the old rusty zinc fences have people locked way in hidden these spaces. The crime statistics show that many unsavoury things are happening behind those walls and so we need to have them torn down. We should have large music studios dotting the landscape. Reggae belongs to us but many others are earning a lot more than us from our product. We should look at making Kingston the music copyright capital of the world. We could earn major bucks from this venture. We would attract major recording labels and copyright lawyers, as well as other music interests to our shores.

The Economy

CONFRONTING OUR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS

Jamaica has, for too long, avoided confronting our problems, relying on external loans, remittances, drug money and, most recently, "hot money" lured by phenomenal interest rates to support a flagging economy. Not even these factors were sufficient to avoid massive devaluations. In the last 34 years, the Jamaican dollar has almost lost most of its value.

Much more jobs can be created through call centres based on the advantages we have over countries like India (where many call centre operations from North America are outsourced). If we create the ideal climate for investments in call centres we could almost immediately employ nearly 100,000 new jobs in the short term period of 18 months.

We also need to enable the estimated J\$150 Billion owned by Jamaicans which are locked away in banks/BOJ's vaults to begin working for the country to create investments rather than earning interest from the poor taxpayers.

We need also to focus more seriously on early childhood education, reorganizing the Justice system so that we can have more efficiency and uniformity of the dispensing of justice for every citizen and on rationalizing the health services so that those who can afford to pay will pay while making it free for those who cannot afford to do so.

When one thinks of how much better we can do, the question which must be asked is, "Why are we not doing so?" the answer is comes down to our outmoded, corrupt political order and the short-sightedness of our political leaders. In order for us to get through this quagmire we may have to suspend our competitive/combatative politics for a five year period. During this time we should form a government of National Unity with the political parties, civil society and the private sector. We would use this period to formulate and implement a new political, economic and security structure.

After that five years sabbatical from combative politics, we could resume under a new constitutional arrangement that would seek to put the people first and not the special interests subverting the people's agenda.

Peter A Townsend

President

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