

GOOD MORNING – MY NAME IS MICHAEL ELLIOTT AND I AM AN EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT...TODAY I PRESENT A POINT OF VIEW ON “JUSTICE”

Justice! – justice for ALL – is the paramount responsibility of government. More important than the Economy; Education; Agriculture!
Justice provides the fundamental framework that makes fairness and good governance possible.

Swift justice is effective. Slow justice is hardly any justice at all. There are cases which take several years...years during which witnesses forget, witnesses die, files are lost or burnt. When people lose confidence in the justice system they resort to vigilante justice or “rent-a-gun and do it yourself justice”.

Justice influences every aspect of life. Let me give you an example: In Agriculture, predial larceny causes frustration for many farmers. They become tired of planting and tending crops or livestock for months or years only to have it reaped or slaughtered by the predial thief.

The answer to this problem is in the arrest, fair & speedy trial and hefty fine or imprisonment of the thief.

What prevents this process from taking place?

[1] The “informa-fi-ded” culture

[2] Political interference

[3] Inadequate numbers of police. The police force has been reduced from 12000 to

8000 while the population is increasing.

[4] Absence of the agricultural equivalent of the neighbourhood watch

What makes up the Justice system?

The Justice of the Peace – The JP and the Petty Sessions is a system in need of restructuring. Many JP’s tend to hide from regular contact with the people. We no longer have the small village concept where people know people. We now have housing schemes and large and small apartment buildings where people hardly say good day or know their neighbour.

The Resident Magistrates Court – Too many of the court houses are in need of repairs. The enormous number of back log cases needs to be tried/resolved

The Circuit Court in too many instances suffers from having to use the same court houses as the RM Courts.

Technology is available to speed up the legal process, to make court notes ready on the same day of the sittings. But this technology is NOT being used island wide.

The Supreme Court : Needs urgent attention to be more efficient.

The Court of Appeal: The slowness of the courts below these courts reduces the quality of evidence presented to it

The Police – The numbers are inadequate as mentioned before. The maintenance of buildings, vehicles and the use of modern technology are also grossly undersupplied. A good start in Community Policing was made at AMCHAM in the Grant's Pen community in St. Andrew. There needs to be much more Community Policing. One serious issue with this good policing is ... as soon as the police gain the confidence and trust of the community that police personnel is transferred.

The Prisons – The attitude of punishment --- as draconian as possible ... should be replaced with emphasis on rehabilitation. The aim must be to reduce the prison population ... NOT to build more prisons.

Juveniles should NOT be in adult prisons

First time offenders should NOT be locked up among hardened criminals.

Dangerous criminals should be in maximum security. The prisons should be sanitary and humane.

Autonomy: The Justice System must NOT be subject to any political influence. This means that the all the Police Services Commissions and the Judicial Services Commission should be appointed by Parliament using an open and transparent method.

The NDM supports the Legal Aid system which should be expanded to give assistance to those in dire need for Justice and are unable to afford it.

The demands of the Justice System placed on the country at this time are caused mainly from too many years of neglect. This can be now approached as a matter of will and in part a matter of money. All sectors of the society have financial demands to a shrinking and non productive budget. What the NDM proposes will not be attainable immediately. Governing by planning for all Jamaicans for a

productive society must be placed in front of planning to win the next election. Appealing to the minds of the people with ideas and positive proposals when campaigning should take the place of 'belly full of food and a handful of cash' with some excitement.

The people should demand good governance think and understand the issues and not follow some meaningless messianic slogans.

GOD gave us a fantastic mind....Let us use it for the betterment of our selves and Jamaica.

Think Jamaica....NOT party...THANK YOU!

I am Michael Elliott, Executive Member of the National Democratic Movement (NDM).

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