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INTRODUCTION

- Some weeks ago I made what turned out to be a controversial speech to members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force Motorised Division concerning improving the quality of policing in this country. Since then, there have been several news reports indicating that the government is taking steps to review the role of the Jamaica Defence Force and revamp the JCF.

- I'm very pleased to see these stories, because this is an issue that is close to my heart. Of course I hope it us more than just an announcement, because you know how we love to applaud intentions of actions in this country. But when it comes to the question of crime and violence, I think we all agree that what we need is ***“action, not a bag o’ mouth.”***
- If the government is indeed serious about improving the quality of policing, then I believe it presents some important opportunities for us. Today I would like to talk to you about two of these.

LOCAL ACTION

- Firstly, this is a chance for all Jamaicans, in our communities everywhere, to prove that we can apply more attention to an issue than the proverbial “***nine-day wonder.***” I have appreciated all the media coverage that my speech has attracted – not because I like the publicity, ***in fact those of you who know me well know that attention is the last thing I would crave.*** Rather it is because it has afforded an important topic the appropriate level of public interest. However, I believe that it is time to expand this media focus into local communities.
- I would like to encourage community based organisations, non-government organisations, church groups and parent-teacher associations in every parish, to engage in meaningful discussions about crime and the strategies needed to combat it.

- Wisdom does not lie in a few heads -- in fact we have a saying that “**two heads are better than one.**” If that is indeed true, then the collective wisdom of a nation is powerful beyond words. All over Jamaica, in community centers, town and church halls, I’m calling on Jamaicans to examine what is happening in their communities. As we are all aware, crime and violence is no longer confined to the inner cities of Kingston and St. Andrew. In recent months some little towns that have never been in the news before have made headlines because of murders taking place there.

- The citizens of these rural communities have an even better chance of being successful in this battle because crime is not yet widespread and entrenched there. This is their chance to reinstate the role of the community leader, which in many cases has been usurped by the “**don.**” I’m talking about the people who, in time past exerted a powerful positive influence in their communities simply because of the respect they commanded. It’s time for those people: pastors, teachers, professionals and members of the business community, to stand up and be counted once again.

- But it is not enough for leaders to take a stand. They must be backed by strong support from the people. There is no way that a few criminals, no matter how degraded, can flourish, or even survive, when the other 95% of the people are determined to stop them. And please don't get me wrong: I'm not encouraging vigilante action. The beating and murder of suspects by angry citizens arise out of frustration at the perceived ineptness of the security system. But that kind of action reduces us all to the basest level and renders us little better than criminals ourselves.

- What I **am** advocating is that communities unite to put pressure on their elected representatives to induce them to act on their behalf. We hear over and over again the complaints that MP's appear around election time and are absent once they have won the vote. And while not discounting those MP's who are active in their constituencies, I believe it is time to make that role more meaningful. The problem of crime prevention and control is an apt one around which to anchor this transformation. Citizens need to demand meetings with their MPs and talk to them about their ideas for crime management. Let them know that if there is no effective action, then the MPs will see their opinions on Election Day.

- And it doesn't matter whether you are PNP and the MP is JLP, or vice versa. Bullets are all the same. I have never seen green or orange bullets. And they are just as deadly to the PNP, JLP and no "P", which, judging from the results of the last elections, represent a significant proportion of the Jamaican voters. On this issue, we must speak with one voice. For we face a common adversary. Crime is the enemy of all honest, well-thinking people who want to get on with the business of moving this country out of poverty and debt and into real progress. In a few months we will be celebrating 43 years of independence. In a country so rich in natural resources and talent, how can it be that we are struggling in the backwater of under-development?

- But apart from making their voices heard through their representatives in Parliament, people must also take action by co-operating with the Police. It is common knowledge that in most cases, communities not only know who the criminals are, they know which crimes they have committed, How else can one explain the phenomenon of being able to recover your stolen property if you appeal to the right person? Police need the help of the general public to apprehend these criminals. Crime stop is not going far enough.

- And I know that this is easier said than done. Reprisal killings against suspected informers and their families are common and ruthless. But consider this: the alternative is to grant the criminal element more and more power, allowing it to become a veritable Hydra: a multi-headed monster that grows a new head in another place every time you cut one off. Is that an acceptable option? There has to be a way for the police and citizens to work together to empower the police to identify and root out the perpetrators of crime.

- The principle of bullying is the same whether he is a 12-year-old picking on a seven year old on the school ground, or a coward with an M16 rifle. Once the bully can successfully intimidate the victim, he wins. When the victim stands up to him, he has to back down. I once heard the story of a tiny lady who was at a stoplight in Kingston when a thief reached into her car, grabbed her handbag and ran into a nearby bus. To his, and everybody else's surprise, she jumped out of her car and onto the bus behind him, gave him a solid beating and demanded that the bus driver take them to the nearest police station. The beating aside, that is the spirit we need to inculcate and foster in our communities: the determination to cease being hapless victims, cowering in fear behind our grills and security systems and praying that the gunman will not pick on us next. It is time to stand up to the bully.

REBRAND THE POLICE FORCE

- I said I would speak to you about two opportunities that present themselves at this crucial point in the evolution of the security forces. The first is a renewed community spirit combined with a recommitment to unity of all honest people against crime. The second is a chance to re-brand the police force.
- No matter what structure emerges from the review process that the government is now undertaking, this new entity must also acquire a fresh image. Every member of this new force must be thoroughly steeped in what it means to be a Jamaican policeman or woman.

- A staff member told me about a routine traffic check that a friend of hers experienced on Mountain View Avenue. The policeman involved greeted him politely and asked him to please step out of his car. The policeman's approach and demeanour was so pleasant that the youngster got out of his car held out his hands and said "arrest me officer, I want **you** to arrest me right now." We laugh, but it is sad that that kind of civility in the force is so rare that it elicits that kind of response.

- As we establish this new Force, we must create a brand that is as distinctive as reggae. Just as it is easy to recognize the beat no matter where you hear it and in which language – and the more I travel, the more I realize that reggae has really taken over the world – so it should be with the police. I spoke about some of these desirable elements in my last speech: uncompromising integrity, fearlessness, justice, and of course, civility.
- Let us construct a brand so strong, that criminologists will be writing papers about it and representatives from other states will visit us to see first hand what makes the Jamaican police so special. With this Force, mothers will once again feel confident to say to their children: “***if you are in trouble, run to a policeman.***” Tourists will marvel at the efficiency and cordiality of the Jamaican police.

- (**Ladies and**) Gentlemen, I have not abandoned this subject, not because I'm seeking a job with the Force, contrary to some popular speculation. And for those who have been suggesting that I undertake such a role, thanks but no thanks. I like being a banker. Besides, I'm too old to change now.
- But as a banker, and a pragmatist, I know that any projections of economic growth are mere pipe dreams if we don't solve the crime problem and do it soon. So I won't let up on this. I encourage you as Rotarians to also engage in the cause. Let us not desist until government understands that the people of this country will not stand for this unchecked crime and violence anymore. We don't want to be called the murder capital of the world.

- Some of us can run to greener pastures, but most of us do not have that option and some of us do not want it. What we **do** want is to live in our own country in an environment that allows us to be productive and make a meaningful contribution to its development. We have given birth to a music form that can be heard on every continent and a religion that attracted 300,000 people to celebration thousands of miles away. Surely we can solve our crime problem.