

OPINIONS

GOOD TIDINGS

By the Rev. C. S. Reid

Editorials

SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Dr. Dudley Stokes, President of the Caribbean Association of Secondary Schools, in an address to the Montego Bay Lions Club, dealt with the difficulties of Jamaican schools today. He felt it necessary that the community should help its school, and that principals must be careful administrators and disciplinarians if we are not to see education lose all meaning for the young.

We have mentioned a number of cases in which schools have in fact been helped by local firms, civic organisations, and individuals, and we have stressed the value of the examples thus given. Dr. Stokes referred to cases in which furniture from schools has found its way into homes or been seen on streetsides serving as stands for itinerant vendors, and he deplors that there are men and women who are prepared to walk in and take out without permission, and to take to their residences, wherever they live, furniture which belongs to the school — which the Ministry is expected to replace. Certainly where such things are happening,

the community must organise to help the school, through a Parents Teachers Association or a Citizens Association, if it wishes its children to be well educated.

Dr. Stokes also mentioned vandalism committed by the children themselves, which points to a lack of discipline, and also to a decline in the wish for education, since children so behaving are making it difficult for themselves to learn.

We hope that what Dr. Stokes said will receive serious consideration. We are sure that in those schools which have been helped the teachers are conscientious in the ways he regards as essential. Just as we hope that in other communities help will be forthcoming we hope that the teachers will make sure of their functions.

The message is clear. It is not enough to leave everything to Government — for in our democracy citizens are not mere robots. Education is as much a community as it is a national effort. It is the responsibility of all of us.

Coffee in St. James

The Catadupa Coffee Growers (1977) Co-operative Society has earned for its members over \$1,000,000 in the last few years, output being about 56,000 boxes. It plans to move its office from Montego Bay, where it is housed in the J.A.S. building, to a more logical location in a coffee-growing area, and it is asking the Coffee Industry Board to set up a fermentary at Seven Rivers, something which the Board is not able to do unless the annual crop reaches 20,000 boxes, which the Co-op regards as practicable.

The report submitted in August to the Annual General Meeting stressed the improvement since 1977. Before that, the low price paid by the Board, unavailability of planting material, and the backwardness of planting and spraying techniques had actually led to a decline in production.

In some respects coffee is a crop particularly attractive to the small producer, and we feel that the Board, the J.A.S., and the Co-op are to be congratulated on the increase in output. We hope that this will continue.

OPINIONS on this Page, except for those in the editorials above, do not necessarily reflect the views of the GLEANER.

Well! At least Dr. Paul Robertson is the bearer of good tidings. I'm not speaking of his interesting claim about people of all classes clamouring for his party to be returned to power and the accompanying impression conveyed of a PNP horse champing at the bits and rearing to take the course of Government again. He is entitled to give his party whatever political cheer he can. But what I consider good news for the country at large is his statement that meetings have been taking place between the PNP and JLP leadership with a view to removing violence from their political rivalries. Since then the top leaders have met, and the signs are encouraging.

It appears there is some division of view as to whether this subject should be publicly discussed, with some people feeling that it is a way of creating public hysteria. I have no interest in fostering hysteria, and think that we should at all times strive for sanity and rationality in discussing public issues. Therefore I am by no means suggesting that we are on the edge of civil war or anything like that. But I do say that it is the duty of the whole society to be on guard against communal violence and that it is the duty of political leaders in particular to take steps to prevent a repeat of the carnage associated with their rivalries three short years ago.

The fact that the two major political

parties are discussing the matter is heartening indication of an intelligent awareness of the dangers posed to our whole political system and democratic way of life by party war. If Jamaicans have any doubts as to the mortal danger to a state posed by unbridled communal violence, let them but look at what is happening in Lebanon today, and quickly come to their senses. And let us not forget, that if we cannot create unity among ourselves there are forces waiting on the sidelines to supply the arms, foment our internecine strife, manipulate our warring factions and achieve their own non-Jamaican objectives.

No less pressing

Therefore, in political terms, I believe that the foregoing of political violence and the creation of a social consensus which sees this phenomenon as anti-Jamaican, are number one priorities in this country.

But I want to suggest that in economic terms, the need is no less pressing. Let us consider Tourism alone. Everybody admits that just now a buoyant tourist industry is a vital element in keeping this economic ship afloat. It is our foreign exchange life-line. It will be for some time because it will take some good time before our traditional export crops (sugar, bananas, citrus), bauxite and non-traditional exports come back on stream to ease the pressure on

Tourism as our main dollar earner.

So by Tourism we shall live! But this is one of the most fickle of industries. It is affected by the social and political preferences of the travelling public. It is also extremely sensitive to threats of danger from violence. You would have to pay me a large sum of money, to go and take vacation in Beirut this Christmas!

A cursory glance at our statistics for the tourist trade over the last decade will easily identify 1975-76, the period for State of Emergency and 1980, the year of our most violent political campaigning, as the periods of that sector's most depressing performance. In fact, only in 1982 did our gross arrival figures recover to what they were in 1972. But in terms of Jamaica's percentage of the Caribbean market in 1972, we have not yet recovered! There is a direct correlation between crime and violence, and Tourism down-turn.

Enemy no. 1

Now it goes without saying, that no matter who forms the government, Jamaicans will not be able to achieve and hold a decent standard of living in the next decade without a vibrant tourist industry. Therefore, it is in the national interest that we banish from our way of life, those things that will destroy tourism. Political violence has proven itself the most potent destroyer of that industry.

Therefore, politically inspired violence is just now Public Enemy Number One. Since political violence springs from out of the bowels of the parties and not from the fingers as some people would have us believe, it is within the central planning and educational programme of the parties that this enemy must be identified and destroyed. That the major parties are talking about it together is for me, a sign of hope. We must all pray that they exercise determination in seeing this thing to a satisfactory conclusion, that intra-party rivalry among its supporters in some areas has broken out in open gun play. Mr. Bruce Golding might soon need to give up either his Ministry or his Party Secretaryship in order to restore discipline to the party of government.

Finally - what of the Workers Party of Jamaica? Are they being included in the anti-violence talks? For it should be openly recognized that by ideological commitment and recorded official methodology, Communist parties are the ones least opposed to the use of violence and civil disorder as means of achieving power in non-Communist States. When Communists so act it is called "bringing in the Revolution." When such methods are used against a Communist regime, it is damned as "counter-revolutionary crimes!" The democratic parties and the people of Jamaica would like to hear an unequivocal word from Dr. Trevor Monroe and his friends on this matter. It is a question of, not party interests, but NATIONAL SURVIVAL.

Voice of the people

BEST NEWS

THE EDITOR, Sir— The headline of September 14, which proclaimed that the PNP, JLP agreed to examine ways to stem political violence, was the best news Jamaica has had for years. Maybe at last, "Peace will return to our shores, when war and slaughter will vex the land no more." Congratulations to the top leadership of both major political parties.

I have always advocated that the innocent must not, and need not be led to the altar of sacrifice to win elections — it is quite unnecessary.

I know as a veteran political campaigner of long standing, that our people individually or as a group can come up with a decision as to whichever party or candidate to vote for, by listening to

same and credible arguments put to them for their support, without duress of any form. In fact, I know the hard core of both major parties constitute one third each of our electorates — their support either way is almost irrevocable and uncompromising.

The decision of the other one-third swings victory to one or the other party. So how to convince the uncommitted latter group hangs the pendulum of victory or defeat. Violence cannot deter their decision. Therefore the use of violence to win elections is not only futile but cruel.

I am, etc., J. A. LOWE

Jacks Hill Sept. 14, 1983.

Energy Conservation

THE EDITOR, Sir—

Two cheers to the Ministry of Mining and Energy on the recent increase in the number of training courses — at long last — in energy conservation practices. Technical information and practical training, as distinct from advertising and P.R., have been the week side of government efforts to teach the nation to conserve energy.

It was a little disappointing, however, to read your report (Gleaner September 5) of a speech opening a one-day seminar on "Energy Conservation in Transport" by the Director of the Energy Division of the Ministry, Dr. Henry Lowe. His speech as reported seems to have been confined to the usual platitudes and toothless warnings.

May I suggest two areas in which government action can supplement preachment with substantive effect. 1. Start applying the law to motorists whose vehicles lay down smoke-screens like warships trying to evade the enemy. I would guess that four out of five diesel-engined vehicles ought to be taken off the road for proper adjustment of their fuel jets. I am informed that the jets are deliberately opened wider than manufacturer's specification in order to increase engine power to cope with the inevitable over-loading. Through this practice — and the over-loading — reduce the life of engine and vehicle, the comparative cheapness of automotive diesel fuel is thought to compensate.

Whether the cause is false economy or incompetent auto-mechanics, there is no reason why diesel engines should be permitted to belch smoke.

It is not allowed in any civilised country. The smoke is a distinct traffic hazard, and it is a pollutant, which increases the risk of cancer and respiratory ailments to the population (is the Ministry of Health not concerned?). But since we appear to be equally unperturbed by environmental threats and carnage on the roads, perhaps we might be moved by the financial aspect. All that dark smoke is, in fact, particles of unburnt fuel. That's our scarce foreign exchange going up in smoke — literally.

2. My second suggestion is tax and fiscal incentives for solar water heaters. While a few large solar heaters have been installed in some government hospitals, successive administrations in this country seem unable to grasp the potential of solar energy — which is free and non-polluting.

Water comes from the cold water tap at about 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The temperature then has to be raised another 132°F to reach boiling point. If water is trapped from a solar heater, it comes out at between 140° and 160°F (depending on the efficiency of the unit and on the weather). That means free energy will have done about half the heating required to reach boiling point. The corollary is that paid, commercial energy is used for only half the heat which is required to boil the water for your rice or

to cook your soup, make a cup of tea, do your laundry or wash your hair.

I hope I am forgiven for spelling it out in A-B-C, because I suspect that the powers that be have been acting on the assumption that domestic hot water is merely a luxury for rich people to have warm baths. Every household, however poor, almost every person, uses hot water virtually every day! And solar energy is free and, in this part of the globe, abundant.

However, the large-scale adoption of solar water heaters is inhibited by the high initial cost (\$3,000-\$6,000) of purchasing and installing the solar collector and storage tank. Roughly half of that cost is government tax: excise, sales and consumption taxes, and duties on imported raw materials.

Since few of us can afford the capital outlay, the contribution of the taxes to government revenue is a pittance and the taxes are, in effect, a prohibition on the use of solar energy. Commonsense, therefore, dictates the removal of these taxes on solar devices; and I would propose, in addition, that householders receive a tax credit for the cost of purchasing and installing solar heaters.

The potential gains are obvious: saving in domestic consumption of cooking gas and electricity

— both of which are derived from imported petroleum — and thus a saving in the annual foreign exchange bill for oil. A reduction of even 50,000 barrels of oil means US\$1.5 million saved, at today's prices. A further gain would be the increase in business and employment in the manufacture and installation of solar collectors, which would arise from greater demand.

A perfectly realisable target is to have 100,000 houses using solar energy within five years.

The measures I propose have been adopted in other countries, notably in Barbados which got into conservation after Jamaica but which, qualified observers tell me, is way ahead of us in most aspects of national energy management today. I am advised that nearly all hotels, and most housing built in Barbados in the past five years, have solar water heaters and that the retrofitting of older structures is moving apace. I know of no rational argument as to why we cannot do likewise. In almost five years of pitching this point all I've ever heard are variants of the old bureaucratic rubbish: "It is receiving active consideration and attention". Meaningless hundreds of new housing units are going up and we lose the opportunity of shifting our infrastructure to a more energy-efficient basis.

I am, etc., HUGENTLES 1 Maryland Close Kingston 6 Sept. 8, 1983

Not surprised

THE EDITOR, Sir— I have watched, listened and read a lot regarding the shooting down of the South Korean passenger plane, resulting in the loss of 269 lives.

Having lived and visited many countries outside of Jamaica, and have had the privilege of working alongside many different races of people, I am forced to ask my fellow Jamaicans one question regarding the behaviour of the Russians, in the downing of this airliner; are there any of our countrymen or women, surprised over the action of the Russians, having watched the arrogant, contemptuous and Bullyboy attitude of the Russians in countries like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Afganistan?

Having watched how they have classified their own nationals as "dissidents", names like these, instantly comes to mind: Andre Sakarov, Anatoly Scharansky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn who have been subjected to imprisonment and punishment in Labour Camps.

If any Jamaicans here, express surprise over this, the latest of many barbaric acts, then I suggest he or she should see a psychiatrist.

I am, etc., LLOYD A. S. HENRY Richmond P.O., St. Mary

I am, etc., DOUGLAS DWYER 1 Cromwell Cres., London DWS 9QB, U.K.

I am, etc., DEBORAH KENT 1, Thurston Road, Deptford London SE8 England Sept. 6, 1983

Our Society

THE EDITOR, Sir— With a population that is predominantly teenagers we must realise that whatever happens to our teenagers will drastically affect our country. What we must do is identify our problems and try to solve them.

Our foremost problem is not the relevance of our Coat of arms. Our foremost problem is our society. And what is our society like?

My view of our society is that it is one in which too many people are against regulation. A society in which everyone wants to reach the top overnight. A society in which illegal businesses are the most profitable. A society "long on guns" and "short on textbooks". A society which adults allow mini-bus conductors to turn away school children and then they take the vehicle.

A society which had better sacrifice to educate its teenagers or allow them to become adult ignoramuses.

This is not a message of hope or happiness but one of truth and warning!

I am, etc., PHILLIP REID 39½ Lincoln Ave., Kingston 13 Sept. 6, 1983.

Pensions

THE EDITOR, Sir— I refer to a letter which appeared on page 8 of the Daily Gleaner of September 8 1983, written by the Hon. J.A.G. Smith, Minister of Labour and the Public Service and entitled "Pensioners".

As President of the Jamaica Government Pensioners Association, I must state our case.

The Minister states "Pensioners are computer based upon the salary that the officer was in receipt of, at the time of retirement. It is, therefore, an expression of gratitude for past services when the government grants an increase to Pensioners."

We are not asking for an expression of gratitude. Our insistence is that the monetary value of pensions should be realistic, although an officer's pension may have been quite fairly computer based on his salary when he retired, because of the decrease in the value of money, the

pension ceases to have any real value. Many officers, in the past, who made the Civil Service their career and were depending on a pension for which they could exist, now find themselves unable to live. Most democratic countries insure against this by linking pensions to cost of living.

The Minister states "There is no basis in law or in practice for negotiations with Pensioners. There is therefore no need to set up a board or any other body to review pensions."

As a member on the executive body of the Government Pensioners Association for over fifteen years, I know that, hitherto, all increases to pensioners by Government have come as a result of deliberations with the Pensioners Association. Are we to understand that the moment a Government employee crosses the threshold from being a worker to become a pensioner he is automatically created a "non-person"?

One day he is able to negotiate with the Government and the next day he is barred from doing so.

We have been requesting an independent Review Board or Commission and still do, because whatever reviews have been made, in the past, seem to us unrealistic.

I should like to emphasize the point that there is a great difference between the pension for a Civil Servant, which is non-contributory, and the pension for a widow for which her husband contributed 4% of his salary over 35 years. This area of pensions cries out for a Review Board more than any other area.

The Minister in his letter also deals with the restoration to full pensions of those who on retirement opted for a lump sum payment and a reduced pension and who have remained alive after 12½ years. Before the original arrangement was arrived at, a life expectancy study was carried out and the 12½ years life expectancy was determined. It seems only logical, therefore, that those who are still alive after the 12½ years period should have their full pension restored.

I am, etc., H. D. CHAMBERS President Jamaica Government Pensioners Association, 7 Caledonia Ave., Kgn. 5, Sept. 13, 1983.

Carnival

Editor, Sir— Your coverage of the Carnival was quite good and well received. The bands from Dominica and Grenada are to be congratulated for the music they were playing at the Carnival. Everybody, it seemed, was dancing and following these particular floats.

But poor old Jamaica! What a shame that so much emphasis is put on "Reggae" talking music. I think it is full time now that Jamaicans realise that "Reggae" is for private entertainment and not for entertaining the public. The band that was playing in Welcome Park was doing nicely until they spoiled it with talking music. Every nationality was enjoying the music and swaying to it until the so-called talking music started. What is going on? Where is our taste gone.

We are letting this thing go on for far too long. When we go to a party we get talking music. It is full time this thing stop.

When people go out to enjoy themselves, the last thing they want is to hear talking — they want to hear music — good dancing music — the old and the young would agree that now-a-days too much talking music is played at parties. Even on Reggae time and Roots Rockers, scarcely anyone is listening to them again because of the talking music.

I say wake up, Jamaica and produce some good dancing music.

The old time artistes were really good. Away with "Talking Music", people young and old want to dance.

Could you also allow me the space in your paper to congratulate the latest film made in "QUICK-STEP" and shown on British TV. One of the reasons I would like to congratulate the actors is that there were no swear words. I was born and grown in Trelawny and did not know the origin of QUICK-STEP.

Let us have more programmes ABOUT ORIGINS.

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REPUBLICAN FRIVOLITY

THREE may have been a public issue, last week, that meant even less to the Jamaican public than whether we should become a republic or remain a monarchy. If there was, I would be grateful to any politician or private citizen who would tell me which bit of news was less significant to our future than the announcement that the Joint Select (parliamentary) Committee on Constitutional and Electoral reform has reaffirmed a 1979 agreement that Jamaica should proceed to Republican Status.

I apologise to my readers for the tangled prose of the above paragraph but that is the only way to describe what has been absorbing a lot of the energies of the Speaker of the House, the Hon. Tom Forrest, and that over-worked, highly competent Mr. J.A.G. Smith and that good liberal, Mr. Seymour Mullings, and the President of the Senate, the Hon. O. G. Harding, and the formidable, combined brains of Senators Abe Dabdoub, Carl Rattray and Hugh Small.

We are talking, you must understand, of some of the keenest minds in Parliament — including Mr. Dudley Thompson, who really ought to have been excused duty for such a committee on the grounds that we need him more to oppose the government on serious issues.

Doomed?

Anyway, as you could have expected, the Joint Select (parliamentary) Committee on Constitutional and Electoral Reform has agreed unanimously that we should become a republic.

What a pity that such a committee was not formed in 1979 to find some means of ordering our finances so that the \$100 million spent last year on the import of new motor cars was not spent on schoolbooks for our children — and that the \$26 million for schoolbooks, which our present Minister of Education is hunting, was not an assured 126 million.

Is this country incurably frivolous? Are we irremediably doomed to waste our best human resources on considering matters that will not grow one extra acre of cassava, or produce another A Level scientist, or persuade a jobless woman that having twelve children by twelve different fathers is a disastrous way of life?

What on earth does it matter whether Jamaica, as an independent Commonwealth country, remains a monarchy or becomes a republic?

The majority of the Jamaican people are obviously quite content with our Queen — even if she is English and visits us only once in a while. Indeed, the majority of the Jamaican people

seem to positively enjoy having a Queen as their Head of State, with a Governor-General as her independent representative and advisor on Jamaican affairs.

As it is, even the PNP recognises that any change from monarchy to republic would be a change in name only — not a change in what we are. The new republican President, according to the PNP's memorandum, would be a ceremonial figure rather than an Executive one. He (or she) would be appointed by much the same methods as are now agreed on between Government and Opposition. His (or her) functions would hardly be different by more than a title or a small piece of ritual and ceremony.

The only real change in making Jamaica a republic now would be a loss of cash, and a dreadful loss of time and energy. To change our status from monarchy to republic could take anything from 9 to 15 months in the House, and would need at least one referendum — and perhaps two if certain conditions were not agreed to by the Senate.

Can we afford it?

Jamaica is now down to bamboo ashes as far as making it economically is concerned. We might, with little concentration of the public will, pull ourselves out of the pit in which we lie.

Can we afford at this point, expensive exercises as to whether we vote for republican 'dignity' and 'status'?

I would be far, far more confident about both our Government and its loyal Opposition if they had a joint Select Committee, comprised of their best talents, coming up with agreed measures on family planning and environmental pollution.

What percentage is there in it for us to hear that the government and its Opposition are agreed that Sir Florizel Glasspole should be known in the future as 'Mr. President', instead of the 'G.G.' as he is now fondly thought of by every citizen in the land.

Enough to do."

Many of the disturbing experiences that the delegates related could have been avoided and especially the complaint that there is nothing to do. It is not really true. It is very normal for the sophisticated visitor to react in this fashion. They are only impressed with New York, Paris and London. We

have to learn to turn that kind of snobbery around. That's what it is, snobbery. And it is quite easy to handle.

Better luck next time Foreign Affairs.

I am, etc., YVONNE MAHONEY White Sands Beach P.O., St. James, Sept. 10, 1983.

Several

THE EDITOR, Sir— It was disheartening to read your editorial of September 10, 1983 on the Seabed Talks. Equally disturbing was the report exactly three days after the delegates of the Preparatory Commission arrived that they were complaining again about Jamaica, and that the complaint this time was — "there isn't

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