



NATIONAL ADDRESS

to

The People of Bermuda

by

The Hon. Paula A. Cox JP, MP

Premier of Bermuda

Delivered

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David Clarke ... aged 26. Randy Robinson ... 22. Jahmiko Leshore ... 26. Colford Ferguson ... aged 29. Do you recognise those names? You should. They are the names of murder victims ... young men who have been gunned down on our streets this year.

Hello ... and thank you for joining me.

I offer no apologies for starting off my first televised address to the people of Bermuda ... since taking office as Premier ... with a shocking list of our gun crime victims. I promise I will end on a less sombre note.

But ... as I reflected on the subjects and issues that I wanted to discuss today ... as I thought about how important it was for this

message to be perceived as a reality check ... I concluded that anything short of a no-nonsense report on the real state of our nation would be an insult to you.

Like you ... I am shocked and saddened that our young men are being slaughtered at the rate ... this year ... of one a month. Like you ... I am outraged at this senseless violence. I can only pray that their deaths were not in vain and that ... in some way ... these tragedies ... and the pain and suffering they leave in their wake ... will help bring about a realisation that Bermuda is in urgent need of help.

In a moment ... I will say more about the kind of help I believe is necessary. But first ... let me state clearly ... and for the record ... that my two most critical concerns are the safety and financial health of our society. Not the next election. Not my personal standing in the approval polls. Not Ministerial salaries. Not any of a number of otherwise very worthy Government programmes ... each one important in its own right.

I was elected as Party Leader and then sworn in as Premier not because I was the only candidate with the ability to lead the Government. There are many of our Government MPs capable of doing that.

I was elected as Party Leader because of my work ethic ... my unswerving focus on integrity ... and because I was considered the leader most likely to ensure that your Government delivers on its

promises ... and fixes the issues that matter most to the people of Bermuda.

What are these? According to the latest independent Omnibus survey of Bermuda residents ... the economy and crime rank as the top two most important issues.

That means my sleeves ... which were already rolled up six months ago when I became Premier ... are still rolled up. It means that I must refuse to be distracted from the job in hand.

Words ... of course ... are often regarded with a great deal of suspicion ... but let me remind you ... that it was my commitment to reinforcing public safety ... my insistence on talking directly to the Commissioner of Police ... that contributed to the departure of a valued Cabinet Minister recently.

So let me stress ... these are not just words. Crime is not just a word. It is a priority ... for me and for my Cabinet and our Government ... and I intend to see that we do everything in our power to combat it.

What does that mean? It means that the full weight of the partnership between the Legislature and the Bermuda Police Service ... will be brought to bear on a problem that threatens to undermine the spirit of Bermuda and Bermudians. It means that Cabinet will shortly consider legislation making gang membership an offence. It means that we will broaden the scope of proceeds of crime laws ... and consider

incentives to encourage information on the location and ownership of guns ... be made available on a live ... real-time basis.

It means that our Inter-Agency Task Force will develop a cohesive approach to information sharing ... to interventions ... and to providing assistance to those at risk.

I'm sure you must be asking : What does success look like? How do we measure our effectiveness?

We have seen an increase in court cases and criminal conviction rates ... which have risen significantly. But I have to say ... that an increased conviction rate is only part of the solution. It must be accompanied by a reduction in the number of repeat offenders ... and by clear evidence that our young people are making positive life choices. I will have more to say about programmes for our young people in just a moment. Last evening I spent a productive time talking to some of our young students from our senior schools and at the Bermuda College. It was important. I listened ...and I hope it will be a continuing conversation.

In terms of crime prevention ... we have already stepped up our efforts. Additional CCTV cameras have been installed in high crime areas ... a new X-ray scanner is being placed in Hamilton docks to help detect contraband ... such as guns and drugs ... hidden in containers.

Another factor that has an indirect bearing on this subject ... is that of Police pay and benefits. With the recent successful conclusion of

long-running pay talks ... the men and women of our Police Service have been able to put salary issues behind them.

Perhaps as a combined result of these and other factors ... not the least of which is the dedication and commitment of our police service ... latest surveys indicate that residents are now significantly more confident in the ability of the Police to solve drug and gang-related crimes ... than they were in 2008.

More recently ... I have appointed former Assistant Police Commissioner and House of Assembly Deputy Speaker ... Wayne Perinchief ... as the Minister of National Security and former Police Commissioner ... Jonathan Smith as the Junior Minister. Two former Policemen dealing with issues and situations that they understand better than most of us.

A moment ago I observed that Bermuda is in need of help. Not the kind we can purchase ... such as CCTV or X-ray machines. The help I am referring to is help from within. It is up to us ... as a nation ... to do everything we can to assist the police ... and other agencies ... to help take back our community ... not sit back and watch it perish. This land is our land Bermuda! If you ask me who is responsible for fixing our crime problem ... the answer is ... we all are. We all have a part to play. The launch of the new music video "Proud to be Bermudian" produced by THE BERMUDIANS in association with Just Platinum Recording Studios is most timely as its lyrics encourage all to "come along with me, let's stand together... a

brighter destiny will dawn for us as we blend our hopes and dreams and live in peace as one.”

I promised you a no-nonsense report. But I also want to give you some hope for our economy. Not the false kind that comes from the spin doctors ... but the solid kind that is founded on reality.

It is still too early to talk confidently about a recovery ... there are still too many variables ... too many unknowns that could impact our economy. Energy prices ... for example ... are ... as always ... extremely volatile and unpredictable and could re-ignite inflation. Our construction sector remains weak ... and unemployment is still in the region of at least 5%. Our Department of Labour and Training has been inundated with Bermudians looking for jobs. Job fairs have been oversubscribed to an extent previously unseen.

How are we responding? There are several initiatives underway that will help stimulate job creation ... and over the coming weeks you will see various press announcements covering these measures.

By far the most innovative is a plan to re-allocate a portion of already budgeted funds in support of a programme to provide Bermudians with short-term employment opportunities. This would take the form of summer work for unemployed youth and for older unemployed persons.

The aim is definitely work-fare ... not welfare. This is an important distinction. The development of effective welfare-to-work services

give our people the skills and confidence they need to secure a job and sustain employment. To be effective ... this type of work-fare reform must be developed in a mutually supportive way ... so that the right support is in place to address the barriers that people face along the pathway to employment.

Part of the objective is to supplement summer employment for our students ... and I think it is worth reminding everyone ... that apprenticeships carry a zero rate of payroll tax. The programme will also aim to create jobs for the unemployed by generating small works projects ... relative to government estates.

Unemployed persons interested in these opportunities ... will first need to register at the Department of Labour and Training offices.

Also ... as part of an outreach effort for this programme ... the Government will be taking sign-up road shows out to the community and sporting clubs and working with the parish councils. This will reflect a joined-up partnership between relevant Ministries ... Government Estates and Information Services ... Public Works ... Economy, Trade and Industry, Youth, Families, Sports and Community Development... and the Minister without Portfolio with responsibility for the National Youth Council. The programme also incorporates elements of the recommendations emanating from the Mincy report.

On a smaller scale ... we are also finalizing plans for a four to six month horticultural training and certification programme ... soon to be

introduced by the Ministry of Public Works ... with the aim of training a small number of locals each year. The intention here is that these individuals would take over the horticultural maintenance of our railway trails.

All the initiatives I have just mentioned are designed to bring immediate ... partial ... relief to our unemployment situation ... and are expected to come into operation within the next few weeks.

On the tourism side of our economy ... I am pleased to say that there are distinct signs of improvement in our visitor industry.

According to statistics issued just a few days ago ... winter air arrivals increased this year for the first time since 2008. Latest figures indicate that almost 31,000 visitors flew here during the first three months of the year ... an increase of approximately 7% over the same period last year. The new daily AirTran service out of Baltimore ... with Atlanta soon to be added ... also came as an added boost to our visitor industry.

Other tourism developments are helping to bring a more optimistic mood to the industry. Tucker's Point Hotel was officially re-named Rosewood Tucker's Point ... formally linking the resort to the international luxury hotel brand. And I should add that Morgan's Point developers will be looking to start work on their top class \$2 billion resort.

I said that construction remains weak ... but the building sector has been really active during the first quarter. Four major projects were commenced ... three of them as a result of Government support.

By far the biggest was the new hospital ... but we have also seen work start on the National Aquatics Centre swimming pool and facility buildings ... the Waterloo House harbourside development on Pitts Bay Road in Hamilton ... and the new WEDCO housing project.

Our hope is that we can turn what could be the start of an economic recovery ... into a jobs recovery.

Meanwhile ... international business remains strong. This is the largest driver of our economy ... especially the insurance and reinsurance sector which has an asset base of \$496 billion. Tragic catastrophes ... such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan ... the earthquakes in New Zealand and Chile ... storms in Europe and floods in Australia ... have all served to underline the global importance of the Bermuda risk industry. To give you an idea of this importance ... just this week ... the industry announced that it would be paying out more than half of the claims arising out of the New Zealand earthquake.

This industry is not only critical to those who buy high-quality financial protection ... it is also vital to Bermuda ... directly and indirectly generating thousands of jobs for our economy.

As a result we are formulating policies to provide real incentives to those job-makers in our international business sector who provide real opportunities for Bermudians in their companies.

Business Bermuda ... the professional services organization which works closely with Government to promote the wider interests of the international business industry ... has also been very active recently.

It conducted well attended financial services briefings in London ... Singapore and Hong Kong this month ... showcasing Bermuda's legal ... banking ... financial and investment capabilities ... while demonstrating the strong public/private sector partnership that exists in our jurisdiction.

Additionally ... the Bermuda Stock Exchange this month announced that its listings of insurance linked securities reached a record \$1.8 billion ... a strong performance for what is still a relatively new category of listings.

I said earlier that I wanted to give you grounds for real hope ... and I would like to expand on that now. While it is true that much remains to be done ... your Government has not been dragging its feet.

When I became Premier ... I undertook a huge task ... the biggest reorganisation of Ministries in the last 30 years. For the first time ... our focus was to encourage synergies between the Ministries ... rather than accepting business as usual. This raised a major challenge to the way people and processes had been operating. But

to achieve better service delivery ... there was no doubt in my mind that we needed to re-configure our Ministries.

Within a month of becoming Premier ... a team from the UK's National School of Government arrived to begin work on a review of our civil service.

One of its main findings was that while Bermuda is fortunate to have so many committed ... capable ... and hardworking public servants ... we needed to raise our game. Changes were recommended in the areas of management ... structure and culture.

Equally ... I was never in any doubt about the need to improve our effectiveness in the design ... tendering ... purchasing and control of Government projects. Accordingly ... we set about establishing an Office of Project Management and Procurement within the Ministry of Finance. Your Government intends to build both capacity and capabilities in the area of procurement and project management best practice.

At the same time ... we will focus on providing transparency and value for money. These plans are moving forward and I hope to be able to announce the formal establishment of this function before the end of May. As I made clear in my National Budget Statement ... this is an important department ... one that will require the creation of two new posts ... a Director of Procurement and a Senior Compliance Officer.

Additionally ... as part of an improved governance and financial accountability programme ... the Government intends to give

legislative teeth to its internal audit and procurement functions. In short ... your Government intends to demonstrate that it has zero tolerance for infractions and malfeasance.

In terms of promises made and promises kept ... I am particularly happy to report that consultant contracts ... which came in for considerable criticism in the run up to the budget ... are now being reviewed for new post and temporary positions by a new staffing review committee. This was formed to objectively assess the continuing manning needs of the Government. Also ... in the area of open budgeting ... we have begun work on another promise ... namely ... securing greater public involvement in national budgeting and spending decisions. More on that in my next update.

Indeed ... public involvement and transparency have already become distinctive hallmarks of my Premiership.

In order to generate the widest possible level of debate on the National Budget ... Cabinet Ministers and I conducted three ... town hall style meetings at which the public were able to express their views on the Government's planned schedule of spending and revenue for the 2011/12 fiscal year.

I am sure that you do not need me to tell you that these are difficult and challenging times ... possibly more difficult and more challenging than any we've experienced in recent memory.

This may not be of any consolation to you ... but I want you to know that I do understand the pain that some of you must be feeling as you struggle to find employment. While I cannot stand in your shoes ... I sense the deep hurt that many of you endured when you were made redundant. It is often said that hard times bring out the best in us. While that may be so ... losing a job is not only about losing a pay cheque ... though that alone is a big enough setback. It is also about losing a sense of worth and validation.

Let me emphasize ... the fact that you are unemployed does not mean that you are less worthy. We are defined not by what we do ... but by who we are. Recession or not ... employed or not ... the people of Bermuda ... the workers of Bermuda ... are tremendously talented and creative.

For those who have been diligently seeking work ... I would encourage you not to lose hope. If you can ... I suggest that you use the time that you are not working to acquire new skills ... or refine existing ones ... and ... whatever else you do ... be sure to register with the Dept of Labour and Training.

My fellow Bermudians and residents ... from my perspective ... the past six months have been challenging ... to say the least. Assuming the office of Premier ... almost on the eve of the National Budget statement ... may not have been the smartest or safest strategy to adopt for an incoming Government leader ... but it certainly pitched me in at the deep end ... which ... in turn ... shortened the time it took for me to learn how to swim. That doesn't mean my stroke is perfect.

It isn't ... and I would be the first to admit that it is a work in process. But with each day that goes by ... it gets a little better. And ... with each day that goes by ... I learn to appreciate a different aspect or nuance of my job.

I have also learned to appreciate the devotion ... skill and professionalism of many of those I am privileged to call my colleagues. Many of them are tireless workers ... on call 24 hours a day ... 7 days a week ... with no overtime ... double time ... or in some cases ... not even a proper salary.

There are ... of course ... the inevitable frustrations. In this regard I must admit that it is in my nature to want to move things along a tad more quickly than they want to be moved. Let me apologise here and now to those I have bullied or cajoled in my eagerness to expedite a plan or project.

Do I wish my approval ratings were higher? Yes ... of course I do. But the reality is that the honeymoon period is over. As I have remarked before ... leadership is not for the faint hearted. By definition ... popularity contests tend to be won by popular people. Leaders ... by comparison ... cannot rely on the luxury ... and the political capital ... of remaining popular forever.

It takes grit and character to resist the temptation to indulge the politics of appeasement ... and to say ... there will be no symbolic cuts in Ministers' salaries. This ... in my view ... would be an empty gesture ... inappropriate for a Government ... or for any team ...

facing the prospect of having to do more with less ... and having to do it in half the time ... under double the pressure.

-I have tried to give you a sense of my first six months in one of the toughest jobs I have ever had. I have also tried to give you my take on where Bermuda has been ... where it is now ... and where I think we're going. That doesn't mean I have all the answers. In fact ... the suggestion boxes we have started have been filling up with ideas from inside and outside the Government ... and ... if you haven't already done so ... I invite you to take part in the process.

In giving you a practical explanation of the Government's various challenges ... programmes and activities ... I have also attempted to dispel some of the myths and speculation that often surround the work of those engaged in public service.

There is no doubt in my mind that there are some who have not thanked me for making the decisions I felt I had to make. That's just the way it has to be. I will continue to do my job ... without fear or favour. I sleep well at night knowing that what I do ... I do in order to help Bermuda and Bermudians. That is my single minded focus ... given my responsibility as the Premier of Bermuda.

I would like to thank you for joining me ... and I want to leave you with a closing observation. I talked earlier about the importance of having grounds for hope ... and about the difference between false hope and the real kind. Let me finish by telling you about another kind of hope

... the living kind ... epitomized and modeled by the Bermudian people.

I spent time recently at the Belco Visitor Industry Partnership Excellence Awards. What a powerful tonic that was!

I thoroughly recommend listening to people who love what they do ... and who do what they love. Their enthusiasm ... their rock solid belief in the future ... is as therapeutic as it is infectious.

So ... if you're having a tough day ... if you're feeling that your hope is fast turning into hopelessness ... and that there's no solution to gun crime and the recession ... try talking to Fairmont Hamilton hotel doorman Carvel van Putten. This gentleman ... who won the top prize at the VIP Awards ... gets immense satisfaction out of nothing more than doing his job. For him ... there is no greater joy ... nothing more pleasing than the fulfillment he gets from telling our visitors about his precious island home. There is also no question about this man's hope for the future of Bermuda. And he is not alone. There were 54 nominees and 18 prize winners in 18 different categories at the VIP Awards. All of them full of hope ... all absolutely wonderful ambassadors for their industry ... their employer ... and for Bermuda.

Maybe Bermuda really is another world after all.

I wish you ... and your families ... peace ... serenity ... and a blessed holiday.

Thank you.