



Peter Bunting - Member of Parliament for Central Manchester

Central Manchester Member of Parliament's QUARTERLY REPORT TO CONSTITUENTS

Issue No. 5
Feb 2009

Dear Constituents,

I am pleased to present my fifth quarterly report covering the period from September 30 to December 31, 2008, and to include some comments on developments at the commencement of 2009. In the latter regard, I would like to join all those welcoming the appointment of the Governor General designate Dr. Patrick Linton Allen, former President of the West Indies Union Conference of Seventh Day Adventist Churches and resident of Manchester. Apart from Dr. Allen's eminent qualifications, his appointment is special to Central Manchester because we have perhaps the largest Adventist population of any constituency in Jamaica.

PARLIAMENT

Bauxite/Alumina Industry - During the quarter, the Sessional Committee on the Economy and Production, which I chair, delivered a report on the Bauxite/Alumina Industry. The Committee recommended a comprehensive slate of measures for the authorities to examine in order to improve the industry and the quality of life in the communities in which they operate. The report is available on my website.

The future of the industry is very uncertain at this time as a result of the global recession and the inability of the government to come up with any deliberate interventions as was done in the 1980s when it took over operations of the ALCOA plant and convinced the US government to purchase the output for their strategic reserve.

Recently, Alpart announced that they will be reducing their production by 50% and Windalco has also announced that it will be closing indefinitely at the end of March. These will result in the loss of hundreds of jobs and have a tremendous negative impact on the economy of our constituency. The ultimate survival of the industry is in question. I am calling on the government to initiate measures to mitigate the impact of these developments on the workers affected, and by extension, the communities in which they live.

Capital Punishment Debate - In the last quarter, Parliament debated whether Jamaica should retain the death penalty. My stand against its retention is based on several points which I made in the debate and summarised below in the hope that constituents can at least respect my position even if they differ. (Please refer to the website for my full contribution).

1. Hanging holds enormous negative symbolism in the history of enslavement and colonization of our people. Hanging was used as a tool of oppression and intimidation against our forefathers and freedom fighters, some of whom we honour as National Heroes - Paul Bogle, George William Gordon and Sam Sharpe. As humankind evolves and societies become more civilized, there is a movement away from capital punishment in most countries around the world.

2. I disagree with the view that the death penalty will be an effective deterrent against violent crime in Jamaica as statistics suggest that the probability of an offender being convicted for murder could be as low as one in a hundred. I believe, as do many experts, that increasing the likelihood of being arrested, convicted and incarcerated for long periods would be far more effective as a deterrent, especially within our social context where violent criminals don't seem to have a great fear of death.

3. Capital punishment can be a discriminatory and imperfect punishment. Again, statistics show that in countries which still carry out the death penalty, such as the USA, it is the poor (and often black) people who disproportionately suffer this penalty. The reality is that in many cases the quality of legal representation a defendant can afford, affects the outcome of their trial. Based on historical data, innocent people are invariably executed. In our attempt to punish murderers, I do not believe that we should risk innocent Jamaicans dying at the hands of the State, which has an imperfect criminal justice system.

4. Finally and most fundamentally, my spiritual upbringing instilled a commitment to the value, dignity, and sanctity of human life, which is inconsistent with support for the death penalty.



CONSTITUENCY

Development Programme - Towards the latter end of the quarter, contributions were made to social and infrastructural projects with various churches, service clubs, NGOs, community organizations and schools who applied through the Constituency Development Fund. These partnerships were successful and encouraging. We undertook the following:

- A constituency-wide clean up and beautification project was undertaken through the Manchester Parish Council which employed over 500 persons for the holidays;
- Four Childrens' Christmas Treats were conducted and some 200 care packages for the elderly were distributed across the constituency;
- \$600,000 of contributions were made to support the efforts of service clubs, schools and churches, including construction of a Multi-Purpose Complex for citizens and development of high school sports programmes;
- Through a contribution from the United Way of Jamaica and a generous 50% discount from Caribbean Fencing Ltd., we were able to provide much needed fencing for the May Day Basic School, with an overall project cost of approximately \$500,000.



MP Bunting with Supt. i.c.o. Manchester Royland Salmon (2nd row), ACP John McLean and Mayor Brenda Ramsay at the Launch of the JCF's Community Policing initiative in Comfort, Manchester.



A happy May Day Basic School Chairman, Astley Smith and MP stand at the school's new fence.

I continue to meet with my constituents on Fridays, however, office days have been reduced to every other week, while alternate Fridays are dedicated to visiting communities and connecting with constituents who are not able to reach the office.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- The Manchester Parish Council, issued stop orders on the illegal construction of cell phone towers by one of the mobile phone operators. The Council claims that the operator has not secured the proper approvals for construction of their towers.
- The Car Park in the precincts of the Mandeville Arcade known as "The Bronx" was completed and was outfitted with a Police Post. Congestion in the area has eased significantly.
- During the Christmas holidays, I participated in a Tree Lighting Ceremony and Concert in the Cecil Charlton Park in Mandeville, hosted by Mayor Brenda Ramsay and the Council. There was a good turnout and we enjoyed a spirit of togetherness in marking the season.

This year looks set to be one of the most challenging that the constituency and the country has faced in a long time. We will have to re-double our efforts to ensure that we not only pull ourselves through, but can reach out and provide some assistance to the less fortunate.

Sincerely,

