

*CLIC Symposium on
Current Developments in Caribbean Community Law
November 8, 2009
Remarks by the Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies
Professor E. Nigel Harris*

Salutations

- Chairman of this Conference, H.E. Dr. Edwin Carrington, Secretary General, Caribbean Community
- Prime Minister, the Honourable David Thompson
- The Rt. Hon. Justice Michael de la Bastide, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice
- Ambassador Dr Cuthbert Joseph
- Professor Winston Anderson
- Members of the Judiciary and Legal Fraternity
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Other specially invited guests
- Colleagues
- Friends

Let me start by saying a special thank you to Prime Minister David Thompson, who has demonstrated extraordinary support to our Regional university enterprise by his opting to attend University of the West Indies events outside of Barbados – he travelled to London to launch our Foundation there; he travels in his capacity of University Grants Committee; he will travel to an important University event in Canada –on every occasion his presence has boosted the event considerably. I do know that we have sterling

support from our Prime Ministers and I do know that PM's Thompson's remit within CARICOM is the CSME and Integration, but his presence here and on other similar occasions tells me that he is "walking the talk".

I wish to congratulate Professor Winston Anderson and the staff of the Caribbean Law Institute Centre for organising and effecting this impressive Symposium. As Vice Chancellor of the University of the West Indies, I feel proud and encouraged that another of our University's Centres can contribute to framing directions and policies of regional import – this speaks in every way to our University's mission of propelling the economic, social, political and cultural development of West Indian society through teaching, research, innovation, advisory and community service and intellectual leadership.

The Caribbean Law Institute (or CLIC as we call it) is one example of an extensive collaboration with every sector CARICOM. Since 2007, With Professor Winston Anderson as executive director of CLIC, there has been a re-positioning and re-conceptualisation of CLIC to provide enhanced research, advocacy and public services to strengthen and support regional integration.

Some of CLIC's recent activities include:

- 1) Visits to CARICOM countries to advocate acceptance of the CCJ as the appellate jurisdiction as the final court of appeal for CARICOM states. A recent visit to Belize along with an earlier visit by the CCJ were clearly important in their Prime Minister's subsequent announcement that Belize would discontinue appeals to the Privy Council and join the CCJ. Other country visits of CLIC are planned and let us pray for similar results.

- 2) Other initiatives of CLIC to promote Regional integration include Professor Ralph Carnegie's contribution to revising the Treaty establishing the OECS into a Treaty for Economic Union of the sub-region consistent with the broader CARICOM objectives.

- 3) This conference represents another important CLIC initiative to promote Regional integration

Our University, in fulfilling its broad regional mission is also well represented in and works closely with other regional bodies including the Caribbean Examinations Council (CXC), the Caribbean Disaster and Emergency Response Agency (CDERA), the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) and the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) to name a few.

Individuals from the University are also continually on the front lines of the integration movement .The immediate example I shall seize upon is Professor Winston Anderson who was seconded from UWI during 2003 to 2006 to serve as General Counsel to CARICOM, where among other things, he assisted Secretary General Edwin Carrington's efforts to make the CCJ a reality as well as in the introduction of the CARICOM passport. Professor Anderson is back in the UWI fold and as executive director of CLIC that passion to forge regional integration burns as brightly and has as ready a platform within the University.

Someone observed recently that the UWI is the most persuasive example of functional cooperation within CARICOM. Our partnership with regional bodies to forge and implement policies in health education, social and economic spheres, government and business, suggests that the statement has merit.

It is important to add too that conferences like this one are a most common occurrence at one or other of our Campuses – one month ago, there was the Institute of International Relations Conference on the Future of Caribbean-EU Relations held at St. Augustine; several have been held on each Campus to discuss the Global Economic Crisis and its impact on the Region; other recent gatherings have addressed Agriculture and Food Security, Crime and Security, Biotechnology, Education at the Primary and Secondary levels, Reggae and Dance Hall music and much more, all

subjects of import to the history, culture, social, economic, health and developmental needs of our Caribbean. These symposia provide fulsome evidence that there exists a full service, mature university, with sufficient academic staff, access to global expertise in diverse fields, and with regional and international standing, to hold forums of this kind.

The thrust of this particular Conference is the CARICOM Single Market and Economy and exploration of how our community will establish and implement the legal, political and economic framework necessary to promote regional integration, even at a time of economic disruption and local financial crisis.

My hope and expectation is that this conference will realise the objectives the organisers have set. Our central role must continue to be one of forging a more integrated region even as we help energise and contribute to its sustainable development. We must take seriously the 1989 Declaration of Grand Anse that asserted CARICOM's commitment to the UWI remaining a regional institution indefinitely. It is no accident that the Mona Campus site in Jamaica was selected for the signing of the Agreement establishing the CARICOM Single Market in 2006. I recall that then Prime Minister Percival J. Patterson said that he proposed Mona as the site for the signing ceremony because it was the site that best fulfilled the criteria of being "Regional Soil". I should add that on that historic occasion, we were proud to note that several of the

Region's Prime Ministers who signed that Agreement, many of the Ministers of Government, the Secretary General of CARICOM and many of his staff were all graduates of the UWI. Most would have said if questioned that they garnered much of their sense of Regionality while at the UWI.

There is growing concern in some quarters that University is losing its regional character and that it may not be the force for regional integration that it once was. In truth, those critics are often harkening back to the days when all West Indian students went to the Mona Campus and were imbued with a profound sense of their Caribbean identity based on their interaction with fellow students and staff drawn from all parts of the West Indies. But times have evolved and higher education can no longer be the province of a select elite, able to be cloistered in one single place of excellence in the Caribbean. In today's world, leaders of all CARICOM countries know that knowledge capacity and innovation are the essential currencies of development, and access to **high quality** tertiary education has to be expanded in their own countries to enable greater competitiveness and sustainability. It is in this context that in the early 1960s Campuses were also established at Cave Hill and St. Augustine and it is in this context that the OECS and other West Indian countries are seeking to establish University presences on their own soil. Cave Hill and St. Augustine have certainly served Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago well, but they have also served the regional University well, because their establishment and

growth has diversified and enriched the contribution that the regional University has made to our collective peoples in ways that Mona alone could not and cannot do. On the other hand, the formation of the Cave Hill and St. Augustine campuses within the assembly of a broader university were of immeasurable assistance to those campuses and their countries.

Our challenge is to determine how the UWI can enhance that sense of Regional purpose and bring broad value to the CARICOM Community and individual nations. Our older campuses Mona, St. Augustine and Cave Hill each have several thousand students and our hope is that the newer Open Campus will also recruit several more thousands, particularly from those UWI contributing countries without campuses. While most of the four campuses have overwhelming numbers of students from the country in which they reside, 10 – 15% come from other parts of the Caribbean. It would be impractical, indeed impossible to move massive numbers of students from one campus to another in the name of regionality, hence we must develop other strategies to achieve this goal. In framing a regional Strategic Plan 2007-2012, an effort that involved stakeholders from within and without the University across the entire Caribbean, we designed and implemented several measures to enhance cross-campus collaboration in teaching, research, and outreach. We have also introduced programmes for individuals and groups of students to move to other campuses for periods of one week to one year through sports competitions, field trips and

provision of scholarships to study at another campus. We are also promoting sharing of teaching across campuses either by academics travelling physically or by utilising internet and videoconferencing facilities. We have embarked too, on making all our sites in all 15 contributing countries scattered across the Caribbean Sea, part of a single, seamless, ICT network. It should be noted that administratively the UWI has always functioned as one entity with common policies, common standards and a single governing body, the University Council.

However, all the steps to promote a sense of regionalism and a wish for integration will not succeed without its participants seeing the profound value in becoming one entity. We must continually seek ways to demonstrate to our larger community of nations that there is incremental value that accrues to the whole as opposed to its many parts. With respect to our 4 Campuses, I often say that one plus one plus one plus one must together considerably exceed four. A few months ago, someone pointed out to me that in a ranking of world universities, the Mona Campus and the UWI were ranked separately, but UWI was about 100 places ahead of Mona. I, like many others in the academic leadership community, have no confidence in how these rankings are determined, but it would not take a rocket scientist to expect that UWI as a whole would rank much better than an individual campus. We have an academic staff of which more than 60% have terminal doctorate degrees, we provide about 800 undergraduate and graduate programmes and

are responsible for nearly 90% of the scholarly articles and books published from the region. However, if you were to disaggregate this enterprise into little parts, the numbers would be underwhelming. Our united one is by any measure much more than our component parts. If our people can see and internalise this sort of example, I believe we shall be much closer to an integrating vision.

In coming to a close, I want to quote from a 2009 valedictory address given by Ms. Renee Gayle, a Jamaican Law Student who studied at the Cave Hill Campus. I quote:

“I arrived at Cave Hill in August 2007 as a proud Jamaican who was so far removed from the rest of the Caribbean that admittedly I did not have a sense of Caribbean identity. This evening, I am proud to say that I am a West Indian first and a Jamaican second. For my renewed Caribbean pride, I am totally indebted to the University. For many of us, the University was our first opportunity to interact on a daily basis with other Caribbean citizens. It is a true microcosm of the entire region.”

Ladies and gentlemen, that statement has been made by countless UWI students 50, 40 or 30 years ago, but that it was made a week ago is reassuring. Let me close by thanking and acknowledging

again the Caribbean Law Institute Centre, an entity housed within our University's walls but whose purpose and intent is to conduct and provide objective research and analysis and policy guidance in broad legal areas of import to our Region. This Conference exemplifies and helps fulfil the mission of the Centre and in so doing helps meet some of the goals of the University itself.

My very best wishes for a successful Conference.