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The JCC Calls for the preservation of decency in public life

The reported utterances of Minister Everalld Warmington, the Minister of Works and Mr. Dennis Meadows, the caretaker candidate for Trelawny Northern for the People's National Party, have brought back into national focus, the presence and persistence of political misconduct in our national experience. The reported statements fly in the face of our constitutional, democratic and governance arrangements and constitute a threat to the gains that the nation has made in its political development.

The spectre of political victimization and questionable accountability standards have no place in our governance arrangements. Equally so, it is inconceivable that an aspirant for high office gives public approval to actions that are clearly illegal and which have caused untold harm and destruction to communities, families and individuals.

Egregious utterances such as these demand decisive and unequivocal responses on the part of those who lead. This is because of the potential for serious damage to the international reputation of our nation. It raises an alarm, as well, regarding the deteriorating moral fabric of our nation and draws attention to the urgent need to arrest this decline. Further, for the sake of the civility and decency that our children must see and imitate, we must demand and expect high standards in public life. Further, it is unacceptable that perpetrators of unbecoming conduct should eventually be called upon to contribute to the consideration and passing of legislation, especially when the weighty matter of the independence of institutions such as the Integrity Commission is at stake.

We commend the Jamaica Labour Party and the People's National Party for renouncing the respective comments and acknowledge the retractions that have been issued by the two individuals. However, sincere apologies ought to carry concomitant moral responses and concrete actions to correct the wrong that was done; in this regard we think it is reasonable that resignations be offered. Failing this, we call for the removal of both individuals, from any and all national leadership roles.

This unhappy situation causes us to reiterate our concerns with the present arrangements regarding the Electoral Commission of Jamaica (ECJ). The ECJ is, in our view, presently overwhelmed with the technical matters of the recently held elections. Its mandate may now be complicated by the additional role of policing misconduct and egregious behaviour of public officials.

February 29, 2024.

We therefore call on the government to strengthen the mandate and mechanism for the monitoring of breaches of the Political Code of Conduct

JAMAICA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES



Bishop Christine Gooden-Benguiche
President