

Beloved Constituents of St. John's,

Fellow Grenadians

As all of you are no doubt aware, two days ago I tendered my resignation from the Cabinet of Grenada, while remaining committed to the cause of the people of Grenada, particularly the people of St John's, and to my party the National Democratic Congress whose support and backing allowed me to become a representative of this proud constituency.

My resignation came neither from any pressure nor was it done with a spirit of anger, bitterness or rancour.

In fact, I held respectful discussions with the Prime Minister when I presented him with my letter of resignation on Monday.

There has been a great deal of speculation following the Prime Minister's unfortunate explanation for his offer to "demote" me to a lesser rank within the Ministerial Portfolio.

I shall seek to clarify this not so much for myself, but for my family and for you my constituents who have always reposed an enormous dose of faith, trust and confidence in me.

In this regard let me begin by saying, that I can find no place in my heart or in my politics, for discrimination and/or exclusion in any form. I believe that all men are equal and should be treated equally regardless of race, creed, gender and colour.

My path through life, including my political perspectives, aspires to a country where all Grenadians, regardless of gender, race, class, or political affiliation can have a place and play a role in the development process.

This construct is captured in our "motto" together we aspire, together we achieve.

Based on these principles for which there can be no compromise on my part, as Minister of the Environment, International Trade and Export Development, I set about building a competent team of Grenadians which high international standing in their field of endeavour.

I realized quite early, that the Ministry was in critical need of these experts and I sought, to identify these people and bring them on board to provide me with the advice I required to function optimally.

My initiative was often challenged, and I found myself having to defend several persons from accusations and certain orientations from time to time.

The resistance to Dr. Antoine was the severest of all, and I was on several occasions advised by some persons to put distance between him and me.

The easy thing to do was to accede to these requests, but I saw no possible accommodation between this act of exclusion and the principles that Michael Church held to be the essence of my political philosophy.

This was particularly the case since I have shared a mutually professional relationship with Dr. Antoine and his family extending over twenty years.

This relationship has never been political. It embraced my advice to him when the NNP was in Office and his advice to me, more recently in my tenure as Minister.

Dr. Antoine's credentials as one of the regions premiere trade and policy economist is well known and he advises among the largest private sector companies, globally, regionally and in Grenada.

I have found his advice to be pragmatic, profound and wise and I am extremely proud to have Grenadians of this calibre in my professional circle.

My relationship with Dr. Antoine has always been proper, above board, and characterised by the highest standards of decency.

So when two months ago in pursuing a mandate from two CARICOM bodies, I sought to hold consultations with a number of countries in Geneva. It was to Dr. Antoine that I turned for technical support. The meeting came together while I was already out of state and I had a narrow window to seize the opportunity.

This was not a negotiating meeting, but an informal meeting which sought to take a gauge of other countries' perspectives on the issues. Dr. Antoine accompanied me in a private sector advisory capacity. We had an excellent meeting and when I returned home I reported to several colleagues on the outcome.

Despite statements to the contrary, I did not go off on a frolic of my own. I did travel on a matter for which there was an agreed regional position.

Let me state today, that I cannot fulfill my national and regional obligations and mandate via the pursuit of a policy of exclusion and partisan political prejudice, while still holding to those principles and morals that I hold dear and those that I have sought to impart to my own children.

Given a choice between giving tacit endorsement to this continuing practice of political tribalism and taking up my principles and walking - the outcome was always clear. Difficult as it might be, uncertain as the future may look, without the prospect of certain employment. I chose to keep my principles, to preserve my dignity and that of my family and hopefully you my constituents and walk.

But what is more is that as we pursued constructive engagement with Colleagues, it became evident to me that it was in the best interest of the Government and party for me to leave Cabinet at this time.

But cabinet's loss is my people's gain.

I will find more time to work directly with and for the people of St John. I will become a more active advocate in and out of parliament to end the tribal nature of the politics which now characterizes this country; and I will be more robustly able to campaign on your behalf for improving the material and social conditions of the People of St. John's.

What happened this past week is a natural part of Westminster democracy. If you have fundamental and irreconcilable differences - resign!

Great countries, great governments and great parties can have a strong debate and come out stronger for it.

And I can only trust that this is the case here.

In politics, as it is in life, there is a time and place for everything.

The time has come to stop the bleeding and start the healing.

We as a party and people must move forward – not stand still.

Throughout the big debate of the past few days, I have remained almost invisible – a quiet observer but a crucified spirit – constantly restraining myself from saying and doing anything that would further inflame an unfortunate political situation which in the first place should never have existed and worse yet should not have been played out in the public domain.

During this time, many persons have called and reminded me that I needed to engage my constituency because they should be made aware of what has transpired and why these events have occurred. At the expense of losing face with my constituency; I still refused to participate in the carnival of disrespect and human insensitivity.

In my letter of resignation to Prime Minister Tillman Thomas with whom I remain extremely friendly, I wrote:

“I depart not with rancour but disappointment that I had to leave seemingly prematurely without being given a real opportunity to share the wide scope of my experiences and professional talent with the Government and people of Grenada.”

Fellow Grenadians,

The Michael Church – Patrick Antoine story was also the ideal opportunity for a group of mischievous persons – who are neither members of government and in most cases non party members – to embrace in the hope of destroying me politically and personally.

I will refrain from chronicling the misdeeds of this group, who reports to no one but itself.

I pray that the impasse of the past week will empower the first cabinet – which is the way it should be.

There is a great team in there and they must be allowed to do the people’s work. After all, the people voted for them directly.

Let me also here debunk the myth that I was disrespectful to the Office of the Governor General. Truthfully, I can declare that I hold the holder of the Office in the highest esteem; in fact, he is my idol; he is the pride of my Constituency.

Constituents, Last week Thursday, contrary to reports in the media, I called the Office of the Governor-General and informed the office of my inability to attend the swearing in ceremony on the designated day.

It was with great surprise I listened to the erroneous reporting of my non appearance at the swearing in. GBN has erroneously reported the issue as fact at least twice. I subsequently learned from GBN that the reason for the erroneous reporting emanated from the information it received from the Prime Minister’s Office.

That has further convinced me that my decision to resign from the Cabinet was the best decision in the service of country, my family and my person.

The decision did not come easy – I thought long and hard over the weekend – of what it will mean for my family and my constituents. I could have stayed for my own personal interest, but the people from Gouyave to Maran, from Clozier to Cotton Bailey – have all united in their view that we all must be treated with unconditional respect. I wished for nothing more.

Because I can accept nothing less!

My decision has entitled my children the right to walk the streets of this our homeland with satisfaction and pride knowing that their father stood up in defense of democracy, fairness, inclusion, his manhood and his humanity. And, I acted notwithstanding the potential material hardships my family may have to endure for just a while.

I often reminded my former cabinet colleagues that I might not have been as religious as they were but there is one truth I hold to be real; that is,

‘If there is one person God looks after that person is me. And, so, as he has done in the past; he will do in the present and in the future.’

To the bigger family – the Constituency of St John; It is because of our significance and value to the nation that we have to stand together. We, together, will confront our common challenges and we will grow and develop together. We are inseparable because we dream the same dreams. Your future is my future. As you are aware, I keep my promises and, therefore, rest assured that I will never abandon you and I will never squander the trust you have vested in me.

Today, my constituency must loudly proclaim that Michael Church, Member of Parliament for St. John, has demonstrated, beyond any doubt, that indeed he is the real embodiment of our proud, fair, egalitarian, confident community spirit.

So, what does my resignation from the Government mean? Well, it certainly means that I am now in a position to advocate more forcefully for our Constituency – our dearly beloved St. John.

It certainly means that I would spend much more time with you and our engagement would be more solid, grounded and qualitatively superior.

It certainly means that I will continue my role as a member of the party and therefore our representation in the party will not be diminished.

It only means that I will not be seating in Cabinet and remember that this would not be new to me because when I was made a Junior Minister in July 2008 I was not allowed to seat in Cabinet anyway.

Dear Constituents, we have a wonderful and unique opportunity to continue, even more aggressively and more purposefully our process of community democracy and development.

Remember, we are always very special people in this sovereign State of Grenada.

Thank You and May God Bless You