



ADDRESS BY

THE HONOURABLE

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MINISTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

AT THE SERVICE COMMISSION DEPARTMENT'S

LONG SERVICE AWARDS

AND ANNUAL STAFF APPRECIATION CEREMONY

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HILTON, TRINIDAD

PORT OF SPAIN



Ministry of
Public Administration

SALUTATIONS

Good evening

I really like the theme that the Service Commission has used to link its work with our annual festival of Carnival and our national culture. Carnival is about creativity, innovation and teamwork.

The research into innovation says that it is a result of diversity and the greater the diversity of a group or a country the greater the potential for innovation.

Our Carnival is a multiplicity of activities directed toward one goal – to make Mas’. It is the coming together and

harnessing of all kinds of skills – logistical, organizational, artistic, financial, management especially human resource management, and musical. Then when one Carnival is finished we start all over again.

As the poet Shelley said, “We arise and unbuild it again.” It is a never ending story and an infinite pursuit of excellence which itself is a moving target. Your masquerade here tonight responds to and reflects the basic and eternal truth that change is a law of life, and that we never step into the same river, or the same Carnival band, twice.

I am not sure if you remember the time when The River was a Carnival band? It was a Peter Minshall spectacular with

hidden significance and deep symbolism dressed in virtually plain clothes. I would like to think of the Service Commission in this way. An organization that has performed extremely well, a management resource for all seasons, but one that has never given itself airs or sought to masquerade as something that it is not.

Here in Trinidad and Tobago we have perhaps the most diverse society in the world – incredible diversity in races, religions and cultures, enormous diversity in places and spaces. The public service of Trinidad is a microcosm of the society and therefore this diversity presents a platform for creation and innovation.

I am extremely glad to see the Service Commission annually creating a special event to honour and appreciate the staff and I am very pleased to be part of the function this year – joining the band so to speak, jumping up on the inside instead of outside the ropes.

I want to start by thanking our Director Personnel Administration for her years of unstinting and meritorious service. She has been one of the pillars of our Strategic Human Resource Management Council, serving on it together with her two Deputy DPAs, Chair of the Public Service Commission and other stakeholders, providing options, insights and advice and contributed to the conceptualization of our Gold To Diamond process and its

many pathways to excellence in service delivery, and transformation of the public service into a 21st Century citizen centric organization.

I also want to thank the outgoing Chairman and Deputy Chair, His Excellency Christopher Thomas and Zaida Rajnath, and to welcome the new Chair, Dr. Marjorie Thorpe and Deputy Chair, Maureen Manchuk. It is going to be a challenging transitional period. I would like to ask you to give all of them a round of applause.

In the changing of the guard within the Service Commission there are also other changes that are taking place in Human Resource Management globally and nationally, changes that

have considerable importance to us as we face the challenge of transforming the public service.

The Public Service Commission and by extension the Service Commission Department has been in existence since 1962, and as defined by the Constitution, is charged with the responsibility for building our Public Service on the merit principle. It has executed these responsibilities in accordance with the *modus operandi* characteristic of the 20th century.

But the time has come for the Service Commission to deploy a *modus operandi* characteristic of the 21st century. Therefore, if we are to build a Public Service that is based on value for money for Public services and in so doing improve

our national competitiveness and the ease of doing business, the Service Commission must play its role in reinventing a Public Service that embraces results driven management, is flexible, and most important, in addition to continuing to be merit based must also become values-based.

Your new role may very well focus less on detailed rules and more on the values that underpin the staffing system and may require fewer rules and constraints in return for more accountability for achieving results.

You have to lead in the adoption of new HR concepts such as competency based assessment and may have to become a standard setting body for these new concepts.

Yes DPA, we need to develop leaders to lead a 21st century citizen centric public service. Leaders that recognize and value every public officer at every level of this organisation from the Driver/Courier to the Permanent Secretary at the same time capable of bringing out the best, and developing the highest levels of professionalism.

It is envisaged that the role of the Service Commission will evolve into being an independent oversight body. We need to delegate further and create an environment in which we facilitate rather than dictate. We have to take up the value-based auditing role instead of trying to call all the shots. We have to look at the purpose of the organisations in our care

and carefully scrutinize the people we hire for the right fit and the ability to meet the highest standards of performance.

We have to promote the right people for the right jobs. We have to reward people for the right things and in so doing encourage the right behaviours.

While I believe length of service is important, and we have examples here this evening of people who devoted many years of their lives to public service, one-thousand-six-hundred-and-ninety nine in all, a formidable figure and an astronomical achievement, more and more we must take into account the quality of service we provide. Fortunately, **your**

department has always successfully combined longevity with high quality performance and service delivery.

We have developed a comprehensive strategy that illuminates the way forward as we reinvent the Public Service. This is what we call the Journey From Gold To Diamond or what we call G2D. This is the new trail we are blazing to achieve public service transformation by 2022 when our country celebrates its Diamond Jubilee.

Obviously it will be challenging and will be more than business as usual – for some it would be business UNUSUAL. However, like all the other changes of the past and present, I am sure the Service Commission will not just

take these new developments in its stride but adopt, adapt, assimilate and add value to them.

What I hope to see is the emergence of the supportive environment that we need for the transformation not just to take place but to be internalized by **all** our public officers and the population at large.

The success of the Gold to Diamond journey to excellence in service delivery cannot be achieved without you, the Service Commission. Service is your first name and should be your hallmark, your obsession, your vocation and your way of life.

Two great poet/philosophers, Rabindranath Tagore and Khalil Gibran had almost the same thing to say about service and it goes like this, “I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy.” As Gibran said, labour is love made visible. Today, now that the masks have been removed, what I see before me is pride in purpose, smiles in service, and love in labour. We just have to build on that platform to reach higher heights and success that is truly sustainable.

I am happy that my Ministry and the Service Commission are working together on an institutional strengthening project for the Service Commission Department and will soon be awarding a contract to take this further. I am looking

forward to the outcome. You have to get ready to work with the team of consultants who have the expertise to work with you to design this organization of the future, one which will not just achieve but help the public service and other public service organisations to reach and maintain the Diamond Standard of Public Service Excellence.

In this time of transition we needed to know where we are going and how we will know when we get there. We have to know what is expected of us and determine what we expect from our clients, stakeholders and those who make and implement Government policy.

This evening, I want to congratulate all the award winners here this evening. Many of you who have been awarded have many more years to contribute, I also want to challenge you to look closely at your organization and what it needs to do to lead instead of follow, to let the “Service” in “Service Commission” be even more a compass instead of an anchor. I have the greatest faith in your ability to set the pace and to expand the parameters of performance in the public service.

As the Minister of Public Administration, I promise that you will have all the support you require from me to enable you to pursue the mandate of helping us to create the 22nd Century Public Servant in the 21st Century.

As I close, remember the hit song by The Carpenters and by George Benson? Lost in the Masquerade.

Well, I don't want us to get lost in the masquerade. What I want is for us to rejoin our band, head for the Savannah, and win Band of the Year and even more, win the People's Choice.

May God continue to Bless this institution with the wisdom and the courage to face the challenges ahead.

May God continue to Bless the leaders and members of this organization and your families and may God continue to Bless our great nation, Trinidad and Tobago.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you.