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OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS



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STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER

Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin, KCMG, MBE, JC, JP, MP

**Thursday
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The Speaker: Good morning. Please be seated.

Parliament has resumed. I want to start with a few words I have to say this morning by first thanking Her Excellency for her well wishes as I undertake this next step or stage in my political life.

I also want to thank Premier O'Connor-Connolly, my leader Hon. Roy McTaggart, my colleagues in the Opposition, all of you here in the House as Members and Ministers who have reposed your trust in me to become yet the third Speaker of this Parliament in this term.

This term, my sixth as an elected Member, has seen an unprecedented level of political turmoil with Members changing sides and positions so many times that an observer would be forgiven for believing the Parliament has been engaged in a high stakes game of musical chairs. Well, the music has stopped again and we nStaow have a new Premier, our new Ministers—repackaged Ministers—a rebranded Government and in me, a new Speaker. My fervent prayer and that I believe of most of the people of this country is that, that music will not be heard again until the next general elections which are constitutionally due by May 2025.

Colleagues, it is time for a reset. To try again to give the country mature and stable government. In the last general elections voters *tried a ting*, as we say in Cayman and elected an unprecedented number of Independents and those Independents themselves *tried a ting* and behold the birth of PACT. Alas, PACT was short lived and the Government has now been rebranded as the UPM —The United People's Movement. I am certain that the inclusion of 'United' in the new name, is no accident. And indeed, we must all pray for unity of purpose within this repackaged Administration. Indeed, I believe the fate of Cayman and our people hinges on having a Government in which all Members are pulling in the same direction.

Democracy is a messy business, not just in Cayman but all over the world. And it does not always deliver the result that voters thought we had voted for. And that is increasingly the case as not only the rise of Independents, but the rise of small parties which force coalition Governments all over the world. Yesterday was another example, the Netherlands, they have no less than 26 parties. So how long do we believe it will take for a Government to emerge from the results of that election?

Sir Winston Churchill, who in my opinion, was the greatest Prime Minister that ever was, anywhere in the world, put it this way: **"Many forms of Government have been tried and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time..."**

Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the other forms that have been tried from time to time.

There are still many in this country who believe that party politics is a bad thing, but whether you call it a group, a team, a movement, or a party, to govern effectively requires a set of people who have coalesced around a broad set of principles and policies, and agree collectively to pursue them. That is the only way a government can be held to account by voters. Voting for an individual who is not associated with a team that has articulated its position on a wide range of issues affecting the country, really, is like buying a number—you might win and get what you want, but most of the time you lose your money.

I urge the Members of Government to put behind you the events of the past 2.5 years, and work assiduously, and cohesively, to achieve as many of the goals you have set before the next election cycle rolls around; and for those who are first-timers here, I should tell you: You have one year before the silly season begins in earnest.

I want to say a few things about the role of Speaker, and my decision to accept the position. The role of Speaker in the Westminster system of government is almost as old as Parliament itself, dating back to 1377, when Sir Thomas Hungerford was appointed. It was, the role of Speaker, a perilous one in those early times, because the Speaker was the unfortunate one who spoke to the King or Queen on behalf of Parliament. This often involved delivering bad news to the monarch, and being the messenger of bad news had its consequences.

No less than seven Speakers were executed by beheading between 1394 and 1535, hence, I believe, arose the saying, *"Don't shoot the messenger"*— except in those days, they beheaded you. Thankfully, the role of Speaker today is not fraught with quite so much danger, but it is still a very responsible and important office.

I am honoured to become only the Ninth Speaker of this Parliament, and its predecessor, the Legislative Assembly. The role of Speaker, as I see it, is to preside at Meetings of the Parliament, order the business of Parliament, chair the Parliament Management Council, ensure that the rights and privileges of all Members are preserved, protect the interests of the minority in the House, keep order, and ensure that proper parliamentary process is followed.

I wish to make something absolutely clear: The Speaker belongs to the Parliament. The Speaker's allegiance is to the Parliament. The Speaker's role requires him or her to be objective and unbiased in presiding in Parliament. I commend the Honourable Premier for having the confidence and courage to ask me, a founding Member of the Progressives, a former leader of the Progressives, and the current Chairman of that beloved Party, to sit as Speaker; but I am certain that she has done so because she knows me, and knows that I am deeply conscious of the importance of preserving both the independence and integrity of the Office. I promise you I will conduct the affairs of this high office without fear or favour, and without regard to political affiliation.

Therefore, to my colleagues in the Opposition, and my fellow members and supporters of the Progressives, I assure you I have not left the Party. I have simply assumed the independent role of Speaker for the same reason I entered politics more than 23 years ago: *For love of country*. My first loyalty has always been and always will be, to my country and my beloved people.

To you, Premier, and your Government, you have my faithful assurance that I will do all I can to facilitate your legislative programme, and to help you get done the important business of the country which needs to be conducted here. Finally, I say: There may be people in this country who love it and its people as much as I do; but I warrant you, none love it more. I am Caymanian first, and everything after that.

Madam Premier, Members of the Government, and my colleagues in the Opposition, again, I thank you all, for your confidence in me.