



PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

First Meeting of the 2020/2021 Session
First Sitting

STATE OPENING AND INAUGURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS

Friday
4 December, 2020
(Pages 1-15)

Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MP
Speaker

Disclaimer: The electronic version of the *Official Hansard Report* is for informational purposes only. The printed version remains the official record.

PRESENT WERE:

SPEAKER

Hon W. McKeeva Bush, OBE, JP, MP
Speaker of the Parliament

MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MP	<i>Premier</i> , Minister of Employment, Border Control, Community Affairs, International Trade, Investment, Aviation and Maritime Affairs
Hon. Moses I. Kirkconnell, JP, MP	<i>Deputy Premier</i> , Minister of District Administration, Tourism and Transport
Hon. Joseph X. Hew, JP, MP	Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure
Hon. Tara A. Rivers, JP, MP	Minister of Financial Services and Home Affairs
Hon. Dwayne S. Seymour, JP, MP	Minister of Health, Environment, Culture and Housing

EX OFFICIO MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

Hon. Franz I. Manderson, MBE, Cert. Hon., JP	<i>Deputy Governor</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of the Civil Service
Hon. Samuel W. Bulgin, QC, JP	<i>Attorney General</i> , ex officio Member responsible for the Portfolio of Legal Affairs

ELECTED MEMBERS

GOVERNMENT BACKBENCHERS

Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks, JP, MP	Elected Member for West Bay Central
Hon. Barbara E. Conolly, MP	<i>Deputy Speaker</i> , Elected Member for George Town South
Mr. Austin O. Harris, Jr., MP	Elected Member for Prospect
Mr. David C. Wight, MP	Elected Member for George Town West

OPPOSITION MEMBERS

Hon. V. Arden McLean, JP, MP	<i>Leader of the Opposition</i> - Elected Member for East End
Mr. Alva. H. Suckoo, Jr., MP	<i>Deputy Leader of the Opposition</i> - Elected Member for Newlands
Mr. Anthony S. Eden, OBE, MP	Elected Member for Savannah
Mr. Christopher S. Saunders, MP	Elected Member for Bodden Town West
Mr. Bernie A Bush, MP	Elected Member for West Bay North

INDEPENDENT MEMBERS

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, MP	Elected Member for North Side
Mr. Kenneth V. Bryan, MP	Elected Member for George Town Central

APOLOGIES

Hon. Roy M. McTaggart, JP, MP	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly JP, MP	Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Agriculture and Lands

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
STATE OPENING AND FIRST MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT
FRIDAY
4 DECEMBER, 2020
3.00 P.M.
First Sitting

[Hon. W. McKeeva Bush, Speaker, presiding]

The Speaker: I invite Pastor James Arch to grace us with prayers.

PRAYERS

Pastor James Arch: Shall we pray?

Eternal God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you for your blessings on these fair Islands. We stand and bow our heads within the walls of this Hallowed Chamber on this very special occasion to acknowledge and honour Thee as the God of all wisdom, the Creator of all things, the One in whom we live and move and have our being. We bow in awe of your power and glory and praises for what you have done.

We thank you for your guidance and care through this current year of unprecedented and challenging times, we trust in your continued help for the future, we are eternally grateful for the day these beautiful Islands that are founded upon the seas were discovered, that have been home for so many of us for all these years; we thank you for those who have served these Islands in the past as Justices and Vestrymen and as Members of the Legislative Assembly. We stand here with deep appreciation for their commitment, foresight, dedication and their courageous stand for democracy and freedom, which we enjoy so much.

As we gather here on this historic day, in the evolving development of these Islands, we sincerely pray that as you have blessed in the past, you will bless and direct this Parliament and every Member that will occupy these seats, that they may always put God before them, that these Islands and its people will continue to prosper and flourish.

May your wisdom and blessings continue also with His Excellency the Governor of these Islands, the Honourable Premier, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and all others engaged in the affairs of these three Cayman Islands, that we may continue to lead a quiet and peaceful life under the hand of Almighty God in the name of Jesus.

Can we all say:

Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

**PROCLAMATION SUMMONING THE
FIRST MEETING OF THE PARLIAMENT**

The Clerk:

PROCLAMATION NO. 4 OF 2020

BY HIS EXCELLENCY MARTYN ROPER, OFFICER OF THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, GOVERNOR OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS.

WHEREAS section 83(1) of the Constitution of the Cayman Islands provides that the sessions of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands shall be held at such places and begin at such times as the Governor may from time to time by proclamation appoint:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Martyn Roper, OBE, Governor of the Cayman Islands, by virtue of the powers conferred upon me by section 83(1) of the Constitution of the Cayman Islands HEREBY PROCLAIM that a session of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands shall begin and be held at the House of Parliament, George Town, Grand Cayman, at 2.30 p.m. on the 4th day of December, 2020 and shall thereafter continue until such date and time as the Parliament may adjourn hereto.

GIVEN UNDER MY HAND AND THE PUBLIC SEAL OF THE CAYMAN ISLANDS AT GEORGE TOWN IN THE ISLAND OF GRAND CAYMAN THIS 24th DAY OF NOVEMBER, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY IN THE SIXTY-NINTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II.

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS
OR AFFIRMATIONS**

The Speaker: None.

**READING BY THE HONOURABLE
SPEAKER OF MESSAGES AND
ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Speaker: Thank you.

Honourable Members, I do have gracious messages from colleagues throughout the region.

Jamaica

This message comes from the Most Honourable Andrew Holness, ON, MP, Prime Minister of Jamaica:

"Jamaica and the Cayman Islands have enjoyed decades of strong relations. I therefore consider it a great privilege, on behalf of the Government and People of Jamaica, to extend heart-felt congratulations to the Government of the Cayman Islands, as you officially adopt the Cayman Islands Constitution (Amendment) Order 2020.

Over the years, the Cayman Islands have forged a strong democratic tradition and distinguished itself as an economically thriving nation within the Caribbean region. These are important achievements of which your country must be immensely proud.

With the passage of the amendment, you now have even greater autonomy and can more strategically pursue the policies and principles that best suit your needs in the modern era. As an implication of the amendment, you will now have a Parliament of the Cayman Islands, replacing your Legislative Assembly; this is no doubt a historic development, and Jamaica welcomes the opportunity to celebrate with you.

I am certain that our years of excellent relations, friendships and familial bonds, will remain strong as you embark upon this new journey. I look forward to our continued cooperation for the advancement of our People and I give you the assurance of our continued highest regard.

Jamaica celebrates with you on this momentous occasion and sends you our very best wishes for continued peace and prosperity.

*The Most Honourable
Andrew Holness, ON, MP,
Prime Minister of Jamaica"*

Bermuda

From the Premier of Bermuda:

"On behalf of the Government and People of Bermuda, I wish to congratulate Premier, the Honourable Alden McLaughlin and the Government of the Cayman Islands on the occasion of the First Meeting of the newly-named Parliament of the Cayman Islands.

The Cayman Islands Constitution (Amendment) Order 2020 brings significant benefits to the Cayman Islands and provides for broader consultation under your Constitution, and we applaud this progress.

Best wishes to the Government and People of the Cayman Islands as you advance your Islands under your new Constitution and legislative body. We look forward to continuing to strengthen the relationship between our territories.

As we all continue to navigate through the Coronavirus pandemic, I wish health and safety to your Islands.

Yours sincerely,

Parliament of the Cayman Islands

*The Hon. E. David G. Burt, JP, MP,
Premier"*

Bahamas

Message from the Prime Minister, Commonwealth of the Bahamas:

"I deem it a great honour and privilege to have been invited by Premier, the Hon. Alden McLaughlin, to share in the commemoration of the achievement of this significant milestone, in the history and development of the Cayman Islands.

The coming into effect of the Cayman Islands Constitution (Amendment) Order 2020 marks the culmination of a journey which began many years ago, on 4th July 1959, when self-government was ushered in. Subsequent constitutional changes in 1972, 1993, and 2009, each advanced the fulfilment of the aspirations of the Government and people closer, and on the path to full self-determination. The establishment of a full autonomous Parliament of the Cayman Islands is a significant step in that process and to the broadening of democracy.

The commemoration of this historic accomplishment inspires reflection on some notable events and their contributions to this moment in time:

- *The Women's Suffrage Movement and the Right to Vote in 1959;*
- *The Cayman National Cultural Foundation established in 1984, which is responsible for the preservation and promotion of the Cayman Islands' folk music festivals and cultural traditions; and notable*
- *Caymanians in the field of politics, business, education, sports, arts, and culture.*

The economy of the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands share two important similarities—financial services and tourism— which have contributed significantly to our economic development and the improvement of the lives of our people.

We also share mutual support in the time of natural disasters and dialogue and collaboration through our membership in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

I am pleased to join in the commemoration of this historic occasion—the First Meeting of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands; this important advance in democracy.

*Hubert A. Minnis
Prime Minister"*

Barbados

Prime Minister's Office, Barbados:

"It is my pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of Barbados, to offer sincere congratulations to the Government and people of the Cayman Islands on this, the first sitting of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands.

It is clear that the leadership of your nation recognises that in today's complex and dynamic world, success cannot be achieved if systems are not characterised by an atmosphere of creativity and nimbleness in which, across the board, involvement is encouraged and valued.

The constitutional reforms that ushered in your new Parliament, and which are no doubt designed to strengthen democracy through greater autonomy and broader people participation, provide an improved opportunity for the building of more meaningful and rewarding relations with your CARICOM neighbours.

The Government and people of Barbados assure you that we will do all within our power to build on the tradition of harmony and cooperation that has existed between our nations for generations, and which was exemplified in our own cooperation since the events of the pandemic. The repeated episodes of trauma occasioned by this pandemic have been our reality over the past year and therefore our ability to work together has been something that has pleased us greatly.

The Government and people of Barbados wish only the best for each and every one of you in the Cayman Islands, as you embark on this renewed journey.

May God Bless you all.

Thank you.

*The Hon. Mia Amor Mottley, QC, MP,
Prime Minister of Barbados"*

Gibraltar

The Chief Minister, Government of Gibraltar:

"On behalf of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Members of the Gibraltar Parliament, it gives me great pleasure to salute the people of the Cayman Islands, the Members of your distinguished Parliament, the Government of the Cayman Islands and not least, our good friend and colleague, the Premier, the Hon. Alden McLaughlin.

Our heart-felt congratulations on your achievement of constitutional reform; own rights of self-determination and to modern democratic self-government are precious and come with both responsibility and benefit. A Constitution must reflect those modern rights of people and protect them, our economies, and our chosen way of life.

Looked at from a distance, sometimes political history seems to move slowly, simmering along until things come to a head, provoked sometimes by the impact of new technologies or the unwelcome action of powerful countries and the force of nature.

Gibraltar, Cayman, and our fellow British Overseas Territories, have been working hard together to protect our people in the face of major challenges this year, such as Brexit and COVID-19.

Our relationship with the United Kingdom must always be governed by mutual respect, and shared values, and those are not just words. Through the bonds

that we have forged between us all, the territories constitute a great asset for British interests and, therefore, our own interest.

On this deserved red-letter day, Gibraltar sends its best wishes to the beautiful Cayman Islands and the magnificent people of the Cayman Islands.

*Fabian Picardo, QC, MP
Chief Minister"*

Secretary General, CARICOM

Now from the Ambassador, Irwin LaRocque, Secretary General, CARICOM.

"On the occasion of the First Meeting of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands, 4th December, 2020:

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of Parliament, it is my pleasure to be part of this landmark day in the history of the Cayman Islands.

Today you join Bermuda and Gibraltar as the only British Overseas Territories to have a legislative body known as Parliament. The Cayman Islands is an Associate Member of the Caribbean Community, (CARICOM) that is renowned for its adherence to parliamentary democracy, and today's ceremony further underlines this well-earned reputation.

When the United Kingdom Privy Council formalised the change last month, it marked another step in the political growth and maturity of the Cayman Islands.

It has been a long journey from the first meeting of democratically elected representatives of the territory—189 years ago—who, on the 31st December, 1831 became the Assembly of Justices and Vestry. They were the forerunners of the Legislative Assembly, which has been the forum for making laws since July, 1959 and which comes to an end today.

You, the Members of Parliament in the Chamber today, are making your own history. On behalf of the Caribbean Community, I congratulate you all and the Government and people of the Cayman Islands on this momentous occasion."

[Pause]

The Speaker: Do not worry; I shall not be long.

Honourable Members, on the historic closure of the 1959-2020 Legislative Assembly, all Members had an opportunity to mark that auspicious occasion, and you did. It was historic; I do not believe that any Speaker of the House in the Commonwealth ever sat for six-and-a-half-hours without taking a break, so indeed, it was historic in many ways.

We do not have much time on this part of the agenda, but I do not speak generally on matters, and it is only on these kinds of occasions [that] my Standing Orders say I can, as Speaker, give a message to the honourable House so I crave your indulgence to do so at this time.

Honourable Members:

Today is a landmark for our Islands and a monumental day, as we convene as a Parliament, the legacy of our transformative constitutional framework, creates a transition from Legislative Assembly to that of Parliament—a stronger democracy.

Let me first congratulate the Honourable Premier, who has worked assiduously to get the historic amendments we are given today. Something the Foreign Office declared over the years would not have been happening again, after Bermuda. Therefore, I gladly welcome this maturing process.

I also want to thank the Deputy Governor and Mrs. Gloria McField-Nixon, for the roles they have played to get us where we are. Some of our detractors might be so light-headed and poke fun at this moment in history, questioning in the most insulting way.

Honourable Members, to me, becoming a Parliament is a maturing process from where we were. It is about the separation of powers—one of the highest tenets of democracy. The separation of our Legislature from the Executive Arm of our Government is involved here at this time.

Being a Member here for over 36 years, I have some very fond memories of sitting in this honourable House in meetings, and times that gave and still provide me with some levity, when I think of them. I have seen and heard some very thoughtful ways of not heeding the advice of the Chair.

Just recently, I spoke to a matter which a Member was trying to raise at the time; I was asking for his cooperation. Much cross-talk, but I thought the Leader of the Opposition was not about for the Opposition bench to not have its say on the matter, so I further sent a note to the Leader of the Opposition, who it seemed was going to ignore that, when he said, *But you know, Mr. Speaker, you have the worst handwriting; I cannot understand a word you said.*

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Another time, in the 1990s, I was debating but was being heckled from the Government bench and with attempts to distract me, but I managed to continue my points. At least three Members of the Government left the Chamber saying, *we do not have to listen to you.*

In those days, the Backbench had the majority; when those three Members left I moved a suspension of the Standing Orders to allow me to complete my speech. That Motion was carried and I continued—in those days, we could speak for four hours—but my suspension was to complete my speech. The House adjourned, as it usually did, at 4.30 p.m.

The next morning at 10 o'clock, I was still continuing when Mr. Benson came in and said, *Boy, you must only have about ten minutes left.* I happily said, *No sir, sorry, but I am carrying on.* Then the Speaker

had to relay to him that I had suspended Standing Orders to complete my speech. Oh, but they were livid, and I think I spoke for the balance of the day, all very relevant.

Important to note, since 1984 some constitutional changes have been made from Executive Council to the first ever Cabinet of the Cayman Islands in 1994 and I think only two of us—the Member for Savannah and myself—remain in the House today from that first Cabinet.

I always believed we must have a formalised Leader of Government, but it was a battle to get any change. Mr. Smith—I believe he was knighted since—a learned Barbadian Counsel, was the Cayman Constitutional Advisor and he tried for days to convince me to support the creation of a Chief Minister but, the Governor was to appoint him from among Members. I disagreed with that, as did others and so, the 1989-1992 recommendations fell away.

In 2002-2003 we received agreement from Governor Dinwiddie for changes that made us constitutionally recognise the Leader of Government Business and the Leader of the Opposition—me as the Leader of Government Business, and Mr. D. Kurt Tibbetts as Leader of the Opposition, but they refused me any number of parliamentary secretaries. Our backwardness existed from the early days with people refusing constitutional changes because they did not want this one or the next one to be Chief Minister. The same reason we could not get our own Speaker.

Today, I am proud of the many changes in our country, though some of them have not been easy to come by. When I came here, our seniors and others in need only received \$25 per month, and today, it is \$850 per month. That is just to one group. Successive Governments took my lead and have treated that group tremendously better.

Higher education scholarships were nearly non-existent in 1984. The Bankers' Association gave one and Government gave very few and Cable & Wireless gave some training to some of their staff; I think Canadian Imperial Bank (CIBC) was also giving training to their staff, as did Cayman National Bank (CNB).

Today, all that has changed; many glass ceilings have been removed. One of my dictums as the first Minister of Labour was, *No scholarships? No work permits. No upward mobility? No work permits.* They said, *well, how are you going to achieve that?* I said, *Well, I will just go down to the Immigration Office to the Work Permit Board, and tell them how I feel.*

Thank God I did not have to do it; all of them, including Mr. Walker, took the point. No upward mobility? No work permits. I took some beatings for that—being called dictator and communist—but I do not need to elaborate, some of you are familiar with the struggle. Today, dozens of local and overseas scholarships in the millions of dollars have been granted by our Government, and the private sector, which has done a greater job. While there are yet problems in the better-

paying jobs, you can believe we have come a long, long, way from those early days.

Some of my treasured accomplishments were:

- To get Health City established;
- To strongly support the construction of the Community College;
- Moving the building height from five to ten stories
- Getting the new road and other vehicle entrances into West Bay—my constituency;

Although, I must tell you that one of my disappointments was that I was not a dictator and got DART to get the East-West Corridor done at the time. I was most proud also, to have met Her Majesty the Queen, in 1994, at the opening of our sports centre in West Bay and introducing so many of our older persons who had come out to meet their queen; and we cannot forget how the older Caymanians have respected Her Majesty the Queen.

In this First Meeting of our Parliament, I will ring this warning bell: If you listen around, every conceivable complaint is being made on the radio show, mind you, on our own radio too, on social media, and other mediums. I take note; I have listened to the best of the people and have adjusted my thoughts with an open mind, to see what the problems are.

People are concerned about matters, some are listening to those who can complain well and have a gift for speaking—those leading the charge against everything. It is not beneficial to anyone; they are prepared to act irresponsibly to get their way, and it has been said if they cannot have their way and be the Captain, they will go in the engine room and wreck the engine.

As I listen, I do not hear solutions and my warning bell is this: if we Caymanians listen to what I am hearing, and if that is the kind of Cayman of the future, where the church is being torn apart at times, and where Government is being derided at all levels, not just the politicians but the civil servants as well, if that is the kind of future, then only God will save us. There are no solutions, and those listening must ask the question: *Have those people done anything to ever help anyone?* They will talk about something not seen or felt in the abstract and that when you check, they have done nothing but talk with nice, flowery, language.

Honourable Members, if we do as they are advocating, those who have nothing will have less; those who have some little thing, will lose it. Take what I am saying seriously, regardless of how you think I am as a representative.

In our islands today it seems there is this urging to demonstrate; they are urged to demonstrate about everything. They see it on television and think that Cayman is the same, but we are not; they say demonstrate against Government, against the Courts, against the Legal Practitioners Bill (LPB), against the schools and teachers—and maybe demonstrate against the Speaker too.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Yet, it is plain as the nose on your face, this coalition Government has done as good as can be expected, complicated with the effects of the virus as we must deal with now, at this critical time. Now we are to be thankful and careful of where Cayman is. The world has turned upside down and chaotic, but our God has blessed these Islands.

If Cayman is destroyed, in this arena of international disruption and uncertainty, Cayman will not survive. As I said, those who have will have less and that might be taken from them; and those who have nothing will be impoverished. Tell your children and grand-children as I do mine: Cayman is the best place in the world, unless you go to [INAUDIBLE] where there is nothing and you will have nothing.

Think about how bad off the people are in Honduras, San Andrés, Providence, Nicaragua, after this hurricane season. Let us be thankful for what we have; thankful to Almighty God because it is He who has blessed us and not us ourselves. Think about it, where we have come from; think about it and strive to take care of each of our own families. Help those who are really helpless.

There are some things to straighten out, yes. However, Cayman is into a good thing for the future. Think of how well we have survived this pandemic; the Opposition, the Government and the Independents worked together to save us. We have worked together. Oh, they removed my hymnal. I was not going to sing—

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I was going to remind you as the English songwriter says—it is a favourite of mine: “**I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift**”.

Thank you, Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you for the cooperation you have given. Thank you, Leader of the Opposition for your cooperation and understanding, particularly in these times that we are facing, when so much is demanded of the Government and we are still meeting the challenge; and should I dare say, thank God for the coalition. I promised I was not going to be too long. I hope I have kept my promise.

Honourable Members, there is much work to be done but we are all up to the task or the fight, whatever you deem it. God Bless you all in your deliberations.

MOTION FOR SUSPENSION OF THE HOUSE FOR ADMISSION OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin, Minister of Employment, Border Control, Community Affairs, International Trade, Investment, Aviation and Maritime Affairs, Elected Member for Red Bay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You did not do too badly—

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: In terms of time.

Mr. Speaker, I move that this honourable House do now suspend to invite His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Keith Roper, OBE to address the State Opening and First Meeting of the new Parliament.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do suspend to invite His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper, OBE, to deliver an address on the occasion of the State Opening and First Meeting of the Parliament.

All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it. The House will suspend at this time.

Agreed: That the honourable House be suspended to await the arrival of His Excellency the Governor to deliver an address on the occasion of the State Opening and First Meeting of the Parliament.

Proceedings suspended at 3.38 p.m.

ARRIVAL OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper: Please be seated.

ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands, Ladies and Gentlemen: Good afternoon.

Today is a historic day for the Cayman Islands. We come together to embrace changes to the Constitution that usher in a new Parliament and a new era of modernised processes of Government befitting of a 21st Century democracy.

Agreeing constitutional modernisation is a significant achievement in keeping with this historic moment, I am pleased to begin my contribution today by

passing on warm congratulations from the United Kingdom.

First, I am delighted to be able to read out a message on behalf of His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales:

"It gives me great pleasure and pride to congratulate the People of the Cayman Islands on the agreement to reform and modernise your Constitution and on the creation of your new Parliament which, together, represent an important moment for the strong and vibrant democracy that exists in the Islands."

"Having such fond and special memories of our visit to the Cayman Islands in March, 2019, and of the remarkable warmth of the welcome we so touchingly received; my wife and I, particularly, wanted to send the new Members of Parliament and all the People of the Cayman Islands whom they represent, our warmest wishes and to say how you are all in our thoughts at this time."

Secondly, the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson has asked me read out the following message to mark this occasion:

"I would like to congratulate the People of the Cayman Islands on their constitutional reforms, which signal how far they have come in developing into a mature democracy."

New powers come with a heavy burden of responsibility, which no politician should bear lightly, but I am confident that the Members of the Cayman Islands Parliament will build upon the successes of recent decades, which have propelled the Islands forward, as a modern democracy working in partnership with the United Kingdom."

Finally, I am very pleased that Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, who was the UK Minister for the Overseas Territories at the start of the negotiations, also sends his good wishes; he said:

"I am delighted that the constitutional reforms are now coming into effect. This signals another step forward by the People of the Cayman Islands to advance the vibrant democracy they have built as the foundation for prosperity, which shines as an example to others across the Caribbean."

I congratulate the Honourable Premier who played a pivotal role and leaves these changes as part of his substantial legacy. I also congratulate the then Leader of the Opposition, current Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and other members of the negotiating team for the role they played in securing a successful negotiation."

Those messages underline the highly constructive UK-Cayman dialogue on constitutional change that brought us to this point today. As the UK Minister said at the recent Joint Ministerial Council virtual meeting, the constitutional talks with Cayman were a role model for how such talks should be conducted, and one other territories, could follow.

The Cayman delegation demonstrated cross-party agreement and unity at those talks, which had a

powerful impact on the UK and the success of the negotiations. I was pleased to play a role myself as observer in December, 2018, shortly after I was appointed as Governor at the end of October, 2018. I have worked closely with the Premier since then, to ensure that the process moved forward, including navigating the inevitable delays caused by COVID.

As well as becoming only the third Overseas Territory to have a Parliament, Cayman is now the first Overseas Territory with a constitutional provision requiring the UK to consult the Premier and Cabinet before any UK Orders-in-Council are passed. This is now being made available to all Overseas Territories who have Cayman to thank for that advance.

The other changes make clearer Cayman's autonomy in domestic affairs, which I have and will continue to respect fully.

Work to establish a Police Service Commission, which both the Police Commissioner and I welcome, has already been set in hand. It will provide valuable external advice, strengthening good governance and oversight of our police service.

The negotiating team and I had all hope that, as part of these changes, section 81 of the Constitution, setting out the reserved power of the Governor could fall away. As this House is aware, I was instructed to use those powers earlier this year, to give assent to the Civil Partnership Law and, in doing so, ensure Cayman's compliance with the rule of law and international obligations.

Because of that, the UK decided it wished to retain that power for the time being. Its use was exceptional and rare, reflecting the specific circumstances that also arose from the UK's international legal obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights. It is incorrect—as some have suggested—to see its use as implying more activism on the part of the UK, nor should its retention in any way detract from the significant achievements embodied in the other arrangements.

Edmund Burke, a prominent 18th century parliamentarian once said, **"Parliament is not a congress of Ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but Parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole."**

And Winston Churchill reminded us that: **"The first duty of a member of Parliament is to do what he [or she] thinks in faithful and disinterested judgement is right and necessary for the honour and safety of his country. His second duty is to his constituents, of whom he is the representative but not the delegate. It is only in the third place that his duty to party organisation or programme takes rank. All these three loyalties should be observed,**

but there is no doubt of the order in which they stand under any healthy manifestation of democracy."

I believe those wise words apply just as much today and can provide inspiration to present and future Members of Parliament as to the importance and weight of their role.

As COVID-19 continues to rage around us, our islands remain in the enviable position of being largely COVID free. We have many people to thank for that, from the Honourable Premier, the Minister for Health and all Cabinet Members for their leadership; our Attorney General and his team; our brilliant medical staff and officials; and the public who faithfully supported the decisions of the Government. I thank Honourable Members of the Opposition for their contribution, including the Honourable Leader who attended meetings of our Hazard Management National Executive. I also thank the hard-working staff in my Office who like so many in Team Cayman went the extra mile for everyone on these Islands. We owe everyone a debt of gratitude for getting us to the relative normality in which we find ourselves today.

I believe Cayman can look to the future with optimism, confident that we can build back the economy better. With the UK's support, we should soon be in a position to offer a vaccine against COVID to the people of Cayman. Despite concerns in some quarters about vaccines, a strong uptake by the public will be needed as our clearest route out of this global health emergency. Our health professionals strongly recommend that we take it to protect everyone in our community, particularly our elderly and most vulnerable. As leaders we all have a responsibility to do so and to be seen to do so.

Cayman has never sought, or needed, direct financial support from the UK. That is a proud record and I know it is one the Premier and his Government are keen to maintain.

The UK does of course provide, through my Office and at Cayman's request, technical support in a wide range of areas. In the last four years alone Cayman has received over £6.3 million in funding and technical support from the UK in areas such as criminal justice, law enforcement, prisons, governance and public sector reform, public health, child safeguarding, maritime and border security, air operations, environment and disaster management. The UK recognises that such targeted assistance in specific areas can support the Overseas Territories gain access to expertise, which is not always available in smaller territories.

I remain full of respect and admiration for how effectively Cayman provides such a vast array of services to the community here, without the advantages that many larger countries enjoy because of size, scale and resources.

The support the UK provides is part of the strong, mature and constructive partnership that exists between our two Governments. I will continue to work

hard to nurture that relationship, which brings mutual benefits.

One of the most obvious areas where the UK has offered support in recent times has been in the establishment of the Cayman Islands Regiment - an offer made little over a year ago by the then Minister for Armed Forces during a visit here. With the strong support of the Premier and Cabinet, we made fast progress despite COVID and the Regiment is on a trajectory toward full operational capability by next August. Many Caymanians have joined as reservists and some have had the opportunity to train at Sandhurst. This is a truly visible sign of the strong partnership that exists between Cayman and the UK. Many young Caymanians have signed up as membership offers a wonderful opportunity, not only to serve their country but also to develop new and transferrable skills. That was tested recently as Storm Eta passed through and members of the Regiment were deployed to evacuate vulnerable people from flooded homes. They performed with distinction. We can all be proud of the start the Regiment has made.

I would like to thank the Police Commissioner and all members of the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service (RCIPS) for genuinely outstanding work over the last year. COVID presented uniquely challenging circumstances but they rose to the occasion. It may not be a typical year, but excluding COVID related offences, crime is down overall by 13 per cent. That is to be celebrated.

We continue to enjoy peace and security that is the envy of many countries in the region. I would also like to single out the Prison Director and his staff for the highly impressive response to COVID this year, minimising its impact and introducing innovative policies to maintain contact between prisoners and families. All our emergency services have performed magnificently including our Fire Service dealing with the biggest and most dangerous fire in generations. We are fortunate indeed to have people with such dedication, skills and commitment to support our community at times of difficulty.

I will continue to support the many institutions and commissions that uphold our good governance, including our independent, effective and highly respected judiciary, which also demonstrated impressive innovation in administering justice this year during the period of restrictions and lockdowns.

The 2017 General Election marked the introduction of single member constituencies, which culminated in the election of 19 Members of the Legislative Assembly. In less than six months, the May 2021 General Election will see voters casting ballots in the first Cayman Islands Parliamentary Elections. Cayman has a strong track record of holding free and fair elections. To ensure the high standards of our democratic processes are upheld, the excellent team at the Cayman Islands Elections Office are continuing their work to

plan and deliver well run General Elections in line with international electoral standards.

Policies around climate change and the environment are quite properly devolved under the Constitution to the Cayman Islands Government. However, at the request of the Honourable Premier and Minister Hew, I am exploring how UK technical expertise and experience can support Cayman's objectives in this area. Despite the financial challenges that the pandemic has brought about globally, climate change and the environment remain a top priority for the UK, which today announced a target of reducing carbon emissions by 68 per cent by 2030 based on 1990 levels. That is the most ambitious target of any country in the world. I am delighted that the UK and Cayman are entering into a partnership to take work forward in this area.

The partnership will cover work in key areas including support on assessing and updating the risks that climate change poses to our Islands, renewable energy and protecting biodiversity, including coral reefs. As we look towards the Climate Change Conference - COP26 - hosted in Glasgow next year by the UK, we must ensure the voices of Cayman and the region's Small Island States are heard.

My thanks, as ever, go to our outstanding Deputy Governor Franz Manderson and his high quality Chief Officer Team for work in leading an increasingly world class civil service, and with whom I work very closely. Both the Deputy Governor and I were proud of the way so many civil servants stepped up during the pandemic, volunteering for roles outside their remit to support the people of the Cayman Islands. A team across Government recently won the UK Association of Project Management's award for the social project of the year for the way in which they set up the field hospital at the Family Life Centre. This international recognition for one element of Team Cayman's COVID response is a very tangible demonstration of a world-class civil service in action.

Two years into my tenure here as Governor, my commitment to Cayman remains unswerving. I will continue to advance Cayman's interests to the utmost of my capability, balancing those against the UK's constitutional obligations. In the last year I am proud to have supported Cayman on financial services, constitutional change and the Cayman Islands Regiment, working closely with the Honourable Premier to do our best for the people of these wonderful Islands. My relationship with the Premier and his Ministers is a strong partnership based on trust and openness, which I believe is to the benefit of these Islands.

As I have stressed since arriving, I urge everyone to treat all in our community with courtesy, dignity and respect, demonstrate CaymanKind at all times, not least in these difficult times in which we are living through and maintain the highest stands of integrity and personal behaviour.

In the second half of my tour here I will continue to be as open and accessible as I have strived to be over the last two years. I will continue to support our wonderful community as much as I can. There may also be one or two more performances of the steel pan and I am proud, despite a serious lack of musical talent, to have somehow succeeded in increasing my repertoire from 3 tunes to 4 tunes—

[Laughter]

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn Roper: Thanks of course to Cayman's man of steel Earl La Pierre.

In conclusion, Cayman has done incredibly well in managing the pandemic. There is so much for the people of these Islands to be proud about. I believe the future looks bright for Cayman as we build back better, and I hope greener, after COVID. Cayman is a beacon of excellence amongst the Overseas Territories and the wider region. It is one of, if not the best place in the Caribbean to live, work and invest. As you embark on a new chapter with the new Parliament it is an opportunity to step back and look with pride at what Cayman has achieved in recent decades. I send heartfelt best wishes to all Members of Parliament and to the new Parliamentary Secretaries who will be appointed today as you all continue your noble and vital work to make the lives of everyone here even better.

God bless all of you and all the people of these wonderful Cayman Islands.

[Pause]

His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper: Honourable Premier?

[Long pause]

[Applause]

[Long pause]

DEPARTURE OF HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

Procession departed in the following order:

The Serjeant-at-Arms

The Honourable Speaker

His Excellency the Governor

The Governor's Aide-de-Camp

Mrs. Elisabeth Roper

The Honourable Chief Justice and Mrs. Smellie

Pastor James Arch

Proceedings resumed at 4.05 p.m.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

This honourable House resumes its sitting. Honourable Members I do take note, as late as it is, the presence of our distinguished guest, and I do welcome all of you. Among you are, our Chief Justice, and his good wife; and former Speakers, [Mary] Lawrence and [Linford] Pierson; and former Members of the House. Welcome to all of you, to what is a great day, for our Cayman Islands.

MOTION OF THANKS TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. V. Arden McLean, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I beg to move that: **BE IT RESOLVED that this honourable Parliament records its grateful thanks to His Excellency the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper, OBE, for the gracious address delivered at this State Opening and First Sitting of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands.**

I would beg your indulgence—

The Speaker: Before you do.

BE IT RESOLVED that this honourable Parliament records its grateful thanks to His Excellence the Governor, Mr. Martyn K. Roper, OBE, for the gracious address delivered at this State Opening and First Sitting of the Parliament of the Cayman Islands.

The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, continuing.

Hon. V. Arden McLean, Leader of the Opposition: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I shall not be as long as yourself. I will try my best to be as surgical as possible.

The Speaker: Sorry I couldn't be that.

Hon. V. Arden McLean, Leader of the Opposition: I have heard two reports been made, so I will try to be short and please forgive me if I do not go into the minutiae of these changes this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, Mark Twain once said, "**The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why.**" I am sure, that you will agree, that each of us, as God's children, has a purpose on this earth.

Mr. Speaker, just as each of us, as individuals has a purpose, we must also agree that collectively, as a people, and a country, we must have a collective purpose. Thus, I ask the question, what is the collective purpose of all of us who call the Cayman Islands home? Before answering that question, I think it is important to put a few things in perspective, in the short time I have here today.

On the discovery of these 3 Islands in 1503, history recorded them as uninhabited. Much has happened since. I won't get into those particulars as—as one of the Members who came here when I did [said], I will borrow a few words from him—*there is no future in the past*. Whilst I think it is important to understand and remember who we were yesterday, I am sure that you would agree, that who we are today is more important. Even more important is where we expect to be tomorrow. Let us fast forward to 2020.

Today, these Islands are the envy of many that have come through the process of a slow march into the future, promulgated and carefully executed by past leaders for the benefit of future generations. It can therefore be said that every generation of Caymanians, with deliberate action, advances the development of these Islands for the next generation.

This march has come about of the knowledge that we have always found ourselves, disadvantaged by our circumstances. Circumstances such as our geographic location, and importantly, the fact that our natural resources are limited, except for that of our people. Generation after generation has used its creativity, understanding of our uniqueness, tenacity and good old common sense to create one of the most advanced countries in the Western Hemisphere despite our small population.

Mr. Speaker, we have all applauded advances in our Government structure over the years. In particular, over the last 60 years. There are many who question the validity of such advancement and whether our people have advanced in tandem. Using the 2019 statistics, the Cayman Islands have a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita that puts us in the top 5 on this planet. Simply put, of the 200 plus counties that call this planet home, the Cayman Islands have a GDP per capita that would be the envy of many countries. Unfortunately, that GDP per capita means nothing when considering that close to 40 per cent of our working population makes less than \$30,000 dollars per year in a country that has one of the highest cost of living in the world. While our GDP per capita is a quantitative measure of our economy; when we examine a quantitative measure such as the human development index, which looks at achievements in key dimensions of human development such as a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living, the Cayman Islands ranks about 30. In essence, the economy is doing well but it has not translated into an equivalent standard of living for our people.

Our Constitution is a mere 11 years old, yet today we are recognising the second amendment thereto, that in and of its self, tells us that as time moves on in the life of any country, the people must embrace and be willing allies of change in order to progress. Our people have been asked many times to trust their leaders with changes to the premier law that governs them and they have, by and large, trusted their leaders with proposals to enhance the governance autonomy.

That trust that has been reposed, in successive leaders, has resulted in a country that is the envy of many, less it be misunderstood, this success cannot be attributed to generational Caymanians only. Indeed, we have welcomed many to our shores who have played a crucial role in this advancement. They have worked side by side with us. Sometimes the road was tumultuous but we all understood that to survive in our world of uncertainty we had to put our backs to the wheel. Despite the unprecedented challenges we have come out on the other side much better than we started. While this journey can be viewed as successful, unfortunately many have fallen by the waste side, simply because of the lack of opportunity, they will never share in the success if we do not now, turn our attention to the concept that a rising tide lifts all boats.

Mr. Speaker, I speak here not only of generational Caymanians, there are, as they are commonly referred to, 'new Caymanians' who are also included in those who have lost their way and must be included in the journey of inclusiveness if we are to continue to achieve the success of the past.

Indeed, a new category of leaders will take over leadership in less than 6 months and I dare say that they will be tasked with an uncertain future that has been visited upon us by a global pandemic. However, they must also chart a new direction which will ensure that those who have been left behind over the years, are given every opportunity to equally enjoy the spoils of this success story. They must strive to eliminate the often repeated cliché, *who are we developing for*.

Our goal in this new dispensation must be One Cayman. It is indeed ironic that in the quincentennial of our discovery, we were challenged by one of the most devastating events ever experienced by our people, Ivan. Like the phoenix we arose from the ashes, demonstrating yet again our resilience and determination. Unfortunately, in some respects we have ignored the significance of that event and not made adequate plans for the future. The time has come. We are now faced with another opportunity to press the reset button and plan for the development of our people.

Just as we have move this legislature through various stages of autonomy, necessary to advance our country, I submit that we must now plan for the future. We in the Official Opposition would like to call that plan One Cayman.

That plan must reflect the wishes and dreams of our people. Wishes and dreams that they embrace and approve in May 2009 when they exercised their democratic right, to accept this very Constitution we amend today.

We in the Official Opposition believe the preamble of this 2009 Constitution, accurately reflects who our people are and must be used as the basis of any plan for the future.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to pause here to briefly address two other matters that hold a prominent place in the meaning of autonomy and

empowerment as it relates to a country and its people; in this case, of our own.

Firstly, the separation of powers. Just weeks ago, this Parliament took the decision to record in law, the removal of the administration of its affairs from the Executive. In so doing, the Parliament now has responsibility for its day to day administration and financial matters, thereby ensuring that the last blurred line, between the three arms of Government has been eliminated forever. This is to become effective on January 1st, 2021. The only remaining thing to do is amend the Standing Orders to bring them in line with current and new practices.

Secondly, there is a need for a wholesale review of our election process. Many Caymanians have had much to say about the need for a review of the Elections Law (2017 Revision). I personally join that chorus and so too does the Official Opposition. These three areas come immediately to mind:

1. Removal of Electors from the Electors Register. This country is one of very few in the world that removes from its register, electors who have been living elsewhere, for a certain period of time preceding an election. Their absence does not mean that they have any less interest in, or are any less informed of the political landscape than those who are here. In fact, the contrary may be the case.
2. Qualification for elected membership, especially based on the time spent within the country, needs immediate review also. We all saw the outcome of the election challenge mounted in 2013. These qualification requirements are dated and need to be eliminated now. Too many otherwise eligible Caymanians have been disenfranchised from participating in the democratic process as a result of these draconian provisions. Of course, this too will require constitutional change.
3. Lastly, I may take the prize for being the loudest voice advocating for an Elections Commission. An Elections Commission will correct another process in this long and arduous journey of autonomy. Currently, the election process is directed by the Executive as part of the Governor's responsibility. This is no longer the case in progressive democracies around the world. While our country can boast of a history of fair elections, implementation of a commission would remove the administration of the elections process from Civil Servants, and put it in the hands of an autonomous constitutional authority.

Mr. Speaker, it is said that one does not know when one is creating history. I believe that when the history of this country is penned, today will occupy a special place on its pages, and will be chronicled as one of the many steps to protect the people of these

Islands as a part of our slow, 500 plus years walk, towards greater autonomy in the governance of our people.

Members of the Official Opposition and I, would like to record our gratitude and appreciation to our constituencies for having been given the opportunity to participate in this historic milestone and most importantly answer the question I posed at the beginning – what is the collective purpose of all of us who call the Cayman Islands their home.

The answer is simple: to work together for the creation of a peaceful and prosperous, God-fearing country, in which everyone will have an equal opportunity to live their best life, not just survive.

My last act here today is to warmly congratulate my colleagues and in particular the Premier, but that also includes the Deputy Governor and the Attorney General, who do not create any soap box around here. Congratulate them on being the very first Members of Parliament of the Cayman Islands and this First Sitting of Parliament. I encourage you all, to never underestimate the significance; and like those who came before us, remember our journey and the responsibility that we have to those who will eventually follow us in occupying these hallowed halls.

Mr. Speaker, may it please you, and I pray God's blessings upon the people of these beloved Islands.

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE PREMIER

The Speaker: The Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I start my address, I want to join the chorus of warmly welcoming the many people who are here in the gallery and in the chamber, including former Speakers and former Ministers and Members of this honourable House. We recognise full well, the sacrifice you have made to leave your work or other engagements, in the middle of the day, to come and celebrate with us on this auspicious occasion.

I also want to offer apologies on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development who is quarantining within the confines of his home having just returned from having surgery in the United States. I want that to serve as an example to all who have the obligation to quarantine, that even on an occasion as auspicious as this, a Member of the Parliament, the Minister of Finance, has understood and appreciated, and honoured, the obligation that he has, and all persons who are quarantined have, to the entire community, to keep them safe, by withdrawing until you know that you are not carrying the virus and therefore are not capable of passing it on.

Suspension of Standing Order 10(2)

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Mr. Speaker, I am being reminded that notwithstanding that this is an auspicious occasion the Standing Orders still apply. I therefore move the suspension of Standing Order 10(2) in order that the business of the House can continue beyond the hour of interruption.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House continues its business after the hour of 4.30 p.m.

All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

Agreed: Standing Order 10(2) suspended.

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. Alden McLaughlin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the course of my 20 years as an elected representative, but particularly, over the course of these seven and a half years that I have served as Premier, I have taken part in many events of national significance: the 60 year celebration of our Coat of Arms and Constitution; numerous Heroes' Day celebrations; and the visit of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall are just a few. I have felt immensely privileged to be a part of all of them, however, I have also always felt somewhat humbled by such events. Recalling the struggles and achievements of the Caymanian women and men, including our national heroes, on whose shoulders we now stand, puts into clearer perspective our own life and times. Yet, I must confess that I have also taken great pride in those events. Pride, yes, at my own small part in things, but much more I have felt great pride in what our tiny nation has achieved. We may still just be three small Islands in the Caribbean but we are no longer *the land that time forgot*, we have come of age in this world.

The constitutional journey that began at a meeting at Pedro St. James— that is what we call it now; Pedro Castle, I grew up calling it— on December 5th, 1831, has had its twists and turns, but it has taken us to where we are today. I pause here to note that tomorrow, December 5th, 2020, will be the 189th anniversary of that historic meeting at Pedro St. James. Those present that December day so long ago could not have imagined how significant their early steps towards democracy would be, or how far we would have come over time.

Throughout our journey these past two centuries, our national heroes and the founders of our Constitution and our democratic system, are Caymanians of whom we are naturally proud and whose achievements we rightly celebrate. However, I am equally proud of, and honour all Caymanians, nation builders

all, many unsung, who in their own ways have contributed to our success and the enviable position we are in today.

- The seafarers and shipbuilders who laid the foundation for our prosperity and growth;
- The entrepreneurs and those who labour with them, who have helped drive forward our economic success;
- The community organisers and volunteers who have made Cayman such a great place to live;
- The public servants who keep the wheels of Government turning and provide necessary services to the public;
- The mothers and fathers who have raised children who will grow beyond us to take Cayman forward.

Today, I celebrate and honour all of them with pride.

I also appreciate and honour those who have come and settled amongst us, who love these Islands, and who have worked shoulder to shoulder with us to help build and uplift these three Islands and our people. Indeed, many have lived and worked amongst us over the decades and have gained the distinction of becoming Caymanian.

In many respects, today represents a recognition of the contribution of all Caymanians, whatever their heritage, we are gathered here to change the name of a building but we are doing so much more than that. This building has always stood as a symbol of our national identity and our potential as a free self-governing people. A people who some 61 years ago decided that we wished to retain our historical and political relationship with the United Kingdom, but to also provide the ability for that relationship to mature.

Today, we gather to witness one more aspect of that maturity. The change of the Legislative Assembly to become the House of Parliament is symbolic of the United Kingdom's recognition of our growing maturity. It also reflects on our achievements as a people and as a nation. I hope that everyone here today and everyone who visits or just looks upon this building in the months and years to come will reflect on just how far we have come as a people and as a nation in the last 61 years. During that time we have gone through several changes in our constitutional arrangements; each has represented a progression towards greater local autonomy and increased responsibility for our affairs.

In the many years since the adoption of the 1972 Constitution, we have moved from the Executive Council, or Cabinet, and the Legislative Assembly, being merely advisory bodies to the Governor, who was the ultimate decision maker for all matters; to the position today where Cabinet and Parliament have, within the confines of the Constitution, exclusive responsibility for local affairs and local laws. Thus, the progress towards more local autonomy continues with the changes

to our Constitution that were agreed by the Privy Council last month. The change that we are celebrating today, the re-designation of the Legislative Assembly as a Parliament, is rightly the centrepiece of the Constitution Amendment Order. This is a proper reflection of the work that Members do in this building and a proper reflection of our national self-confidence and ability to run our own affairs but it also carries with it other benefits. This Administration, as did the last one that I led, has made it a priority to increase Cayman's profile overseas. That is about Cayman being more assertive in promoting and protecting our interest but it is also crucial as we look at the future of our Islands and our ability to attract and retain the drivers of future economic growth and prosperity.

As we deal more directly with Members of foreign governments and foreign business leaders, it helps that Members can call themselves Members of Parliament, quite simply, it just carries more weight with those of whom we are dealing. It opens more doors to us as we look to open our doors to new opportunities.

As well as the establishment of our own Parliament for the first time, these constitutional amendments include changes that are important, both symbolically and in terms of the substantive enhancement of Caymanian self-government that they bring. I will highlight four of those today.

First and foremost, is the clear constitutional recognition of the primacy of our new Parliament and the Cabinet in all matters of domestic policy and the consequent requirement now, placed on the United Kingdom Government to consult Cayman on Legislation before the House of Commons that directly impacts these Islands. This is the first time that the United Kingdom has made such a concession in the Constitution of an Overseas Territory. It is highly significant as it provides us with the opportunity to influence United Kingdom legislation before it gets into the public domain and political positions are fixed. While this provision does not prevent the enactment of legislation that may not be in Cayman's best interests, this amendment significantly reduces the likelihood of such detrimental provisions being imposed upon us.

Secondly, the Governor's power to approve the Standing Orders of our new Parliament has been removed. This amendment stands alongside the legislation enacted in the last meeting of the old Legislative Assembly, to give the Legislature, not the Executive, the control over the administration and staffing and resources of the Parliament. Together these changes mean that our new Parliament itself is a properly autonomous sovereign institution able to determine its affairs, and is answerable to the people it serves, not the Executive.

Thirdly, the new Constitution Order allows the creation of a Police Service Commission to act as an independent voice in the appointment of senior officers in the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. I have re-

peatedly paid tribute to the work the current Commissioner has done to restore confidence in the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service among local communities. By creating an independent voice in senior appointments this change represents a further step in ensuring that the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service continues to be a locally responsive and accountable organisation.

Finally, the change to become a Parliament also means we are able to replace the role of Councillors with that of formally appointed Parliamentary Secretaries. This affords proper recognition to the hard work of those elected Members who work with Ministers to do so much to ensure the effective delivery of Government priorities. I know from the experience of the last seven years how much I, and my elected Cabinet colleagues, have depended upon the support we have had from Councillors. I thank them on behalf of all of my Cabinet colleagues for what they have done and we look forward to working with them, in their new enhanced roles.

With the recent Constitution enhancements, the United Kingdom is acknowledging both the status of our legislative body and the right of Cayman to determine its future by advancing the Constitution. We are rightly celebrating these achievements today. The last 61 years have shown that we cannot assume that our Constitution is fixed and that no further change is necessary. On the contrary, our development as a nation will continue, and further constitutional change will be necessary to keep pace.

I have said before, and I say again this afternoon, that I regard Independence for Cayman to be as inevitable as my own death, but like my own death, I hope it not to be soon. For the immediate future I believe that Cayman's best interests are served by staying as a member of the United Kingdom family. Not just our economic success, but our culture and traditions are bound up in being a part of the United Kingdom family. I will also add that as the United Kingdom prepares to leave the EU, and seek a new place in the world as global Britain, that it too has a renewed appreciation for the value of its Overseas Territories (OTs) as a part of the British family. The renewed appreciation of the OTs must include an appreciation that we, like other nations that form a part of the British family, should be allowed to take greater responsibility for decisions that affect our people. I have noted on several occasions in conversations with United Kingdom Ministers, UK Parliamentarians and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) officials over the years, including at the recent virtual Joint Ministerial Council meeting, that if the United Kingdom indeed wishes to retain her Overseas Territories over the long term, it is important that she continues to loosen the apron strings.

Increasingly, across all of the Overseas Territories, our populations tend to bristle when they perceive the United Kingdom Government is telling us what to do. The idea of a partnership of progress and

prosperity is important, but it also needs to include mutual understanding and respect. If the United Kingdom wishes to avoid driving the [Overseas] Territories to choose independence, particularly before they are ready, then it must allow them greater autonomy over their own destinies. This includes the ability for the territories to make their own mistakes and to learn from them. The United Kingdom must not feel like it is bound to intervene every time it believes that a territory has made, or is making a mistake.

On the other hand, those of us who govern in Overseas Territories must accept that if we expect greater autonomy, then with that comes greater responsibility and the need for the courage to make difficult and at times unpopular decisions. The decisions we make must have the maximum respect for the rule of law.

The constitutional amendments that have been made starting in 2009 have given our Islands a great degree of self-government but as I have said, there is equally no doubt in my mind that further change will be necessary. As His Excellency the Governor knows, I believe that despite the important changes that we are celebrating today, the Constitution still retains some provisions that could most charitably be described as anachronistic. I still believe the retention of section 81, allowing the Governor to legislate directly in areas of the Governor's special responsibilities is one such provision that needs to be abolished. However, the United Kingdom Government has made clear, that as they have had to recently use the provision, that now is not the time to remove it.

I truly hope that a future Cayman Government can persuade the United Kingdom, that despite its misgivings, this section must go. As the United Kingdom and His Excellency the Governor are aware, I still believe fervently that the Cayman Islands Cabinet must come to be chaired by the Premier, who holds the highest elected representative office in the territory. If it were ever in doubt, this most recent Constitution Amendment Order makes it absolutely clear that the Cayman Islands Cabinet has autonomous responsibility for domestic policy. As such, it is a real anomaly, and indeed a contradiction in terms, that the United Kingdom appointed Governor still presides over Cabinet. A Cabinet of which the Governor is not a Member, and in which he or she has no vote. It is said that this provision is important in enabling the Governor to properly discharge his or her role. In arguing otherwise, I should make clear, I have nothing but respect for Governor Roper personally, and for the office he holds. Indeed, I have come to regard him as a good friend and a most excellent Governor. My position on this issue is one of principle. Indeed, Governor Roper is the 4th Governor that has chaired Cabinet since I have been Premier. However, I believe the Governor can and should fulfil his or her responsibility without the need to assume a role which is naturally and logically that of the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, I say that after seven and a half years in that role and fully cognisant that I have but six months to go. This is not a case I am making for myself. My issue, as I have said, is that the Governor chairing Cabinet actively detracts from the position of the Elected Government having primacy over our domestic affairs that the rest of the Constitution now enshrines. I hope that a future Premier will convince the United Kingdom Government to correct the situation and make the necessary change to allow the Premier to chair his or her Cabinet.

No doubt, when that day comes, there will be other adjustments to be made. Ours is a living Constitution; not a dusty parchment to be viewed under glass by children on a school visit to a museum. It will continue to evolve as our nation continues to grow. Neither we nor the United Kingdom should be afraid to make further necessary changes but those are matters for the future.

Today, we are here to celebrate a landmark achievement in our constitutional journey with the designation of our legislature as a full Parliament. Many have been involved in achieving the constitutional improvements that we celebrate today along with the renaming of this building to the House of Parliament. I wish to pay tribute to all Members of this House for their support for the constitutional amendments and in particular those who worked with me and the team, including visiting the United Kingdom and attending the various meeting with the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office to ensure that we achieved these critically important constitutional reforms.

I wish to thank the Member for North Side, Mr. Ezzard Miller, who was then Leader of the Opposition; and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Member for Newlands, Mr. Alva Suckoo who formed the Opposition's part of the delegation.

Special thanks also to my team on the Government side including the Minister of Commerce, Planning and Infrastructure, Minister Joseph Hew; and the Minister of Financial Services and Home Affairs, Minister Tara Rivers; as well as the learned Attorney General, Samuel Bulgin QC; the Cabinet Secretary, Samuel Rose; Chief Officer, Eric Bush; my political advisor and head of Office of the Premier, Mr. Roy Tatum; as well as Mr. Jason Webster from the Cabinet Office; Mr. Charles Parchment from the Cayman Islands London Office; and my personal assistant, Ms. Jana Pouchie-Bush, for the role that they have played in the success of the negotiations.

I especially thank Sir Jeffrey Jowell QC, who has played an instrumental role assisting the Cayman Islands for over two decades on matters of constitutional reform including the 2009 Constitution, and whose advice and assistance during the recent negotiations played a pivotal part in helping to put together the package of reforms that we presented to the United Kingdom Government.

I also thank the *Celebrate Cayman* team of Alfonso Wright, Marzeta Bodden and Kristy Watler; the Honourable Speaker, Madam Clerk and the many others who worked diligently to make today a success.

Finally, I must thank His Excellency the Governor for the good faith and I must say, considerable good humour he has shown throughout the last 18 months or so of negotiations. Thanks are also due to him for the representations he has made on our behalf in Westminster and Whitehall and for the reassurances he has been willing to give to decision makers as they considered the proposed changes. Final agreement on the amended Constitutional Order was achieved in no small part, thanks to the Governor's willingness to support us in the dialogue with London.

Mr. Speaker, before I resume my seat, I wish to be somewhat introspective. I have dedicated a good deal of my elected life over these past 20 years to working to improve our democratic institutions and advancing our Constitution; the bedrock of our democracy. It is some of the work of which I am most proud, not because of any benefit to myself but rather because of the benefit to the Caymanian people and these Islands that I love so much.

To borrow the words of a great American President, Abraham Lincoln, **"I want it said of me by those who knew me best, that I always plucked a thistle and planted a flower where I thought a flower would grow."**

The advancements to our Constitution, starting in 2009 through to today, and the recognition of this institution as the House of Parliament are indeed flowers that I am proud to have helped plant and that I know will bloom and grow for the benefit of our people for many years and many generations to come.

Today is a very special day; we celebrate our past, we take pride in our achievements and we look with renewed confidence and God's continuing guiding hand towards a bright future.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Honourable Members and invited guests, just a few housekeeping matters: guidance for our guests inside the House of Parliament and the Constitution Hall, regarding departure and outdoor ceremony seating. Once the Official Party, which is the Members of Parliament, has left the Chamber, please remain in your current seating area and our ushers will coordinate departure by group from the House and the Constitution Hall to the outdoor ceremony area, where there is reserved managed seating. I trust that you will join us for the event planned for outside.

Before I call on the Premier, I omitted to mention the presence of a very outstanding former civil servant of a Financial Secretary, Mr. George McCarthy, under whom much growth took place, and many good

times I have enjoyed with his camaraderie, his Christian fortitude—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: —and yes, his prayers for us too. He is here with us today.

The Honourable Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the adjournment of this honourable House until 10 a.m. on Monday, 7th December.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m. on Monday, 7th December 2020.

All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

AYES.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it.

This honourable Parliament stands adjourned until Monday morning at 10 a.m.

At 4.55 p.m. the House stood adjourned until 10 a.m. Monday, 7th December, 2020.