

## **Our Imaginings**

*Remarks by Chancellor Sir George Alleyne*

Let me also extend a warm welcome to members of our academic community, members of the Caribbean public, and representatives of learned institutions from various parts of the world. I welcome you to this Special Convocation-this ritual of installation of our eighth Vice-Chancellor - the principal academic and administrative officer of our University.

I believe in public rituals – they help to create and cement emotional bonds between peoples and can foster that unity of focus which is needed for steady pursuit of common goals. For us in The University of the West Indies, this ritual of installation is an occasion for public renewal of the imaginings that stirred and must continue to stir Caribbean people. Rituals such as this are important for the institution itself, providing as they do moments for reflection and reassessment of the responsibilities that come with change in leadership and providing an occasion for celebration of tranquil transition.

There is good reason for us to speak of imaginings in this University. This is a place where the imaginings of generations of our Caribbean people found concrete realization. From its very inception it carried the hopes and aspirations of the multihued people of the Caribbean for a better future through education. I can say without reservation, that in spite of several anxious moments, in spite of the vicissitudes that are a normal part of all human endeavours, much of that better future has come and the sons and daughters of the Pelican have played significant roles. But there is more of that better to be realized and our University must be a lever to move our Caribbean aspirations for that better future ever upward and onward. And here I must pay public tribute to the constant and unswerving commitment of our Caribbean governments to this University in this task. This has been a commitment shown in several ways, not least of which is the confidence they repose in the institution to pursue its pristine purpose and manage its affairs without the hand of political oversight.

Sir Hilary, you have been selected by the Council of The University to be the leader of this current search for new imaginings even as you build on the achievements won by the hard work and dedication of your seven worthy predecessors. But you are too versed in the ways of academia, too steeped in its traditions, too committed to its canons of conduct, too experienced an administrator and have drunk too deeply from the cup of intellectual innovation for me in these few moments to attempt to outline any specific programmatic lines of action for you. But if I wished some bond or surety of your commitment to the traditions young though they may be of this University and its role in Caribbean development, I would be comforted by an affirmation you made a decade and a half ago.

You posited that the strength of commitment to the intellect must be our primary purpose and you continued to affirm that in the future we must keep one eye sharply focused on the intellectual and pedagogical issues related to the objectives of social cohesion and social justice, while fixing the other on operational policies and programs designed directly to enhance economic growth and prosperity. To that we would all say Amen.

You must be acutely aware that all dispersed institutions – nay all institutions tend to a state of entropy and much of the energy and sagacity needed to confront and dissipate the natural fissiparous tendencies of which our forefathers were not unaware, must come from the persons at the head and at the centre. On numerous occasions I have welcomed your public affirmation of the need to maintain and strengthen the regional nature of our university.

You come to this office with the goodwill of millions within and without the Caribbean. They and I have confidence that in you we have the imagination and intelligence, the courage and competence, the integrity and industry and that fierce commitment to excellence that make for the brightest of auguries.

We pray that you will be given the health of body and tenacity of purpose to guide aright the affairs of this University as it continues on its unending quest to find and foster the new generation of Caribbean talents that will continue to nurture our imaginings.

We wish you well!