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December 2, 2021

The Most Hon. Andrew Holness, O.N., P.C., M.P.,
Prime Minister,
Jamaica House

Mr. Mark Golding, M.P.,
Leader of the Opposition,
West King's House Road
Kingston 10

Dear *Prime Minister,*

I write to you jointly as our Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition who have the political authority and the opportunity to capture a truly historic landmark by establishment of Jamaica as a Republic within the Commonwealth and simultaneously repatriate our Constitution during the 60th Anniversary of our Independence in 2022.

For some time before we entered our fortieth year of Independence, our country has been actively engaged in extensive discussions and consultations on moving towards a Republican system. Since then, the Political Parties you both lead have repeatedly accepted the institution of our own indigenous President as Head of State. This has been reflected in the Election Manifestos of both the JLP and PNP since 2002.

Successive Prime Ministers have reiterated that firm intention at their Inaugural Installations and also reaffirmed their policy positions in numerous Throne Speeches from the dawn of this Millennium.

It has been fully accepted by our Parties, that the new Head of State would be ceremonial in function, save for such powers as are expressly granted by the Legislature as has been done for Governors-General since The Most Honourable Sir Florizel Glasspole was entrusted with special duties on the advent of the Electoral Advisory Committee.

Based on the work and reports of previous Commissions and Parliamentary Committees, the single outstanding issue is whether the incumbent should be chosen by a two-third Membership of both Houses sitting separately or jointly. One early Vale Royal meeting between you both could easily settle that. It is for such a purpose the Vale Royal Meetings were conceived and where previous dialogue between The Most Honourable Edward Seaga and myself took place on this and other issues demanding a national consensus.

Satisfying the Constitutional requirements to amend deeply entrenched provisions would need according to Section 49:

A period of three months between the introduction of the Bill and the commencement of the first debate on the whole text of the Bill in the House and a further period of three months between the conclusion of that debate and its passage.

Thereafter according to Section 49(ii), the Bill has to be submitted not less than two months nor more than six months after its passage through both Houses to the electorate.

That means a Referendum. It would be a spectacular contribution to building our parliamentary democracy; permitting both Parties to share a single platform in a Campaign to secure National approval and allow one of our own image to become Head of State. That would inspire the fullest confidence in ourselves.

I well appreciate the range of formidable challenges which our Nation now faces – COVID 19, crime, climate change, corruption et al. I sincerely believe that the solution to these and other problems requires unity of purpose and action, transcending partisan borders. I dare to suggest that a powerful signal of combined will, when Government and Opposition are seen to act together, would be transmitted to our entire population. It would demonstrate our determination to act in concert by making the long overdue Constitutional change as we promote our common

identity and make our National Motto – **“Out of Many, One People”** a more meaningful reality.

As several of our leading Jurists have opined, The Jamaica Constitution should be enacted by a Sovereign Parliament and not remain perched on an anachronistic Order in Council, issued some 59 years ago.

Fully conscious of the tremendous workload of our Legal Draftsmen and the heavy volume of pending legislation, I express every confidence that there are a number of able retired professionals who can be mobilised to volunteer their expertise in the legislative work required to make our 60th Anniversary a truly memorable milestone. There is already some preliminary legal work which was undertaken by a number of eminent Counsel to which I here refer.

It is repulsive to contemplate a Diamond Jubilee where our Constitution rests on an Order in Council dated the 23rd July, 1962 and a Head of State who does not reflect our own image and enables every Jamaican to aspire in reaching the highest position within our native land. The Jamaican Constitution which stipulate that “The Executive Authority of Jamaica is vested in Her Majesty”, was the first to be crafted when the ill-fated Federation collapsed. We cannot allow ourselves to be the last to sever our colonial vestiges. The time is long due to seek yonder horizon during the year of our Diamond Jubilee.

This plea is submitted for your gracious consideration to reflect our oneness and ignite hope for this and succeeding generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. J. Patterson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

P. J. Patterson, O.N.