

Toast by Chief Justice [Ag.] Brian Alleyne, SC
Gala Banquet at Sandals Grande Beach Resort
ECSC 40th Anniversary Celebrations
24th February, 2007

H.E. Dame Pearlette Louisy, Governor General

Rt. Hon. Sir John Compton, Prime Minister and Lady Compton,

Rt. Hon. Sir Vincent Floissac

Dr. Len Ishmael, Director General of the OECS

Fellow members of the Judiciary,

Other distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

First let me thank you all for joining us to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the existence of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court.

This anniversary is worthy of being observed, for a number of reasons. We are not always conscious of the importance of a Court within a society; we do not always remember that a Court is the machinery through which civilized relationships between person and person; citizen and state are enabled and enforced: it is on the assurance that business norms of civilization replace the law of the jungle. It is on the assurance that business relationships will be governed and regulated according to a recognized and predictable regime that commerce and investment can thrive. It is what ensures that self-help retribution – ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’ is replaced by a just system for regulating a civilized society where offences against rights are not punished by disproportionate, inhuman and unjust retribution against the offender.

What gives this occasion added significance is the unique character of our Court. We are one of a kind. Nowhere else can we find a single Court exercising general jurisdiction over several separate States and Territories according to their several domestic legal regimes, without another model to which we can refer for precedents and guidance, and doing so successfully over a period of forty years. I shall address this at greater length next Tuesday.

We have been able to build and maintain this honourable record thanks to the wisdom, the integrity, and the vision of our political and judicial leaders over this period. Wise, independent, visionary leaders such as Sir Allen Lewis, our first Chief Justice; such as Sir Vincent Floissac who has graced us with his presence here tonight, who guided the Court through the first half of the last decade of the last century, a time of tremendous growth in the workload of the Court, and who so graciously proposed the toast this evening, and offered such profound words of wisdom and guidance; such as Sir Dennis Byron, the reforming Chief Justice who laid the foundation for a new judicial structure able to successfully tackle the issues that confront the Court in this first decade of the 21st century; and such as the Rt. Hon. Sir John Compton and his colleague Prime Ministers and Premiers who had the foresight and the vision to establish the OECS and the Authority of the Heads of Government, thus creating an institution through which the leadership of the Court and the leadership of the countries which we serve can interface in a proper and orderly relationship for the conduct of the judicial functions of the several States which we serve in our respective roles as leaders of Governments and leaders of the Court. I also want to record my appreciation to the former Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. Kenny Anthony, who consistently and positively supported the work of the Court, and in particular the reform programme in the administration of criminal justice, and

committed the funds and the institutional support that were necessary to see the programme through its early stages.

It is on the vision of our political and judicial leadership, and their commitment to preserving and protecting the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary , the foundation upon which the rule of law depends, that we can look forward to another four decades of peace and growing prosperity in these Eastern Caribbean States.

I have in closing to express my profound appreciation to retired Justice Suzie d'Auvergne for the tremendous effort she has put into organizing this evening's event. Its success is due entirely to her dedication and determination to bring it off; to her ability to gently twist arms until those whom she is imploring can no longer say no. We all know the biblical story of the unjust Judge and the poor widow. In the case of Justice d'Auvergne however, we have a just judge prevailing upon generous givers, and as a result we have *'peace flowing over us like a river, and like a stream in spite the glory of the nations'*. Isaiah 66, 2.

I also want to express special appreciation to Ms. Claudette Valentine, our Librarian and her team who are doing so much to ensure that the observance of the anniversary is meaningful not only for us at the Court, but for the wider society and for posterity.

I thank you all for honouring us with your presence and support tonight, and I urge you to maintain a positive and constructive interest in the affairs of the Court. I thank especially our honored guests, Her Excellency the Governor General, the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister and Lady Compton, and the Rt. Honourable Sir Vincent Floissac. May God bless you all.

