

GRAMMAR SCHOOL AT 100
BY
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PRIME MINISTER OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

On behalf of the Government and People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines I congratulate the St. Vincent Grammar School on its one hundredth anniversary. It is a remarkable achievement, particularly in a former colonial society which has too often shown an insufficient commitment to build quality institutions painstakingly over a prolonged period of time. This centenary of the Grammar School is a standing tribute to the dedicated teachers, students, parents, and the wider community who repeatedly sought to enlarge and enhance the narrow educational space created by colonialism, under some pressure from our national population, to establish the Grammar School.

Colonialism fashioned, conceptually, what it considered to be a school of excellence but failed to provide it with the requisite human and material resources to achieve the highest academic and extra-curricular standards. A comparison with similar schools in our region illustrates this point. It is only since the gradual devolution of political authority to our nation in the 1960s, and particularly after formal national independence in 1979, that more substantial resources have been allocated to the school. Even so, much better could have been done. And much more remains to be done despite the major advances occasioned by the Education Revolution since 2001.

I entered the Grammar School at the start of the school year in January 1959 and remained there until my GCE Advanced Levels in May-June

1965. I was the recipient of a sound, basic secondary education but within a culture of a pervasive colonial authoritarianism. I made lifelong friends among students and teachers. I have very fond memories of the idiosyncratic Headmaster, Ulric G. Crick, and teachers such as Leroy Mulraine, C.V.D. Hadley, Monica Dacon, C.I. Martin, and Norma Keizer who taught me history in the sixth form, from the Girls High School. And, of course, there were the outstandingly dedicated caretaker, Miss Emily, and the Groundsman, Mr. Doyle. They, and others, helped to mould me. I am truly grateful.

I am satisfied that despite the many achievements by our school and its students over the years, the teachers and students of today are of a higher academic quality than hitherto. There are, too, better physical facilities. The excellent examination results of recent years, in part, attest to this. However, in the contemporary Grammar School an incipient slide in discipline among a small though growing number of students needs to be arrested before it is too late. The Grammar School, too, has allowed its former emphasis on sports and its dominance in the Cadet Corps to wane unjustifiably. Correctives in these, and other similar extra-curricular areas, are required to be urgently made.

Further, a comprehensive redevelopment plan for the Grammar School and the adjoining Girls High School is to be unveiled next year for a phased implementation. "Ad hoc" improvements are no longer sufficient. This noble centenary of our school is an appropriate historical juncture for a further upliftment in the physical facilities of this grand institution.

Long live our Alma Mater! Per Aspera ad Astra! Long live our Caribbean civilisation and its Vincentian component!