November 5, 2021

**Demanding Answers, Demanding Transparency**

With reference to the sitting of the House of Representatives on Tuesday November 2, 2021, and specifically relating to the position taken regarding the questions posed about the Airport Authority of Jamaica’s investments, Minister Montague’s position & Speaker Dalrymple’s ruling together:

1) Impose secrecy in defiance of Jamaica’s Constitution which obliges Parliament to hold Ministers to account for how taxpayers’ money is spent;
2) Violates the 2002 Code of Conduct for Minister’s which requires Ministers to be open with Parliament and the public ‘except where providing information would not be in the public interest’;
3) Breaches the ‘gag clause’ of the Integrity Commission Act;
4) Breaches the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives which provide no justification whatsoever for refusal to answer the questions asked. Indeed, as recently as June-July 2018 Parliament’s Public Administration and Appropriations Committee probed matters relating to Petrojam (see PBCJ’s YouTube Channel July 4, 2018) following the public raid (see Gleaner, June 25, 2018) on that entity by officers of MOCA and the Integrity Commission, clearly indicating that an investigation of Petrojam was underway;
5) Defies PM Holness’ charge to newly sworn-in Ministers on September 7, 2020 ‘to prevent ... actions which weaken public trust and damage the integrity of the Government’.

The public must insist that this ruling be immediately reversed and that Minister Montague promptly answer the questions relating to the AAJ s investment of half billion dollars of public funds, in breach of regulations as acknowledged by Finance Minister Clarke.

Were the Speaker’s ruling and Minister Montague’s defiance to stand, a most dangerous precedent – further undermining good governance – would be set. Such would facilitate this and any future Government reversing democratic principles, practiced under successive PNP & JLP administrations, whereby Parliament holds Ministers to account and our people are able to find out how their money is being spent or mis-spent.

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