

**ADDRESS BY:
HON. ROOSEVELT SKERRIT
PRIME MINISTER OF DOMINICA**

**AT SWEARING -IN CEREMONY OF
GOVERNMENT MINISTERS**

May 12, 2005

**State House Grounds
Victoria Street
Roseau**

5:00 pm

God is good...all the time ...and all the time...God is good!

SALUTATIONS....

I appreciate, very much, your attendance and enthusiastic participation in this ceremony.

Many of you have traveled from the far corners of Dominica, at personal expense, to register your support and best wishes for the work of this new administration.

Your attendance, in such large numbers, is a source of great inspiration and encouragement, because I am intent on leading a people-centred Government in this new term of office.

I therefore draw great comfort from the fact that this Government is formed by a party that received 52 per cent of votes cast in the recent election. One notable observation is that this is the first time in 30 years that the Dominica

Labour Party has secured the popular vote and is today the natural party of choice in Dominica.

It is therefore fitting and appropriate for ministers of this particular Government to be sworn into office in the presence and full view of so many hundreds of Dominicans, from varying walks of life.

My goal over the next five years is to preside over a people-influenced and people-propelled Government. The make-up of this Government demonstrates our commitment to the politics of inclusion, where we have embraced ideas and philosophies other than those enshrined in the covenants of the Dominica Labour Party.

Fellow citizens, Roosevelt Skerrit is no Albert Einstein. I do not pretend to have all the answers to all of Dominica's problems. No elected member of this Government subscribes to the motto that collectively we have a monopoly on ideas. We are young, for the most part, and have new and creative ideas. We are willing to work and eager to learn.

But the task that befalls us as a nation demands that we involve as many Dominicans as possible in the pursuit of social and economic progress. The success of the stabilization and economic recovery programme is a lasting tribute to the competence and ingenuity of economists and others in the Ministry of Finance and across the various economic and productive sectors of Dominica. A team of Dominican thinkers was at the helm of the stabilization programme...and it worked!

Our country can grow and surmount its challenges if we but call upon those in our community who, by their record of service and academic achievement, can contribute and are willing to contribute to the development of their country.

There are many such Dominicans who have signaled their willingness to be a part of this effort. In the coming weeks, several will be appointed to statutory boards, others to advisory panels and the like.

I am satisfied that this is the best and perhaps only way for Dominica to succeed in an increasingly hostile and competitive global environment. As a small, developing nation, we cannot continue to function at cross purposes.

We must contain and eventually stamp out all-year partisan and polarized approaches to national development. I want competent, responsible and committed Dominicans to help us build Dominica. There is room in this Government for persons who love Dominica and who want to help take this country forward.

It is against that backdrop that I warmly welcome Senator-elect Yvor Nassief into the Government. I wish to place on record, my appreciation for the selfless commitment of Mr. Nassief.

At great personal and professional sacrifice, Mr. Nassief has accepted my invitation to serve in the Cabinet of Dominica as Minister of Tourism, Industry and Private Sector Relations.

Mr. Nassief brings to the Cabinet, a wealth of experience as an administrator, entrepreneur and social commentator. He has effectively volunteered his services, as I am pleased to announce that Senator Nassief accepted my invitation to join the Cabinet of Dominica, on two conditions.

Firstly, that his salary as a minister be adjusted to reflect a grand total of EC\$1 a year, for the five years that he is expected to serve. Secondly, Mr. Nassief requested a near four month leave of absence to wind down his private sector business involvement and activity.

Clearly the portfolios of Tourism, Industry and Private Sector Relations are very demanding and will require full time ministerial attention. Mr. Nassief has said he wants to devote his full attention to the development of our tourism sector as well as to bolster relations between government and the private sector.

I have therefore granted Mr. Nassief leave of absence until September 15th 2005, when he will physically take up his appointment. In the interim, Mrs. Loreen Bannis-Roberts, Minister of State in the Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Private Sector Relations will carry out those functions.

I take this opportunity as well to welcome Mr. Charles Savarin back to the Cabinet of Ministers. In his new role Senator the Hon. Savarin will oversee preparation of the Dominican workforce to cope with the challenges that will be posed by the coming on stream of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy, the Free Trade Area of the Americas and other hemispheric and global treaties.

In this new term, labour and labour related issues will receive special attention as this country must put adequate safeguards in place to protect the rights of workers, in an era where globalisation threatens to overpower traditional norms and values.

Issues such as public service reform, modernization of labour laws and promotion and protection of workers rights will feature prominently on the agenda of the minister.

I take this opportunity also to welcome Hon. John Fabien, Hon. Rayburn Blackmoore and Senators Colin McIntyre and Peter St. Jean to the Cabinet of Dominica. These gentlemen have demonstrated a commitment to the cause of nation building. They have stepped forward to serve their country at a very exciting time in our nation's development. I look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to repeat for the benefit of all Dominicans that the general election is over. It serves no useful purpose for us to divide the country further.

I have no intention of stifling or undermining the right or ability of persons to speak and express themselves on topical issues. But, I would urge Dominicans to be aware of the image that we are creating as a nation when weeks, months and years after a general election, we persist with a campaign of tearing down, blackguarding and undermining.

In the final analysis, we all as Dominicans have to live in this country. We all lose if an investor chooses another destination, because of seeming political instability and likely social unrest here in Dominica.

I want to make it clear that the laws of this country will be strengthened and enforced to stamp out lawlessness and irresponsible behavior, calculated to do harm to the image and viability of our country.

I have no difficulty with persons agitating and even demonstrating...but whatever is done must be done within the confines of the law. There must be respect for, as well as an upholding of the laws of this country, and no one, be they industrialist, trade unionist, broadcaster or even Opposition Leader, will be permitted to break the laws of this country with impunity.

I am instructing the Commissioner of Police to extend the full arm of the law to deal with any person who wantonly sets about to destabilize and undermine the economic stability and recovery of Dominica.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the policies and programmes of this new Government were set out in the manifesto of the Dominica Labour Party. This document was carefully researched and produced. We are committed to fulfilling the promises contained therein. Accordingly, I do not propose on this occasion to repeat those programmes, but rather to announce that, as a demonstration of our seriousness, that manifesto will be tabled in Parliament and debated, as the blueprint for all Governmental activity over the course of the next five years.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is a joyous occasion. I believe I have done more than my fair share of talking over the past six weeks. The time for talking is now ended...it is now time for action.

It leaves therefore for me to thank each of you for your prayers, your support, your congratulatory letters, cards and other expressions of goodwill.

Fellow Dominicans, the future of Dominica is in our hands. Let us care for it. Let us nurture it. Let us build and develop Dominica for ourselves, our children and for generations yet unborn.

May God Bless you all.
May God Bless Dominica.
Thank you!