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**His Excellency**  
**The Most Honourable Sir Florizel Glasspole, O.N., C.D., G.C.M.G.**

MR. CHANCELLOR, There are only a few among us chosen to be witnesses to the birth and nurturing of a nation and to be a source and symbol of continuity in the long and awesome process of growth and development of a society that answers to the call of freedom and justice. One such witness, symbol and source of continuity is the magisterial figure of His Excellency, the Most Honourable Sir Florizel Glasspole, O.N., C.D., G.C.M.G., Governor-General of Jamaica, patriot and nation-builder, public servant and humanist.

Born simply as Florizel Augustus Glasspole, the son of Theophilus A (presumably Augustus) Glasspole and his wife Florence (hence Florizel, no doubt), his journey to his present exalted position came *via* an early christian upbringing reinforced by formal education at Central Branch Primary School, Wolmer's Boys' School (which eventually conspired to provide Jamaica with a Governor-General and a Prime Minister at one and the same time), accountancy classes with the late R. A. Parkinson, correspondence courses from the Scottish School of Accountancy and Ruskin College, Oxford — that last locale no doubt designed to tame what had by then grown into a somewhat rebellious spirit manifested in his activities as a leading trade unionist.

By then his career had split itself into Accountancy as his profession and politics his passion. As with many good men in these Caribbean parts, his passion soon superseded his profession. And it was his passion which transformed him into patriot and nation-builder. As a leading personality in the National Reform Association, he was ripe for foundation membership in the People's National Party which spearheaded the self-government movement in Jamaica and inspired the progress to Independence throughout the entire region. As a founding member of the PNP, moving spirit and party stalwart behind National Hero Norman Manley, he was ripe for leadership in the burgeoning trade union movement and later as candidate for the first ever General Elections held under universal adult suffrage. As trade union leader he was General Secretary or President for a multiplicity of unions as was the custom in those early days. His name appeared simultaneously not only as General Secretary of the Jamaica United Clerks Association, the Jamaica Trades Union Congress, the Municipal and Parochial General Workers Union, the Water Commission and Manual Workers Union, but also as

President of the Mental Hospital Workers Union, the General Hospital and Allied Workers Union, and the Machado Employees Union. Such ubiquity, one is reliably informed, had nothing to do with ambitions to being a General; rather it was a tactical manoeuvre intended to serve as a warning to persons in the establishment who might be tempted into thinking that the owner of a name like 'Glasspole' was as fragile as that name sounded.

This would of course have been vain hope as Florizel Glasspole was to evolve into a sturdy campaigner on the hustings. Good looks, the physique and stamina of a prize-fighter, and the unfailing ability to emerge victorious from his various contests in the political arena, earned him the soubriquet of "The Brown Bomber". He bombed (not literally let it be said) he bombed his way into the newly established House of Representatives, never ever losing his seat which he kept safe for his party – thanks to his self-discipline, his sense of organisation, and his capacity to keep in place the excellent grassroots branch structure which he and his colleagues built up as a contribution to the tradition of organised politics in Jamaica. But his real glory and achievement came with the valiant leadership he gave to his small band of colleagues in the Jamaican House of Representatives where outnumbered he kept a disciplined rump of a team in the best traditions of parliamentary debate thus bequeathing to Jamaica the legacy of a working Opposition with the capital 'O' as guarantee for stable political action. Also, he was to emerge as one of the great authorities on parliamentary procedure in the legislative history of modern Jamaica.

That early apprenticeship in the House of Representatives, albeit in the wilderness of Opposition, prepared him later to be both Leader of the House and Minister of Labour and Minister of Education in the two PNP Administrations that were in place between 1955 and 1973. As such he was present at the birth of the process of modernisation of the Jamaican polity, the establishment of institutions of growth in the building of a new nation, the expansion of opportunities for the mass of the Jamaican people and the realisation of the dream of men and women of his generation to see Jamaicans become masters in their own house and creators of their destiny.

Small wonder that His Excellency even in his present exalted and threateningly isolated position has remained the fighting, dynamic and, may one say, controversial figure that he has been throughout a challenging colourful and multi-faceted career. He could easily have confined himself to a life of semi-retirement in the beautiful surroundings of King's House, emerging at rare intervals to make safe and unchallengeable speeches. But this is not Sir Florizel's style and by his willingness and ability to articulate the problems facing Jamaica in these critical years, he has maintained the post of Governor-General as one to which Jamaicans can look with pride and respect and from which they can expect guidance by precept and example. The honours bestowed on him by his own nation, by the Queen of Jamaica, and by the Government and people of Venezuela all represent national and international recognition for a valiant life of service rooted in dedication, commitment, devotion to duty and love of mankind.

And so, Mr. Chancellor, I invite you by the authority vested in you by Council and Senate, to admit The Most Honourable, Sir Florizel Augustus Glasspole, O.N., C.D., G.C.M.G., Patriot and Nation-builder, public servant and humanist into the fellowship of this University with the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*.