

# BLN Golding, Bruce

Bruce Golding was born on 5th December 1947, the son of Tacius Golding and Enid Golding (nee Bent), both teachers. He was the third of four children, the second (the only girl) died shortly after birth. He was actually born in Clarendon at the home of his godmother, Mrs. Winnifred Stewart (who was the mother of Mrs. Percival Broderick) where his mother was staying in order to be close to her doctor. However, a few days after he was born he was taken to the family home at Ginger Ridge, St Catherine where his birth was officially registered.

In 1949 when he was only 2 years old his family moved to St. Faiths district near Browns Hall, St Catherine where he spent the next 5 years. At the age of 5 although still 2 years away from enrollment age, he started attending the Watermount Elementary School, the headmaster of which was the late early childhood education pioneer, Dr. D.R.B. Grant. In January 1954, he was sent to live for 6 months with his aunt at Skibo in Portland and attended the Skibo Elementary School where she was a teacher and her husband was the Headmaster. He returned to St Faiths in June 1954 and was enrolled at the Macca Tree Elementary School to which his father had been posted as Headmaster in 1923 immediately after graduating from Mico College. He was there for only 6 months as in January 1955 his mother accepted a teaching post at Alpha Academy in Kingston necessitating her along with the three children to relocate to Kingston. After arriving in Kingston, Golding was enrolled at the Alpha Primary School on South Camp Road. In his third year there he sat the Common Entrance examination in 1957 and although his grade was above the qualifying mark he was denied a free place on the grounds that he was not yet 10 years old and could therefore afford to wait another year. He refused to accept this and without the knowledge of his parents he went to St George's College armed with his Common Entrance scores and was in the process of explaining his plight to the Headmaster's secretary when the Headmaster himself, Fr. Edward Donahue, entered the office and overheard the conversation. He took Golding into his office and after listening to his story agreed to accept him as a first form student subject to his parents' willingness to pay tuition fees since he did not have a free place award from the Ministry of Education.

Golding spent 5 years at St George's College, successfully sitting the Senior Cambridge examinations in 1962 before he had reached the age of 15. He received a Grade II certificate with distinctions in Maths & English.

In 1963 he transferred to Jamaica College to pursue A Level studies. He successfully sat the A level examinations in 1966 in Economics, History and Religious Knowledge. From that early stage he demonstrated strong leadership qualities and after attending Jamaica College for only 1 ½ years he was appointed a school prefect (serving along with Dr. Peter Phillips). The following year he was appointed Headboy.

Golding entered the UWI in 1966 and graduated in 1969 with a BSc degree in Economics (2nd class Honours) majoring in Public Administration.

As a child Golding grew up in a political environment. He was only 2 years old (1949) when his father was first elected as a Member of the House of Representatives for West St Catherine, a seat that he retained for 22 years until his retirement in 1972. He was the first Speaker of the House in Independent Jamaica and also served as Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Housing.

From a very early age, Golding developed a keen interest in politics. He was very close to his father and started traveling with him to political meetings during the 1961 referendum campaign when he was just 12 years old. By the general elections of 1962, he had taken on responsibility for setting up and operating the public address system at public meetings. While a student at St George's College he would often go down to Parliament after school to listen to parliamentary debates.

Golding was pursuing his studies at the UWI when the 1967 elections were announced. The government had made substantial changes to the boundaries of his father's constituency removing several of his strongholds to create a new constituency. While at the University, Golding started getting reports that his father was likely to lose his seat. He suspended his studies in order to take charge of his father's campaign and this proved to be a critical factor in enabling the JLP to win that seat by 878 votes - a far cry from his father's usual majority of over 3,000 but a decisive victory given the boundary changes that had taken place.

Golding was by now firmly committed to political service. In 1968 he was elected Vice Chairman of the JLP Constituency Executive for West St Catherine. Edward Seaga, then Minister of Finance and Planning, recognized his ability and appointed him as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Lotteries Commission while he was still a university student.

### From university to Parliament.....

In 1969 less than three weeks after completing his final exams at the UWI, Golding was selected as the candidate for West St Catherine at a special conference of the JLP in that constituency. He was then only 21 years old. He went on to win that seat in the 1972 elections by a majority of 893, becoming at 24 the youngest person ever elected to Parliament, **a record that still stands**. He was elected to the Central Executive of the JLP in 1969 and was one of the founders in 1970 of Young Jamaica, the party's youth affiliate.

In 1972 he was appointed a member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Jamaica. In 1974 shortly after Edward Seaga assumed the leadership of the JLP Golding was elected General Secretary. Because of the gerrymandering of constituency boundaries in 1976 and the atrocities carried out during the state of emergency under which the 1976 elections were held, Golding was defeated in West St Catherine. In 1977 he decided to withdraw from representational politics in order to concentrate on his task as General Secretary and was appointed to the Senate. He was a key figure in coordinating the JLP's organization and campaign for the 1980 elections in which the party was returned to power securing 51 seats to 9 for the PNP.

Following the 1980 elections Golding was reappointed to the Senate and at 32 years appointed Minister of Construction in the new JLP government. During his tenure:

- Construction sector, which had declined by 68% under the PNP administration of the 1970s, grew by 43%. 25,000 new housing units were built.
- Promulgation of a National Shelter Sector Strategy which was acclaimed by the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements and used as a model in several developing countries.
- Reform of Rent Restriction laws to encourage new construction while providing protection for tenants.
- Major programme of road improvement and maintenance to restore dilapidated road network including the establishment of the IDB-funded Rural Road Improvement Programme (RRIP) and the HUB Programme to upgrade township roads.
- Enactment of legislation to provide professional registration for architects and engineers.

In the 1983 elections Golding returned to representational politics when he was elected Member of Parliament for what was then South Central St. Catherine (later reconfigured as Central St. Catherine). He was subsequently re-elected in 1989 and 1993 increasing his majority on each occasion. He acted as Prime Minister on a number of occasions when the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister were away from the island. In 1984 Golding was elected Chairman of the JLP succeeding the late Dr. Ronald Irvine.

Following the JLP defeat in 1989 he was named Shadow Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. His leadership of the investigations into the furniture scandal, distribution of zinc to hurricane victims and irregularities in the sale of government lands made a strong impression on the public.

In the early 1990s, after considerable reflection and analysis, Golding felt the need for reform of Jamaica's political system. He was concerned that the history of political tribalism had polarized the society and had prevented the people from uniting behind common goals. He embarked on a crusade both within the JLP and publicly for fundamental constitutional changes and major reform of our political culture and practices. Public response was overwhelmingly positive but much less so within the JLP some of whose senior members were reluctant to embrace his ideas for change.

He then announced his intention to form a new political party that would be "new and different, inclusive not exclusionary", committed to fundamental reform of our constitutional arrangements and political system. This gave birth to the National Democratic Movement and Golding was elected its first President.

Although there was strong support for the ideas espoused by the NDM it lacked the organizational strength to translate this into electoral support. In 2001 the NDM again fared badly in a by-election in North East St. Ann. Shortly after, Golding announced his resignation as president of the NDM.

Golding withdrew from political activity and in April 2002 started hosting a daily talk show "Disclosure" on Hot-102, replacing Wilmot Perkins' "Perkins on Line". The show was a significant success and by July of that year the All-Media Survey showed that it was second in ratings only to RJR's Hotline.

Even during his tenure with the NDM, Golding always figured prominently in opinion polls as a possible leader of the JLP and this always gave rise to speculation of his return to that party. This speculation intensified after he was the keynote speaker at a G2K public forum in May 2002 and as guest speaker at fundraising events for JLP MPs Andrew Holness and Pearmel Charles.

In September 2002 shortly after the announcement of new elections and after intensive behind-the-scene negotiations, Golding rejoined the JLP under a Memorandum of Understanding under which the JLP committed itself to:

- Re-examine the issue of separation of powers and to ensure that it is placed before the people in a referendum as an option.
- Develop practical initiatives to eliminate political tribalism and garrison politics.
- Establish a Special Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute corruption among public officials.
- Allocate 2 ½ % of the annual budget to be distributed equally among all constituencies to finance projects and ensure adequate provision of basic amenities.
- Ensure that all oversight committees of Parliament are chaired by a member of the Opposition to facilitate greater transparency and accountability in government operations.
- Make provision for the Leader of the Opposition to make statements in Parliament on the same basis as government Ministers.
- Re-examine the issues of term limits and fixed election dates.

Golding rejoined the JLP merely three weeks before Election Day at which time the JLP had fallen behind the PNP in opinion polls. The fact that the JLP performed substantially better polling 48% to the PNP's 52% and winning 26 seats to the PNP's 34 is widely attributed to the impact of his return to the party.

Following the elections Golding was appointed to the Senate and named Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

### **His return to the JLP's leadership ranks.....**

On his return to the JLP, he was elected unopposed as Chairman of the party. He was also elected unopposed as Leader of the JLP in February 2005.

In April 2005, Mr. Golding was elected Member of Parliament for the constituency of West Kingston.

He became the Leader of the Opposition on April 21, 2005.

### **His family.....**

Golding and his wife Lorna have been married for 32 years and are the parents of one son and two daughters:

Sherene: Graduate of Howard University, Rutgers University and now completing law studies at Georgetown University.

Steven: Graduate of Johns Hopkins University and a Garvey scholar.

Ann-Merita: Currently enrolled at Howard University.

source: [www.jlpteam.com/about/bgolding.html](http://www.jlpteam.com/about/bgolding.html)