

B/N Golding Bruce

Profiles of Cabinet Ministers



Hon. Orette Bruce Golding
Prime Minister of Jamaica

The early years

Bruce Golding was born on 5th December 1947, the son of Tadius Golding and Enid Golding (nee Bent), both teachers. He was the third of four children: The second - the only girl - died shortly after birth. Bruce Golding was born in Clarendon at the home of his godmother, Mrs. Winnifred Stuart (the mother of Mrs. Percival Broderick) where his mother was staying in order to be close to her doctor. 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 two years old his family moved to St. Faiths district near Browns Hall, St. Catherine where he spent the next five years. At the age of five, although still two 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 six 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 at Macca Tree Elementary for only six months as in January 1955 his mother accepted a teaching post at Alpha Academy in Kingston. This necessitated that she and her three children relocate to Kingston.

After arriving in Kingston, Bruce Golding was enrolled at the Alpha Primary School on South Camp Road. In 1957, his third year at that institution, he sat the Common Entrance examination 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. The young Bruce Golding refused to accept this and, unknown to his parents, he went to St. George's College armed with his Common Entrance scores. He 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 the young Golding into his office and after listening to his story agreed to accept him as a first form student subject to the willingness of his parents to pay tuition fees since he did not have a free place award from the Ministry of Education.

Bruce Golding spent five 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 Mathematics & English.

In 1963 Golding transferred to Jamaica College to pursue A Level studies. In 1966 he successfully sat the A Level examinations in Economics, History and Religious Knowledge. From that early



Gallery

stage Bruce Golding demonstrated strong leadership qualities and after attending Jamaica College for only 1 ½ years he was appointed a school prefect (serving along with Peter Phillips, now Dr. Peter Phillips, Vice President of the People's National Party). The following year Golding was appointed Head Boy.

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

Lifelong involvement in politics

As a child Bruce Golding grew up in a political environment. He was only two years old in 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. Tacius Golding 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, Bruce Golding developed a keen interest in politics. He was very close to his father and started travelling with him to political meetings during the 1961 referendum campaign when he was just 12 years old. By the general election 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 to Parliament after school to listen to parliamentary debates.

Golding was pursuing studies at the UWI when the 1967 election was 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 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. This proved to be a critical factor in enabling the JLP to win that seat by 878 votes.

Bruce 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, Bruce 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, Mr. Golding was elected General Secretary of the party. Mr. Golding was defeated in West St. Catherine in the 1976 general election, which was held during a State of Emergency. In 1977 he decided to withdraw from representational politics in order to concentrate on his task as General Secretary of the JLP and was appointed to the Senate. He was a key figure in coordinating the JLP's organization and campaign for the 1980 election in which the party was returned to power securing 51 seats to 9 for the PNP.

Cabinet years

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

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

In the 1983 general election Mr. Golding returned to representational politics and was elected Member of Parliament for what was then South Central St. Catherine (later reconfigured as Central St. Catherine). He was 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 Mr. Golding was elected Chairman of the JLP succeeding the late Dr. Ronald Irvine.

Following the JLP's defeat in 1989 Bruce Golding 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.

Crusade for political reform

In the early 1990s, after considerable reflection and analysis, Mr. Golding articulated 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 Jamaica's political culture and practices. Public response was positive but within the JLP there was some reluctance 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" and committed to fundamental reform of our constitutional arrangements and political system. This gave birth to the National Democratic Movement and Mr. Golding was elected its first President.

Although there was strong support for the ideas espoused by the NDM, the party lacked the organizational strength to translate this goodwill into electoral support. The party contested the 1997 general election but failed to win any seats. In 2001 the NDM again fared badly in a by-election in North East St. Ann. Shortly after, Mr. Golding announced his resignation as president of the NDM.

Mr. Golding withdrew from political activity and in April 2002 started hosting a daily radio talk show "Disclosure" on Hot102 FM, 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.

Return to the JLP

In September 2002, shortly after the announcement of a new general election and after intensive negotiations, Mr. Golding rejoined the JLP under a Memorandum of Understanding under which the JLP committed itself to:

- Re-examining the issue of separation of powers and to ensuring that it is placed before the people in a referendum as an option;
- Developing practical initiatives to eliminate political tribalism and garrison politics;
- Establishing a Special Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute corruption among public officials;
- Allocating 2 ½ % of the annual budget to be distributed equally among all constituencies to finance projects and ensure adequate provision of basic amenities;
- Ensuring that all oversight committees of Parliament are chaired by a member of the Opposition to facilitate greater transparency and accountability in government operations;
- Making provision for the Leader of the Opposition to

make statements in Parliament on the same basis as government Ministers;

- Re-examining the issues of term limits and fixed election dates.

Mr. Golding rejoined the JLP 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% of the votes 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 election Mr. Golding was appointed to the Senate and named Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade.

Return to leadership

On his return to the JLP, Bruce Golding was elected unopposed as Chairman of the party. He was 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.

The Jamaica Labour Party won the general election held on September 3, 2007. Mr. Golding was sworn in as the eighth Prime Minister of Jamaica on Tuesday, September 11, 2007.

Family

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

- Steven - a graduate of Johns Hopkins University and a Garvey scholar;
- Sherene - a graduate of Howard University, Rutgers University and Georgetown University Law School;
- Ann-Merita - a graduate of Howard University.