

**A COUNTRY PAPER BY MR. JUSTICE MELVILLE BAIRD
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Since the fourth meeting of the Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions and Anti-Corruption Bodies (CCAICACB) in June 2018, the Integrity Commission of Trinidad and Tobago has been relentlessly and with unflinching purpose pressing forward in its drive to “canonise integrity and demonise corruption”¹.

In this regard it reinforced its emphasis on inspiring and educating the young people of the country vis-a-vis integrity and anti -corruption by hosting a very successful poster design competition on the theme, ‘*Integrity and Ethics*’. This competition which was open to secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago was based on the visual, performing and language arts curricula and engaged students who worked under a teacher’s supervision, to depict concepts on the theme of integrity and ethics in creative pictorials; each artistic concept was accompanied by a rationale. In July 2018 the Commission held an award ceremony for the students who had participated in the competition. In his address the Chairman recognised and congratulated the winners, and went on to comment that the comprehension of Integrity that was reflected in the expressive designs of all the competitors dictated that all the competitors were winners.

The Commission has made the Poster Design Competition an annual event and so in May 2019 it held another competition and the theme for that competition was: “Integrity –it begins with me”. Following in the mould of the 2018 competition the 2019 competition was an outstanding success. In his address to the students the Chairman stated inter alia:

¹ Chairman’s remarks 2019, Report to Parliament

“your minds must be so full of integrity and honesty there would be no room for dishonesty and corruption; integrity must be part of you; it must be in your blood. You must be integrity and integrity must be you, so you would do the right thing always and without effort. In this way integrity would not only begin with you, it would continue with you.”

Still with the emphasis on youth, on September 28 2018, the Commission partnered with the Trinidad and Tobago Transparency Institute (TTTI) and the National Parent Teacher Association (NPTA) in launching Integrity Clubs as a pilot project in secondary schools. In his address at the launch ceremony the Chairman stated : “ The philosophy of our School Integrity Clubs, blending and intermingling with that of other Schools Integrity Clubs in other countries of the world can be compendiously described as the counteraction and eventual eradication of indiscipline, anti-social and cognate behaviour, and violence existing in our schools on the one hand, and on the other, the promotion of exalted ideals of respect , fairness, compassion, integrity, honesty, patriotism and responsibility...”

The pilot project terminated in April 2019. The various reports are now being considered and final word on the success or otherwise of the project should be received in the not too distant future. If the project proves to be successful, then we will introduce Integrity Clubs in all secondary schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

As we continue in our programme of motivating and enlightening the young people of Trinidad and Tobago in all things integrity we have arrangements well in train for the Speech Band Competition.

In Tobago, the tradition of the speech band can be traced back to the early 1800’s and the speech bands are now the custodians of the oral tradition of Tobago. Through this medium articulation is given to issues of social importance invariably with a humour or satirical twist.

This competition is open to all schools throughout Trinidad and Tobago: secondary schools with students between the ages of 11 and 18, primary schools with students between the ages of 5 and 11 and the really young ones of the early childhood care and education between the ages of 3 and 5. We are targeting them from the moment they leave the cradle.

The theme of the competition is: *“Capture a mind; change a life; impact a community”*

The Commission resubmitted amendments to the Integrity in Public Life Act (hereinafter referred to as “the Act”) along with a policy document to Cabinet. The Commission anxiously awaits the final outcome as these amendments constitute a general overhaul of the Act resulting in the Commission being provided with more and sharper teeth.

In September the Commission obtained ex-parte High Court Orders under Section 11 (7) of the Act against persons in public life who had failed to file their declarations of Income, Assets and Liabilities. In 2019, the Commission made further applications to the High Court under Section 11 (7) of the Act for orders against persons in public life who had failed to file their declarations of Income, Assets, and Liabilities. These applications are now engaging the attention of the High Court.

In 2018 the Commission addressed 40 complaints made under Section 32 (1) of the Act and completed 23.

The Chairman and members of senior staff, on October 8, 2018 participated in a workshop facilitated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) on the theme: *“Design and Implementation of a National and International Anti-Corruption Strategy”* at the Office of the Integrity Commission. The workshop was an unqualified success.

From October 9-10, the Chairman and members of senior staff attended a workshop on the theme; *“Prevention of Corruption in Public Procurement”* which was hosted by UNODC at the Radisson Hotel, Port of Spain. The Chairman presented a paper at that workshop.

On October 9, 2018 the Chairman and members of the senior staff attended the Inaugural Regulator forum hosted by the Caribbean Corporate Governance Institute in partnership with the British High Commission at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Port-of-Spain.

The Commission observed the United Nations Anti-Corruption Day on December 9, 2018. As part of the observance of that day the Chairman addressed a message

to the nation stating amongst other things: “Corruption has insinuated itself with such trenchancy in our society and the process of eradication so glacial, that society stands in great peril of consigning it to the quiet back waters of life, becoming calloused to it and accepting it with unresisting acquiescence as an inevitable incident of our nation’s evolution. Such a mind-set could predicate the existence of a pernicious grip hold of the national conscience by this scourge. This cannot be our legacy to posterity.”

On November 30, 2018 the Chairman and senior members of staff met with second year students of the Hugh Wooding Law School. The Chairman addressed the students and his address was followed by a question and answer session. In March 2019 the Chairman and senior members of staff met with another set of second year students of the Hugh Wooding Law School. The Chairman addressed the students and his address was also followed by a question and answer session.

On March 25, 2019, the Chairman, other members of the Commission and members of staff attended a conference at the Hilton Hotel hosted by the Trinidad Chapter of Transparency International; the theme of the conference was, “*Crackdown on Corruption-Facing the Reality*”. The Chairman presented a paper at the conference in which he proposed a concrete step in cracking down on corruption viz the setting up of a website similar to Ipaidabribe.com in India where citizens could combat street level corruption by sharing their experiences with corruption easily, quickly and anonymously. Further, members of the public who would have managed to avoid paying bribes would be encouraged to share the ways in which they succeeded in neutralizing corruption in their daily living. The website would focus on crowd sourced reports of retail corruption and bribery; these reports would then become the bedrock of a body of valuable data about bribery and corruption. The Chairman ended his presentation with these words: “I put forward this idea and set it afloat as an exploratory step in the crackdown of corruption. It is my sincere hope that it would attract favourable attention and that whatever configuration it eventually assumes, it would go on to serve as a template for the ultimate obliteration of corruption in our society.”

In the year ahead, challenges in various forms would present themselves as we endeavour to discharge our mandate. We shall confront them and deal with them, all in the name of Integrity.

