



Association of Caribbean Mediaworkers

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ADDRESS BY ACM PRESIDENT, DALE ENOCH, TO MWAG MEDIA WEEK FUNCTION – JUNE 19, 2006

I am delighted to be here, and invited to say a few words on behalf of the organization which bodies like MWAG have helped form and keep alive, the Association of Caribbean Media Workers.

The ACM. is so pleased with the strides being made by the Media Workers Association of Grenada. This Media Week is yet another initiative which shows that the executive and membership understand the need for sometimes simple, but effective ways of building capacity and motivation.

I have followed with interest the steps taken by the executive to keep members interested, motivated and together. The history of MWAG has been a colourful one, and like so many other media associations in the region, this is one constantly challenged.

Your president's statement to you on the start of the media week tells of some of those challenges. The way these challenges are handled will show the mettle of MWAG and its membership. So far, not so bad at all. In the face of recent turmoil, natural and otherwise, this organization has remained a force. You have taken up the damaged baggage and walked on. You have made yourself into something formidable, all in the interest of the profession and its professionals. That is mettle.

There are challenges plaguing so many of our media associations. Some of these bodies are far older than MWAG. Limited resources, lack of training opportunities, a de-motivated membership, political pressure are all listed among the situations which interfere with the growth and development of media associations such as yours.

In my own country, the Media Association, which I led for several years is also going through some trying times. Efforts to hold an A.G.M. were stalled last weekend, because members just didn't show up.

Internal situations have negatively affected the executive's potency. The membership obviously has not been motivated enough to play the role that is so necessary for the development of any organization. The role I speak about is participation. MATT, which was once a good example of participation, advocacy and vigilance, is in some trouble.

The ACM. recognises the problems and we are ready to provide assistance wherever necessary. Another attempt is to be made to hold that crucial A.G.M. later this month. MATT has been through rough times before and it is hoped that



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these trying couple of years will see a stronger body, similar to the organization which is hosting this week of activities.

I see where your president is claiming, that the authorities here are no longer being overt in their attacks on the media, but are doing it undercover.

That is the worst kind of attack, ladies and gentlemen. Recognising the attacks when they occur is absolutely important. When they come undercover, it is more difficult to do so.

Using some of our own to push agendas is not uncommon and happens everywhere. Poor salaries, low esteem and tainted professional integrity make us good targets.

As an association, you must be ahead of the game.

Early detection of these infringes must be responsibly exposed, if not to the public at least to the membership, so that the war can be fairly fought.

But even with these challenges facing media organizations, focus on developing the professional and the profession but not be forgotten. That ladies and gentlemen must not only be the responsibility of MWAG, but yours as well. Certainly the media body must play a significant role, but you must not sit back and leaving development to any one agency.

Training initiatives are critical in our territories.

People have asked where do I see the need for training, and I say all over. I see that need not just in Grenada, but also in Suriname, Guyana, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago. The media sector has been expanding in all these countries, but standards and quality are not concomitant with that growth. More doesn't necessarily mean better.

Waiting for media owners to provide the necessary training is not always a very good idea. Over the years, our media house owners have not done enough by way of training and development. Therefore we in organizations have had to lead the way. The Media practitioner must also know that developing skills and professionalism are crucial to the outcome of the product. Respect for ourselves and our profession must be encouraged. We must also respect the listener, the reader, the viewer by committing ourselves to bettering the product. And it should be noted that respect for our public can be measured by the work we put out.

We must constantly review our work as media practitioners. When we do that and take corrective action to fix the ills, we make outside mal-attempts more



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difficult. We strengthen the artillery and by extension weaken the challenges posed by others.

The Association of Caribbean Media Workers has since its inception committed itself to training and development. We continue to search and find opportunities which we pass on to our member organizations. These opportunities are in the area of training. We believe that a well equipped and informed practitioner can only be a plus for the individual, the profession and the publics he or she serves.

The ACM. endorses the need for us as professionals to recognise the opportunities and even the challenges which will come to our territories with the CSME. But we need to understand what it is and teach our respective publics. This organization, even before I joined the executive, was very instrumental in the setting up of a system via which free movement of media professionals can take place. We have reached the point where this is a reality. However in order to facilitate it, we as Caribbean nationals must access the Skills Certificates, which in a real sense activate the initiative.

We know there have been problems with gaining such access to certificates. The ACM. is hearing and trying to treat with some of those problems. Nevertheless, we have to make it work for us. Apply for those certificates and let us know when there are problems.

With these few words I leave, ladies and gentlemen. I express my congratulations to the Media Workers Association of Grenada for your vibrancy, your commitment to the profession and your ability to stay on course, even when threats and court matters intervene. The ACM. executive commends your efforts.

We applaud your achievements, we encourage your growth and development, we note your challenges and act when necessary. I thank you for your warm hospitality and from afar, I will monitor the rest of the week.

I thank you.