

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR CHAIRMAN  
ADDRESS AT PRESENTATION CEREMONY, NOVEMBER 2003**

**National Medal for Science and Technology  
Dr. Alfred W. Sangster, Chairman of the Advisory Board**

**Introduction.** Chairman, Minister Phillip Paulwell, Most Hon. P. J. Patterson, Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Commission on Science and Technology, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Distinguished Awardees or their representatives, members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is my signal honour to share with you some aspects of the development process for the award.

November has been designated Science Month, and in this particular November we are celebrating the Tenth Anniversary of the establishment of the National Commission on Science and Technology. In addition, for the first time, we will be presenting the National Medal for Science and Technology. This is a special occasion.

**The Concept of the Medal and the Development Process.** There were quite a number of items which have had to put in place in this pioneering adventure. I will share some these with you.

- **Committee.** The appointment of the Selection Committee, formally called the Selection Board.
- **Announcement.** The award was announced at a press conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> September 2002.
- **Criteria for the award.** The candidate's overall scientific achievements were noted, but what was recognised was a 'body of work', which was particularly significant. Specifically the candidate's work should contribute to:
  - The store of Jamaica's scientific knowledge, its competitiveness, and its Standard of living.
  - The economic, cultural and social development of the country.

The candidate should be a Jamaican and normally only living persons would be honoured. Three letters of reference should accompany the nomination.

- **Number of awards.** As we went along, there were a number of changes made to the earlier proposals. Since this was the first occasion of the awards, the committee proposed two awards for living scientists (instead of the original one) and three posthumous awards (which were never in the original conceptualisation). Cabinet was kept abreast of these developments as we went along so that at the end of the process there were no 'policy surprises'. The rationale for the larger number of awards must be fairly obvious since this is the first time of the awards and there were many choices.
- **Frequency of awards.** The decision that has been recommended is that the next event should be in Science month, November 2005.
- **Applications.** There were seven applications submitted for active scientists. The committee made its own selection of scientists for the posthumous awards. The committee was impressed with the quality of each of the applicants and spent many hours agonizing over the choices to be made. In debating the work of each of the candidates, it was noted that Science and Technology move by a process of ongoing development, building on previous knowledge and work. In addition, it is normal for a scientific team to be involved in the body of work, with the candidate being the lead person in the process.
- **Design of the medal.** An initial consideration was the relationship of this medal to the national Awards Ceremony on National Heroes Day in October. For a number of reasons, we had to steer clear of this type of award. Firstly, the medal must be seen as at a very distinguished level (like a scientific O.J. or O.M.), which are already occupied. The awards procedure therefore demanded a separate event. A proclamation setting out the processes and the guidelines was drafted and issued by the Governor General as Proclamation Number 19/2003 dated 7 November 2003.

We went through many ideas seeking to represent the concept of science and technology in a compact way. In thinking about Jamaica and science, we went through: cane fields, lignum vitae leaves, mechanical gears, the DNA model, ackee (without the saltfish), a satellite dish, and more! A basic problem is that the disciplines of science, and its related handmaid technology, are

so diverse that there is no one symbol that can characterise them all. This is quite different from say medicine, which has the well known of a serpent on a pole. We eventually decided on a medal which had the following characteristics:

- On the obverse (front) side; the Jamaican Coat of Arms is centrally placed and surrounded with the words "For Outstanding Achievements in Science and Technology"
- On the reverse side, superimposed on the map of the island of Jamaica is a diagram of an extended molecular system (which embraces Chemistry, Modern Biology, Agriculture and Medicine) and an integrated circuit (embracing Physics, Engineering and Technology). A circle of lignum vitae leaves with the awardees name in the centre completes the design.

The gold medals are somewhat larger than the normal medal and are beautifully made. (See Poster).

- **Citations, Certificates.** The citations were prepared by a group of the Board who gave many hours reviewing an initial draft prepared for the NCST Secretariat. The framed citation will be presented to the awardee, as well as a certificate signed by the Prime Minister. The names of the awardees will now have a permanent place in Jamaica's history. A report is being prepared to document the process.
- **The Event.** So Prime Minister, and ladies and gentlemen, we have come to today. This is a special day in the life and work of the nation for we will be recognizing five scientists, who have in their own way, either at the present time or in the past, played an immense role in the development of the country. It appropriate that this chapter of our history be not only recorded but also recognised and rewarded. It is a way that Jamaica can recognise the worth and impact of Science and Technology to the country's development.

**In Conclusion, some acknowledgments.** It is necessary to make a number of acknowledgements of individuals or organisations who have made significant contributions of time and resources to make this event possible.

- The original members of the Selection Board were. Dr. Audia Barnett, Executive Director, Scientific Research Council; Mr.

Wesley Barrett, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Youth and Culture; Dr. Rae Davis, President, University of Technology; Dr. Trion Clarke, representing the Scientific Community; Mr. Anthony Freckleton representing the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica; Mr. Thomas Mayne representing the Jamaica Agricultural Society; Miss Bevon Morrison, representing the Jamaica Society of Scientists and Technologists; Miss Deirdre Salmon representing the Ministry of Commerce, Science and Technology; Mr. Mohammad Shams representing the Jamaica Institute of Engineers; Professor Gordon Shirley, representing the University of the West Indies and Dr. Alfred Sangster representing the National Commission on Science and Technology.

- The NCST Secretariat, headed by Mrs. Merlene Bardowell and supported by Dr. Marcia Blair, who have coordinated this event.
- The Chairman of the Board of the National Foundation for Development of the NCST, Mr. Robert Levy and his colleagues on that Board who were able to mobilize significant private sector support for this event.
- The Ministry of Commerce, Science and Technology for their support.
- Miss Sadie Ann Moore, Secretary General of the Orders of the Societies of Honour in the Office of the Prime Minister, for her advice on issues of protocol and procedure and the processing of the medals.
- **Finally Prime Minister,** we must commend you for your unfailing support of this venture and for your involvement as Chairman of the National Commission of Science and Technology (NCST) from its inception. I now ask Mrs. Majorie Humpries, Science Educator and a Past President of the Jamaica Society for Scientists and Technologists (the JSST), to make a presentation to you of a memento to recognise your outstanding contribution to the development of NCST over these ten years and for the introduction of the programme for the award of the National Medal for Science and Technology.

Thank you