

*Television address by United Bermuda Party Leader,
The Hon. Michael Dunkley, JP, MP*

Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

I speak to you tonight with the deepest concern for the future of our island.

Like many of you, I was disturbed by the revelations in last week's Mid Ocean News about the Bermuda Housing Corporation scandal.

They call into question the very character of our country: Our reputation for sound and principled governance and our long history as a place of integrity, fair play and trust.

While we cannot condone the leak of sensitive Police information and fully support any proper steps taken by Police to determine the source, the search for whoever leaked these documents must not divert attention from a far more disturbing picture they reveal.

The people of Bermuda have a right to know the full extent that senior members of the current leadership played in this scandal and whether the BHC investigation was properly handled.

Because when those who hold the public trust abuse that power for private gain, the effects are too far-reaching and too serious for any of us to ignore.

Taken as a whole, the questions surrounding the BHC scandal and criminal investigation raise concerns about the effectiveness of our

criminal justice system and the underpinnings of democracy in Bermuda.

But more importantly, how we deal with this situation in the weeks ahead will say much about us as a country, our political leadership, our public standards and the example we set for our children.

As the Loyal Opposition, the United Bermuda Party is calling for the establishment a Royal Commission to investigate and report on the handling of the BHC criminal investigation and to recommend changes to our criminal justice system that can best ensure that public officials will be held to the highest standards of accountability.

In making that call, we urge the Premier himself to use the influence of his office to make it happen.

A Royal Commission can provide a formal, independent, open and comprehensive inquiry to produce recommendations to get us back on the right track as a country.

It is our hope that as part of its investigation, a Royal Commission would also provide answers to questions such as:

- Why were certain ministers protected from police questioning?
- Why was there such a difference of opinion between the police and the Director of Public Prosecutions about whether charges could be brought against these ministers?
- Was there any outside interference in either the police investigation or the DPP's decision not to prosecute?
- What changes should be made to Bermuda's criminal code to ensure that we hold senior government officials accountable in the future?

In the meantime, we want to strongly register our opposition to Friday's statement by the Premier.

We do not believe that shifting this matter into a constitutional dispute between the Premier and the Governor is in the best interests of the public.

It is simply the wrong way to go and a self-serving distraction from the issues that can make a difference in people's lives.

Issues such as reducing the growing crime rate, improving education, providing affordable housing and ensuring a better quality of life for our seniors.

Bermuda has always enjoyed a reputation for responsible government. It is a reputation that was built by generations of Bermudians. We are all proud of it.

Right now, we need to take steps to protect it.

We believe that a Royal Commission is the best way to do that and to ensure that your government is working for you.

Thank you and good night.

June 4, 2007