

Where are we in Crime Reduction? The only thing on which we all, government and citizenry, agree is that there needs to be real reduction, not the rhetoric to which we have been subject in recent times.

Totally disregarding the existence of white collar crime, the Hon Minister diagnosed the recent upsurge in crime as being created “by those who have made deliberate life decisions to reject society’s offerings and instead fall into a life of crime” and his promise is that “government will respond firmly with the emphasis on operational and preventive interventions.”

I see it as a problem of the entitled, who feel disrespected, retaliating by disregarding the mores of the disrespectful And so I ask “to what is government responding? Is to the core problem or to its manifestation?” After all, crime is a symptom of a dysfunctional and ineffective implementation of policy.

The strategy, according to the statement, is to continue project HOPE – Harmony, Opportunity, Peace and Enforcement – more of same. I prefer the HOPE offered by the late Pat Bishop – Help Our People Excel.

That project, instead of requiring 6000 police and SRPs would provide:

- 500 additional specialist reading teachers throughout the school system to ensure that all of our children are literate
- 300 more social workers with a support system for these officers to ensure that they can access all areas and identify persons who are in need of the various social safety net programmes
- 500 more professional personnel in appropriate disciplines to assess and treat mental, emotional and psychological disorders in our children. The Minister of Education has recently declared that up to 30% of our school population have special needs. We must also be aware that many of our children inhabit environments where violence – domestic and communal – is endemic. Many routinely have their nights disturbed by gunfire.

Yes, it is a fact that a plethora of educational and training opportunities exist but we need to ensure that our children and youth are able to benefit from those opportunities that are provided for their development.

Where are the programmes and support services for disruptive children and youth? Where is the parental support for parents with difficult children who they eventually have deemed “out of control” by the court and institutionalised, to save them from the greater disaster of incarceration after they have committed a crime?

Where is the incentive to stay in school when relatives and siblings who have done so and have achieved CXC and CAPE passes and even university degrees cannot

get appropriate employment once they use their home addresses on their job applications?

I note that “community outreach” will continue but will it include:

- Refurbishing the Nelson/Duncan Street Plannings to the same standard as the unit that will be earmarked for occupation as a police post?
- Providing the Beetham Community Centre?

I noted with great interest and some distress that “building capacity within law enforcement” is treated separate and apart from the establishment of the National Security Training Agency. It suggests that the powers that be do not yet recognise that C21 policing requires new recruitment and training criteria; that our officers need to be given specialised training in the different specific areas of law enforcement; that the time has come to partner with a world class establishment specialising in law enforcement and security training.

I applaud the expansion of the Citizen Security Programme and hope that adequate resources are provided for this programme, as it is by far one of the most successful crime prevention initiatives and should as a priority be operating throughout the country.

I too have not encountered either the highway patrol or for that matter the traffic wardens. So, but for the proposed acquisition of “drones” we have heard it all before and it has either not materialised or not produced the promised results. And that for good reason!

This problem of crime reduction is bigger than the Ministry of National Security, the Police Service the Justice System and the government and in terms of resources will absorb much more than \$6 Billion. Every ministry, department and government agency has a dynamic role to play but we the entire citizenry have to decide to reclaim our children, our communities and our country.

Each one of us has to step up to the wicket and take on a leadership role, in our homes, our schools, our communities, our work places. The adults in a child’s life are

his/her first role models and we have no right to require of anyone else what we are not willing to develop in ourselves.

EDR and Laventille have produced Medical Specialists, a Chief Justice, a Prime Minister, a Chief of Defence Force. They did not have the option of a \$69 a day job, they had the values inculcated in them by parents, teachers and caring adults; they embraced the available education opportunities and were offered job opportunities commensurate with their qualifications.

Each of us has a role to play and can contribute by performing with integrity. Give to every citizen the respect and courtesy we would like for ourselves and you members of the Chamber, as employers, I urge you to lead by example - take the chance and hire a qualified citizen irrespective of the address on the application.