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Lowell Smith - Editor- in- Chief.

The Editor Speaks

Evidence of the lack of self-discipline within our Jamaican society abounds in most, if not all, forms of activity that we come across.

One has only to think about the conduct of motorists on the roads, of students in the classrooms, of spectators and even players at sports events, and about incidents arising from political partisanship to realize that immediate steps must be taken to bring about more self-discipline in our people. Self-discipline — orderliness, self-control, obedience to laws and regulations, co-operation — is in the best interests of personal and community development and success. Reasonable, thinking people realize this. Self-control and orderliness help us to do the right thing at the right time, and in the right way, preventing, in so far as is possible, any detrimental or otherwise regrettable consequences. Obedience to rules and co-operation are important, especially for better relationships with people (including the police). Self-discipline also involves proper regard for and consideration of others, without which we cannot hope to achieve unity, national or otherwise.

But, what is to be done about the lack of self-discipline? As always, a problem must be tackled at the roots, and in my opinion the roots of those problems are the great neglect of due thought and consideration before actions, and refusal to act thoughtfully and considerately. We have here a problem that is complicated by the differing of natures of people. Yet it is just this differing of natures on which we have to base any attempts at attaining self-discipline. Best results can only be gained by attention to the shortcomings of the individual, since the extent of the problem varies with each person. That is not to say that attempts with groups will not be successful. They will be successful, but never as successful as attempts with individuals.

The home, the church, and the school have traditionally been looked to for solving the problem of lack of self-discipline. However, it seems to me that in this regard great expectation should be of the individuals — ourselves — rather than dependence on institutions. Individuals can be of very greater help to the home, the church and the school in trying to end their own lack of discipline and that of others. In other words, each and every one of us can do something, and we must.

One can begin by developing, first in himself, the habit of thinking more often of what effects a particular course of action will have on himself and on others, whether it is right or wrong to follow that course of action, and what better course there may be. He must then do what is best. Finally, he must try to get others to do the same. By example and by influence, he can persuade other people, especially friends, to take the same steps. Very often, too people need only to be reminded to conduct themselves with more discipline. The individual must give reminders, being careful at the same time not to be too irritating.

In closing, then, I would like to appeal to everyone to take upon himself the responsibility of trying to discipline himself and helping others to discipline themselves. The method I have proposed is not too idealistic. Rather, it is the most fundamental method of attempting to solve the lack of discipline in society, since it takes into consideration the short comings of each person by helping that person himself, and other persons, to overcome those shortcomings. How well it works depends on me and on you. Let us bring about a change.