

REPLYING TO MR IAN PARSARD

I write in response to a letter dated March 9, 2009 written by Mr Ian Parsard and printed in your publication, with regard to my objection to him being appointed a member of the new CTL Board.

He asks how can I "pledge full support to the new Board" while "vociferously opposing his appointment". He assumes that I am either "confused" or that I "will not stand up for the principles that I believe in". Permit me to clear the air and break it down simply for you, Mr Parsard.

Yes, I am totally opposed to you being appointed to the new board Mr Parsard while you, along with other members of the previous board are presumably----(if the instructions of the OCG have been complied with)--- under investigation by entities of the State for alleged acts of irregularity, impropriety and ineptitude. You have been put onto the new CTL board before your good name has been cleared of charges levied against the previous board, your colleagues, and by extension, you, by the Office of the Contractor- General.

The previous board has been accused by the OCG of, among other things: "Evidence of breaches of":

- (1) The Corruption Prevention Act
- (2) The Companies Act
- (3) The Contractor-General Act
- (4) The Public Bodies Management and Accountability Act
- (5) The Financial Administration Act and
- (6) The Government Procedures & Procurement Guidelines.

I have read all 187 pages of the OCG's Report and nowhere in said Report, to the best of my knowledge, were you, Mr. Parsard, exempted from the findings of the OCG. Reference was made to "The Board", of which you were an integral part and active member.

If and when your name is cleared by the investigations to be carried out by:

- (A) The Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP);
- (B) The Corruption Prevention Commission;
- and (C) The Commissioner of Police,

then Yes, I would gladly welcome you onto the new board. But until then sir, like it or not, the fact is that you, along with the members of the previous board, are presumably under investigation, and even though you apparently still think that "the previous board acted in the best interests of CTL" the fact is that a lot of us do not concur with your clearly biased opinion of yourself and that board, and in fact are of the opinion that the best interests of the racing fraternity were far from being well served under your collective leadership.

And as you have been appointed to the new board, I, as a racing enthusiast, have two options: (1) I could decide not to support the new Board because of your inclusion, or (2) I could decide to support the new board in spite of your appointment. I have decided to do the latter, and to support the new Board in spite of your appointment. Do you understand my position now? It seems pretty clear to me.

You speak of my preoccupation with "the rear view mirror", and that we should stop looking back. I cannot judge how good Mr Tony Hart, Mr Raphael Gordon, Mr Chris Armond and the other members of the new board will be as I would need a crystal ball to see into the future and to their future actions. But as I have said before, we wish them well and do not pre-judge them, and have high expectations for the future under their leadership.

But in your case Mr Parsard a "rear view mirror" will have to suffice, as you were a member of the previous board, and so your possible actions on a new board can legitimately be judged by your past actions, or inaction, while you were on the previous board. Actions, by the way, that you still seem to be proud of in spite of the 187 page Report by the Office of the Contractor- General which, shall we say, was not quite complimentary of the actions of the Board on which you sat. A "rear view mirror" therefore is, as you should know, a vital piece of equipment, as without knowing where one is coming from we cannot know where one is going. History has taught us that.

The one thing that I did find interesting after reading Mr Parsard's letter was that he does, in fact, have a voice and is able to speak when the situation suits him. I have written letter upon letter asking for answers from the previous CTL board regarding:

- (1) the treatment of jockeys who sustained injuries;
- (2) the abolition of quinnella betting on races with 8 horses or less;
- (3) the doubling of the minimum wager from \$20 to \$40;
- (4) the disgraceful condition of the racetrack;
- (5) the run-down appearance of the OTBs;
- (6) the lack of sponsorship in racing;
- (7) the proposed plans for 50 acres adjoining the track to be partitioned off and divested;
- (8) the lack of communication and seeming disrespect shown by the previous board to many interested players in the racing industry.

Not once have I ever had the courtesy of an answer to any of my queries from the then board or any one of its members, including Mr Parsard. Obviously my questions regarding the welfare of racing were not important enough to warrant a response, but my questioning his personal appointment to the new board does!

Mr Parsard apparently deems it necessary to remind us of his

humble beginnings on Penwood Road. But of what relevance is this? My family also had humble beginnings, but of what importance is any of this? Why tell us of his humble beginnings now? When he had the opportunity to "touch base" with "the masses" and to speak with them as "one of them", one who came from Penwood Road like many others probably did. Mr Parsard acted as though he was a member of the elite group delivering edicts from the great house on high to the underlings in the racing fraternity, and he seemed to have been very comfortable in that role. No hint then of his humble beginnings on Penwood Road!

Similarly, I cannot see that Mr Parsard's connection to the Jamaica Broilers Group has anything to do with this issue. Why he should raise it seems unclear. Jamaica Broilers is not involved in any way in the matter.

Finally, Mr Parsard ends his letter by saying that I should "learn from (my) mistakes". What, dear sir, were my mistakes that you speak of? May I remind you that that damning OCG Report, were you to take the time to read it, was about you and your colleagues on the previous CTL board. It was not about my "mistakes". This statement by you shows clearly that at least one characteristic of the previous board that you will be carrying onto the new board with full vigour is that of unmitigated arrogance.

Thank God that we live in a country where all are free to express their views, and Mr Parsard is entitled to his, as biased and self-serving as it may be. He merely joins the company of others such as Mr Howard Hamilton who, after returning from a long sea voyage and supposedly reading the OCG's Report, dismissed the report as "Much ado about Nothing". Clearly Mr Hamilton, while sailing up past the coast of Argentina after passing through the treacherous seas of Cape Horn, and with the breeze from the ocean clearly blurring his memory, got his Shakespearean quotes mixed up, and obviously meant to say: "Oh what a tangled web we weave, ..."

Best Regards
Andrew Azar