

# Passing of the Gavel

At its meeting in St. Georges, Grenada, in February 2010, the Caribbean Community Heads of Government agreed to the recommendation of the Regional and Judicial Legal Services Commission (RJLSC) that the Right Honourable Sir Dennis Byron be appointed President of the Caribbean Court of Justice to succeed the Right Honourable Mr Justice Michael de la Bastide TC, who retired on 18 August, 2011. Sir Dennis Byron took the oath of office as President of the CCJ on 1 September 2011 at Government House, Basseterre, St. Kitts and Nevis, before an assembly of Caribbean leaders from every sphere of activity: judicial, political, economic and social.

Born in Basseterre in 1943, Sir Dennis won the Leeward Islands Scholarship in 1960 and went on to read law at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge University, from which he graduated with an M.A. and LL.B. After 16 years of private practice in the Eastern Caribbean, he moved on to serve as High Court Judge, Justice of Appeal and then Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. During his tenure as Chief Justice, Sir Dennis led the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court Judicial Reform Programme, which included the establishment of a Code of Ethics for Judges, the implementation of new Civil Procedure Rules and the establishment of a Judicial Education Institute, among other innovations. His special interest in judicial education activities has led to his appointment as President of the Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute (CJEI), a position which he has held since the year 2000.

In July 2000, Sir Dennis Byron was elevated to the rank of Knight Bachelor by Queen Elizabeth II and he was appointed a member of the Privy Council, as well as an Honorary Bencher of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple in 2004. Appointed by the United Nations Secretary General to replace Judge Lloyd George Williams, the then Mr Justice Byron served as a Judge of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) as of June 2004. He was elected President of the Tribunal in May 2007, succeeding former President Erik Møse of Norway and was re-elected for a second term as President in May 2009.

Sir Dennis Byron has written many articles and publications and also holds the first Yogis and Keddy Chair in Human Rights Law at Dalhousie University Nova Scotia, Canada.



*CCJ President, the Rt Hon Sir Dennis Byron, displays the CCJ seal at his inauguration ceremony*



*Above: Oath being administered to CCJ President by H.E. Governor General of St. Kitts and Nevis*

The programme for Sir Dennis' installation as President began with an invocation by Reverend Dr Wycherly Gumbs, Superintendent Minister of the St. Kitts Circuit of the Methodist Church of the Caribbean and the Americas. This was followed by a "Passing the Gavel" feature, as the assembly was addressed by the Right Honourable Mr Justice Michael de la Bastide, TC, retired first President of the CCJ, who formally said goodbye to the Presidency of the Court and passed the gavel to Sir Dennis.

Mr Justice de la Bastide's address was followed by greetings from the Honourable Dr Denzil Llewellyn Douglas, Prime Minister of the Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis, in which he expressed the pride and satisfaction of the islands in seeing a son of the soil elevated to the Presidency of the CCJ.

The Honourable Mr Justice Saunders, Judge of the CCJ, and himself Sir Dennis' successor as Chief Justice of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, next took centre stage to introduce the President-Designate. This was followed by the solemn taking of the oath of office by Sir Dennis. The oath was administered by His Excellency the Governor-General of St. Kitts and Nevis, Sir Cuthbert Sebastien.

This having been completed, Ms Paula Pierre, Registrar and Chief Marshal of the CCJ, then presented Sir Dennis with the Seal of the Court, the symbol of its authority. The final formal part of the proceedings was an address by the new President of the CCJ.

All the formalities having been completed, His Excellency the Governor General hosted a reception for all guests at Government House.