

## **Scrutiny of public funding**

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THE ISSUE of public financing for political parties has been put back on the agenda with the Government proposing to begin discussions with the Opposition and the wider public for a solution.

Governor-General Professor Kenneth Hall made the disclosure yesterday while delivering his first Throne Speech at the State Opening of Parliament in Gordon House.

"A matter of some importance in strengthening our democracy, to which the Government intends to give priority attention, is that of the transparent and realistic financing of political parties," the Governor-General said.

He added that this would enable representatives to better service their constituents while providing funding for election campaigns.

In 2003, then Opposition Leader Edward Seaga called for the issue of party financing to be addressed, following allegations of dirty money being used to finance the election of deputy leaders of his party.

### **BIPARTISAN TALKS**

Recently-retired Prime Minister, P.J. Patterson, in response to a request from Mr. Seaga, agreed to the bipartisan talks as he said there was common ground for further action on the issue.

In its report on Jamaica in 2004, Transparency International also called for regulations to govern political party financing, arguing that it would curtail corruption by public servants.

The group noted that there was no campaign or political finance law for Jamaica, and so there were no requirements for candidates of parties to have their accounts inspected to determine the source of financing or to limit their level of expenditure.

In the People's National Party presidential elections, held in February, the issue of campaign financing again resurfaced when contender for the presidential post, Portia Simpson Miller, accused fellow candidate Dr. Peter Phillips of misusing ministry funds to finance his campaign. The allegations were denied.

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