

**MINISTRY OF STATE FOR PRESIDENTIAL AFFAIRS
EXECUTIVE MANSION
MONROVIA, LIBERIA**



*Office of the Department of Public Affairs
& Information Technology*

“Our Leaders Have Lost Focus and Fail to Do the People’s Business”

A Rejoinder

By: The Department of Public Affairs – Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs

In as much as Managing Editor, Mr. Kenneth Y. Best has often been very critical of the government of recent, he deserves kudos for his positive views for at least one of the most important institutions of the country, the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL).

Reading the recent commentary by our respected journalist, titled “Our Leaders Have Lost Focus and Fail to Do the People’s Business” we learned that “News is the first draft of history”. We believe that facts anchored on accuracy and precision should inform how news is pieced together in order for the story to be told correctly.

Last week, Mr. Kenneth Best found himself addressing young people at the graduation of ‘Brilliant Communication & Leadership School on a theme “Three Principles Media Practitioners Must Embrace”’.

Surely, there was a glorious opportunity to speak to a group of young graduates, but the packaging and the quality of the message amounted to giving the right patient the wrong dose. No other person in this country could have more authority on speaking on such topic as Mr. Kenneth. With his background, there was ample material to draw from without falling into building a case on assumptions and falsehoods.

While there is no perfect institution on the face of planet earth – the experience of Kenneth Best as a household word in media circles clearly dictates that there would be no room for carelessness. The position the veteran journalist has risen to in our society put him amongst the leaders of this nation. This is why we find almost improbable that Mr. Best would speak to young people without ascertaining the facts belying his discourse.

First thing first: the facts. Before the learned journalist took to the microphone to launch his scathing remarks, Mr. Kenneth Best did not get to know that shortly upon arrival at the airport, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf wasted no time in dealing with the crisis in Margibi schools. She convened a meeting with the leadership of the teachers, authorities of the Ministry of Education and other stakeholders to address the issue and discuss the way forward. Mr. Best did his audience a disservice by not ‘asking the right question’; another basic principle of his own teaching.

One of the basic principles of journalism as we learned from Mr. Best's lifelong practice is to find the truth behind every story before reporting the wrong information or reaching biased or prejudiced conclusions in the absence of scientific investigation. For once it would be fair to criticize this government or any other administration but getting our facts correct is a recipe for responsible journalism.

Certainly, we could not have selected the theme of Kenneth Best's lecture but it would have been prudent to illuminate those young graduates with contemporary facts and figures in their best interest as our nation makes such a huge leap from war to peace; from a country branded as pariah cum rogue state to one passing piles of international litmus tests and crossing Rubicon; from a nation of self-destruction to a place of rebuilding and hope; and from a country war weary population to one of a prosperous future, from the eye of the storm to a land of peace.

It is incumbent upon Mr. Kenneth Best to ensure that the draft history he presents is occasioned by nothing but the obtainable version of the truth. Kenneth Best must endeavor to appreciate that in spite of his often venomous criticisms – the Daily Observer will not experience arson attacks as was the case in the 80s given that this is a legacy that come tomorrow he will reminisce with hindsight. Mr. Best can be assured that the great majority of Liberians know where their country is and where it is headed. We don't expect Mr. Best to drum up the doomsday scenario dreamed and propagated by naysayers and those who shut their eyes on the realities and facts. Mr. Best knows well where this country stood in 2003 and where it is now.

Peace, social progress and an open space for every Liberian to speak their mind and have a chance to reach their full potentials do not fall from the sky: they are the fruits of hard work and leadership. Things may not always align with Mr. Best's wishes, but he can be assured that the Leader of this nation has her eyes on the ball and the bigger picture.

Interestingly, all and sundry including Mr. Kenneth Best take great pride in the annual ratings undertaken on the watch of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance committed to analyzing data on the quality of governance in Africa freely available and accessible to all citizens of the continent and interested stakeholders. Of course the question of Liberia remains paramount but it takes profound research to get to the finishing line. On Mo Ibrahim's Index for 2015 Liberia scorecard stands at 50.7 (reflecting a positive change since 2011 of 0.9) and rating out of a total of 54 countries place at 26th well ahead of several countries even in the region in terms of 'overall governance'.

On account of "Safety & Rule of Law"; which captures the extent to which all individuals and protected from both internal and external threats to the peace; the degree to which society is safe and secure is assessed alongside the existence of a robust legal system and transparent, effective and accessible institutions – within all branches of the state. Under "Safety and Rule of Law" that encompasses 'rule of law; accountability, personal safety and national security' – Liberia ranks 23rd with a scorecard of 55.6% (positive change since 2011 of +1.3).

Underpinning participation and human rights, which emphasizes relationship between government and citizen; it measures, on the one hand, the extent to which individuals can participate in, and take ownership of, the political process and, on the other hand, the state's achievement in guaranteeing the political and social rights of all citizens; Liberia ranks 21st amongst 54 countries with a scorecard of 56.2% (indicating negative change since 2011 of 2.0).