



**Press Conference by Chief Minister Dr. the Honourable D. Orlando Smith
“Announcement of two new ministers”
Chief Minister’s Conference Room
Tuesday, 13 September, 2005
8:30 a.m.**

Good morning.

The passing of our friend and colleague, the late Honourable Paul Wattlely, placed a responsibility upon both the people and Government of our Territory. The death of a Minister and elected Territorial Representative required a dignified and respectful process for filling his posts in accordance with the laws of the BVI. Thus, this past week the people were called upon to go to the polls and elect a Territorial Representative to carry on Paul’s term.

This the people did with all the solemn dignity and commitment to civic duty that is befitting a free and democratic people. The elections were carried out smoothly and in an orderly fashion. And the people sent a clear message – by overwhelmingly voting for Mr. Elmore Stoutt, the people of the BVI demonstrated their continuing support for the path of empowerment that this Government has championed, and that Paul Wattlely worked to achieve.

With his Territorial seat now securely passed on through proper means, it now falls to the Government to address the question of filling his post as Minister of Communications and Works. Out of respect for him and his family we have proceeded with deliberately in this process.

During the period of his illness it was decided that as Chief Minister, I would assume responsibility for the Ministry of Communications and Works. In this work I was ably supported by Dr. the Honourable Kedrick Pickering. At this juncture, on behalf of myself, the Ministry and the people of the BVI, I would like to thank Dr. Pickering for the support and leadership that he provided during this critical period.

Thanks to him and to the hard working, dedicated and professional staff of the Ministry of Communications and Works, the duties of that office were discharged admirably in Paul’s absence.

The people of the BVI owe a true debt of gratitude to each and every one of the public servants who never wavered in their commitment to doing their duty in a manner that would make Paul proud. And I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the Members of my Government who worked together as a team to help make the critical decisions that needed to be taken in maintaining the work of the Ministry.

As a Government, we believe strongly in the power of teamwork. That is why we have always made a point of sharing in our work so that all Members of Government are aware of what each Ministry is doing – so that in moments of crisis if one member of the team is unable to perform his or her duties the rest of the team can carry on the people's work.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am confident that all Members of this Government are capable of serving as Ministers in the various Ministries of Government. And so today I will make two announcements.

Firstly, I am pleased to announce that after careful thought and consideration, my Government has decided to appoint Honourable J. Alvin Christopher as the new Minister of Communications and Works.

As we all recall, Mr. Christopher has previously served as the Minister for Communications and Works. He is intimately familiar with the Ministry and has a deep understanding of the unique opportunities and challenges that come with this critical office.

Secondly, I am also pleased to announce that replacing Mr. Christopher as Minister for Natural Resources and Labour will be the Territorial-at-Large member, Honourable Eileen L. Parsons.

As every citizen and resident of this Territory know, Honourable Parsons is one of the most experienced and distinguished public servants our Territory has ever known. She is a person of impeccable credentials and unquestionable talent. Over the course of her career in public office she has served as the Minister for Education, Health, and Welfare.

The official swearing in and the formal appointment of ministers fall under the Governor's portfolio. I have already advised the Governor of my decisions so the appointments are likely to take place early next week.

In making these announcements, we do not for a moment forget the sad events that brought us to this day. I know that there is not a person in this Territory who does not still mourn the passing of our friend Paul Wattle. And we continue to pray and ask God for the strength to understand and accept his purpose.

But we also know that it is up to us to carry on and continue to do the work which Paul dedicated his life to.

Honourable Christopher and Honourable Parsons will assume new duties but are carrying on a single duty: to build a better future for our Territory.

I take this opportunity to offer congratulations to the Honourable J. Alvin Christopher and Honourable Eileen L. Parsons on their appointments and look forward to their continued sage advice as we work to build a better British Virgin Islands for our people and for future generations to come.

Thank you.