

## Arcanum in the news



### I AM A QUINTESSENTIAL CARIBBEAN WOMAN

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**BARONESS Patricia Scotland has responded to the controversy surrounding her election as Commonwealth Secretary General saying that she was sponsored by her home country of Dominica, and was not a “British-sponsored candidate” as had been claimed. “I am a quintessentially Caribbean woman,” she declared.**

Scotland was elected Commonwealth Secretary General last month by private vote during the Commonwealth Leaders meeting in Malta. She is the first woman to be elected to the position, and will succeed Kamlesh Sharma of India, whose term of office ends in April 2016.

Scotland, former Attorney General of England and Wales, was one of three candidates put forward by the Caribbean for the post with the two others being Ambassador Sir Ronald Sanders of Antigua, and Dr Bhoë Tewarie, the former Trinidad and Tobago Minister of Planning and Sustainable Development.

This country, however, formally withdrew Tewarie’s candidature in October, and instead expressed support for Sanders. Antigua and Barbuda’s Prime Minister Gaston Browne, who backed Sanders for the post, is reported as saying in a radio interview in Antigua that Baroness Scotland “was not a Caribbean candidate” but she was a “British-sponsored candidate who happened to have been born in Dominica with Antiguan parentage”. He had also said that interests and contributions are “exclusively Brit” and she is a “British candidate”, and therefore the Caribbean lost out.

Scotland, who is in Trinidad on the invitation of the Pointe-à-Pierre Wildfowl Trust for their 50th Anniversary celebrations today, was asked about the controversy during a media interview in Maraval yesterday. She reported that “my Prime Minister” Roosevelt Skerrit of Dominica nominated her. She also pointed out that at the time England had its own candidate who was canvassing “and that candidate was not me”.

“So I have heard with interest all of the comments made about whether I was, or was not Caribbean.

That’s someone else’s problem.

It's not mine. I have always known, from my early years, who I was," she said. She noted that people speak creole around her and believe she does not understand, which is a major advantage.

She said her mother and father ensured that she never forgot her roots. She said that Antigua, under previous Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, nominated her as well as "trenchant support" from Barbados Prime Minister, Freundel Stewart. She noted that both countries have worked with her for years "so they know how Caribbean I was".

She said if there has been contention that she is some sort of "blow in" she has been coming back and forth to Trinidad since 1978. She also noted that she has been a patron of her sister's charity Lifeline, has worked with jurors in Trinidad, has lectured here, helped design the Trinidad Family Court, and received a doctorate from the University of the West Indies, for her contribution to Caribbean jurisprudence.

She pointed out that she was born in Dominica comes from one of the oldest families in Dominica, two of her cousins were former prime ministers of the country, Edward Le Blanc and Roosevelt Douglas.

"So frankly if I'm not Dominican, as I don't know who is," she said. She noted that her father's family was a very old Antiguan family, and he played cricket for the Windward/Leeward islands with Malcolm Richards, father of former West Indies cricketer Sir Vivian Richards. She also noted that her father was Malcolm Richards' best man and Sir Vivian got his name from her mother Genevieve.

Asked if she was confident of being elected Scotland said she was told from the beginning that she had the majority support, but you "never know".

She said she put her faith in God and believes that if something is for you, it cannot be taken away.

She noted it is a great honour to be appointed Commonwealth Secretary General, and she feels "truly blessed to be chosen". She noted that there are 53 countries in the Commonwealth, and the post is a "huge task".

"I feel greatly blessed and humbled by this amazing opportunity," she said.

Scotland said she hopes to develop a better-honed partnership between the countries of the Commonwealth. She noted that we "live in troubled, troubling times" both with common values, law and language there is an opportunity to put the "wealth back in Commonwealth". She said that the countries should work in partnership to deliver real changes.

She pointed out that 33 per cent of the world's population is represented by the 53 countries.

On the issues of terrorism, extremism and Islamic fundamentalism currently facing the Commonwealth Scotland said it is a "challenging moment for all of us" and we are in "troubled and troubling times". She stressed that is a matter for each of us, and evil will prevail only if good men and women are silent, and she has "never been silent".

"The 53 countries we will collectively raise our voices and say 'not in our name'," she said. She noted that we have to see why there are so many disaffected people in all our countries. Questioned whether diplomacy is an avenue to be taken with the militant jihadist extremist group ISIS Scotland said that diplomacy has a "huge role". She noted that we

all have to work together to build a world young people want to live in.