

- **Most Jamaicans believe island would have been better off under British rule**
- **WITH JAMAICA getting ready to celebrate 50 years of political independence from the United Kingdom next year, most Jamaicans are of the view that the country would have been better off had it remained a colony of Britain.**

Pollster Bill Johnson, who, on May 28 and 29 and June 4 and 5, conducted an island wide survey among 1,008 people, found that 60 per cent of Jamaicans held the view the country would be better off under British rule.

Conversely, 17 per cent of those surveyed said the country would be worse off had it remained a colony of Britain, while 23 per cent said they did not know. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus four per cent.

The island has been independent since August 6, 1962, after the lobbying and hard work of individuals such as National Heroes Sir Alexander Bustamante and Norman Washington Manley.

But that has failed to impress six in every 10 Jamaicans who long for "the good old days".

The culture ministry has started the process of setting up a secretariat to coordinate and drive the planning for Jamaica's 50th anniversary national celebrations next year. A total of \$50 million has been set aside in the national Budget for the celebrations.

Prime Minister Bruce Golding has also proposed that Jamaica say "bye-bye" to the Queen (Elizabeth II) as head of state before Independence Day next year.

Free of monarchy

In his contribution to the 2011-2012 Budget Debate in the House of Representatives in April, Golding said he wanted Jamaica to make its 50th year of Independence free of its colonial ties to the British monarchy.

"Transforming Jamaica from a monarchical to a republican state means no disrespect, and must not be interpreted in this way," Golding said.

"I have long believed that if I am to have a queen, it must be a Jamaican queen. I would not wish to see us celebrate 50 years of Independence without completing that part of our 'sovereignisation', for want of a better word," he told legislators.

The Government and Opposition have agreed to work towards putting in place certain constitutional arrangements, including replacing the Queen as head of state, before Jamaica turns 50.

Republican structure

If Jamaica replaces the Queen, the country would move to a republican government structure.

But Johnson found that most Jamaicans have rejected the suggestion that the current Westminster system of government be replaced with a republican system.

Some 44 per cent of the people surveyed said the current Westminster system should be retained, while 35 per cent said it should be replaced with a republican system. Another 21 per cent answered 'don't know' to the question.

A constitutional commission in 1995, after consultations, recommended that Jamaica should no longer have the hereditary monarch of the UK as its head of state, and that the country should

become a republic with its own indigenous president as head of state.

However, there is no agreement on the role the president would play in the affairs of the State.