

The Bahama Journal

SUPPLEMENT FOR THE 46TH

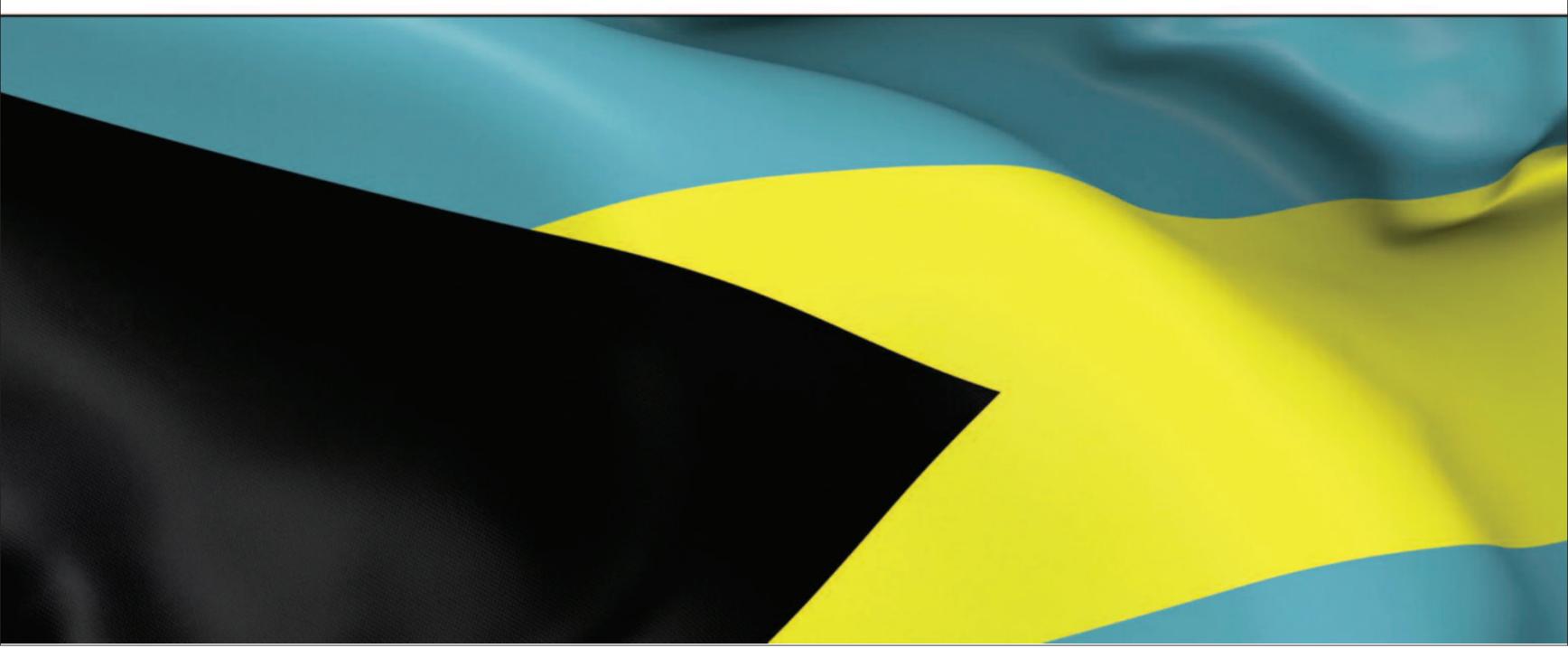
ANNIVERSARY OF

Independence

OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

JULY 10TH

1973 - 2019



THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

With Bahamians preparing to celebrate the 46th anniversary of independence, we are disheartened by the level of anti-social behaviour that we see in many areas of our society. We were particularly disturbed by the terrorism visited upon the Montell Heights area where some fifteen persons were shot and injured by a gunman last Sunday at a birthday party.

While we are a free and sovereign nation, there is a price of freedom. In the files of The Bahama Journal, we recently came across a speech by the Father of the Nation, the late Sir Lynden Pindling which we found not only instructive, but inspirational.

We commend excerpts of this speech to our readers, with the hope that it would be forwarded by the youth of the nation for the improvement of the level of discipline and civility in the nation.

Sir Lynden said: "My generation has always believed that children are a gift from God, 'the author and giver of all things good.' Sadly though, mankind is failing young people. Throughout much of the world children are the principal victims of all of

society's most troubling ills. In this decade of the child, it is children, the fruit of humanity in developed and developing countries, who must quietly endure the ravages of war, hunger, poverty, disease, and illiteracy. In the so-called advanced countries of the world we are seeing evidence of a spiritual poverty, a sense of hopelessness and despair, that leads to drug addiction, crime, gang violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour, particularly among young people. And in The Bahamas, we find ourselves struggling to deal with a spiritual poverty of our own as we try to respond to rising expectations in a rapidly changing economic, political and social environment.

"We are not a rich country, but we certainly are not poor. We do not have all we want; neither do we have all we need; but we do have more than most people have and for that we should be grateful. Everywhere people are struggling for the very things many of us take for granted. We have peace, stability, freedom of speech and religion and the right to go where we please whenever we please. The poor are still with us, and, like death

and taxes, they will always be but, thank God, poverty does not stalk our land and everyone has access to basic health care and education. Millions of our neighbours, however, can only dream of living as we do. Yet, how many of us give thanks to God for the blessings he has bestowed upon us?

"We have known hard times in The Bahamas too, but most of you are too young to remember them, too young to know what your grandparents had to do to survive. You can't imagine the sacrifice they made to bring you to where you sit today. You are too young to know that, back then, the only place they had where they could take refuge from the daily battering their spirit and their pride took from racial and economic oppression was the church. It may be difficult for you to understand that the only peace many of them ever knew in those days was that moment when they fell to their knees and asked God to guide them.

"We were not a Nation then. At that time we could not be a Nation because a majority of the people were not free to determine their own fate. Some of them knew free-

dom would come on day, but many were not so sure. Some of them believed it because they knew that God would never abandon them; and they knew, too, that He would make a way out of no way. Still, however, there were others who did not believe. They believed that they would be free because they had faith and they kept that faith the kind of faith the Bible talks about in Hebrews; faith that 'is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' They had that kind of faith, the kind of faith that God rewards, and they worked to achieve the things hoped for because they also learned, long before John Kennedy ever said it, 'that here on earth God's work must truly be our own.' I should like to remind you young Christian warriors that Bahamians as a people have always had faith, and though some may waver and others profess doubt, as a people we do still trust in the Lord.

"Today your generation of young Bahamians, facing new challenges and seeking still greater goals, needs the faith that sustained your parents and grandparents during those trying times. Besides being



► The Late Sir. Lynden Pindling

members of that generation, you are also believers in God so I ask who better than you to spread that faith. If not you, who? And if not now, when?

"Your world is different from mine. You face a different set of challenges and problems than those I faced. Your interests and priorities, even your Language, have changed and you are growing up with a global culture in a global village where the whole world is your backyard. Your music, which is a reflection of much of what your generation feels and embraces, is constantly changing. Your attitudes about life, love, work and faith are still being

formed, however, and I pray that they are consistent with what The Bahamas needs to prosper as a Nation for all that you achieve and all that you believe will rest on the values you adopt during these formative years," said Sir Lynden who passed away in 2000.

More than two decades after that speech was delivered, the message to our youth remains the same. The time is now for all leaders of our country to get involved in a massive initiative to give our youth the inspiration they need to face the changing world and the realities of the 21st century.

Happy Independence Bahamas !!!

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INDEPENDENCE

Message by the Governor General

My Fellow Bahamians, as we celebrate the forty-sixth anniversary of our Independence, let us reflect with gratitude on our journey as a people since 1967. Notwithstanding the difficulties we have encountered, and continue to face, we have much to be thankful for as we consider the natural and manmade blessings we enjoy as citizens of this beautiful archipelago entrusted to us by Almighty God.

We are called individually and collectively to uphold the lofty ideals of Freedom and Justice as we build our Nation. And nation-building requires that we first believe in ourselves; inasmuch as further successes would only be achieved in a determined spirit of Unity and Objectivity, underpinned by Faith in Almighty God

through whose generosity and empowerment we exist.

Our Flag, our National Anthem, and the other symbols which bind us together, give the fullest expression to our need to remain steadfast and united as we move "Forward, Upward and Onward."

Our theme for this year's celebration is "United We Stand, Bahamas – Together We Can." Let us set aside all negative attitudes and unite in the understanding that together we indeed can achieve; we shall move forward, but only together. In this fashion, we shall develop a renewed commitment to work together, applying willing minds, hearts and hands in the practice of the time-honoured values of Respect, Charity, and Love.

**H a p p y
I n d e p e n d e n c e
A n n i v e r s a r y,
B a h a m a s!**



GOVERNOR GENERAL HIS EXCELLENCY C.A. SMITH



► The 46th Anniversary Independence Celebrations Beat Retreat on Sunday, July 7, 2019 took place at Rawson and Parliament Squares, attended by Their Excellencies, Governor General the Most Hon. Cornelius A. Smith and Mrs. Smith; Prime Minister the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis; the Hon. Mr. Justice Brian Moree, Chief Justice of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas; President of the Senate, the Hon. Katherine Forbes-Smith; and other senior officials. The Royal Bahamas Police Force Band, The Royal Bahamas Defence Force Band, and The Department of Correctional Services Band performed for the spectators -- under the theme, "United We Stand Bahamas.... Together We Can." **(BIS Photos/Patrick Hanna)**



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REFORMING THE CONSTITUTION

For a Better, Just and Caring Society



► By Hon. George A. Smith

The sensitive issue of citizenship for many persons born in The Bahamas whose parents were 'not' citizens of The Bahamas and who were given assurance of citizenship in the Constitution, subject to their making application in the prescribed manner, is frequently and prominently in the national discussion. And so, on this, the 46th Anniversary of our Nation's birth I ask, 'is it time to reform the Constitution', so that this and other constitutional matters could be discussed and finally settled in a civil and patriotic manner? Bahamians must come to fully appreciate that The Bahamas is a country of immigrants. Our ancestors came here from many lands; many were brought here, having been forced

into slavery, leaving family, friends and country behind. They boldly contributed to building this country, making it what it is today. We must, therefore, continue to embrace people from other lands, who came here lawfully, as we expect them to embrace Bahamians in theirs. During this period when we are some two years from the start of the actual campaign for the 2022 Elections, I hope we can have a sober and intelligent dialogue about constitutional reform. We should be honest in assessing our future. Our goal must be to create a more just, fair and prosperous society, where all Bahamians will have an equal opportunity to realize their full potential. We must reflect on our past and embrace the challenges and expectations of the future so that we will continue to build a nation of pride, faith and unity, a society where people matter more than things, and where human dignity is paramount. We have made significant progress in our nation's development. The road ahead for us as a people will demand our talents, creativity and wisdom. We ought to ensure that we remain on a prosperous path. We can achieve great

success for our nation if we embrace the opportunity afforded to create a revised Constitution that resembles us as a people and in our effort to do so, we must not be discouraged.

Independence Constitutional Conference

I was privileged to have been a delegate at the December 1972 London Constitutional Conference that led to the creation of our nation-state, the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. That was a memorable experience and often, as I reflect on years past, I think about the intellectual depth and the collective wisdom of the delegation in fashioning a nation founded on lofty, fundamental principles. Those principles included a national commitment to Self-discipline, Industry, Loyalty, Unity and an abiding respect for Christian Values and the Rule of Law, and a nation founded on Spiritual Values, recognising the Supremacy of God. Upon reflection, I also recall The Bahamas during the years following our liberation on 10th January 1967, and comprehend the magnificent accomplishments that we have made on our national journey. I remain steadfastly proud

of our nation, and yet find cause to pause and ponder the wonders that lie ahead, if only we restore our nation to the path of prosperity, safety, civility and respect for humankind. The Bahamian delegation displayed the maturity that allowed for all views and opinions to be considered and for our Constitution to represent the combined will and shared spirit of the Bahamian people.

The process

There is no denying that The Bahamas of today is fundamentally different from The Bahamas of 1972.

To amend a nation's constitution is a serious matter. It is a process that must not be propelled by partisan politics. At its core must be the further education of the Bahamian people and their leaders; it must include the creation or stimulation of a national conversation through informed discussion amongst the citizenry. The process also demands careful and thoughtful deliberations. It must not be rushed or hijacked by special interests. It must be rooted in the law and in the people's welfare. If this is followed, then at the end of it all, we will have an amended constitution that reflects the new Bahamas that is worthy of the Bahamian people.

I personally believe that the primary objective must be to produce a near-perfect, easy-to-read progressive Constitution.

The Governor-General should appoint a fifteen member by-partisan Constitution Reform Commission, seven on the advice of the Prime Minister and seven on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition, under the chairmanship of the Chief Justice to consider all reasonable submissions, presented at open forums. Furthermore, as far as practicable, the members of the Commission must reflect a cross-section of the society.

My suggestions

There is no doubt that the Constitution of 1964 which ushered in internal self-government and the 1973 Independence Constitution have served us well over the past fifty-five years. We have had no serious constitutional challenges and, in many respects, our Constitutions have guided our democracy to greater stability.

We have had six peaceful changes of government (1967, 1992, 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2017) and although the electorate is generally evenly divided between the two major political parties, on given issues there is a keen sense that the people of The

"It is not, what I am told I may do; but what humanity, reason, and justice, tell me I ought to do."

-Edmund Burke

Bahamas can put aside their partisanship for the national common good. This is a defining feature of our evolving maturity as a people.

This can be for us a period of transformation, a time of fulfillment, a time of renewal and a time of new beginnings. Inspired by this knowledge, I wish to share my thoughts on what I think should be reflected in our 'new' Constitution:-

- The Preamble must continue to speak to our enduring values. I strongly advise that there should be a recognition of our growing multiculturalism and diverse spiritual values and beliefs and the preservation of the environment;
- I firmly believe that no position in The Bahamas should be beyond the reach of a Bahamian. Therefore,

■ See page 6...

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On the 46th Independence

A Message from The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis Prime Minister to the Commonwealth of The Bahamas

This year's independence theme, "United We Stand Bahamas...Together We Can", is a reminder of the importance of national unity in preserving our natural and cultural heritage.

Though we enjoy the diversity of different backgrounds, creeds and affiliations we are One Bahamas. We are bound together by the wonders and possibilities of our country. We are an archipelago, or quilt of industry, resilience and imagination.

Some years ago, Chris Hadfield, the first Canadian astronaut to walk in space said: "The most beautiful place from space, is the Bahamas, with all the gorgeous colors of the ocean."

In terms of the number of islands, islets, reefs, coral reefs and cays, the Bahamas is one of the larger archipelagos in the world.

Former Governor General Sir Arthur Foulkes once wrote: "The natural heritage which helps to shape the Bahamian personality is replete with island jewels, set in thousands of square miles of crystal clear azure blue and emerald green waters, with magnificent coral reefs, sun-drenched beaches,

forests, fascinating blue holes, spectacular sand banks, lakes and creeks.

"That heritage also encompasses rich marine resources, from passing jacks, to pink snappers, to blue marlins; beautiful plant life, from cascarilla, to yellow elder, to lignum vitae; and spectacular avian life, from the hummingbird, to the roseate spoonbill to the glorious flamingo."

We have sought to preserve this natural beauty and bounty through our world-renowned National Park System.

We must be ever vigilant in: preserving our biodiversity; addressing pollution; protecting our marine environment and resources and combatting other environmental threats.

With the historic challenge of the accelerating and life-threatening effects of climate change, United We Must Stand to save our Bahamas from rising sea levels and the other destructive effects of a warming planet.

Climate change is a threat to our survival as a country and as a people.

We must also, stand united to, preserve, and to promote our cultural heritage. It is culture that makes us



The Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis

unique in God's creation. It is our ability to express ourselves culturally and to celebrate our art forms that make us complete as individuals and as a nation.

"That is why we love Junkanoo so much. It brings together our historical memory, our ability to create stunning visual beauty, our ability to create music, our ability to dance and celebrate our wonderful heritage."

We also delight in other musical forms like rake 'n' scrape, combining the scraped saw, accordion and goat skin drum to express joy, sorrow and the range of human emotions.

One Bahamian at the recent Rake 'n' Scrape Festival in Cat Island, sim-

ply said, the music, "Touches my soul!"

Through the E. Clement Bethel National Arts Festival, generations of Bahamians have showcased their artistic talent.

Because we are so wonderfully blessed, with a rich and vibrant culture, we must preserve and celebrate our diversity of cultural expressions, while passing on our traditions to future generations.

To ensure that our arts sector continues to thrive and grow we are moving forward with the establishment of a million-dollar arts and culture fund.

This fund will be dedicated to supporting the development of Bahamian painters, writers, sculptors,

filmmakers, artisans, playwrights, poets, musicians and performing artists involved in projects of cultural significance.

As in years past, I take this opportunity to make special mention of our diplomatic officers and other representatives overseas, who are to be commended, for ably representing the interest of our country in various capacities.

I thank them for the essential work they do on behalf of our country.

I close with these words from Sir Arthur Foulkes: "We are Bahamians, and

we have woven a single, rich cultural tapestry of threads from Africa, Europe and Asia, threads spun and colored in the Americas and the islands of the Caribbean."

Though we achieved national sovereignty in 1973, the Bahamian nation is much older and will endure because, "United We Stand Bahamas...Together We Can."

*Happy Independence.
May God bless the
Commonwealth of The
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REFORMING THE CONSTITUTION For a Better, Just and Caring Society

Continued from / PAGE 4...

it follows that the Office of 'Head of State' should be held by a Bahamian. We should create a Republic (The Republic of The Bahamas), a unitary state and a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. The duties presently prescribed for the Governor-General to be carried out by a President, in addition to some added responsibilities. The Constitution should set strict eligibility guidelines to provide for the election of the President by a Parliamentary vote supported by two-thirds (2/3) of the members. The office should include specified constitutional powers, which can be a vital check on potential abuses within the system. A Vice-President should also be elected in the same manner;

We should abolish the Senate, which has long ceased to perform in the intended manner. Some present responsibilities of the Senate could be supplemented through the Office of the President;

On the vital issue of citizenship, we should take a modern and realistic approach to citizenship, one that reflects a new paradigm for the Country. In this regard, the Constitution must remove any and all ambiguities relative to the rights to citizenship. We should expand the existing provisions and remove the prohibition which prevents Bahamian mothers from conferring citizenship to their children. We should allow for those persons who were born in The Bahamas and have continuously resided in The Bahamas, maintaining a close connection, affinity and loyalty to The Bahamas to become citizens upon making application for citizenship. The Constitution should remove all discretions that presently exist in the law regarding their right to become Bahamian citizens. However, if there are any strong legal requirements for codified exceptions in the Constitution, these should be limited to matters of national security and prescribed public policy. I also advocate that the foreign spouse of a Bahamian woman, who has demonstrated close affinity to The Bahamas, should have access to Bahamian citizenship or the right to reside and work in the Country, subject to national security considerations. Bahamian men should pass their citizenship to their

children born out of wedlock, subject only to proof that they are the biological fathers of their children. We should sympathize with those who have or ought to have a claim to citizenship and do what is morally right;

- In respect of the fundamental rights provisions, I believe that there should be some recognition in our Constitution to prevent discrimination on the grounds of sexual preference or orientation. This is consistent with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Any provision in the Constitution which permits any form of gambling or any other activity that imposes disabilities or restrictions on the citizens of The Bahamas must be eliminated. We can no longer tolerate the existing practice;
- I believe that there should be a provision that expressly prohibits the right to bail in capital cases or very serious criminal matters and similarly the issue of the death penalty should be addressed and settled. Personally, I believe that the death penalty should be abolished;
- I support the creation of an Ombudsman, with specific jurisdiction to safeguard the community in its dealings with governmental agencies by:-
- Correcting administrative deficiencies through independent review of complaints about government administrative actions;
- Fostering good public administration that is accountable, lawful, fair, transparent and responsive;
- Developing policies and principles for accountability; and,
- Reviewing statutory compliance by law enforcement and other such agencies with similar powers;
- I believe that time has taught us that many elected politicians do not recognize and respect the age-old conventions that are not written in the Constitution. We need to find a means to incorporate some of these conventions, certainly the most important of them, in our Constitution or in an Addendum to the Constitution. I encourage the following:-
- The composition of the House of Assembly should be a minimum of forty-two members, which can be increase as may be specified by an Order;
- There should be a mechanism to allow for a recall of Members of Parliament, based on a petition presented to the Speaker of the House of at least 50% plus one of the electors

in the constituency;

- There should be a requirement for all MPs to devote the necessary time in order to give proper attention to the people's needs and concerns with the assistance of generalist staff and with functional committees of the House; and,
- There should be a limit imposed on the amount of money spent by a candidate or his agents in any constituency in any general election or by-election; such sum not to exceed a figure fixed to the total number of electors. In fixing the amount, consideration should also be given to the geographical and demographic features of the constituency;
- There should be an Independent Boundaries and Electoral Commission whose composition is set out in the Constitution. Such a Commission should comprise a Judge of the Supreme Court, who shall be the Chairman; the Ombudsman; the Clerk of the House; the Parliamentary Commissioner; two non-MPs appointed by the Prime Minister; and, two non-MPs appointed by the Leader of the Opposition. Guidelines for the conduct of the Commission must be clearly defined;
- Given the financial hardship that the nation has endured in recent times with the large size of Cabinets, the Constitution should also set a maximum number of ministers. I propose a Cabinet of not more than sixteen members with the understanding that the Cabinet is composed of Substantive Ministers and does not include Ministers of State who would only attend Cabinet meetings by invitation and not by right. This could result in enhancing the role and value of the backbencher in our parliamentary system and thereby serve as a further check, in addition to the Official Opposition, to the abuse of power by the Executive;
- There should be a provision for the appointment of a Deputy Prime Minister based on the same principle as that which applies to the appointment of a Prime Minister;
- I also support the reform of the Public Service. Drastic changes should be made to the Public Service Commission and the Public Service Board of Appeal. Similar progressive changes should occur with the Judicial and Legal Services Commission, Security Forces Commission

and other commissions. To bring the public services into the 21st Century, serious consideration must be given to the elimination of the bureaucracy around the hiring, discipline, termination of public officers. A Pensions Review Board should be appointed;

- I have the highest regard and confidence in the ever-growing sophistication of Bahamian professionals. I think that this is notably demonstrated in the many talented Bahamian jurists who have served with distinction and intellectual integrity. I support the Judicature being comprised of the Magistrate Court, the High Court (replacing the Supreme Court) and the Supreme Court (embodying the current functions and jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal, as the final appellate court for The Bahamas). The Supreme Court will also replace the Privy Council for both criminal and civil cases. In order to dispel the anomaly that currently exists in that a ruling of the Chief Justice, who is the Head of the Judiciary, can be over-

turned by the current Court of Appeal or the Privy Council, in my opinion, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (that is, the reconstituted highest court) should indeed be 'the Chief among all Justices, at the pinnacle of the Judiciary'. The Chief Justice will, therefore, be the head of the Supreme Court, our final court. I also support the increase in the retirement ages of Justices of both Courts: say at seventh-five years (subject to good health and mental capacity). When consideration is given to the Judicature, we should conclude that the Judicature should not be any different from any other august institutions of State. If we are building truly Bahamian institutions, we need to overcome the shallow insecurities and reservations that have prevented our Judiciary from full maturity. After all, Bahamian institutions of State should be populated by highly trained and qualified persons; and,

- Consideration could be given for the retention of the Privy Council for appeal from the Supreme

Court in special circumstances, which must be clearly defined in the new Constitution.

'Follow the Way of Wisdom'!

The process of constitutional reform is both vital and critical in the evolution of a people and a nation. In order to guarantee that we have the benefit of the best of our talents and wisdom, we must employ all our intellectual power and national pride, to create a better, just and fairer Bahamian nation that protects the fundamentals of our Constitution and defend the people's best interest and promote the common good. I unequivocally maintain that together we can serve The Bahamas with distinction by ensuring that the voice of the people is heard and echoed through each and every page of the 'reformed' Constitution. That at the very heart of the process is an understanding and appreciation that the all-wise God will forever bless and guide us, in our faithfulness to the vision and wisdom of our forebears, by responding to the call to continue to mold this multicultural country into a land of enlightened, innovative people, who take pride in their devotion to social justice and a merciful God.

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MESSAGE FROM THE HON. PHILIP 'BRAVE' DAVIS

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

ON THE 46TH ANNIVERSARY OF NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

I join Bahamians and people of goodwill everywhere in offering hearty congratulations to the Government and people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas on the occasion of its forty-sixth anniversary of National Independence and Sovereign Statehood.

We might be a relatively young nation at forty-six, but we are proud of our regional leadership position as a democratic nation. Having convened our first Parliament under the Governorship of Woodes Rogers on the 28th of September 1729 in historic Parliament Square, The Bahamas is one of the oldest and mature democracies in

the region.

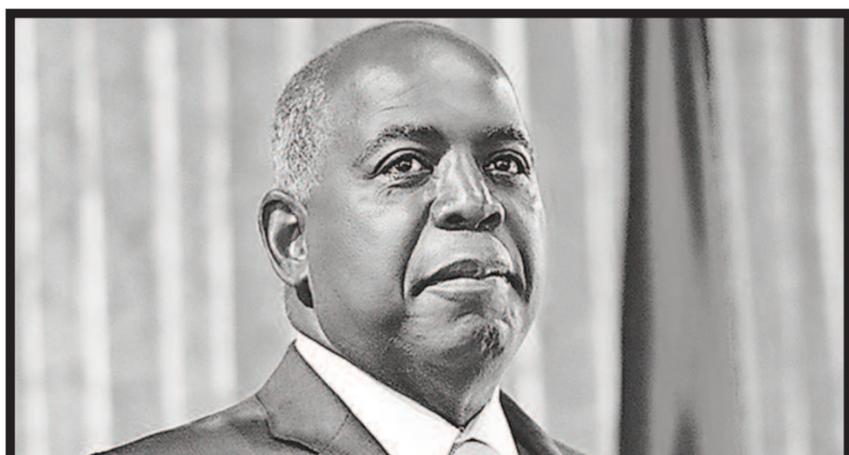
We are proud of our free, modern, democratic state - the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

We are known internationally for our stable democracy and integrated economy which has created a favourable investment environment. I commend the ongoing conciliatory partnership between the Government of The Bahamas, its people, the labour movement and our international partners that have consistently made this all possible.

As we reflect on our glorious and sometimes challenging past and look to the future with optimism - our

resilience, institutional knowledge and the indomitable spirit of our people ideally position us to exploit the boundless opportunities that lie ahead for our people.

Economic patriotism through cooperation must be the watch words for Bahamians and its Government as we work together and look to the future - ever mindful of the collective will and yearning of our people to expand our ownership of the national economy, guard our heritage, deepen our democracy and entrench our national identity. This conciliatory partnership will and must become more critical in an ever increasing-ly competitive global



community.

I remain resolutely committed to facilitating and strengthening this important partnership and national endeavour in a spirit of mutual trust and mutual respect as we look the future together. We will do so together in

the public interest.

On behalf of my wife Ann-Marie, the Progressive Liberal Party, the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and my Parliamentary colleagues, I say congratulations Bahamas on forty-six years of state-

hood as we look with optimism to the next forty-six years of peace, security and prosperity through cooperative sustained national development.

May Almighty God bless the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

Inspiration Behind Independence Theme

'United We Stand, Together We Can'

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Chairman of the Independence Anniversary Planning Committee Mark Humes said the "polarized" state of the nation inspired his selection of the theme for this year's celebration.

"You see now everything is kicking up about race. We're polarized around our political colors. We're polarized in our various nationalities," Humes said.

"In order for us to progress as a nation, we need to find a common purpose for uniting. So,

that's what the theme is actually saying - United We Stand, Together We Can."

He said this message resonates best for the Bahamian people moving into this 46th year of independence.

When asked what it means to be Bahamian,

Humes said, "It means that I am born, bred, and raised here in The Bahamas. I may have spent some time out of the country, but I've come to understand that our culture is special.

"So, being a Bahamian essentially means that you've developed an

appreciation for who we are as a nation."

Tonight the grand anniversary celebrations are set to kick off at Clifford Park at 8 p.m.

This will include an ecumenical service and a cultural show.

The People's Love and Unity Rush will follow on

July 10 at 1 a.m. on Bay Street.

On the evening of July 10, an independence close-out concert celebration will take place at Clifford Park.

The gospel concert will kick off at 7 p.m. and the secular segment of the show will start at 9 p.m.

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'Struggles Continue After 46 Years'

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

After 46 years as an independent nation, The Bahamas is still struggling to build a country Bahamians can be proud of, former Cabinet Minister George Smith said.

During an interview with The Bahama Journal, Smith added that this independent season

is a good time for Bahamians to pause and look at the many successes and mistakes made as a nation and chart a course that could be effective by 2023.

"When we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our country, we should pursue becoming a republic so that the real head of state is a Bahamian citizen and not just a Bahamian representing a

foreign member of the British Crown," Mr. Smith said.

"We should look at examining many aspects of our governmental society. Whether the Senate today is practical, or whether it serves the purpose for which it was intended, I think not.

"We should look at raising the standard of people who are elected these days to the House

of Assembly.

"We have to listen more to young people and find out about their ambitions, but not only just listen to them, but get them involved so they can be the change that they talk about."

It is Mr. Smith's hope that Bahamians will show greater signs that The Bahamas is one of the best countries in the world in terms of peace,

civility and in terms of improving the quality of life for all.

"We should work harder to improve our educational level and, or health level. We should improve our civics, how we treat one another," he said.

"We should learn to treasure those who have made contributions to family, to community and to the nation and I think that we can show."

To achieve this, he said, issues like race must be addressed and not swept under the carpet.

In addition, how problems have evolved must also be addressed and not ignored as fleeting comments or moments in someone's mind.

Mr. Smith said he firmly believes the future of The Bahamas is bright, but it's up to the people to make it so.

'Graveyard' Feeling for Independence

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas is about to celebrate its 46th birthday, but it's more like a funeral, according to Ruby-Ann Darling, who said the independence atmosphere is like a "graveyard" as many Bahamians are not showing excitement and patriotism for their country.

"I was bemoaning the fact that the country is desolate," Darling, the first woman registered to vote in The Bahamas in 1962, told The Bahama Journal.

"I had my cousin driving along with me and I said oh my God, 'Look at this nation, no flags, no semblance that independence is just a day away.'

"I passed by the big mall, not a flag. I went up the Eastern Road, nothing. It is like a graveyard with no flowers to remember those that were here and I am very sad."

Darling added that she is also sad because there seems to be no love for country.

"It's filthy. People don't care. Anybody can come and do what they want to do. It's just a very sad state of affairs," Darling said.

"See it is the love of God, love of brotherhood, love of your country that God has given me. I don't see no love of God here. It's gone. I don't see any love of the brotherhood and I see no love of country."

Since there seems to be

no love, Darling believes the nation needs more prayer.

"It's time for the country to come down in sack cloth and ashes as we approach 46 years," Darling said. "Psalm 46 says, 'God is our refuge and strength and a very present help in time of trouble.' And I pray that God will have mercy on us."

Since 1973, Darling said she noticed the patriotic changes of Bahamians during independence over the years.

She recalled the many cars that would fly Bahamian flags on the days leading up to independence.

But as she drove around New Providence during this independence

season, it was not the same.

"I think in all of my driving around, I think I saw about the most, three cars," Darling said, adding that when she drove on Balfour Avenue and Ida Street, there was a car beautifully decorated for independence that captured her attention.

"They really went out the way and I say, 'congratulations' to that person there on Ida Street and Balfour Avenue that really went out of their way. It's an elaborate display of the flag and flowers to match the colours of the flag. But other than that, I don't see anything."

The Bahamas became an independent nation on July 10, 1973.



► Ruby-Ann Darling

"It is the set of the sails, not the direction of the wind that determines which way we will go".
Jim Rohn

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Independence Message By Reverend Anthony A. Sampson

Here we are marking another Independence. I join with thousands of Bahamians and best wishers in saying: Happy 46th Anniversary Bahamas! Indeed, I give God thanks for this beautiful gem called the Bahamas. God has been good to us as a people and has brought us from a mighty long way and in the words of James Cleveland, "God has smiled on [us]". So celebrations and thanksgiving are in order but such is not the only disposition warranted. We are called upon in moments like these to engage in introspection and ask ourselves the salient question: What challenges do we currently face as a people as we continue to strive for "the common loftier goal"? I want to posit three challenges I believe that deserve our utmost attention and resolve.

Firstly, the culture of violence that is becoming more and more pervasive in our land. Nowhere is this culture more evident than among our youth; especially among our young black men. As Dr. Keva Bethel poignantly pointed out, "Young black men are killing themselves and each other." Many of our young people are in the grip of what Sigmund Freud calls "the

death instinct" and a nihilistic orientation towards life. If the truth be told, this culture of violence did not spring up over the night. We saw the signs of its development and now like a volcano it as erupted. We saw the breakdown in family life, the entrenchment of poverty, the infestation of drugs and guns, the high rates of school dropouts and incompleteness, the deterioration of communities and the list goes on. So, yes, some are guilty but we are all responsible. Arresting this culture of violence will require a collective effort from Bahamians regardless of race, class, gender, religion, denomination, and political affiliation. We must no longer endorse the mindset of the biblical character Cain who did not see himself as his brother's keeper. I believe that the call to "march together" means that I care about the slain person in Foxhill, Kemp Road, or Montel Heights because we are one family. Our independence invites us to make more tangible "the Bahamian family" and realize our interdependency.

The second challenge is the high level of economic disparity. The chasm is widening between the

Haves and the Have Nots. The masses of Bahamians are confronted with stagnate wages, inflation and onerous taxes. Over the last decade the Middle Class has been thrown into an "economic tornado" not just here in the Bahamas but around the world. For thousands of Bahamians, the Bahamian dream is becoming more and more elusive and the proverbial economic "pie" continues to shrink. Many Bahamians are working two or three jobs and still finding it hard to make ends meet as the cost of living continues to increase. This is why the social misery index remains elevated in our country. And I want to add here that there is a correlation between social misery and social aggression. As we celebrate, we have to be cognizant of the fact that many Bahamians feel that they cannot succeed in their own country and thus have opted to leave and those who are off to school don't return. Their cry is: "there's nothing here for me." Now, am not naïve for a second to believe that within a capitalistic system everyone can have equal slices of the economic pie but justice demands that we do our best to ensure that the "slices" are not too dis-

proportionate in favor of one group or class of people. In fact, the establishment of a more just society was at the core of the prophetic ministry in ancient Israel and Jesus' conceptualization and embodiment of the Kingdom of God. Martin Luther King, Jr. calls this just society the Beloved Community where we are treated as God's people and deserve to sit at the "table of bounty." I have always contended that it is wrong to blame people for being poor without acknowledge the systems the perpetuate poverty. History teaches us that such chasm inevitably leads to social revolution if not corrected.

The third and final challenge is the lack of inspirational leadership. I believe that the greatest need we have as a people is **INSPIRATION**. Bahamians need to be inspired. We need a cause that summons all Bahamians throughout the length and breadth of the Bahamas to tap into their potentiality, creativity and intelligence. For too long, we have elected leaders who are more interested in maintaining the status quo and implementing programs to appease short term needs. Moreover, the political tribalism and



petty politics we engage in are stifling the growth of our country as so many Bahamians who have so much to offer are punished for political affiliation. We are too small for such rancor. What we do need are courageous leaders with vision and big plans to make the Bahamas the best country in the world. It was inspirational leadership that transform Singapore and China into two the most successive countries in a 30 year span. I think that part of the problem we have in our country is that we have made those in politics the sum total of leadership. We know this to be a problem because over the last 20 years we have changed political parties every election

cycle. The time has come, I believe for new paradigm of Bahamian leadership to emerge; one that will usher us into the "Promised Land" and we must embrace it as it comes. As I conclude, I invite us to think about the words on the Coat of Arms this 46th Independence: Forward, Upward, Onward, Together. These words my fellow Bahamians call us to: Progressive Collectivism. They call us to make progress together. For the Bahamas to be what God has called it to be, each of us must do our part. Such mandate calls us to put country before self and strive for the greater good for all. Again: Happy Independence!

A Message from Bishop Ros L. Davis

46th Independence of the Bahamas

Time to Fight Back

1 Samuel 17:1 -3

Now the Philistine gathered together their armies to battle...

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered together...

And the Philistines stood on a mountain on one side, and Israel stood on a mountain on the other, and there was a valley between them.

This is a picture of two armies that squared off for war. One army represented the Israel...Jehovah's people, and the other represents the opposite side people of the heathen nation.

God's Israel was virtually attacked by an aggressive giant for forty days. God's people were afraid and trembled daily. On the fourteenth day... there came out a young man, he too was aggressive and fed up with the daily teasing from the giant.

They wasted no time and in short order the two of these champions came



face to face and before one's eye could blink the war was over. Goliath, the giant laid on the ground with David standing over him having his head severed off with his own sword.

As we celebrate our forty-six year of Bahamian Independence we too are at war. We are at war with all that we know to be just and good.

Never before have we seen the blood-bath in the

streets, the assassination of person's character, the low moral standard of the Bahamian people, and low disregard for those in authority!

This war is not our war. We call on you to rise up and receive the Word of the Lord and be aware that what we are experiencing is good seeking to get our attention to trust Him so we may become winners... God will see us through.

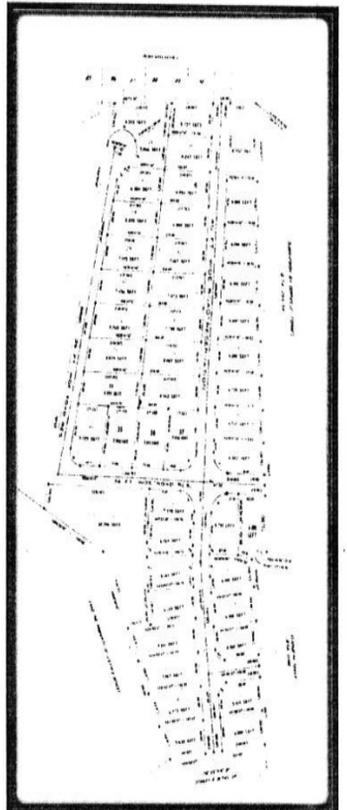
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AN INDEPENDENCE LETTER FROM BISHOP DELTON FERNANDER

President of the Bahamas Christian Council

My Brothers and Sisters

We have come to our 46th year of nationhood, and we have much to be grateful for. God has blessed us with freedoms and privileges as citizens of The Bahamas that many around the world can only dream of and work toward. The celebration of our independence is the opportune time to reflect on how far we have come and how much we have yet to do on our leg of this relay called life.

Bahamians, we cannot take for granted what we have, what those who came before us toiled and sacrificed to leave at our disposal. What we enjoy today did not come freely but cost those who offered themselves for public service at a price. We cannot be the generation that destroys all that has been provided for us. Bahamians of the future and the past are counting on us to carry the baton firm in our hands with the understanding of its importance and the man-

date which it symbolizes.

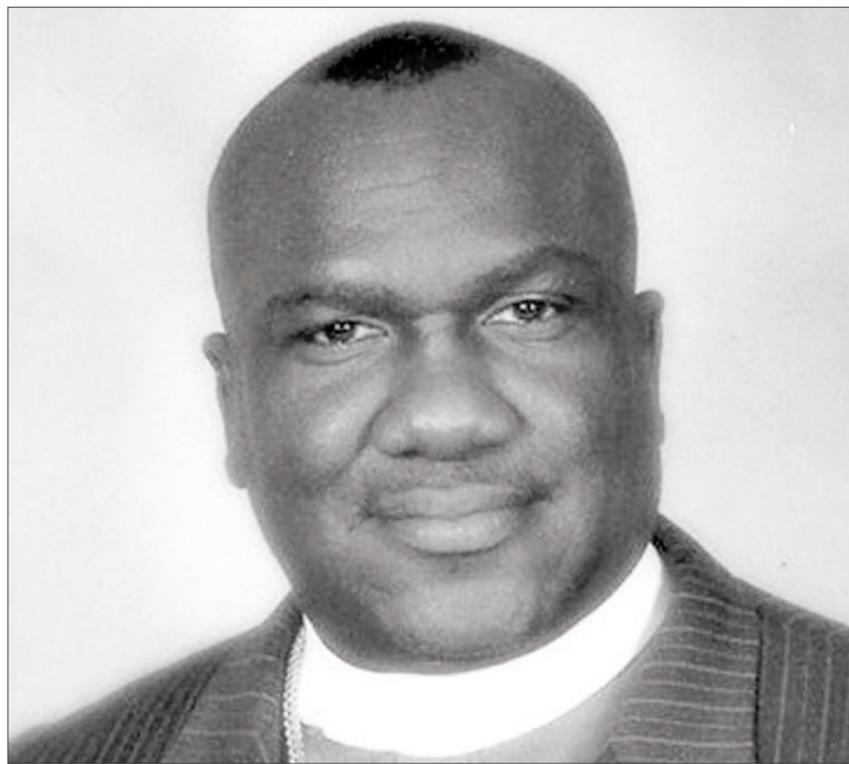
The theme chosen for this year's celebrations, 'United We Stand Bahamas...Together We Can', reflects precisely what must be done in order for us to move forward as a nation. We must unite in the common goal of positive, sustainable national development of this country and its citizens, knowing that, that strength of our unity will propel us forward.

Many of us take for granted that the Bahamas we know and love today will remain no matter what negativity we bring to the table. This, of course, is not the case. The lives that we live and the country in which we live them requires the effort, unity and partnership of all sectors of this society to not only survive but to thrive.

It is not by chance or happenstance that we were born in the beautiful Bahamas. God in his infinite wisdom knew exactly what our country needed

and it is my belief that he placed within us everything that we need for The Bahamas to flourish. We must be prepared to offer ourselves to public service not only in politics and governance but in all parts of our communities to ensure that we do our part to build this nation. If we continue to stand aside, others will have the power to dictate what is to be Bahamian and we will find ourselves watching as what we have been given is systematically taken from us.

As we press forward toward our fiftieth year of independence, we must rededicate ourselves to citizenship in its truest form. We must resolve to develop our country as a whole including our family islands and those who still inhabit them. We must resolve to establish the ways and means by which more Bahamians can own a piece of this country. We must resolve that more Bahamians must become meaningful-



ly involved in our economy. We must resolve that certain aspects of our growth and development is above partisan politics. We must resolve that God is the head of this nation and that we believe that we can achieve anything

through Him who strengthens us.

I know that God loves our country, and each and every Bahamian. I have faith that we will find our way back to that path that leads us to the furtherance of our common loftier

goal. It is my prayer that God will continue to protect and guide us as we move forward as a nation. May God bless the Commonwealth of the Bahamas.

Bishop Delton Fernander

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