



**MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER
THE RT. HON. FREUNDEL J. STUART
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE 49TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
INDEPENDENCE OF BARBADOS**

Fellow Barbadians,

I greet you once again as we celebrate the completion of 49 years of nationhood. We thank God for the guidance He has given us ever since we embarked on this journey on the 30th day of November, 1966. His bountiful blessings have been a source of continuing strength and inspiration to us during our 49 years as a nation.

Whether we speak of Barbados in terms of its economy, in terms of its society or in terms of its politics, as a nation we have been able to make significant strides. We have seen Barbados transformed and the lives of its people enriched by the changes which our elevation to nationhood brought with it.

Before we became a nation, our economy was largely dependent on sugar cane agriculture. Today, not only have we diversified our agricultural sector, but also we have been able to build to maturity two new sectors: tourism and international business and financial services. We are now embarked on the building of two additional sectors: the cultural industries sector and the renewable energy sector. Throughout our period as a nation, we have continued to support our very important manufacturing sector, a reliable pillar of the local economy.

Before nationhood, ours was an uncoordinated and sometimes unresponsive social sector. Forty-nine years later, we can feel proud of having one of the most

sophisticated social safety nets in this hemisphere. Our achievements in education and health continue to claim both the respect and the admiration of countries in our hemisphere and beyond. The provision we have been able to make for the aged and the differently able segments of our population has marked us out as a humane and highly civilised people.

While we still have some way to go, we have been able to register the successes I have mentioned all within the maintenance of a strong and reliable democratic framework which has always acknowledged as the preamble to our Constitution reminds us "that men and institutions remain free only when freedom is founded

upon respect for moral and spiritual values and the rule of law”.

When from time to time, we have been faced with the challenge of events, we have not allowed ourselves to be overwhelmed. We have instead confronted our challenges with faith, with courage and with resolve, confident always that our resourcefulness and resilience as a people would see us through.

At no stage during our journey as a nation have our people, whether young, middle-aged or old had any reason to lose faith in the future. Hope is still very much alive in Barbados. Our young people continue to live in a society which abounds with opportunities for the

realisation of their aspirations. I invite our young people, therefore, to resist the many unhelpful distractions by which they are bombarded daily and to take full advantage of what our society offers for their betterment.

Fellow Barbadians, for the last 49 years, we have been responsible for both our domestic and our foreign affairs; we have had our own national anthem; we have had our own flag; we have had our own national pledge. The title of our Head of State was changed from Governor to that of Governor General; the title of our Head of Government was changed from Premier to that of Prime Minister. These are all the accoutrements of nationhood and have served us very well over the last forty-nine years.

As we embark on the journey to the celebration of 50 years of independence, however, we must make the transition from nationhood to real independence. Decolonization remains incomplete until there is complete decolonization of the mind. This requires us to realise that we have to take the lead in shaping our own future; that no one anywhere owes Barbados a living. It requires us to realise that what Barbados becomes over the next fifty years will depend on how hard we are prepared to work, what sacrifices we are prepared to make, what standards we are prepared to set and to what core values we are prepared to subscribe.

Genuine independence will involve our reaching that stage of maturity where we respect, without hesitation or misgiving, what we produce whether spiritual or material. The wide range of artefacts of our manufacturers are as good as can be found anywhere in the world. When we remain faithful to the pursuit of excellence in every area of our lives, the creations of our artistes whether performers, writers, visual artists, sculptors, singers, indeed, our whole range of cultural creations, are as good as those in any other part of the world. We must put behind us, therefore, the belief that as long as a creation has originated abroad, by that fact itself, that creation is superior to what originates here in Barbados. We do not claim to be superior to others but we are not inferior

either. We are the equals of the best wherever they can be found.

Real independence requires us also to see ourselves not only as takers from the world beyond the shores of Barbados, but also as worthy contributors to that world. We can help to enrich the treasury of human civilization. Our Diaspora continues to help to present the image of Barbados to the world in those far-flung areas where they are ordinarily resident.

As Barbadians we have not only a society and an economy to protect, but also we have a total way of life that makes us uniquely Barbadian. Barbados was never a Grant-Aided Colony, nor were we ever a Crown Colony. We always

looked after our own upkeep up to the time of our nationhood. We have continued on that path for the last 49 years. For that reason our national motto has been "Pride and Industry". Ours has been "a pride that makes no wanton boast of what it has withstood", but has been a pride "that binds our hearts from coast to coast, the pride of nationhood".

As we resolve, therefore, to make the transition from nationhood to real independence, I think we can best do so by looking backward, by looking inward, and by looking forward. Let us look backward to see those features of Barbadian life which we have lost and need to reclaim. Let us look inward to see those features of Barbadian life that we need urgently to discard. Let us look forward to

see those features of Barbadian life which we have not lost and need, at all costs, to retain.

But our efforts as a people will all come to naught if we forget to look upward to God, on whose strength, on whose inspiration, and on whose guidance our success as a nation will continue to depend over the next 50 years and beyond.

Barbados is our nation. Let us do everything in our power to make it the treasure of the world. Happy Independence to you all!