



Message Delivered by
The Rt. Hon. Freundel J. Stuart, QC, MP,
Prime Minister of Barbados
on the Occasion of the 51st Anniversary of Independence
November 30, 2017

Fellow Barbadians, I feel honoured to be able to address you once again on this the 51st Anniversary of the Independence of Barbados.

When I addressed you last year, Barbados had just completed one full year of the celebration of its Golden Jubilee as an independent nation. It was also a year of deep reflection.

The Barbados at Fifty study, which was commissioned by the 50th Anniversary Secretariat and carried out by the Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies, has sought to answer the three questions which I posed to the nation at the launch of the 50th Anniversary celebrations. That study has revealed the deep and abiding love which Barbadians have for their country.

It has revealed also that, despite the many changes which have taken place in the environment in which we operate, our people continue to attach great importance to those core values that have made us strong throughout our history.

Ours is a small country which belongs to the family of Small Island Developing States. We have never allowed our small size, however, to shape our view of what it is possible for us to attempt or to achieve. Therein is the secret of the impact we have been able to make on the world beyond Barbados.

Whether in sport, in the arts, in literature, in entertainment, in the world of ideas, or in areas such as health, education, and the environment and whether in the region, in the hemisphere or in the

world beyond, Barbados has shown always an enviable capacity to lead. That has been the story of the last fifty-one years.

That story cannot be properly understood, however, if we do not remind ourselves of those values that have made our successes possible. Our national anthem traces our achievements through times of plenty and times of need. Barbados has known both of these states, and the character of our nation has been shaped by the capacity of our men, our women and our children to manage both plenty and need.

Ernst Schumacher, who delivered the first Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture on the 10th Anniversary of our Independence in 1976, issued the timely reminder that economic development is something much wider and deeper than economics or econometrics.

The roots of economic development, he says, lie outside the economic sphere in education, in organization, in discipline, and beyond that, in political independence and a national consciousness of self-reliance.

Let us resist, therefore, the tendency to treat present challenges of debt and deficit as the measure of our country. The measurement of our progress as a people has never been purely in terms of money or material gains. Our image in the world has primarily been associated with our character and it is that character that has sustained us as a nation, both in times of plenty and in times of need.

People remain at the centre of our concept of development. So as we work through present challenges, and seek to recapture the essence of what it is to be a Barbadian, let us ensure that the strength of this nation's true character continues to shine for all the world to see.

The world in which Barbados celebrates its 51st Anniversary as a nation continues to be haunted by dizzying change and the uncertainty which change, even in the best of times, always engenders. A constant feature of the history of our country has been that much of what we have been able to do here has depended on what was happening outside of Barbados in the economies of our main trading partners – the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the CARICOM region. That reality is not going to change anytime soon.

We cannot determine how the owners of the world's material wealth allocate or otherwise dispose of that wealth. As a people, Barbadians can, however, mobilize and fully exploit those vast reserves of inner wealth which we have always been known to possess. I speak of self-confidence, a robust determination to succeed, a belief in hard work, pride as a people, an abiding trust in God, and the desire of Barbadians for the achievement of excellence in all that we do.

It is these reserves of inner wealth that have made the difference whenever we have had to confront and manage challenges. It is these reserves that have ensured that we triumphed over difficulties whenever they have arisen. It is these reserves that have kept alive our capacity to hope and to have an unshakeable faith in the future.

That Barbados has done well as an independent nation, no one will deny. What we have been able to achieve, represents battles fought and won. But we cannot live our lives in the past. "Life goes not backward, nor tarries with yesterday." We have now to ensure that we protect past achievements, in a spirit of thanksgiving, while we concentrate on building a sunlit future.

We can enhance our chances of creating that future if together as Barbadians we continue to pursue the creation of an inclusive society that is peaceful, productive and stable; if together as Barbadians we continue to promote commitment to democratic values, so that as many people as possible can have a say in the moulding of their destiny; if together as Barbadians we continue to preserve our belief in fundamental human rights at the core of which is respect for our many individual differences.

I am confident that, God going before us, these goals are well within our capacity to achieve and that, buoyed up by the words of our national anthem, we can continue to proudly "*write our names on history's page with expectations great, strict guardians of our heritage, firm craftsmen of our fate*". Every Barbadian has an important role to play in the building of our nation!

I take this opportunity to wish a Blessed and Happy Independence to all Barbadians and those who reside with us!