

Independence Message 2006

By His Excellency Sir Daniel Williams, GCMG, QC

Governor General

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An anniversary is usually an occasion for some rejoicing. If it is a birthday, or a wedding anniversary we thank God for another year because we have no guarantee on life. At this our thirty second anniversary of Independence we have much for which we ought to be thankful. We have survived two Hurricanes in one year, the country is already recovering from those disasters and there is every indication that we will rebuild better.

This year of Independence is certainly one for reflection after those two traumas. On reflection we can easily conclude that we have made substantial material progress. For example we can see bigger houses and motor vehicles, the number of secondary schools have greatly increased, there are many more graduate teachers, the National College has advanced in leaps and bounds over the last two decades. We have seen many hotels built within that period as well as we have seen sports facilities expanded including in particular the Queen Park Sports Stadium.

We were progressing quite confidently when Hurricane Ivan struck us with a vengeance and destroyed the greater part of what we had constructed, and Emily was successful in opening some of the partially cured wounds that Ivan had inflicted on us.

Although there are people who have not yet been properly housed and others whose homes are not yet completely restored, I believe that who suffered will receive some help. Grenada today can be proud of its material recovery. However, I must draw this strong contrast between the material successes of our people and our peace and happiness. We find all is not well with how we behave towards each other. I recall a decade or two before our Independence, relatives and friends were friendlier with each other, fewer incidences of violent crimes of robbery, burglary and of people insulting each other; we cannot continue along the path where good and friendly behaviour is lagging behind material successes.

Everyone likes to be kindly treated, if each person is kind to the other person the country will rid itself of all unpleasant confrontations and unhappiness.

The concept of Independence suggests that you will not have to depend on someone for your sustenance. As a small country with limited resources we traditionally received outside economic support. Before Independence it came primarily through Britain, after Independence it came from donor countries and multiple Agencies such as: US Aid, European Union, Canadian Development Agency and the Caribbean Development Bank. Of course most developing countries need that sort of support, and even many developed countries are not as independent as they would wish to be. Among the developed countries some will have oil and gas, while others will have minerals, thus there is a certain measure of inter-dependence even among the developed countries.

When we were struck by the two recent Hurricanes our economic independence was really shattered. To appreciate the extent of the devastation, the loss to Grenada was more than the total earnings of every person together with the total production of everything in the country for any two years preceding the Hurricanes.

Our reconstruction is far from complete; but considering how desperate we were immediately after Ivan and how relieved we are today, we should be profound in thanking God, our Grenadian people and our friends regionally and internationally for our recovery. Each of us must now look forward to contribute to the building of a great Grenada.

This our thirty second anniversary is a good time for reviewing our young country, and as we move progressively forward let us endeavour to adopt as a principle, kindness to each other. I have enormous confidence that if in Grenada we accept the doctrine of kindness to each other we will progress from strength to strength and will be a happier and better country.

I wish all the citizens and friends of this country happy Independence.