



CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS AND STAFF ASSOCIATIONS OF BARBADOS

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WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

MEDIA RELEASE

CTUSAB's INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE, 2018



The celebration of the 52nd anniversary of the independence of Barbados comes at a time when the country is facing economic and fiscal challenges, which has forced it to embark on a structural adjustment programme. The contraction being experienced in the economy and the consequential social fallout which has been propelled by the retrenchment programmes initiated in both the public and private sector, have placed a damper on the expressions of joy that are usually associated with the annual independence celebration.

Notwithstanding the current economic and fiscal challenges facing the nation, Barbadians can be proud of the progress and development which the country has made since gaining independence from Britain in 1966. **It is to the credit of the small island developing state with an open economy and little natural resources, continued to compete favourably on the global market.**

As Barbadians we must be proud of the fact that this country has and continues to punch above its weight. As a people we ought to be conscious of the contribution of the human resources to the level of national development. Barbados is known for well-educated, industrious and dedicated workers. These attributes of the Barbadian workers have served the interest of Barbadians, as they have led to the opening of the corridors of employment for its nationals in the global marketplace.

Against the backdrop of the current ailing economy, Barbadians must draw on their resilience for which they are known, if the country is to successfully respond to the current challenges confronting the nation. The opportunity presents itself for Barbadians to stand up and take individual and collective responsibility in helping to rescue and shape the economic destiny of the future.

As an independent people, we are encouraged to see independence beyond the narrow confines of political independence. It is important that the people of Barbados understand that political independence is founded on economic independence. The move to empower Barbadians at this time, must therefore be directed towards ensuring that ownership of local capital is vested in the hands of average Barbadians, instead of being concentrated in foreign hands and local elite groups; whose sole interest is the exploitation of the nation.

Within the context of the prevailing circumstances, Barbadians ought to come to grips with the fact that they have a responsibility and a commitment to shaping the economic independence of Barbados.

Economic independence will only be achieved if the control of the wealth of the nation is vested in the majority of the citizens. At this time of the nation's development, the trade union movement calls on government to pursue a policy of the engagement of the Barbadian workers, through the placing of greater emphasis on promoting local ownership of resources and the means of production. A commitment to promoting share ownership must be seen as a strategy towards achieving this end.

Having achieved political enfranchisement in the right to vote, followed by political independence in 1966, access to free education and social services, the labour movement strongly believes that the circle of independence remains incomplete until such time that economic empowerment through local ownership of resources and means of production is achieved.

As Barbadians celebrate this 52nd anniversary under a cloud of economic and financial doom; where retrenchment, layoffs and unemployment generally, will contribute to economic hardship and deprivation, the Congress of Trade Unions and Staff Associations of Barbados (CTUSAB), urges all Barbadians to reflect on how the past economic and social struggles of pre and post-independence were overcome.

It is the understanding that within the colonial and post-independence period working class Barbadians have had to make numerous sacrifices for the sake of progress. In looking ahead, the resolve should remain that of the will to overcome and achieve; to be engaged and empowered.

Essentially this is not the first nor will it indeed be the last of such challenges. It is however perhaps the first time that the consequences of not overcoming appear to be as dire.

The Trade Union movement has always been in the vanguard of legislation that has brought real and fundamental changes to the social landscape of Barbados from the proclamation of Universal Adult suffrage to education, health care and land redistribution. Let us resolve to face this crisis head on, even as we learn lessons from those who have passed this way before.

The fortunes of working-class Barbadians rest on the willingness to innovate, to be entrepreneurial and to work in partnership and/or collaboratively, if they are to achieve the quest of controlling ownership and economic enfranchisement.

CTUSAB salutes the nation on this its 52nd anniversary of independence.



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CTUSAB