

The True Status of Independence

The achievement and celebration of independence by any nation is something that its citizens ought to be proud about. They should however be quick to recognize that the achievement of independence is to be seen beyond the realm of political independence. Independence has been traditionally described as the complete freedom of control or influence by another. In distilling this definition, it is best expressed as the attainment of sovereignty and self-government, where the nation retains the right to govern, legislate and make its own laws. It can be argued that irrespective of the attainment of sovereignty and self-government, the real meaning of independence lies within the embrace of the democratization of a nation.

As the nation of Barbados celebrates its jubilee anniversary of independence, it is expected that this would be an appropriate time for reflection and the completing of a full assessment of achievements recorded to date. Founded on the premise that the democratization of the nation becomes a fundamental part of its preserve, it becomes important for the nation to examine the extent to which the practice is observed. It is to be argued that democratization cannot be limited to political enfranchisement which is enshrined to the right to vote, but goes beyond that to being part of the wider decision making process in all spheres of life, including that of work. It must also be advanced that the process of democratization extends to include educational empowerment and the attainment of economic equality.

In reflecting on the years of independence, it has been touted that there has been the removal of the subjugation from a colonial power. Whereas this is seemingly so, the question remains as to whether the nation has removed itself from the trapping of the colonial powers. Politically, there is still the recognition of the Governor General, the Head of State, as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen of England. It is a fact that many of the old colonial political systems and practices are still evident in practice. Additionally, there is the archaic bureaucratic administrative system and practices which remain part of everyday life.

It is important that every independent nation takes pride in its ability to assume a state of sovereignty, where the government has complete control over making and executing laws and foreign affairs. This apart, a totally independent nation must be in a position to satisfy its self that it has the inability to be economical strong, so as to satisfy the needs of its people; including the feeding of the nation. There is no getting away by a nation with

limited resources, from living in a state of interdependence where external forces can by way of political decision making, dictate and shape the course of the nation's destiny. Consequently, it becomes important for every independent nation to pay close attention to improving its self sufficiency. The reality is that the dependency syndrome which characterizes small island developing states will tend to comprise that status they enjoy as truly independent nations.

In putting the meaning of independence into perspective, the conclusion can be reached that it might mean different things to different people. For Barbadians it supposedly means charting the way forward for the political, social and economic development of the nation. In forging ahead to attain further positive outcomes, it will require the continued commitment of citizens to achieving growth and development.

Independence can be considered as a state of mind. The will of a people to influence positive and meaningful change can therefore make a difference to the change to the state of the level of independence. As a nation, this can be achieved. To this end, it requires a reaffirmation to the upholding of the national motto of pride and industry.