2016 INDEPENDENCE REMARKS… “HONOURING OUR PEOPLE’S EXCELLENCE”

MY LORDS MY LADIES,  EXCELLENCIES, DEANS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, MARSHALL OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS, FELLOW COLLEAGUES OF THE DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR CORPS, DISTINGUISHED  LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FELLOW BAHAMIANS, BOYS AND GIRLS.

GOOD EVENING, EVERYBODY. ON BEHALF OF DAWNE AND ME WELCOME TO THE 43RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS INDEPENDENCE DAY.

THANK YOU FOR COMING.

FORTY THREE JULYS AGO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS WAS BORN. AT THAT TIME IT WAS ANOTHER WORLD. BUT THAT WORLD WAS ALREADY CHANGING AND SINCE THEN, THE BAHAMAS HAS MADE MUCH PROGRESS AND HAS CHANGED IMMEASURABLY.

WE HAVE SEEN HOPE FULFILLED – INDEPENDENCE, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, DEMOCRACY DEEPENED, AND THE START OF NEW DEVELOPMENT.

MY HEAVEN ON EARTH, THE BAHAMAS HAS PRODUCED IN ITS HISTORY MANY OUTSTANDING PEOPLE. WE HAVE PRODUCED THE FIRST BLACK ACTOR TO WIN THE ACADEMY AWARD IN SIDNEY POITIER, SEVERAL RHODE SCHOLARS, PHILOSOPHERS, THINKERS, STATESMEN, WRITERS AND WORLD CLASS ATHLETES…YOU WILL FIND IN THE BAHAMAS BEAUTIFUL STUNNING WOMEN, GOOD LOOKING MEN AND ABOVE AVERAGE CHILDREN….JUST LIKE MY LITTLE “NOT SO PERFECT” SELYNA. AND SO THIS YEAR WE ARE HONOURING OUR PEOPLES EXCELLENCE.

WE ALSO CELEBRATE ALL OF YOU —- THE MEN AND WOMEN AT THE BAHAMAS HIGH COMMISSION, THE BAHAMAS MARITIME AUTHORITY AND THE BAHAMAS TOURIST OFFICE WHO REPRESENT THE BAHAMAS WE LOVE.

FRIENDS, TONIGHT’S CELEBRATION IS THE FIRST OF TWO EVENTS PLANNED THIS YEAR TO OBSERVE THE 43RDANNIVERSARY OF THE BAHAMAS INDEPENDENCE. THE NEXT EVENT IS THE ANNUAL CHORAL EVENSONG AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY ON MONDAY, JULY 11TH AT 5PM AND I WISH TO EXTEND A CORDIAL WELCOME TO ALL TO JOIN US AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY. IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE CHORAL EVENSONG SERVICE, YOU ARE REQUESTED TO BE SEATED BY 4.45PM ON THAT DATE.

THE PREAMBLE TO THE BAHAMAS CONSTITUTION READS: WE THE INHERITORS OF AND SUCCESSORS TO THIS FAMILY OF ISLANDS, RECOGNIZING THE SUPREMACY OF GOD AND BELIEVING IN THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS OF THE INDIVIDUAL, DO HEREBY PROCLAIM IN SOLEMN PRAISE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC SOVEREIGN NATION FOUNDED ON SPIRITUAL VALUES AND IN WHICH NO MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD SHALL EVER BE SLAVE OR BONDSMAN TO ANYONE OR THEIR LABOUR EXPLOITED OR THEIR LIVES FRUSTRATED BY DEPRIVATION, AND DO HEREBY PROVIDE BY THESE ARTICLES THE INDIVISIBLE UNITY AND CREATION UNDER GOD OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS.

THESE ARE NOT SIMPLY WORDS ON AGING PARCHMENT.  THEY ARE THE PRINCIPLES THAT DEFINE US AS A NATION, THE VALUES WE CHERISH AS A PEOPLE, AND THE IDEALS WE STRIVE FOR AS A SOCIETY, EVEN AS WE KNOW THAT WE CONSTANTLY HAVE TO WORK IN ORDER TO PERFECT OUR COMMONWEALTH AND THAT WORK IS NEVER TRULY DONE.

YET ON THIS DAY WE KNOW THAT THE BAHAMAS’ JOURNEY IS NOT SUSTAINED BY THOSE OF US IN THE SERVICE ALONE.  IT MUST BE THE CALLING AND CAUSE OF EVERY BAHAMIAN. WE MUST REMEMBER THAT ALL OF US ARE PARTNERS IN THIS GREAT EFFORT TO BUILD A BETTER BAHAMAS.

SO LET US RESOLVE, AS CITIZENS, TO CARRY ON THAT WORK WHICH BEGAN MORE THAN 40 YEARS AGO.

WE ARE A YOUNG COUNTRY. LET US RENEW OUR COMMITMENT…IN THE WORDS OF OUR NATIONAL MOTTO; “FORWARD, UPWARD, ONWARD TOGETHER.” SO HAPPY INDEPENDENCE DAY EVERYBODY… GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU AND GOD BLESS THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS.

AND WITH THAT, LET ME AGAIN THANK ALL OF YOU FOR HONOURING US WITH YOUR PRESENCE.

ON BEHALF OF MY WIFE, DAWNE, THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS…AS A SYMBOL OF OUR ENDURING FRIENDSHIP WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM, I ASK YOU TO RAISE YOUR GLASSES IN A TOAST TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN...THE QUEEN!