



GOVERNMENT OF BARBADOS

FEATURE ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

**THE RT. HON. FREUNDEL J. STUART, Q.C., M.P.
PRIME MINISTER**

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CENTRAL BANK OF BARBADOS' 45TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
AWARDS GALA AND DINNER**

“HONOURING WOMEN AND MEN OF EXCELLENCE”

**AT
THE BARBADOS CONCORDE EXPERIENCE**

**ON
SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2017**

- Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, the Honourable Christopher Sinckler, M.P.
- Acting Governor, Mr. Cleviston Haynes and Mrs. Haynes
- Head of the Civil Service and Permanent Secretary in the Prime Minister's Office and other senior public officials
- Members of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Barbados
- Former Governors Mr. Calvin Springer and Dr. Marion Williams
- Deputy Governor Bank of Jamaica, Mr. Livingstone Morrison
- Distinguished Awardees
- Management and staff of the Central Bank of Barbados
- Specially invited guests
- Ladies and gentlemen

I feel more honoured than I can describe to have been invited to address the Central Bank of Barbados on the occasion of its 45th anniversary, having also had the privilege of addressing it on the 40th anniversary in the month of May 2012. It is always important for milestones like this to be celebrated, since anniversaries allow us both to look back at achievements registered and lessons to be learnt, and also to look ahead to the challenges to be faced and the future to be embraced.

The theme of this evening's engagement is "The Central Bank of Barbados at 45 - Celebrating Excellence, Stability, Innovation and Leadership" and this evening's event is for "Honouring Women and Men of Excellence". The location at which, and the ambience in which, this event is being held this evening, the Barbados Concorde Experience – home of the acclaimed British Airways Concorde or Alpha Echo for short – is itself a living example of the kinds of Excellence of which this evening is a proud celebration. I should like to remind you that Barbados is one of only five countries in which the Concorde has been laid to rest!

It helps, I think, to go back in time to recall the circumstances of the birth of the Central Bank of Barbados. The Federal experiment had been tried in 1958, and collapsed in 1962, leaving Barbados in a miniature currency union with seven other small islands. It was soon increasingly felt that Barbados would experience a faster pace of economic progress if it launched out on its own. After a succession of attempts at bringing eight small islands together in another but smaller federation, the Government of the day took the decision that Barbados should proceed to independence in 1966. As part of the post-Independence project, the Central Bank was later set up in 1972 to manage the issuance of a new Barbados currency, among other things.

Today, the Central Bank of Barbados regulates the issue, supply and availability of money; acts as banker to Government and commercial banks; advises Government on monetary and fiscal matters; manages the island's foreign exchange reserves; provides accurate and timely statistical data to Government and to the public; manages the Public Debt; and supervises the operations of all financial institutions, especially the commercial banks.

These functions require a high degree of discipline; a body of specialized knowledge; and a corps of committed workers; most of all, outstanding leadership.

The Central Bank of Barbados has been led over the years by a galaxy of fine Governors in the persons of Sir Courtney Blackman from 1972 to 1987; Dr. Kurleigh King from 1987 to 1992; Mr. Calvin Springer from 1992 to 1997; Mr. Winston Cox, from 1997 to 1999; Dr. Marion Williams, from 1999-2009; and Dr. DeLisle Worrell from 2009 to 2017.

These are all eminent and distinguished Barbadians who have given stellar service to our country. Against sometimes daunting odds, they have succeeded in laying the groundwork for the observance of the high standards of research and service excellence that have been associated with the Bank from its establishment down to the present time.

Into the shoes of his distinguished predecessors has now stepped Mr. Cleviston Haynes, Acting Governor, who, in the short time that he has occupied the post, and supported by a staff that knows no standard other than that of excellence, has demonstrated that he is more than equal to the task of raising the gaze of the Bank to new and hitherto unimagined horizons.

Further, the Boards that have provided guidance to the Governors of the Bank since its existence have comprised men and women of vision and resolve, and I thank them for their contribution to this area of nation-building. What they have given will forever adorn and enrich the annals of the Central Bank of Barbados.

I should like to extend my sincere congratulations, and that of the nation, to the Central Bank of Barbados on its 45 years of outstanding service. In these 45 years, in common with Central Banks the world over, it has had to cope with a range of storms both internally and externally derived. The measure of its capacity has been the proven ability to sail through sometimes rough seas, to negotiate sudden and unpredictable storms, and to reach harbour safely with its reputation undefiled and enhanced.

The Central Bank of Barbados is well known for its independence, its reliable economic policy advice, its regular publications and press releases, the quality of its economic research, and the wealth of financial data it generates and makes available in print, online, and more recently, in its videos.

The Bank has the capacity and competence to make economic forecasts and to discuss these with confidence with international financial institutions. So, for example, when back in 1991, the country was going through a major crisis, the consensus was that everything possible would have to be done to defend the exchange rate, and the country was made aware that sacrifices would have to be made. The Bank therefore spearheaded the construction of a major home-grown structural adjustment package for discussion with social partners and ultimately with the International Monetary Fund.

Central Banks are creatures of the societies that produce them and therefore must change their approaches to reflect the environment in which they operate at any given time. But they often retain, of necessity, some traditional core functions.

Central Banks that operate in countries with floating exchange rates may have to focus differently in particular circumstances from countries that do not have a floating exchange rate.

Since Barbados has a fixed exchange rate, which we need to defend at all costs, our working assumption is that maintenance of a healthy level of reserves, and prudent management of the fiscal deficit, are vital to facilitate growth and to maintain confidence.

In Barbados, with the level of reserves always a matter for especial consideration, a strategy of disciplined management of exchange control has evolved under the careful guidance of the Central Bank.

Over the years, especially given the recent financial challenges of the last 20 years, the maintenance of financial stability has emerged as a critical need for every country. In larger and better resourced countries, it is possible to establish a new dedicated institution separate and distinct from a Central Bank to supervise the commercial banks and other financial institutions. But in small countries like ours, only the Central Bank tends to have that capability, or to be able to develop that capability at short notice.

The scourge of drug trafficking and international terrorism has led governments and international financial institutions to fight drug trafficking and terrorism through anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing strategies. This has resulted in another layer of financial regulation often facilitated by the Central Bank.

In short, as the international financial architecture has been forced to change in response to crisis after crisis, Central Banks have been called upon to transform themselves in response to such crises.

The Central Bank of Barbados has evolved and transformed itself seamlessly when required so to do by changed objective conditions in the national, regional or international financial environment.

Even as it has tended to the nation's financial needs, and so effectively, the Central Bank of Barbados, on its own initiative, has established a strong presence in the cultural area. The creation of the Frank Collymore Hall, some 31 years ago, was a major achievement that reflected vision and foresight.

The Central Bank of Barbados is not the first institution of its kind to establish a hall that facilitates the performing arts. It is perhaps, though, the only institution of its kind to influence to the extent that it has the landscape of a country, through its many facilities and programmes, all of the highest quality.

The sheer variety of the Central Bank's programmes and events, ranging from the Crop Over Visual Arts Exhibition, to the Youth Pan Project to the Schools Programme, to the Research Department's Annual Review Seminar, to the Domestic Financial Institutions Conference, to the Distinguished Visiting Fellowship Programme, to name a few, is evidence both eloquent and moving that the Bank has been imbued with a strong sense of mission and of social responsibility from its inception.

The Sir Winston Scott Memorial Lecture, perhaps its premier event, is as good an example as any of the Bank's determination to exercise thought leadership by inviting international experts and Barbadians that have excelled internationally, to share their insights, in the presence of an informed local audience every year.

Similarly, the Bank continues to contribute to the Beautification of the Bridgetown area by appropriate maintenance, renovation and by development of its facilities. These facilities now include, not only the headquarters building and the Frank Collymore Hall, but also, in recent times, the Exchange Museum and the Church Village Green. All of these facilities project beauty, excellence, class, and that pride and industry to which we are all encouraged to aspire.

The Central Bank's vision for itself is that it must be a Centre of Excellence. Those outside of the Bank, who just observe its functioning from a distance, often take this ideal for granted. The Central Bank, though, always aims high, sets ennobling standards for itself, and, in the discharge of its routine functions, makes paradox look like platitude.

The Bank, notably, has been able to get its annual report completed and in the hands of the Minister of Finance by March 31, 44 times in 45 years.

This reassuringly consistent performance over four decades reflects insightful and visionary leadership as well as the stick-to-it-iveness of an accomplished and capable team made up of competent, loyal and dedicated staff. Tonight we will honour staff that have been here at the Central Bank for over 30 years, some for nearly forty years: four decades! Now that is indeed incredible.

Tonight's awardees run the gamut from those tasked with protecting our people, to economists, IT specialists, human resource practitioners, and regulators. The awardees have spent a virtual lifetime at the Central Bank. They have made a significant contribution to the building of the Bank and they remain loyal and passionate about the institution, its work, its philosophy and its ethos of excellence as reflected in their output. I congratulate each and every one of this Group of Awardees.

One might ask why would you want to spend almost 40 years working for the same employer. That length of service must speak to personal stability and an unwavering commitment to national development; it speaks also to the excellence of existing working conditions; to the high level of camaraderie in the workplace; and to the relevance of the job to national needs. It undoubtedly means that something good is going on at the Central Bank of Barbados.

At this juncture of the Central Bank's existence, I urge the Governor and his staff to continue on their trajectory of excellence, and to continue also to set a fine example for others in the nation to follow. Let me encourage you to keep pressing on, because to date your labour has not been in vain. You are an inspiration to Barbados and may God continue to richly bless the Central Bank, its Governor, its Board, and every one of its dedicated employees.

Thank you.