

Remarks by

Rt. Hon. Perry G. Christie MP

Leader of the Official Opposition

Leader of the Progressive Liberal Party

*On the occasion of the retirement of
The Governor General, H.E. Arthur D. Hanna*

Government House

Tuesday, 13th April, 2010

SALUTATIONS...

From the moment that he returned to The Bahamas having completed his formal education more than fifty years ago, Arthur Dion Hanna has remained in the forefront of public life, a powerful national icon with a truly enriching and transformative impact on what The Bahamas has become today and what this country will become in a future built upon solid foundations that were laid with the major help of his hand.

He was and remains the foremost advocate for the idea that we should ‘build this country with our own hands’ ...

He was a fighter for freedom from the social injustice of his day;

He was a champion for the advent of Majority Rule;

He was an ideological beacon in the march toward National Independence;

He was the Architect of Bahamianization; and

He was a Field Marshall in the forces of the Social Revolution.

On occasions such as this, one tries to visualise how future generations will assess the legacy of national heroes like His Excellency Arthur Dion Hanna. My own view is that his legacy rests on three pillars that were undoubted and unchanging throughout. The pillars of Arthur Hanna’s legacy are Ideological Purity; Integrity; and Compassion.

Firstly, he was the most ideologically focused of them all in his times. He based his political actions on a philosophy that was essentially nationalistic. He had enormous confidence in the Bahamian people and their capacity to govern themselves. It was for this reason that he emerged as the most passionately and intellectually committed proponent of National Independence for The Bahamas.

This same ideological purity also explains why he was so deeply committed to the policy of Bahamianization, with which his name will forever be indelibly associated. If there were some who at times thought he was too uncompromising in his positions, it was because he had an exceptionally clear vision of what he thought was best for The Bahamas and would not allow anyone or anything to deflect him from transforming that vision into reality.

The second pillar of Arthur Hanna's legacy that future generations will celebrate is the unblemished integrity that characterised His Excellency's entire career in public life. He gave unselfishly and incorruptibly of his time and talents to the building of a new nation. Through it all, he was a standard-bearer for the absolute importance of honesty and selflessness in the discharge of public duty and governance. In this regard, he stands as a role model for present and future generations of politicians and other public servants to follow.

As the third pillar of this great legacy, Arthur Dion Hanna will be remembered for his compassion, which informed his tireless championship of the poor, the downtrodden, the powerless and the dispossessed. His compassion has been memorialised in that famous line of his that has, perhaps, been repeated more than any other line in the modern political vocabulary. The line that speaks of "wiping every tear from every eye".

All that he ever did in public life was ultimately dedicated towards the elimination of human misery and suffering, wherever he found it in this land he so much loves and for which he has given so much.

I am happy that for virtually the entire term of Your Excellency in this place, you have had the companionship of your dear late wife Beryl Hanna, who not only stood shoulder to shoulder with you as a powerful surrogate, but was herself an extraordinary national activist, with her own place of honour as a patriot and major contributor to the building of The Bahamas.

Arthur Dion Hanna is truly one of the greatest Bahamians of all time. He is a national hero of the first order and he deserves to be revered and remembered by all Bahamians living today; and by all generations to come.

Finally, I must say that I am personally indebted to His Excellency for the advice inspiration support and example over many long years... as is doubtless the case for many others in the political arena on both sides of the political divide.

Excellency, I wish you Godspeed, good health and happiness in your retirement.

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