



REMARKS

BY

**THE HON. T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.
THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

AT

**BAHAMAS TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL
INSTITUTE GRADUATION CEREMONY**

THURSDAY, 24th JUNE 2010

10:00 AM

SUPERCLUB'S BREEZES, CABLE BEACH

SALUTATION:

Dr. Iva Dahl, Manager, BTVI;

Dr. Leon Higgs, Director of Higher Education & Life Long Learning;

Dr. Ted Sofianos; International Operations Specialist/Director, Center for Business & Industry Economic Development Daytona State College;

Dr. Charles Carroll, Senior Vice President, Planning Development & Institutional Effectiveness Daytona State College;

Senior Education officials;

Faculty and staff, BTVI;

Distinguished Graduates;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good evening.

It is indeed an honour and privilege to be here to see the faces of you the Bahamian professionals who are preparing to further advance our Nation with the skills you have obtained from this institution.

There are many persons who have been instrumental over the years in bringing The Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute from a vision in 1949, to the road to accreditation and being an internationally recognized organization. These visionaries include: Dr. Claudius Walker, Dr. William Saul, Mr. J. Flint and Mr. Cecil Curling.

I would like to commend Dr. Iva Dahl, under whose leadership BTVI is presently making tremendous strides and steps closer to being internationally recognized accredited body. I also wish to commend our partners in this venture Dr. Ted Sofianos and Dr. Charles Carroll from Daytona State College for their assistance in this historic undertaking. I believe their commitment goes beyond a business relationship and they truly want to see us achieve the objective on transforming BTVI to a world-recognized institution as much we do for the citizens of The Bahamas.

In October 2004, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) emerged from an International Experts Meeting on “Learning for Work, Citizenship and Sustainability” a follow-up to the Second International Congress on Technical and Vocational Education (TVET) held in Seoul, Korea in April 1999 with the understanding that:

...The twenty-first century is a century that will be an era of knowledge, information, and communication. Globalization and the revolution in information and communication technology have signaled the need for a new human-centered development. We have concluded that Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), is an integral component of lifelong learning, and that it has a crucial role to play in this new era as an effective tool to realize the objectives of a culture of peace, environmentally sound sustainable development, social cohesion, and international citizenship.

The United Nations as a body has taken the position that effective technical and vocational education and training is the means to addressing the Millennium Development Goals which include: reducing by fifty per cent extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education and gender equity, reducing under-five mortality and maternal mortality, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS, halving the

proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Imagine if Technical and Vocational Education can accomplish these goals for billions of people around the world, what can it do for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas a country of slightly more than 300,000 citizens?

If The United Nations believes that technical and vocational education is the solution to many of the critical problems faced by developing nations, then it is reasonable to assume that it can also be a means by which we in The Bahamas lift ourselves out of our present economic situation.

As early as the 1950's initiatives relating to technical and vocational education and training were implemented to prepare the Bahamian workforce force for these changing times. The National Technical School became the Nassau Technical Institute and offered training in Construction, Electrical and Telecommunications, Engineering, Carpentry and Auto Mechanics. Later in 1956, a programme for waitresses and hotel maids was introduced. If we were do research on the impact on the development of The Bahamas, I am certain that it would indicate that many of our leaders in sectors mentioned earlier have some affiliation with this institution.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is no mere coincidence that much investment and focused is placed in BTVI at this time. The fact is that the Government believes that BTVI must and will play a significant part in our national development. We are of the view that Technical and Vocational Education is the single most

powerful means of improving the quality of life for many of our citizens. It is truly a viable vehicle to “Preparing Our Nation’s Workforce.”

One of the first responses to address the lay-offs in particularly in the tourism and financial sectors was to open the Career Institute at the College of The Bahamas. The Career Institute was designed to train affected workers with skills that would facilitate their re-entry into the job market.

Another measure the Government employed to address this situation was establishing the National Training Initiative, a partnership between the BTVI, The College of The Bahamas and the Ministry of Labour and Social Development. Two hundred and sixteen (216) students enrolled in the programme which enabled them to obtain certification in a number of employable life skills.

Your entry and subsequent graduation from BTVI has put you on track to making a significant difference in our Nation. The fact that you are now equipped with technical and vocational skills gives each and every one the potential to start a business. Each of you has the ability to ultimately become an employer of at least two persons in your business and make a dent in our unemployment rate.

It is very perplexing that you would pursue higher education rather preferring to remain complacent in a safe or familiar job rather than branching out and setting your sights on entrepreneurship and leadership. Too many seekers of higher education are merely seeking a promotion to the next level rather than empowerment. My challenge to you today, BTVI Class of 2010 is to break this trend and become bold in your future endeavours. Stop looking for others to reward you for knowledge; use knowledge to shape your own destiny.

You would have heard the discussions in the media about the various tourism sector projects that will be getting underway in the near future. The question that many are asking – “why do we need such a huge number of foreign workers to execute them? The question that should go along with this – Are there truly sufficient qualified Bahamian skilled workers available to arrest this influx of foreign workers?

No Government wants to deny its citizens employment when it means so much for the buoyancy of the society.

This is perhaps the best time to step out of the box as businesses are downsizing and even the Government has put a freeze on hiring. If you were to drive around this island, you would note that persons are still investing and expanding; they have faith and insight that the future will be brighter and are

preparing for that time. Education and knowledge should give you that optimism that you can succeed despite the prevailing climate.

Graduates the knowledge you have acquired should inspire you to collaborate to open businesses. The possibility exists for the Government to be your client rather your employer.

Another noteworthy thing that I would like to reflect on is this, the fact BVTI is an institution, whose doors then become complacent then become complacent are always open for career and training enhancement. There are many persons throughout our Bahamas who have seen fit to attend BTVI more than once because of the benefits they derive from the courses offered. An individual can enroll in BTVI to do Accounting in twelve weeks and shortly thereafter can can do a course in Barbering, Cosmetology or Marine Outboard Engines.

Although today, you wear your cap and gown reflecting your graduation from BTVI, it does not mean your relationship with BTVI ends. This institution is evolving and the Government has it earmarked to play a pivotal part in preparing the nation's workforce.

You would have heard me in the House of Assembly speaking on The BTVI Bill 2009 which will allow the Institute to restructure and reorganize which in turn will assist in its transformation to a World Class Accredited Organization Known for Innovation, Quality Customer Care and High Standards in preparing adult Bahamians throughout The Archipelago for The World of Work.

The new legal status will also provide more flexibility in the Institution's operation, Staffing decisions and Course Development as it will allow the avenue to address its weaknesses of having little autonomy in decision making as a result of its governance that contributes to its administrative inconsistencies; the

strengthening of industry partnerships through industry involvement in guiding Curricula to ensure the work force have the required skills as well as encouraging financial involvement; addressing the physical structure, i.e. facilities and inadequate (dated) equipment and the maintenance thereof; Administration and Instructional Staff Deficiencies in Technical Education Experience; and addressing student needs, Curricula and Public Relations.

With this future outlined for BTVI, I encourage you to explore other learning opportunities. I admonish you to let your knowledge make you fearless and not powerless as you prepare to make a difference and a contribution to the development of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas.