



**BRIEF REMARKS**

*by*

**T. DESMOND BANNISTER, M.P.,**

**MINISTER OF EDUCATION**

*on the occasion of the:*

*Celebration of the Designation of  
"Farquharson's Journal & Registry of Slaves"  
into The Memory of The World Register*

*at*

**The Department of Archives**

**Mackey Street**

**Nassau, The Bahamas**

**4:30 p.m.**

**26<sup>th</sup>, March 2010**

**Salutations:**

1. Hon. Charles Maynard – Minister of Youth, Sports & Culture
2. Permanent Secretary (MOYSC) – Mr. Archie Nairn
3. Permanent Secretary (MOE) –Mrs. Elma Garraway
4. Dr. Gail Saunders – Former Director General of Heritage
5. Members of the Advisory Council on Public Records
6. Chairs of:
  - Antiquities Monuments & Museums Corporation
  - Clifton Heritage Park, and the
  - National Arts Gallery
7. Other Special Guests
8. Ladies & Gentlemen

**Good Afternoon!**

It is my pleasure to join you today on this historic occasion in celebration of the designation of the Farquharson's Journal and Registry of Slaves of the British Caribbean into The Memory of The World Register. Each person here, I am sure would agree, that acknowledging and recording our past are necessary for us being able to chart a wise course for our forward progression.

The handwritten diary entitled, "Farquharson's Journal and Registry of Slaves of The British Caribbean 1817-1834 (Bahamas, Beliz, Dominica, Jamaica, St. Kitts, Trinidad and Tobago and The United Kingdom), written by Charles Farquharson will now serve as a constant reminder to us of our heritage that has shaped us, of how far we have come as a people, and of our indomitable spirit that has helped us to survive. I am told that this diary speaks to the daily happenings on the Prospect Hill Plantation from 1831 to 1832. No doubt this document will have positive effects as it provides information unique, not only to The Bahamas, but to the region. There is no

doubt that present and future generations may benefit in a most positive way by it.

The Memory of the World Register documents the various heritages of countries all over the world, so as to preserve, protect, and share it. Much information has been lost throughout the years in various parts of the world as a result of destruction, poor housing, and illegal trading. We are indeed honoured and grateful to the International Advisory Committee of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for having seen fit to include the Farquharson Journal as a part of that archive at this time, making it a permanent part of history.

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas has enjoyed a special relationship with UNESCO over the years as they have supported us in the development of our people through education, the promotion of peace, and through the advancement of humanity in general. Through UNESCO's leadership, recommendations, activities and policies, we have undergone much progress in our country, especially in the area of

education. Commonwealth Education Ministers from around the world meet biennially to dialogue and to produce and implement Action Plans that focus on: Distance Education, Tertiary Education, Curriculum Development, Training & Programme Development, Improvement of literacy, numeracy, technical & vocational education, tourism studies, Teacher education, Research opportunities, Evaluation and Accountability measures in education, and Budgeting and finance. These forums allow Education Ministers to network with their peers around the world and with UNESCO's officials, and to gain an understanding of issues that impact education at an international level.

We would all agree that education is a very important factor in the building of our country. Former South African President and civil rights leader, Nelson Mandela once said. ***“Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world.”*** One of the goals of the Government of The Bahamas is to see our small island nation develop through providing each of its citizens equal opportunity to enhance their lives through education,

so that they may make positive contributions. For this reason, we have seen education receive the lion's share of the national budget each year which has always been used to enhance the quality of education and to improve student learning and achievement levels.

For the school year 2009-2010, the Ministry of Education, which has responsibility for approximately one hundred and sixty one (161) schools and just over 50,000 students, decided that to better facilitate the transformation of our educational system, determined focus needed to be placed on basics or the “**Three R's**” which are: *Reading, Writing and Arithmetic*, plus the added values of: *Respect and Responsibility*. With this focus we continue to stress the need for improvement in the areas of literacy and numeracy at all levels. A literate person, as defined by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in a document entitled “Literacy: the Core of Education for All” is: “*One who can engage in all those activities which literacy is required for effective functioning of his group and community and also for enabling him to continue to use reading, writing and*

*calculation for his own and the community's development."*

To help in this fight, we have undertaken certain initiatives such as the hiring of literacy and numeracy aides to work in the classrooms of our public schools. Additionally, there is the "Read to Lead" programme which was launched in 2008 as a joint effort between the Ministry of Education and the United States Embassy, Nassau, to encourage more students to read through having citizens from the community act as volunteer readers. The effort has also spilled over into the adult arena with the "Literacy for Life" television programme which gives adults the opportunity to learn how to read in the comfort of their own homes.

Regional literacy levels have increased according to UNESCO. It has been reported that adult literacy rates in Latin America and the Caribbean are high, due to the overall high level of participation in education, especially in at the secondary and tertiary education levels in those countries. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics shows that Latin America and

the Caribbean are doing very well as compared to other countries in terms of literacy. The Government of The Bahamas, and the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) have collaborated on the initiative known as the Grandfathering Programme, launched in June 2008 to ensure high quality early childhood programmes, for our students, through the training of Daycare and Pre-School providers. As far as numeracy is concerned, the Grade Level Assessment Test (GLAT) for grades 3 and 6 for the school year 2009, has shown that improvement in this area has been slight, but there are still areas of concern as it relates to Mathematical terminology and symbols. With the assistance and guidance of UNESCO, we shall get that much closer to realizing our dream of having a fully literate citizenry.

On the issue of encouraging students to display *respect* and *responsibility* in our schools, we have adopted a zero tolerance to violence in the schools and the general lack of tolerance and accountability as far as behaviour is concerned. We were able to

implement some immediate measures such as: the Revision/Review and stricter implementation of the Safe School Manual; Enforcement of Student ID Card policy to gain entry to schools; Confiscation of cellular phones, ipods, and other electronic devices if brought on to campuses; and the Enforcement of *no gum chewing* policy at school.

The Ministry of Education has also sought to retrain students who cannot function within the regular system by offering them alternative schooling through programmes such as Transitional Alternative Programme for Students (TAPS), Success Ultimately Reassures Everyone (SURE), and Providing Access for Continuing Education (PACE). It is too high a price to pay if we were to neglect or lose even one young mind. Therefore, we continue to uphold our mission which seeks to: *“Provide all persons in The Bahamas an opportunity to receive an education that will equip them with the beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and skills required for work and life in a democratic society, guided by Christian values.”* The battle to reach and to

save all of our children through education as UNESCO has mandated us to do rages on.

In other areas of our society, we still have much work to do, however, with the continuous evaluation and assessment of programmes and initiatives, and in remaining abreast of world standards and changes, we will soon realize major transformations as we have already made small gains with the strategies recommended through UNESCO's leadership.

Ladies and gentlemen The Bahamas is grateful to UNESCO for its work in the areas of Intercultural Dialogue which has fostered the promotion of our heritage, and in the area of Scientific Knowledge which has brought more of an awareness to us of the state of our environment, and has helped in its improvement.

As we in The Bahamas move toward a more productive, educated and industrious citizenry, we ask that all partners get on board as we continue to move in a most positive direction with the assistance of UNESCO. The acceptance of the Farquharson's

Journal and Registry of Slaves of the British Caribbean into The Memory of The World Register moves us one step closer to realizing our goals as a nation. Let us continue to look at all facets of our society with the view to improving the lives of our people and making The Bahamas the best little country in the world.

Thank you.