



**REMARKS**

**BY**

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

**AT**

**THE LAUNCH OF BAKKE UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMMES IN THE  
BAHAMAS**

**AT**

**CHARTHOUSE  
FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA**

**SATURDAY, 25<sup>TH</sup> SEPTMBER, 2010**

**6:30 PM**

**Salutations:**

**(list attached)**

**Good evening.**

**It is indeed a pleasure to be here on this occasion to celebrate with officials of Bakke Graduate University, and the inaugural class of this institution and the entire Grand Bahama community, the launch of its graduate degree programme in The Bahamas.**

**On behalf of the Government and the People of The Bahamas and the Senior Management of the Ministry of Education I wish to extend an official welcome to Bakke Graduate University. We look forward to a wonderful and exciting partnership for the benefit of all involved.**

**We also wish to thank the Bakke University for selecting The Bahamas to expand its campuses, Grand Bahama being particular as the first site for its visionary Masters Degree programme. This initiative will provide students on this island with another opportunity to advance educationally and enhance their marketability by acquiring new skill sets that they can be used to improve the quality of life for themselves and fellow citizens of Grand Bahama.**

**What excites us about Bakke Graduate University is its effort to ensure that students are cognizant of the world we live in while they are studying. There are many institutions whose approach to learning is 'text-centered' while Bakke Graduate University tells its student that the acquisition of genuine knowledge must be done with awareness of the world we live in and its present conditions. Students who enroll in this programme must therefore be prepared not only to learn from books but also to learn firsthand the lessons of poverty, human suffering, environmental degradation and other current issues through to travel to various counties where there are tangible examples of these conditions.**

**I am certain that there are prospective students in Abaco and New Providence who are eagerly awaiting the arrival of Bakke Graduate University and the opportunity to excel through their experience in this programme.**

**I am particularly impressed that with the fact that the leadership of Bakke University has a strong commitment to biblical truth and realizes that we live in a world that has many social ills and human suffering and as a result of this has incorporated in the learning process a community project which will result in students gaining an appreciation for service and their civic responsibility towards the less fortunate in the society.**

**I am told that although the programme will not get underway until January 2011, students enrolled in the programme have already identified their community service projects. Some of these projects have the potential to greatly impact this island in a meaningful way which could fill voids in areas where national resources are limited unable to do so. Included in these projects are: a literacy mentoring project in the Eight Mile Rock community to prepare students for BJC and BGCSE; an outreach programme to assist the homeless; a parenting programme and a programme to assist victims of substance abuse.**

**Should these projects come to fruition during the course of the programme, then the citizens of Grand Bahama would realize tremendous benefits.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, the launch of Bakke Graduate University degrees bodes well for persons interested in earning a masters degree and for those professionals who cannot afford to go abroad or take study leave from their jobs. This programme will allow students to study in a virtual classroom, and their success will be dependent on their discipline and commitment to their goal of enhancing their academic qualifications. I implore you students to do your best and not to allow distractions and other obligations to derail your studies.**

**You are trailblazers and there are others counting on you to succeed so they can follow in your footsteps. For you the inaugural class of Bakke Graduate University, Grand Bahama, it is a bold move on your part to invest a significant amount of money while others around you are simply fighting for survival. This optimism that you have demonstrated by pursuing a graduate degree will allow you the opportunity to be a part of the Renaissance in Grand**

**Bahama. It stands to reason that you are preparing yourselves for a brighter future. You are seeing the glass as half full, rather than half empty.**

**Your confidence and tenacity flows in the same vein as Mawi Asgedom, an Ethiopian boy who along with his family escaped from their war-torn country of Ethiopia. They traveled through the harsh deserts of Africa, spent years in a refugee camp before arriving in the United States with absolutely no money. Mawi's parents knew that if he was to succeed in America he would need a good education and so they impressed on him the importance of studying dedicated himself to his studies and eventually won a scholarship to Harvard University. Mr. Asgedom is now a world-renowned motivational speaker; author and designer of 'Mental Karate', a programme which teaches educators how to inspire their students. His life went from a treacherous walk in the desert to a path of greatness.**

**When Oprah Winifrey featured Mawi on her show and after hearing his story of perseverance she stated that she wouldn't tolerate "can't" from anyone. I'd [Oprah] say, "Mawi walked across the desert. What do you mean it can't be done?" Anything is possible for those willing to make the sacrifice.**

**While you may not have to cross a perilous desert to achieve an education, the fact that you are investing a substantial amount of monies in education when others are holding on to theirs in cases of emergency, is exemplary and is indicative of your enterprising spirit. More importantly, it shows that you know the value of education.**

**Students, this is a sacrifice and there are days when you will be question your decision, but the time will come when you will see that your actions have a Godly purpose and a role in nation building. When you come to accept this reality then you will see that acquiring an education was the easy part; applying your skills to bring about change in Grand Bahama and ultimately our nation is the real test of your abilities.**

**I am heartened by the presence of the community leaders and hope that they will support Bakke University and you in this initiative. I believe that you are embarking on this journey because you want to be agents of change in Grand Bahama. I once again wish all involved in this enterprise every success and hope that The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and future generations will be benefactors of your sacrifice.**