

In His Own Words. Sir Randol's Dream for A Great Society



Sir Randol's mission in life was not limited to the over throw of the white, colonial minority government, but he wanted to build "the Great Society" through the creation of a "righteous government".

Last week, I was an invited guest on a local talk show. Wanting to be provocative, the host asked me whether Sir Randol, if he were alive, would be happy with the present state of affairs in the country. In responding, I replied that Sir Randol would be disappointed. "Why?" some of you here tonight may ask.

Sir Randol was an idealist; he wanted a society where wise rulers would eliminate poverty through fairly distributed resources. He also wanted a society where persons would cease to be regarded as disposable, cheap labour and cheap lives but where they would be regarded as human beings made in the image of God and their lives and dreams would be valued and given dignity and worth.

Dad often joked with us and said, "When I was younger I was a socialist, but necessity forced me to become a capitalist."

This blueprint for a working nation is so simply put in the song that he loved to sing everywhere he went: "It Could Be a Wonderful World". Here are the first two stanzas.

*If each little child could have fresh milk each day,
If each working man had a good job with pay;
If each homeless child had a good place to stay,
It could be wonderful world*

*If there were no poor and the rich were content
If strangers were welcomed where ever they went,
If each of us knew what true brotherhood meant
It could be a wonderful world.*

To create this wonderful world though, a certain kind of man and woman was needed. An analogy that he frequently gave in numerous speeches was that of a boat builder preparing to build a ship. He said that in the boat builder's search for the best wood, "he would tramp through the forests of Abaco and Andros for the tallest, the straightest, the strongest timber with which to build masts and spars.

"Way over yonder there is a tree that appears to be perfect for the purpose but no there is a twist in it, a flaw that only the experienced eye can detect. Comes a storm it will snap and splinter and under rough weather, the ship into which it is fitted will be lost together with the captain, the crew and the passengers.

"Here is another tree that has the ship builder puzzled. But on a second look, its heart is half rotten. It has knots in it. It is just a shell of fine, outward appearance. It is not fit for ship building.

"Suddenly a smile comes over the face of one of the men. He calls all his brothers together and says, "I have found it: this is the tallest, the straightest, the strongest tree in the forest. We shall build our ship out of this timber."

Continued Sir Randol, "My brother and my sister, today we are searching the forest of humanity, from Bimini to Inagua, for Bahamian timber tall enough, straight enough, strong enough, true enough and honest enough to build our Ship of State.

"Brother! Sister! Are you tall enough, straight enough, strong enough, true enough and honest enough and stout enough?

"Are you the kind of timber with which we can build our nation?

"Are you a Cedar of Lebanon?"

In addition to the requirement of a certain type of person needed to build the great society, Sir Randol once stated that the crying need today is for righteous government, that is, government in the right relationship with God as outlined in the ten commandments and the sermon on the Mount. "I urge you in this election," he said in one of his election campaign speeches "to vote for decent men and women who are not afraid to stand up and be counted for high moral values rather than for the same old men whose fingers are still dripping with the spoils of their filthy lucre. You must help in this struggle to restore Christian morality to our nation. God will not forgive you if you sit back and leave it to the other fellow."

On this same theme and in another speech Sir Randol stated that if the general strike has provided anything it is this: "that unless the institutions of government expand to accommodate the moral and intellectual ground of the people, it will fall by the first wind that blows."

In the development of the child, we only need to look at one of the ways that Sir Randol

and Lady Fawkes reared their children: the pursuit of the arts was of paramount importance. As a young child going to piano lessons, I resisted the discipline that is required for success in the study of an instrument. I remember telling both parents how much I hated it and when I would ask Sir Randol about the possibility of quitting, his reply was, "Children who pursue the arts never become juvenile delinquents."

The pursuit and embracing of the arts...could this be one of the planks in our effort to stamp out crime? I congratulate the present government on the formation of the musical bands. I heard the children perform on Sunday and they are doing marvelously well.

In closing, my final points come from an afternoon address over station ZNS given on January 14th, 1968. Mr. Fawkes declared that no man who was involved in an enterprise which required many hands had not been appalled, at times, by the unwillingness of the average person to concentrate and to do a difficult job well.

"Whatever your trade or profession may be," he told his radio listeners, "there are three basic pillars on which the reputation of our country must stand or fall, They are: attitude, punctuality and responsibility.

To get the right attitude Sir Randol urged the listening audience to think like a successful man; talk like a successful man and even to walk like a successful man every minute of the day. I am willing to wager that soon you too will be a success."

As the radio address continued, he told them that pillar number two on which our country will rise or fall is punctuality. Added Sir Randol, "I addressed three meetings of employees at a downtown hotel last Friday. The one for 10.30 started at 10.45, the one at 11.30 began at 11.40 and the one scheduled for 2.30 got under way at 2.35. Well they are improving, but it is still not yet good enough.

"Absenteeism," he went on, "is another aspect of wastefulness in modern business. Lateness and absenteeism account for the loss of many man hours which, when translated in the ledger books, mean the loss of many thousands of dollars which could otherwise have meant more success for you and greater prosperity for the country. Remember punctuality is the courtesy of kings."

In my closing statement tonight, I give you pillar number three which Sir Randol stated was hard work and responsibility. He concluded, "We must realize that we must rise earlier, study longer, learn faster, think better and work harder than ever before. Every worker contributes to the national wealth and growth of our country. When any one of us forgets this and works only three days out of a week or works five hours instead of eight per day, he is not only selling himself and his family short but the nation's income is lessened and the prosperity of the nation is hampered.

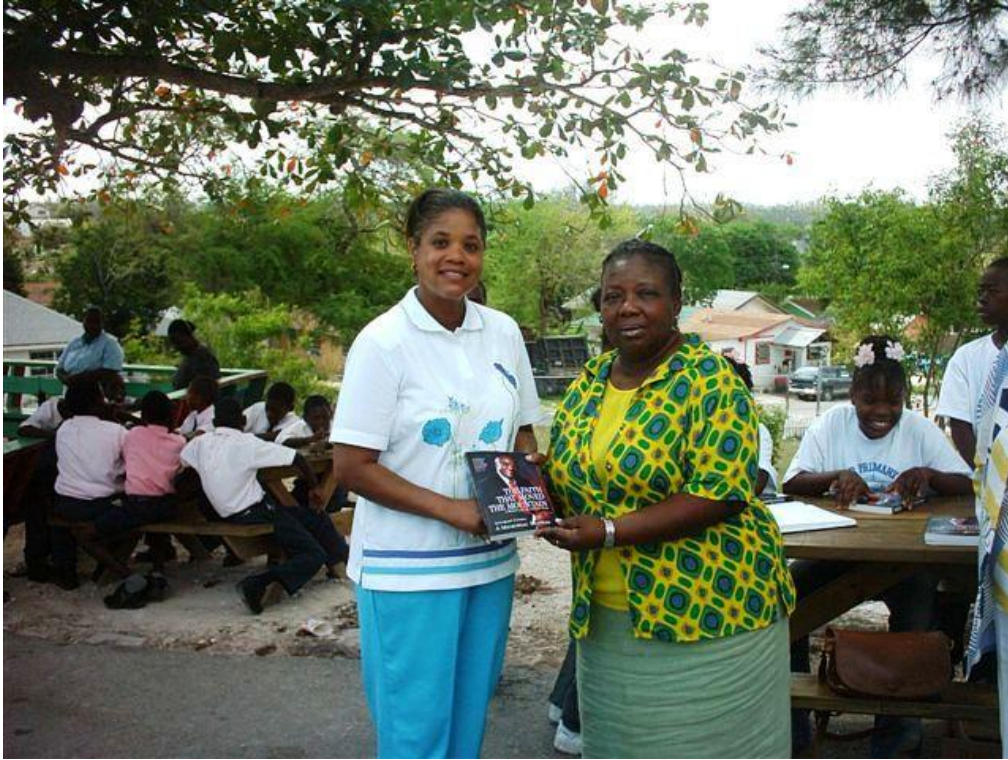
"Responsibility means answering a call and doing an allotted job well.

"And so, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, boys and girls, while you are on the threshold of a new day, if you should hear a still small voice asking, 'Are you the new Bahamian?' I hope the answer will always be, 'Here am I, send me.'"

I close with a stanza from one of his favourite poems:

*Heights by great men reached and kept
Were not obtained by sudden flight,
While their companions slept,
They were toiling upward in the night.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Speech given by Rosalie Fawkes

June 5th, 2013

at

The Trade Union Congress Labour Week Lecture

The Harry C. More Library – The College of The Bahamas