

Remarks by David Fawkes at the

1<sup>st</sup> Annual Randol Fawkes Labour Day  
Church Service  
At  
Wesley Methodist Church  
Baillou Hill Road & Chapel Street  
Nassau, Bahamas  
June 2, 2013 at 3pm



## Greetings and thanks

Protocol already established.

I bring greetings from Lady Jacqueline Fawkes and Fawkes Family.

## Education

Whenever Rosalie or I have an opportunity to speak about Dad, we love to speak about him and the passions that he had... the way we knew him and what he talked to us about.

On this year's Majority Rule Day, I gave a speech to the Students of H.O. Nash High School on my father's love and passion for reading, writing and education. I would like to share and expand on some of those remarks with you today.

A singular memory that family members still have of Sir Randol is that of a figure sitting at a table or a desk, reading. While people will talk at length about his contributions to the Labour Movement, they don't realize how much of his life was devoted to reading and self enlightenment....He loved going into book stores and he spent vast sums of money purchasing reading materials. He had a library in his home and he kept the door locked because he wanted to ensure that none of his books went missing.

## Reading with Mother

Dad's love of reading was nurtured by his mother. I quote from his autobiography, "My three sisters, one brother and I were reared under the influence of a great family tradition. Our mother led us every night

in family Bible reading and prayers. At the close of every night's reading, we all kneeled around mother's bed and prayed.

### Indoctrination

Dad often reflected on the role of education in his early years. He states, that, unfortunately, in the 1930s, for the repressed majority, quote - “the schoolroom was not primarily a place of education but a political tool which sought to maintain the power base of the colonial rulers.”

In Chapter 2 of Sir Randol's autobiography, he tells a story of the use of education as a tool of repression. At the age of 7, Sir Randol says and I quote -

“I made my first acquaintance with the King George V on May 24, 1930 – British Empire Day.

Amid great pomp and circumstance, His Excellency, The Governor, Sir James Orr, finely regaled in all the accoutrements of a General of His Majesty's Army, addressed the students of Eastern Preparatory School.

You see, yesterday, His Excellency encouraged the **white** children of Queen's College to study hard to show themselves worthy of becoming the rulers of the land. We therefore harbored great expectations from his visit.

After singing our National Anthem “God Save our Gracious King”. His Excellency's voice pierced the silence, "Boys and Girls, I bring you greetings from the King and Queen of England.

"Today, in every part of the globe, young people are rededicating themselves as His Majesty's loyal subjects.

.....

**"You must work hard, for only in this way can you become good maids and laborers in the future Bahamas." – unquote.**

### Inflection point.

Dad often spoke to me of this event being an inflection point in his life where he became acutely aware of the separate and unequal society in which he was being educated, and he dared to dream of making a difference. He realized that it would only be through reading and education that he would be able to rise above the role mapped out for him by the Colony.

### General Strike

Brothers and Sisters, if you will, please fast forward with me from March 24, 1930 to January 12, 1958. The General Strike.

150 armed British troops of the Royal Worcestershire Regiment were arriving on Bahamian soil from Jamaica. They carried 3-mm rifles with fixed bayonets. They were ready to quell any violence which the striking workers may cause.

Despite the turbulence, Sir Randol and Sir Lyden Pindling, the Father of our Nation, took the time out to educate the youth.

**You see, Dad took the unfortunate event of the 1930's Governor's indoctrination speech and turned it around to his style of education.**

I quote from his autobiography "on our way from the striking hotels in the West to Bay Street, Brother Pindling and I decided that the students at the Government High School should be apprised of the General Strike. Perhaps, they would want to demonstrate in sympathy with the workers' cause; at least, this is what we hoped.

We were in luck. The top class was studying literature, under a tree, without a teacher! Among the thirty students were Perry Christie and Bernard Nottage. We seized the opportunity and explained the issues to them.

Dad did not go into the details of the issues he discussed with young Perry and Bernard. However, I am sure that the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security will fill in the blanks in their autobiographies.

Issues discussed, I am sure touched upon the freedom of association, the right to join a union, the abolishment of the corporate vote, women's suffrage, and the ability for all males to vote at the age of 21 even if you didn't own land. Rights which we take for granted today.

Next, Sir Randol refused to sing our National Anthem "God Save our Gracious King", and continued the protest in song. He led the students in the singing of the second and third stanza of his own composition, Bahamas Glorious Homeland, sung to the tune of The Church's is One Foundation. He called it the National Anthem of Free Bahamians. In Dad's mind he was already free, we had already achieved majority rule and the Promise Land was in sight.

***Sing the following: -***

*Full well we love our islands and sea of sapphire blue,  
Our homes and schools and churches, **our Unions good and true;**  
With these let no man trespass or rest the tyrant's hand,  
Lest we shall fight forever, till freedom fills the land.*

*One day when we are older and to our sons unfold  
The burden on broad shoulders of **common men** and bold;  
With one heart they shall honor, with one voice they proclaim  
Bahamas, Glorious Homeland—sweet land of liberty*

I quote: “We had scarcely finished singing when we observed our old Headmaster himself, Dr. Dean Peggs, lumbering toward us. Panting, out of breath with a look of fear on his face, he said, "I can hardly believe my eyes and ears that you two, former students of this school will disrupt my classes. You should be singing God Save our Gracious King! Mr. Peggs invited us to leave, and leave quickly.

Dad said to Mr. Peggs "We will go. But soon we shall sing our own National Anthem written by our own Bahamian in this great Government High School." Unquote.

In my closing remarks to the Students of H.O. Nash I encouraged them to read, write and form their own independent world view, as Sir Randol did.

I quote from Sir Randol in later life:

“When one challenges constituted authority, as I had done, one must be prepared to suffer the consequences. If I shall succeed without sacrificing, it is because some of our former Bahamian heroes have sacrificed before my time; but if I suffer without succeeding, then it is in order that those who come after me may succeed.

### Closing

The Fawkes Family is truly grateful to the Bahamian People, the Government of the Bahamas under this PLP administration, the Opposition, the Governor General, the TUC and the BCPOU for

unanimously bestowing the honor of Randol Fawkes Labour Day on a true National Hero.

May you have a blessed Randol Fawkes Labour Day.