

# Sir Randol Fawkes: A Champion to the End

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Sir Randol Fawkes, the Father of the Labour Movement, was no stranger to the Guardian's newsroom. He came and went like he was one of us. For the most part, he just wanted someone to talk to and if you needed his input for a story, he gladly gave it. It became a pleasure to speak with a man possessed with a wealth of knowledge.

Over the past year, whenever Sir Randol came to this office, everybody would say, "Lindsay, your friend is here." I knew right away who they meant. I would clear my desk and finish whatever I was writing, for the upcoming session would be lengthy but enlightening.

I was probably the last person to interview this great national leader with a bubbly personality and witty sense of humour.

Our last session was Friday, May 26, a week before Labour Day, and Sir Randol spoke about his vision for the Labour Movement in the country.

"I believe the Labour movement will be responsible in the future, but the members of Parliament are not striving at this time for an outright Labour Party," he said. "We claim that any government without a legitimate and qualified representation from the Labour Movement cannot serve the purposes of any nation."

According to Sir Randol, government has failed to satisfy the just demands of the Labour Movement simply because they always treated the laborers as units of the stock exchange and not as men and women made in the image of God who are entitled to an equal place at the conference table.

"When you consider Labour as units of the stock exchange, you are putting Labour on the auction block and to do so, knocks the whole relations out of focus," Sir Randol said.

His most solemn wish was for a government free of corruption, and with workers' best interest at heart. "Over the past seventeen years," Sir Randol said, "I have never seen a government or opposition that was incorruptible. All I have seen was the unlimited greed of both sides and that really isolated me as a one man Labour party, not by choice but by necessity."

Asked his views on the tabling of the package of Labour bills by Prime Minister Hubert A. Ingraham in the House of Assembly on Wednesday, May 24th, Fawkes said, "I think they should redraft them because they were formulated by persons who were not familiar with the history or the language of the Labour Movement here in The Bahamas."

"When the laborers say they are 'working to rule' they are doing what they are supposed to do: not working overtime. When they say 'it is the rule of law' that means that all men are treated equally.

"None of the parties – Progressive Liberal Party (PLP), Free National Movement (FNM) or United Bahamian Party (UBP) were ever that much interested in the Labour Movement and therefore, they were entirely unfamiliar with the tactics and it was obvious that the working people had more knowledge than government itself," Sir Randol said.

During his struggle for workers' equal rights, Sir Randol said he received encouragement, from his mother through a letter written July 18, 1956. Across the way in New York City, she told him, "Never look behind, and continue to go forward; mother is always behind you with her prayers..."

On January 10th, 1967, Sir Randol – elected as a member of the Labour party – gave his support to the Progressive Liberal Party on condition that they would institute local government in the city of Nassau, where the state church was, and throughout The Bahama Islands because that would engender a greater civic spirit and education.

But, he said, in accordance with their 1956 platform the PLP said, "We agree that the time has come for the City of Nassau to form a corporation that will take care of its own utilities.

"We pledged to introduce legislation that will effect this change and establish a corporation for the city of Nassau. But when they got in," Sir Randol said, "they forgot about it and the Out Islands were the worst for it."

He was asked about his perception of today's union leaders. "Thomas Bastian, former president of Bahamas Hotel catering and Allied Workers Union was needed for his time," Sir Randol noted.

Once upon a time, Sir Randol and the late Sir Etienne Dupuch both agreed that "There was a marriage between labour and capital."

"Bastian caught that particular philosophy and he put it to work," Sir Randol said. "He has brought the labour movement a great distance. If Bastian was to tell

the story, he would start as he had started in 1958.

“However, Sir Randol said, “Pat Bain, who defeated Bastian at the polls on May 26th can tell it differently. Pat Bain is the son of the late Shervin Bain, a taxi driver, one of the spark plugs in the General Strike who fought for the formation of hotel workers and for the rights of hotel workers to strike.” Sir Randol believed that Pat Bain at this particular time “is the right man for the job because he is more articulate and less susceptible to so many bonanzas from the other side.”

This year’s Labour Day witnessed a united march of more than 10,000 workers under the umbrella organizations, other unions, and private entities.

On Junkanoo at Labour Day parades, Sir Randol was strongly opposed to this. “In my time, we did not have any Junkanoo,” he said. “Junkanoo has a place; this is serious business which could easily be marred by some scuffles. I thought they would march very seriously and ask the Junkanoo groups not to become a part because we are fighting for real values in the real world. The PLP has a method of defiling every single thing they touch.”



*“In my time, we did not have any Junkanoo,” he said*

Not against the traditional heritage passed down from our ancestors, Sir Randol thought Labour Day should highlight civil rights matters, which uphold the integrity of the government, legislature and judiciary. "Junkanoo has its place," he reiterated.

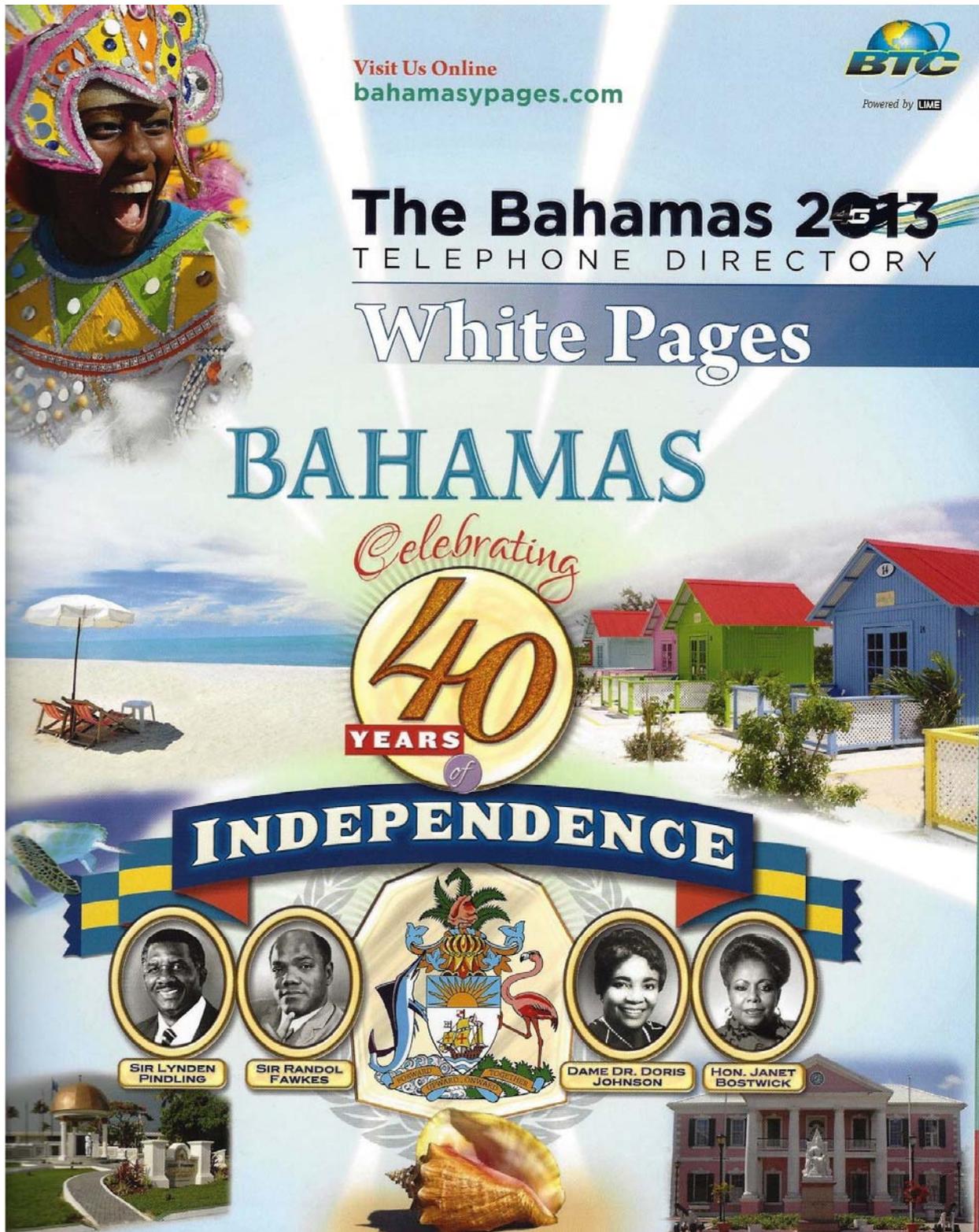
Sir Randol was supposed to return to the *Guardian* so we could complete this interview. He never came back. The news of his death on Thursday, June 15th, 2000 saddened us all. May his soul rest in peace and may his legacy live on. Through this article, hopefully, the workers in the country will forever know that they were foremost on his mind, even to the end.



*In May, 2012, Sir Randol was honoured posthumously by Pastor Myles Munroe and the members of Bahamas Faith Ministries, Nassau Bahamas. Receiving the honour was Lady Jacqueline Fawkes and members of the immediate family.*



*CEO GLOBAL Awards (2008) - Celebrating Ethics and Excellence". Presented posthumously to the late Sir Randol Fawkes, trailblazer. Award presented received by Lady Jacqueline Fawkes from Deborah Bartlette and the CEO Network.*



Sir Randol is featured on the front cover of Batelco's telephone directory for 2013. The directory's cover marks the 40th anniversary of the nation's independence.