

REMARKS BY
THE PRIME MINISTER
THE RT. HON. PERRY G. CHRISTIE
AT FUNERAL SERVICES
FOR THE LATE BRUCE BRAYNEN
OCTOBER 11th, 2012

Permit me to begin by extending once again my sympathies to the children and other surviving relatives of the late Bruce Braynen in whose memory we are gathered here today.

I do so not only for myself but for my wife, Bernadette as well, and I do so also on behalf of the Government and people of The Bahamas, including the family of the Progressive Liberal Party to which Bruce Braynen gave so much of himself during his long years of dedicated struggle.

Is it just me, or does it appear to you too, that we are losing our old stalwarts, our old freedom-fighters, at an ever increasing pace these days?

It certainly seems that way to me. Every fortnight or two, it seems that another outstanding warrior of old is called to his Eternal Rest. It's so very sad, isn't it? Sad because with each of these passings, we are reminded that what I like to refer to as the Golden Age of Bahamian Politics is fast dissolving into our collective memory. One

day, in the not too distant future, all the Bruce Braynens will be gone; all those brave and fearless men and women who fought on the frontlines of the struggles for Majority Rule and Independence will all be gone, leaving us only with the memory of the good and glorious things they did to help make us free.

And make no mistake about it, Bruce Braynen is included in that number of which I speak. He was a quiet man, a mild-mannered man, a gentle-man but my what a warrior he was all the same!

He was fearless, resolute, reliable, steadfast, and yes, stalwart in his convictions and in his commitment to the struggle for a fairer and more just society.

Yes, Bruce was a quiet but influential freedom-fighter, firstly, in joining with other kindred spirits of his day in struggling for the economic empowerment of black Bahamians; and secondly, in his political involvement in one of the most defining periods of our modern history.

Bruce was a pioneering businessman and entrepreneur, especially at a time when there were very few black men who were not just common labourers or tradesmen. Bruce believed in self-reliance but he also believed in the power that would come when Bahamians, especially black Bahamians, awoke to the need to pool their

resources and join in collaborative business enterprises. Bruce was a big believer in that.

But inevitably, I think, Bruce will be remembered mostly for what he achieved in the political arena.

I have already had occasion to speak publicly of how Bruce Braynen was catapulted to national political fame when, in the historic General Election of 1972, he was elected as the PLP candidate in the St. Agnes constituency, unseating the then Leader of the Opposition Free National Movement, Sir Cecil Wallace-Whitfield.

That alone was an achievement that guaranteed Bruce Braynen a place in Bahamian political history. This little man with the big heart, this quiet man with the eloquent example of his personal dignity, this most unlikely of political figures, Bruce Braynen, was called upon by destiny to bring down the biggest man for the Opposition in whole of the land at that time. And brought him down he did, electorally, of course.

I wonder how many of you here today remember that election, the General Election of 1972. My what a tumultuous election that was! And what a historically momentous election it was too, fought as it was over the larger-than-life issue of Independence – Independence not later but now!

The 1972 General Election was an election that in some ways brought out the very worst in us - the bloodshed in Perpall Tract, the dynamite-blast at a dock in Abaco and all the fire-bombings and bust-ups in between.

But it also brought out the best in us too, and among the best things that it brought out, I think, was the quiet determination and dignified peacefulness of political personalities like Bruce Braynen. He was a good, clean-living, clean-fighting man who never got carried away by campaign rhetoric or by electioneering hysteria. Instead, he remained focused and steady, almost disciplined, always going about his business in a peaceful but purposeful manner. He was an example to all his supporters of how to do things the right way. He was never one who thought that you had to take your opponent's head off, or humiliate him, or heap personal abuse on him, or scandalize his name, just so that you could win an election. That was not Bruce's way. He would have none of it. He was way too decent a man to engage in that kind of stuff.

And so, when Bruce Braynen emerged triumphant in St. Agnes it was not only a very great feather in his cap, it was a vindication of his personal conviction that things could be fought for - and won - in a way that upheld the highest standards of political engagement in a democracy.

Bruce would go on to give distinguished service in the House of Assembly for two consecutive terms. He was a diligent and conscientious MP. He took his responsibilities seriously. He was a serious man who had no time for trifles. And he was a wonderfully modest man too, never one to go in search of the media spotlight. For him, it was never about personal glory or self-aggrandizement, rather it was all about being a faithful servant to the people of St. Agnes and of the whole Bahamas.

After serving in the House of Assembly, Bruce graduated to the Senate. And it was there, I think, that he was temperamentally more at home. The Senate was – and is – a more civilized place, a less contentious place, a place in which cooler heads are usually on display.

And there was no head that was ever cooler than Bruce Braynen's. He revealed it time and time again when he presided over one session or another in his capacity as Vice-President of the Senate. He was the epitome of the wise and dignified judge whenever he was in the chair. He conducted the proceedings with a calm but firm hand. He insisted on proper decorum and the observance of the rules of debate but above all he was always fair to both sides of the aisle. Yes, the governing party to which he belonged might have the numbers to win the day but while Bruce Braynen was in the chair

Opposition Senators also knew that that they would have their say. Bruce Braynen saw to it that they did. Again, not by shouting or carrying on but rather by his personal dignity, by that quiet strength that he always exuded. That example was far more persuasive than any amount of hammering words could ever be.

As a freshman politician back in the 70's, I was one of those who was deeply impressed by Bruce's example. He was genuinely interested in the younger generation of political aspirants. In that soft and gentle voice of his, he was always ready to offer advice. And the advice was always wise, always sensible, and always sincere – freely given without any guile or mischievous motive. Bruce never liked intrigue or in-fighting. He had no time for that. He deplored destructive behaviour of any kind.

I always found Bruce to be extremely helpful. I remember his thoughtfulness and the sincerity of his interest with much affection and gratitude today.

And so the quiet man who gave so much to the Quiet Revolution has now passed on. He had a wonderfully full life, didn't he? The Good Lord allowed him to live for nearly a full century. That is a record of longevity that very few of us ever get to match.

Bruce Braynen was an outstanding Bahamian who contributed much to his country. He was an example to so very many of his countrymen. He served us all well and for long. He was a good man. He was a decent man. He did his best.

Farewell, then, good brother. And on behalf of a grateful nation, I thank you.

May you rest in peace.