



**Key Note Speech by the Honourable Gaston Browne
Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda to
the Opening Session of a meeting of the
Technical Advisory Committee of the University of the West Indies
at the Sandals Grande Resort
on Thursday, February 21, 2019**

A CALL FROM AN UNDER-SERVED REGION

I have a very important message for the Technical Advisory Committee from the government and people of Antigua and Barbuda.

The message is that the 4th Landed Campus in Antigua of the University of the West is an imperative. It must happen. In other words, failure is not an option.

As you examine your budget, I urge you to take into consideration that you will be increasing the opportunity for university education for an under-served region – the countries of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS).

The OECS countries are also Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and they require special and differential treatment to allow them to compete within the region and globally.

This means that there must be a special carve out for the OECS to ensure that administrative costs are kept at a minimum and that affordable fees are delivered.

That is the unequivocal message from the people and government of Antigua and Barbuda that I deliver as you begin your important work today.

THE REGION'S PEOPLE IN THE WIDER WORLD

In setting the role of the University of the West Indies in the preparation of our people for their place in the global community, a distinguished West Indian Historian remarked:

“We must go into the wider world with one voice and one identity, as a unified intellectual force, to serve Caribbean peoples and the wider world; we must be one University with an activist agenda seeking alignment between industry and academia for wealth creation and distribution;

expansion of access to tertiary education and increased agility to global opportunities.”

That Historian is UWI Vice Chancellor, Professor Sir Hilary Beckles

Antigua and Barbuda shares all of Sir Hilary’s sentiments including, expansion of access to tertiary education and a unified Caribbean intellectual force. That is why we regard the establishment of the 4th Landed Campus of the UWI in Antigua as essential.

The University of the West Indies is the cradle of our intellectualism.

It is where, for almost 70 years, West Indian thought, knowledge and expertise has been nurtured and developed, creating a place of respect for our people in many fields and in many parts of the world.

NEED FOR NEW AND RELEVANT MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT

As we continue to develop our rational intellectual knowledge, Caribbean intellectualism should not rely only on foreign thinking.

For while knowledge of such thinking is important and necessary, it should not be all that we know or all upon which we rely.

There is also a vital need for practical and bespoke intellectual thought and imagination, relevant to the developmental needs of our people.

Our region is rich in its scholars, several of whom have distinguished themselves across the world, but, yet, our region is poorer for having lost some of our global intellectual competitiveness.

Many factors contributed to this loss, including: the brain drain, lack of resources for research and development and a weakened intellectual resilience.

There appears to be a creeping weakening of the intellectual will of our scholars to develop new social and economic concepts and models which challenge inherited and traditional theories that have passed their “sell-by” dates.

Instead, we continue the wholesale adoption of exogenous socio-economic models that are not best suited to our region, since they do not take into consideration our vulnerabilities, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies.

For example, the exogenous economic models tell us that governments should not be involved in business, and that its role should be limited exclusively to market regulation.

The policy instruments developed from these models, exclude government's participation in the productive and financial sectors.

Consequently, this restriction places certain lucrative sectors, including telecommunications and banking, beyond the reach of our miniscule local businesses, measured in global terms.

Indeed, many of our businesses that are considered large in our small economies are micro-businesses when they are compared to the multi-nationals that are operating globally, including in our Caribbean countries.

This situation creates a heavy reliance on foreign capital, increasing our vulnerability and dependence and denying us the chance to participate beneficially in these lucrative sectors.

Subsequently, our modern-day economies have been structured as extractive economies, like the sugar economies of slavery and colonization.

They operate for the benefit of foreign firms with most of the generated profits repatriated to the wealthy countries from which they originate, making those countries wealthier and keeping our countries in a vicious cycle of dependency and poverty.

Since political independence, our Caribbean states, particularly the member states of the OECS, have had to grapple with low domestic capital formation, slow growth and under development. These are our realities.

Recognizing the failings of these purely capitalist or entirely socialist economic models, why can't we develop our own economic models; not as modern-day socialists and not as 'fire brand' radicals, but as practical nations which recognize that equitable distribution of wealth and narrowing the gaps in income distribution, depend on models that mix local private enterprise, foreign investment and government investment into new vehicles of economic growth and development.

THE ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA EVOLVING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MODEL

In Antigua and Barbuda, we have commenced rudimentary work on the development of our own economic model, to try to broaden domestic ownership and to transform our country into an entrepreneurial state.

Our economic model of empowerment capitalism (Entrepreneurial Socialism) is people-centric, designed to fuel a more equitable distribution of wealth through public private sector joint entrepreneurship.

Pure capitalism, generally-speaking, is profit-focused, ignoring wider societal needs; its nature promotes a widening of the income gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'. What we are seeking to develop is a more equitable model - one that would narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.

It does not exclude private investment, local or foreign. Where such private investment provides benefits to the nation, without incurring any government costs, including loan guarantees and excessive tax breaks, it is welcome and encouraged.

Quite separately, public sector-private sector entrepreneurship is an economic partnership between government and the private sector in specific enterprises for profit.

The government's share of dividends from profits are paid into the national Treasury and socialized, to fund education, health care and even infrastructural development for the benefit of all. For us, this is an egalitarian model which, executed properly, will provide the opportunity for all to flourish.

This model has already been implemented successfully in Antigua and Barbuda. And, it has broadened local business ownership and increased retained profits to fund future socio-economic development.

This is an economic model in which my government would like to partner with UWI to develop it further.

PARTNERING WITH UWI

We want to make sure that a significant portion of the profits made in the region are retained for the region's development, and not simply repatriated to enrich other already wealthy countries.

We want to ensure that we have sustainable profits that will contribute to both maintaining and increasing growth and development within the Caribbean.

Today, I call on our intelligentsia to strengthen their will and their commitment to produce more bespoke social and economic developmental models; to avoid the wholesale adoption of the international ‘one-size-fits-all’ models that evidently are not best suited to our peculiar realities.

There is no room for us to be lazy minded. We must put our intellect to work collectively for the benefit of the region.

ENHANCING CARIBBEAN LEADERSHIP BY STRENGTHENING ITS INTELLECTUAL BASE

In his remarks that I quoted at the beginning of this presentation, Sir Hillary spoke of service to the wider world.

Today, while the world is replete with conflicts, the Caribbean remains a zone of peace and tranquility, a bastion of democracy and an exemplar of the rule of law.

Many nations, large and small could learn from our experience.

In this connection, the Caribbean must provide leadership wherever there is instability and violations of the international rules and conventions that are designed to protect all nations, large and small.

To be effective, this Caribbean leadership also requires a unified intellectual force.

Another West Indian Historian, who became one of the great founding fathers of our independent Caribbean said:

“The real case for unity in the Commonwealth Caribbean countries rests on the creation of a more unified front in dealing with the outside world – diplomacy, foreign trade, foreign investment and similar matters.

“Without such a unified front, the territories will continue to be playthings of outside governments and outside investors”.

That Historian was, of course, Dr. Eric Williams, the then Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago.

He recorded that compelling observation in his seminal work, *From Columbus to Castro*.

At the time, he was ruminating on what he described as “the present disgraceful state of fragmentation of the Commonwealth Caribbean countries and the opportunities thereby created for manipulation by outside powers and outside business interests”.

Some may argue that in the 48 years – nearly five decades – that have passed since Dr. Williams wrote *From Columbus to Castro*, the fragmentation of our region has not much changed.

Nor has the susceptibility to external manipulation.

Fear of the powerful – and in some cases self-imposed trepidation – causes a united front to elude our governments and immobilizes our countries from taking a joint stance in support of the fundamental principles of international law upon which our own security is based.

Those principles, as you well know, are: independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of states.

Our respect for these principles, and our determination to see them upheld by all in the international community, will be tested in the coming days as a perilous situation looms on the border of Venezuela.

The possibility of intervention on the pretext of delivering humanitarian assistance to Venezuela grows.

No Caribbean country should countenance such intervention from whichever quarter it comes.

The process for delivering humanitarian assistance to any country is laid out by the United Nations and agreed by all nations.
It should not be politicized.

It should adhere to the normal procedures of the UN; be conducted by the relevant UN agencies; and carried out in accordance with normal procedures, including the participation of the Government which is a requirement of the UN conventions.

Any movement away from accepted norms and principles, governing the conduct of relations between nations, threatens peace and security, and endangers us all.

It will certainly not help Venezuela, where the most acceptable solution to its present situation, is a process of dialogue and negotiation between the

Venezuelan parties, leading to a ‘Venezuelan accord’, devised by Venezuelans; agreed by Venezuelans; and implemented by Venezuelans.

There is no other peaceful outcome.

This is a position that requires the unified support of all CARICOM countries. It is a position that we collectively should make clear to every government, everywhere in the world, no matter how large, no matter how powerful.

In the words of Eric Williams, the countries of the Caribbean “should make their own history to become the subjects rather than the objects of history, to stop being the playthings of other people”. His sentiment assumes a fresh relevance and vibrancy today. We would ignore them at our peril.

The Caribbean region is a zone of peace and we should stridently and fearlessly resist any provocation or action that could destabilize our region.

Our economic development, our social improvement and our very survival depend on preserving and protecting our area as a zone of peace. We should join in defense of it by using the moral suasion of our highly-regarded history of respect for human rights, for civil rights, and for state rights.

We may be small, but our record of upholding freedom, democracy and the rule of law stands tall. That record gives us the right to speak, and to be heard without fear or favour.

I make my remarks to this distinguished gathering in this vein, because you are all distinguished Caribbean academics, entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing the creative imagination of our region’s greatest resource – our people.

The education you deliver must do more than certify capacity and knowledge in specific fields of study, it must also liberate the mind and imbue an understanding of the place of the Caribbean in the world, and the continuous struggle in which we are involved, not only to progress our region economically, but also to preserve and protect our identity, our self-worth and our self-respect.

THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF THE 4TH UWI CAMPUS FOR THE OECS

A UWI education should focus on increased entrepreneurship and innovation, to reduce the employment burden on governments, to create a space for the development of new industries and the environment for entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity to flourish.

These are among the central objectives that, as Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, and a regional leader, I expect of the 4th Landed Campus of the University of the West Indies here in Antigua.

The University has been a singular representation of Caribbean unity and Caribbean excellence.

No institution has done more to shape our people into global competitors. That is why I insisted, among my cabinet colleagues, that the option of a university must be the 4th Landed campus of the University of the West Indies.

It would have been inappropriate to engage a University, external to our region, that would not fully appreciate the social underpinnings, the economic aspirations and the idiosyncrasies and the peculiarities of our area.

The absence of a UWI Campus in the sub-region of the OECS has deprived a wider body of our people of the opportunity to take advantage of the University's education.

The Fourth Landed Campus will change that limitation and my government is going the extra mile to ensure that it is a reality, not only for the benefit of the people of Antigua and Barbuda, but for the sub-region. In as much as this campus will be in Antigua, this will be a campus to serve the people of the sub-region.

It would be beneficial to all if other Governments and institutions in the OECS collaborate and partner with us in this important and overdue investment in our youth, in our future and in the learning of generations to come.

This is a much-needed campus for the countries of the OECS to ensure that we continue to develop our human resources, and to make sure that our people are globally competitive.

Of course, it will come at a cost.

My government has taken the position, that whatever it costs to operate this campus, we will find the money. The people of Antigua and Barbuda will be called upon to make the sacrifice through increased taxation to fund this campus. It is an imperative.

Ignorance is more expensive, more damaging, more limiting. To overcome it, investment is required. No dividend comes without investment, and the dividend we want is the enhancement of our human capital for the individual benefit of our people and the collective benefit of our nation and the sub-region.

THE EXAMPLE OF DIVIDENDS FROM INVESTING IN EDUCATION

If we need justification for this investment in a university education, we have only to look at the experience of Barbados, where the third landed UWI campus was established three decades ago. The experts will confirm that Barbados' human development has been sprinting ahead of its OECS neighbours.

In 2010, Barbados was ranked 18th of 172 nations in expenditure above the post-secondary school level. In the same year, Antigua and Barbuda was ranked 156th in the world – a mere 16 countries from the bottom.

In 2012, Barbados was adjudged 59th in a world of 228 countries, on a per capita GDP basis, earning in the region of \$29,000. By comparison, Antigua and Barbuda was adjudged 76th in the world, earning a per capita GDP of \$17,800.

Of Barbados and Antigua and Barbuda, which country, under these circumstances, could be expected to produce a higher level of human development?

Although slightly dated, I understand that the gaps have remained nearly the same.

The Cave Hill Campus produces much of the professional capacity that Barbados requires.

While Barbados and other parts in the region are satisfying their human resource needs from their own indigenous populations, within the OECS sub-region, we have had to bring others external of the sub-region and CARICOM to fill a number of senior positions, especially executive positions.

It's one thing to be an independent nation, but if our indigenous people, our Caribbean people, do not control the commanding heights of the various sectors, then clearly, we are a dependent people.

That is why my government is of the view that in order for Antigua and Barbuda to increase income and earnings, to spread learning and professionalism, the UWI Fourth campus is an absolute necessity.

Having this 4th Landed Campus of the University of the West Indies will provide the resources as we seek to truly liberate our people to take control of the commanding heights of all sectors within our economy.

PAYING FOR THE ANTIGUA CAMPUS

In order to afford a university campus, my government chose three separate paths for raising monies, unrelated to tuition and fees.

First, the Cabinet examined the non-tax revenue route.

A decision was taken to raise US\$150,000.00 per family, applying for Antigua and Barbuda citizenship, through our Citizenship by Investment Programme (CIP).

The Antigua and Barbuda CIP fund is called the University of The West Indies, Antigua Campus Fund.

A new drive at the CIP Unit, projects that the UWI Fund will begin to attract enough to make a difference when the marketing plan is fully geared-up. If even ten applicants per year are successful, the amount collected would be US\$1,500,000.00

I believe that this is one way by which the OECS countries with CIP programmes could collaborate to fund this campus. They could allocate a percentage or a flat amount towards the fees at UWI. It will be a shared cost to alleviate the burden on our students.

The second source of financing for the UWI Fund is a 10% tax on the windfall profits of telecommunications companies, insurance companies, financial institutions, and the sole petroleum storage and distribution company in Antigua. It is a windfall tax because the increase in income and profits which these firms enjoy is the result of recent government policies.

The tax is expected to raise up to \$15 million dollars annually and it will be imposed for 24 months in the first instance.

With the addition of the fourth landed campus, I am confident that the rates of economic growth will increase, expanding business and swelling profits for the very companies that are now asked to contribute a 10% windfall tax.

As Sir Hillary indicated, Antigua and Barbuda has consistently registered economic growth in excess of 4.5 – 5 percent over the last four years. In 2018, we posted a growth rate of 5.3 percent – the highest in the hemisphere. Notwithstanding our vulnerabilities, our high debt to GDP ratio; and despite the plethora of challenges we inherited four and a half years ago, we have been able to enjoy strong and sustainable rates of growth. As a result, businesses are doing better.

The third source of funding will come from money the Government of Antigua and Barbuda now spends on higher education. This money includes more than \$20 million annually from the Prime Minister's Scholarship Fund, all of which is grant; none of it is repaid.

The Board of Education also provides scholarships and our government also extends loans to students, totaling \$2 million annually to enable their attendance at universities abroad.

It is my Government's intention to divert a significant portion of the Prime Minister's Scholarship Fund and the Board of Education grant funding which will likely total more than \$15 million annually.

These three sources of funds should provide the initial resources than the UWI Fourth Campus will require, in order to meet its financial obligations, and to be a success.

These funding sources will be revised in subsequent years in order to ensure sufficiency.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE UWI CAMPUS FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE OECS

The UWI Fourth Landed Campus is to become a reality in less than seven months. It may appear to be a daunting task. But we are of the view that, come September 2019, we must open the doors of the campus. Everything might not be in place but making the first step is necessary.

It is our expectation that 4,000 students will be enrolled by September and that the numbers will continue to climb as the Campus delivers on its objectives.

During the months ahead, my Government will work closely with officials of the UWI, to complete all the necessary steps for the establishment of a campus that prepares our youth for leadership roles.

My Government promised the delivery of the UWI Fourth Campus because, we know that it is vital to building an economic powerhouse and to achieving and maintaining higher living standards for our people.

We know that within the breast of every young person in our nation, beats a passion to progress and prosper. And we know that they cannot fulfill that passion unless, they are provided the means to learn more, to know more and to apply knowledge for their own advancement.

We are also aware that our nation will never hold its own; never have the courage to stand-up for itself; never be free from fear, unless our people are given the opportunity to be the equal of all and the inferior of none.

For that, they need the strength that higher education infuses.

The independence of our nation, the dignity of our people and the self-worth of every individual will be enlarged by the knowledge, the confidence and the self-assurance that the Fourth Landed Campus can deliver.

That is the task to which I summon you all today.

It is a noble one; it is a transformative one; it will make Antigua and Barbuda rise, it will make the OECS rise and in the process raise up our people.

Thank you.