

THE 6<sup>th</sup> TOM ADAMS MEMORIAL LECTURE ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF TOM ADAMS DELIVERED  
BY SIR RICHARD CHELTENHAM, K.A., Q.C., PH.D AT THE  
GRANDE SALLE, TOM ADAMS FINANCIAL CENTRE,  
BRIDGETOWN ON MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2015

Good evening:

- Madam Chairperson,
- Mrs. Genevieve Adams
- members of the Adams' family,
- the Hon. Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Mia Mottley,
- members of the Opposition in Parliament,
- fellow former Cabinet members,
- Comrades and Friends of the Party, and
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Introduction**

Tom Adams is, on any reckoning, one of the most outstanding and gifted Barbadians of our history. His contribution to party politics, the House of Assembly, the constituency of St. Thomas and to the country and its governance has been large indeed.

It is wholly appropriate, therefore, that his memory is being kept alive. It is commendable that for the last thirty years and today, too, the constituency branch has placed a floral arrangement on his grave on the 30th anniversary of his death.

It is only about ten years ago that this lecture series commenced. This evening's lecture is the Sixth Tom Adams Memorial Lecture. They have not been annual, but they have been continuing.

At the forefront of the efforts has been the Honourable Ms. Cynthia Forde, the Member of Parliament for St. Thomas. I want to recognise her for her untiring and enlightened efforts in regard to Tom's memory, and for her caring and energetic service as a Member of Parliament.

Sir Alexander Hoyos' book ; "*Tom Adams: A biography*" apart, much of what has been written to date relates to his role in sending Barbadian troops to St. Vincent in December 1979 to quell the disturbance at Arnos Vale.

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There is much mention, too, in the literature, mostly journal articles, of his role, acting in concert with Dame Eugenia Charles of Dominica, in inviting the United States to send troops to Grenada, and to spearhead the efforts of Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean to restore order in Grenada following a failed coup d'état and the assassination of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop in 1983.

Tom Adams is a large subject. And this evening I propose speaking to you about him, his early upbringing, his education at Harrison's College and later at Oxford University and his years in London. I next turn to discussing his role and effectiveness as parliamentarian, leader of the Opposition and Prime Minister. The main emphasis here will be on his philosophy and style of management.

I recall the circumstances in which his colleagues learned of his passing and the swift and smooth transition from Adams to St. John. I conclude with a quick identification of some of the major initiatives and activities of his period in office, 1976-85, highlighting the extent to which he has transformed his country and etched for himself a secure and inerasable place in its history.

**Early Beginnings:**

Tom was born on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1931. His mother, Grace Thorne, was married to Grantley Herbert Adams in 1929 at St. John's Parish Church. According to F.A. Hoyos' book on Tom he was born a 'blue baby' and had to be dipped in hot and cold water immediately after his birth to save him from the fate of 'stillbirth'. As a child he suffered all the ailments of children known at the time, including rheumatic fever.

Tom was given a formidable list of names. His father wanted him to be called John after the outstanding and highly effective British advocate Sir John Simon. Grantley was, himself, called Sir John by those who admired his prowess at the local Bar. There is no uniformity of spelling of Tom's first name **John**. His birth and death certificates list him as "John" while alternative sources like Wikipedia and other websites like Totally Barbados list him as "Jon". His mother favoured the names Michael and Geoffrey. She wanted, too, to show her gratitude to the doctor, Gerald Manning, who had brought her and her son out of what F.A. Hoyos in

his book on Tom refers to as “the shadow of death”. She, therefore, added the name Manningham to her son’s many names. And like most Barbadian boys he was entitled to a nickname and the one she loved most of all was Tom. Tom was thereafter known at home and abroad simply as Tom Adams. No other name was used.

Tom was Barbados’ second Prime Minister. He served for eight years and six months. He was the only son of Sir Grantley Herbert Adams who was, himself, the effective leader of Government since the semi-Ministerial system of Government was introduced in 1946 under the so-called ‘Bushe Experiment’. It was named after the Governor Sir Grattan Bushe. And he remained the effective leader until 1958 when he left Barbados to go to the Federal Government.

Some analysts point to the early influence of his father and the politics-filled nature of his household to support the thesis that Tom Adams was the leader best prepared by virtue of his parents and upbringing to lead the country.

He was educated at the Ursline Convent and at Harrison College, which he entered at age eight. He was a sickly lad in his early years and lost the entire first year at Harrison College due to ill-health. It had no effect on his performance as he was tutored at home by Dr. St. Elmo Thompson who found him ‘precociously bright’. Carlisle Burton, later Sir Carlisle, one of our most outstanding public servants, also tutored him at home.

Tom was a regular boy in the village, mixing freely with the girls and boys of the Codrington/Spooners Hill area.

At Harrison College he joined the Acton Club and participated in its debates. His vocabulary was large for a boy of his age and his memory powerful. As early as then he was an effective speaker. He edited a mathematical journal at Harrison and displayed quite early his organising ability and his capacity for careful and meticulous work. He followed in his father’s footsteps and won the Barbados Scholarship in 1950. His headmaster, Mr. Hammond, remarked that he could have won the scholarship in any one of the specialist offerings in the Sixth Form – Classics, Modern Studies, Science or Mathematics. Tom won the scholarship in Mathematics.

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Continuing to follow his father, he went to Oxford University. However, unlike his father who attended St. Catherine's, Tom's college at Oxford was Magdalen. At Oxford he pursued a degree in Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) and left Oxford with an M.A.

While in England, Tom was employed at the BBC as a producer and broadcaster where he was in charge of the West Indian programme. It was while there that he met his wife, Genevieve, who also worked at the BBC. They were married in England in 1962 and honeymooned in Venice. Before returning to Barbados Tom travelled extensively in Europe, admiring and taking note of the built environment.

**Party Politics:**

Tom returned to Barbados in 1962 with his wife where he started the practice of law. The Barbados Labour Party had suffered a devastating loss at the polls in 1961. The Party was in desperate need of an injection of new blood. Tom worked in the party as its secretary and tried to introduce systems of organisation and record-keeping.

In June 1966 he attended the Barbados Constitutional Conference in London as a Member of the BLP's delegation. Later in the year he contested and won a seat as the Senior Member for the constituency of St. Thomas under the double member constituency system, that is, each constituency returned two Members to the House of Assembly.

**Style of Leadership:**

Tom's style of leadership, whether presiding over the Cabinet, or one of its sub-committees, or over Party meetings of the National Executive Committee was relaxed, informal and discursive. It was wide-focused and anecdotal. At the same meeting he would, for short periods, be concentrated and discuss agenda items with single-mindedness and take four or five important decisions. Then, it was not unusual for him to return to his anecdotal self.

Matters as diverse as friendship, deception, love, loyalty and espionage were among some of the many matters that he would speak about.

Tales of the exploits of Hannibal and Caesar of old, and of Generals Rommel and Patton in World War II, the sinking by the Germans of merchant ships in the Atlantic in the second World War and the memorable battle in the North Atlantic to sink the Bismarck, Queen of the German Navy, might all be part of the same Cabinet meeting.

Not all Cabinet members favoured his style. St. John, in particular, was always concerned that we should stick to the agenda and when he chaired in Tom's absence, and later, when he became Prime Minister, he would often say when other issues were raised, that that was for the lunch table or 111 Roebuck Street.

In all of this Tom exhibited the extent to which he was a frustrated military leader and the extent, too, of his knowledge of matters large and small. He knew more trivia than a dozen men, yet he had a range of knowledge and a depth of understanding of serious issues matched by few.

He was, too, a big teaser. If he got hold of a good story on you, he was likely to tease you about it for a long time. Such was his sense of mischief and playfulness. He had, too, a devilish sense of humour.

At all times Tom's mind was flexible and open to new ideas. He would argue persuasively for a particular position, yet he was prepared in the face of solid argumentation to depart from his own early position and even abandon it while embracing the opposing view point.

I was comfortable with Tom's style and quite enjoyed his discursive, far-ranging and interesting anecdotal reach. I contributed to that and so, too, did most of our colleagues like L.B. Brathwaite and Lionel Craig, now both deceased, and others. I certainly learned a great deal about matters large and small, local and foreign at virtually every meeting. Tom infused me with my enthusiasm for military history, particularly World War II, which I still enjoy.

Tom was loyal to his colleagues and quick to move to the defence of any of them whom he felt was unfairly attacked.

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One Tuesday in House Barrow launched an unprovoked and mean-spirited attack on Billie Miller and Delisle Bradshaw. He said of Billie that she should know that he, Barrow, only dances with people of the opposite sex. Of Braddie he said, that were he Bradshaw a woman, he would not have to wear lipstick. I found it difficult to understand what he was saying about the two members to whom I was close. Suddenly both members appeared to have lost their buoyancy and confidence. Tom, sensing that Barrow had dispirited them said, "Tell them not to worry I will deal with Barrow in the reply". In the course of his reply, Tom said that he was ashamed of Barrow's remarks. He reminded him that he was the Father of the House i.e. the oldest serving member, and rather than encourage two of the youngest and most promising members of the House, he without provocation launched a mean-spirited and *ad hominem* attack on them.

Addressing Barrow directly, he told him that he should be last person to do such a thing, bearing in mind that he was particularly vulnerable to the charge of homosexuality. Barrow got up as though seeking to respond, but having got to his feet, he slumped right back down in his seat with hands outstretched and shouted "Oh God, Oh God". The message was clear. Tom was like the lion protective of his cubs. He was not prepared to countenance any major attacks on his ministers from any quarter.

### **Tom's Style of Governance**

In the period 1971 – 76, Tom Adams became leader of the Opposition following the rout of the party at the '71 General Elections. The then Leader of the Party and Opposition, Bernard St. John, lost his seat and the party's numbers in the House were reduced to six. Tom's profile rose steadily in the country during his days as Leader of the Opposition. He was effective in Parliament and on the public platform at political meetings. He was a natural before the microphone and the television cameras. And increasingly the public saw him as a "Prime Minister in waiting".

One of the highpoints of his performance as Leader of the Opposition was his 1976 response to the Budget Debate. The Budget speech of the Prime Minister was delivered on July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1976 and Adams was required, in a departure from tradition, to respond the same afternoon.

He accepted the challenge well knowing that he had what Hoyos, in his biography, described “as a time bomb” which “he planned to explode in the Government’s face as he drew near the end of reply”.

Before the House, a packed visitors’ gallery and a wide radio and television audience, Tom charged that certain members of the DLP had received from Sydney Burnett Alleyne such sums as \$20,000.00, \$5,000.00 and a regular subvention of \$600.00 a month before Alleyne Mercantile Bank was licensed by the Minister of Finance. He pledged to make copies of the cheques documents of the House, adding: “If there is a Watergate, the Prime Minister will have to investigate that, not me”. He gave the impression that his bag was stuffed full of cheques, but really there were no more. Tom was a true poker player and pulled off an elaborate bluff.

He sent Government members into a state of panic. He lamed them in the eyes of the public and scored, on any reckoning, a major victory. His real problem was at the level of the Parliamentary Party and that is a story which needs to be told.

Tom had been given copies of the two cheques drawn on the Sydney Alleyne Mercantile Bank. He advised a meeting of the Parliamentary party the evening before displaying the cheques, and said that he wanted to disclose them in the course of his reply. I was not intending to be at that meeting though those of us who were courting constituencies for the upcoming elections would frequently be invited to the meeting of the parliamentary party on Mondays. Around 4:30p.m., I was driving through High Street retuning to my office on James Street, Tom stopped me and said that he was on the way to the Leader of the Opposition’s Office and that I should go and park and come right back. I did as suggested and when I got there I recall that Clarence Jemmott, then a Senator and close to him was there. Bernard St. John and Henry Forde were also there. I struggle to remember others who may have been there. But it was a small group of us.

Tom had a good assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the members of his team - those who were naturally cautious; those who combined a sense of caution with a realistic sense of adventure, and those who erred on the side of pure adventure.

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Tom raised the cheques issue indicating how he intended to proceed. I remember both Bernard and Henry urging caution and arguing that there may well be an innocent explanation which, if raised in the face of his having disclosed the cheques, might turn out to embarrass him.

Tom's political instinct and judgment was that he had highly explosive material which he should use against the Government. He went around the table and asked for the vote of each member calling us by name. I remember that Clarence Jemmott and I supported the disclosure, Henry and Bernard dissented and Tom obviously was in favour of disclosure and that he did.

But he was not unmindful of the caution issued and he was clearly checking the morning papers in the days following to see whether there might have been a response from the member of Government whose name was on the cheques. Two days after, at about 5:30 in the morning, Tom called me to say that the Government member had written a letter to the newspaper in his defence and that it was such "a poor defence that we have nothing to worry about".

The Government was already under pressure and that revelation added considerably to their discomfort. A prominent cabinet member of the Barrow Administration told me at the time that at many subsequent cabinet meetings there would be outbursts from members who said "Prime Minister I just want it to be known that I did not get any cheques from Sydney Burnett Alleyne". They may in turn have been reflecting the pressures from the public. Ministers were openly asked from time to time, "Skipper, you get some of dem cheques?"

Among his colleagues and the public in general, Tom's stock rose dramatically. He clearly had an uncanny political sense and political nerve. He knew once again when he had an ace in his hand and not a jack and was not afraid to play it at the right moment.

Grantley Adams as Premier of Barbados and Barrow as Prime Minister were dominant leaders. Everything centred on Grantley Adams when he was Premier. Often it was reported in the newspapers of the day that no decision was taken on a cabinet day, no matter how pressing the issue, because Grantley Adams was out of the Island.



Barrow, too, was a leader in that tradition, dominant and dominating. Sir Herbert Duffus, retired Chief Justice of Jamaica, presided over a Commission of Inquiry which was set up after the 1976 General Election to investigate five financial ventures undertaken by the Barrow Administration. In the midst of the report, Duffus penned the words, 'all roads led to Barrow'. It became a description of Barrow's style of government.

Tom, in contrast to his father and to Barrow, was a delegator. Tom appreciated that his father, and to a lesser extent Barrow, presided over a Barbados that was more simplistic as a society and as an economy. He appreciated, too, that an effective style of management could not be premised on 'all roads lead to Tom'.

It would appear, too, that his own natural style of leadership and personality did not admit of that. Within a broad policy framework, his Ministers were generally given a free hand. He was so free with me that he gave me no instructions when he asked me to lead the team negotiating the first double taxation treaty with the United States of America.

After about a year of negotiations with the Americans, I told him that I would like to update him. He advised that I was to work closely with my team and whatever we settled for is what Barbados gets. All of that was consistent with what Tom had told me when he made me Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs. He told me that major reforms were needed in the sugar industry. He said he was giving me Jerry Hegelberg, then in his Ministry of Finance, and I should get on with the job. Jerry was a German who spent a lot of his years in Cuba and was generally regarded as an expert on sugar. He was a regular visitor to Barbados until about three years ago when he passed away in Kent, London.

Our first Central Bank Governor, Sir Courtney Blackman, knew Tom at school and worked closely with him as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Sir Courtney gave one of the Tom Adams' Memorial Lectures in the course of which he commented on Tom's leadership style as one of "collegiality". On another occasion he was to refer to Tom, again based on his leadership style, as the first modern leader of Barbados.

The hidden premise on which the delegated leadership was structured was trust and confidence. A story well illustrates the point. One day while sitting at my desk in the Ministry

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of Agriculture, a fellow Cabinet Minister called me and without hesitating said to me “Johnny, what sort of man this Tom Adams is?”

The question asked by my fellow Minister caught me by surprise and my response was “what do you mean, you know him as well as I do. We both sit in Cabinet as his Ministers.” He then went on to tell me that his Permanent Secretary had reported to him that the Prime Minister had directed that all of the files in his Ministry should be sent to his office on the back of a truck. You may rightly conclude that notwithstanding his style of collegiality he knew at all times the performance of his Ministers and the feedback thereon.

### **Confidences**

Tom had a high regard for those who respected his confidences. In those cases where his confidence was breached the reaction was likely to be sharp and painful. On one occasion, he advised one of his Ministers that he would be transferring him to another Ministry which he named. Tom did not tell him how soon it would be and there was no official announcement. The Minister promptly and unwisely went to the Ministry to which he was told that he would be transferred and alerted the senior staff. Tom’s reaction was to disappoint the Minister in a reshuffle by sending him to an entirely different Ministry.

On another occasion he called a party member who was very deserving of a position in the Senate and advised him that he would be appointed to the Senate. So happy was the individual that he told many people. The news got back to Tom before he was ready to make the announcement. In the end the party member was never made a Senator.

To summarize, his style of leadership seemed concerned to inspire confidence and to encourage capacity building in his Ministers. It resulted in him getting the best out of his team. In all of that he never lost sight of what was happening across the country. He was aware, too, of the quality of ministerial leadership that was being provided. He had a listening ear and a keen eye. And through his many contacts, he was always aware of the performance of his Ministers and the public reaction thereto.

He also got the very best out of the senior civil servants to whom he was unfailingly courteous. One story is very typical of his style in dealing with civil servants. There was a road project Tom wanted advanced. The money had been available for a year but the road remained unfinished. Tom summoned the civil servant in charge to a meeting. He kept the chap in the waiting room for some time. It was only after Tom's secretary reported to him that the gentleman had been seen going to the bathroom four times that he was called in. Tom would then earnestly enquire why no further progress had been made. Tom would deliberately place his diary on the table next to the civil servant. He would then ask the hapless civil servant to bring his diary to him. Tom would then diarise a meeting for ten days later. Invariably at the next meeting appreciable progress was reported.

But Tom Adams was more than rich substance. He was a man of impressive style as well. It arose from his tall and handsome looks, the memorable timbre of his voice, his distinctive gestures and his striking composure before the microphone and television cameras. Nor must we forget his romantic relationship with and his command of the English language, his ready feel for words. Some have contended that he brought to the administration of Barbados what John Kennedy brought to America. It was a touch of King Arthur's court. It was Camelot.

### **Philosophy:**

Tom, through his University training and wide reading, was exposed to a wide range of philosophers from Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes and John Stuart Mills to twentieth century thinkers like Harold Laski and Milton Friedman. He also knew Marx and Lenin, their brand of socialism and much else.

But Tom was not concerned with 'isms'. He wanted to continue his father's dream of the total emancipation of the Barbadian society, particularly that class who were voiceless and down-trodden prior to 1937. He wanted to see them and their off-spring well-educated at all levels and that is why he never quarrelled with the growing bill which the Government faced for increasing numbers who were enjoying free tertiary education. He knew its importance to

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upward social mobility and economic well-being. He knew, too, the value of home ownership and the sense of freedom and independence that goes with it.

Tom wanted Barbados to have a national health scheme which would be a variant of what obtained in Britain under the National Health Service but no less comprehensive. He wanted to see a drug scheme, allied to the health scheme in which the elderly, the sick, the handicapped and those suffering from traditional diseases, like asthma and hypertension in all age groups would be provided with free medication.

Tom wanted a Barbados in which all households would be provided with water and electricity. He felt that Barbadians were capable of enjoying one of the highest standards of living in the world and his aim was to so provide. Nothing gave him more pleasure than to be greeted by Barbadian maids vacationing in New York and London. He came home after meeting them in those capitals and reported those stories with much pride and sheer delight. This was also a reflection of Tom's egalitarian personality. He could mingle with the masses and the classes.

The Barbados Labour Party applied for and secured membership in Socialist International as early as November, 1978 during the Organisation's 14<sup>th</sup> Congress held in Vancouver, Canada. In those days, prominent members of Socialist International included: Olof Palme, socialist leader of Sweden, Willy Brandt, the well-known Mayor of Berlin, Chancellor of West Germany and Leader of the Socialist Democratic Party, Lionel Jospin, and Leader of the Socialist Party in France later Prime Minister of France and Carlos Andros Perez, President of Venezuela. The BLP was excited over this development and a spokesman for the party stated that, "We are joining the mainstream of the International Socialist Movement". Tom saw conversations with parties and governments across the Western world as important for the party and the Government.

Apart from Tom's philosophy, rooted in people and their upliftment, he had an architect's/engineer's view of Barbados which called for a network of roads opening up the interior of the island and gaining maximum advantage of our limited physical resources. His philosophy called for tasteful, yet modern public structures like the Central Bank and the

General Post Office. All areas of national life attracted his attention. He took initiatives to improve and enlarge our national festival Crop Over. His further initiatives impacted the entire cultural scene for the better.

His commitment to democracy was at the heart of his philosophy. He put a high emphasis on Parliament and its finest traditions as the forum for the people's business. He heavily emphasised, too, the party system and elections which are fair and free from fear. He introduced legislation to constitutionally protect the Electoral and Boundaries Commission. The free flow of information, too, about Government and its business was all at the heart of his philosophy.

#### **Death:**

I will never forget where I was at the moment I received the news of Tom's untimely death. I was in Cabinet with several colleagues awaiting the commencement of the Cabinet meeting set to approve the Annual Estimates of Expenditure.

After about one hour waiting around, Mr. Frank Blackman, the long serving Cabinet Secretary, appeared at the open door of the Cabinet Room. He was wearing his pipe and with trembling hands, I remember him saying "Lady and Gentlemen, Prime Minister Adams is dead". I did not believe him and immediately enquired "What sort of Chernenko joke is that?" Chernenko was a reference to the Leader of the Soviet Union whose death was reported in the Barbadian papers that very day.

Mr. Blackman was quick to respond that he was serious and that Prime Minister Adams was dead.

#### **Quick Succession:**

I was both shocked and dismayed at the news but my thoughts ran to the succession and the need for St. John, whom I was sure would be called upon to form the Government and be Prime Minister, to address the nation that very night at 8 pm.

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Grief stricken as I was, I started to write St. John's speech. Suddenly St. John, virtually out of breath, just having climbed the three flights of stairs to the Cabinet Room entered and confirmed the news of Tom's death. He turned to me and said "Johnny, I want you to drive me to Government House to be sworn in".

I promptly responded and in a minute or two we were off. During the car ride "Bree", as I called him, reflected on the route that he had taken to the Prime Ministership. He had stepped down as Leader of the Barbados Labour Party and of the Opposition following his defeat at the polls in 1971. And it was following Bree's resignation that Tom became Leader of the Party and of the Opposition.

Bree and Tom had always gotten on well. They were always urbane and civilised in their exchanges. However, some while before Tom died he wrote a letter, which became public, to the Director of Tourism, a cousin of Bree called Patrick Hinds. In that letter he said that the management of the tourism industry was more damaging to the Barbados' economy than Hurricane Janet.

Bree was, in my judgment, nothing short of wounded by this letter which had become public. At the time the letter first surfaced he was Minister of Tourism, among many other ministries, but thereafter Aaron Truss succeeded him. One day following a meeting with the Prime Minister and others, I enquired of Tom for whom was that letter intended. And he said to me that I am a man that often called a spade a bloody shovel and he proposed to respond to me with like bluntness. He said it was intended for Bernard. He added, "I cannot speak to him and I am not happy with the way in which the tourist industry is being managed".

On the Thursday before Tom died Bree left the Cabinet Room about ninety minutes after Cabinet was in session. The door to the Cabinet office suddenly became ajar and when I looked up, it was Bree beckoning me to come. And when I went to him he told me that he felt he should let me know that he has written Tom a letter resigning from the Cabinet. In the weeks before that Bree was distinctly unhappy. The letter was in wide circulation and he was very conscious of the fact that it was a sign of disapprobation by the Prime Minister.

Following Tom's death, I enquired of the Prime Minister's secretary whether she had seen the letter. She reported that she had not.

St. John and I arrived at Government House. He took the oath of office at about 4:30 pm. On our way back to Government Headquarters, we talked about many things. He told me very early in our conversation that we must go to the polls. That was his first instinct and I thought it was the correct one. I told him, however, that our first duty was to bury our fallen leader in style. Thereafter I would provide him with a note on which constituencies had sitting members, which ones had 'caretakers' and how many new candidates we would need. I advised Bree to go home and change into a black tie, white shirt and black suit. I told him that he should come back to me at Government Headquarters where we would rehearse the speech I had written for him to deliver and that, thereafter, I would drive him to CBC to address the nation at 8 pm. We followed that plan. St. John was appropriately dressed and spoke to the nation in the right tone and with the right substance. You might think this was too detailed, but Bree was a bright man who would not necessarily have thought of something as mundane as appropriate clothing.

I followed his instruction, given to me on the way back to Government Headquarters, to advise my colleagues to be at Government House at 9 pm that evening to be sworn in as Ministers. That took place but the footage of the ceremony cannot be shown. Many ministers, after repeating four or five lines of the oath, dropped both the bible that they were holding and the card on which the oath was written, and ran out of the room bawling. On each occasion Dr. Cato was to declare in firm and dead pan tones "Sworn". Cabinet members were trying to deal with the grief and the enormity of our sudden loss.

The next morning St. John called me at my desk at the Ministry of Agriculture and enquired what I was doing. I told him that I was going through some files and trying to come to grips with the fact that Tom was no longer with us. He asked me to come to see him at the Prime Minister's office. When I arrived there, and before I could sit, he told me that we had to settle down and run the Government for the next year. That was a dramatic turnaround from what he indicated the evening before. In the weeks following Billie and I fought hard though never together to persuade him that the right thing to do was to go to the polls. We thought that the

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Party would benefit from a sympathetic vote; that the Opposition would be caught with their pants down and that we would get a renewal of confidence from the people. We thought, too, that St. John himself needed to establish his own legitimacy as Prime Minister.

**Historical Assessment of Tom's Legacy**

I now turn to our historical assessment of Tom's contribution. It is still relatively early to do so, for after all, he has been dead only 30 years. But I regard a first statement as important particularly coming from someone who worked alongside of him and interacted with him. It makes no claim to be comprehensive. The judgment may be criticised as biased in his favour but the facts cannot be challenged as inaccurate.

I want to identify four (4) policy initiatives and/or activities of the Tom Adams Administration 1976- 1985 that underpin the thesis that he was a transformative and modern leader. Tom made a marked impact on his country – its psyche, its economy, society, polity and its physical features. His legacy will, I have no doubt, be an enduring and positive one.

**Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act:**

The first is the landmark piece of legislation on the statute books referred to as the *Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act*. Professor Hilary Beckles of UWI and Dr. Nicholas Draper of University College London are leading the fight to secure compensation for the descendants of slaves in the West Indies and elsewhere. But it can be argued that Tom Adams, by taking the initiative to provide at peppercorn rate to the descendants of slave workers the piece of plantation land which they occupied at 10c a square foot, not exceeding \$300.00, is an act of reparation and it must be seen in that context.

It was in Tom's thinking an attempt to right a cruel wrong. He wanted to pay the plantation owners nothing but he was persuaded that he would rank with Mugabe and others as a confiscator if he did so.

**Offshore Financial Sector:**



I now turn to the offshore financial sector. When he took office in 1976, Barbados was highly dependent on the sugar industry, tourism and light manufacturing activities for its foreign exchange. The sugar industry was in serious difficulties and facing an uncertain future. As Britain entered the EU it terminated the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement. As a result we lost the guaranteed price for sugar.

Tourism, too, was seen as fickle and in any event there was a period of very low occupancy between April and September every year. And before the Crop Over Festival was launched some hotels actually closed during that period. Manufacturing was on a growth path but was still in its early stages of development.

What was urgently needed was another prop to the economy and another serious earner of foreign exchange.

Barbados was regarded as a good candidate for establishing itself as an offshore financial sector. The sophistication of its telecommunications system, a good airport and seaport, reliable air links to Europe and North America, political stability, highly-rated educational facilities at every level and the easy trainability of its people were among the considerations that supported that view.

The Offshore Financial Sector was given a major boost with the passage of the International Business Companies Act in 1978 and the Offshore Banking Act in 1979. That was followed by the Shipping Incentives Act of 1982 which provided for ships' registration in Barbados. Then came the Foreign Sales Corporation Act of 1984 which, combined with an Exchange of Information Treaty with the USA, qualified Barbados as one of the first locations for the use and establishment of foreign sales corporations. All of those initiatives were taken during the Tom Adams Administration and today the Offshore Financial Sector is second to tourism as an earner of foreign exchange.

THE 6<sup>th</sup> TOM ADAMS MEMORIAL LECTURE ON THE 30<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF TOM ADAMS DELIVERED  
BY SIR RICHARD CHELTENHAM, K.A., Q.C., PH.D AT THE  
GRANDE SALLE, TOM ADAMS FINANCIAL CENTRE,  
BRIDGETOWN ON MARCH 11<sup>TH</sup>, 2015

**ABC Highway:**

I turn to the Highway from the Bridgetown Port to the Airport and from St. Peter to the Airport now called the ABC Highway. It needs to be said that at the outset Tom wanted a 4-lane highway. The arithmetic of the project and the resistance of the IADB restricted the number of lanes provided. Today the expansion as Tom envisioned it is urgently needed and will cost several times more than it would have cost then. Such was Tom's foresight. But the highway has allowed for the rapid movement of people and goods across Barbados and has opened up vast areas for housing and industrial development. It has allowed us much better use of our limited land resources and it has avoided the roads becoming car parks.

**Health Services:**

Tom wanted to introduce in Barbados a national health service which, though in some respects might be different from the National Health Service in the United Kingdom, would be as comprehensive in its delivery of health care services.

His further vision was that it would cost nothing to the Barbadian at the point of delivery. It met with great resistance from the doctors and Tom died before he was able to negotiate with them. But it remains to his credit that we do have a health care system which remains largely centered at the polyclinics across the country and at the QEH. It is free at the point of delivery and is of an acceptable quality.

It is time to leave Tom. I have presented him as a great human being, a prominent and distinguished Barbadian leader who has made a transformative impact on his country. Like his father before him, he was a man of large vision and stature. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked closely with him and for the chance to reflect on him, his work and contribution tonight.

I apologise for disturbing him so often have I called his name. I can only hope that he can return to rest and continue to enjoy light and refreshment in abundance.