

## **Bermuda Independence Commission**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

#### **Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen:**

**I am Vernon G. Lambe Sr.**, Chairman of the Bermuda Independence Commission, a duly appointed body made up of a cross section of committed, intelligent, respected and very serious members of this community. A cross-section not only in race, gender and age but also by political affiliation, religious persuasion holding differing positions on the subject of independence.

**Indeed, we are a microcosm** of this community. But we are united in one common purpose. To bring to you the public, in as unbiased, transparent and forthright manner the information we believe will assist you in making an informed, as opposed to a purely emotional or less informed, decision on the topic of Independence.

**We come before you to** inform you of our common purpose and the process by which we intend to accomplish that purpose.

**We are also here before you to** solicit your full participation in that process as a community at large. Because, after all, the issue of Independence fundamentally impacts the lives of every man, woman and child in this community.

**Before proceeding further**, it is incumbent upon us to pause and express, on behalf of this Commission, our deepest appreciation and debt of gratitude to the United Bermuda Party and former UBP Government for its investigative work on the subject of independence. A work which spanned a period from 1977-1995, which we have adopted as a beginning point for our discussions. We hope the UBP continues that seminal and historic work for which we are eternally grateful.

**Presently**, these works may be accessed at the Government portal and website.

**Our** remit is to carry the investigation beyond these works. To a wider appreciation of other options and models of Government not found in those works.

**Additionally**, we must express to the present Government our gratitude for their insightfulness and expediency in appointing this Commission to more thoroughly and conclusively explore and expose to this community pertinent information on this subject of independence.

**To permit the** investigation to go beyond the ambit and control of the Government of the day and the respective Political Parties and to enjoy a wider, less insular and partisan remit in this process. We thank the Governor and the Government for making available its portal, technocrats, experts and other resources to assist us if and when required.

**The question** has been asked, Why BIC? Why Now? We answer, Why not BIC? And, Why not Now?

**Firstly**, because an Omnibus Survey, a syndicated quarterly survey of Bermuda residents June 2004, clearly indicates a strong interest for more information on the subject of independence. We will provide that information and quench that thirst for knowledge.

**Secondly**, the demographics of our country has changed in regards to at least two generations of college graduates who now comprise our current population. These graduates have modern views about how they want their country constituted. These views may not coincide with the views of their parents. Yet their perspective on the issue must be considered.

**Thirdly**, the lowering of the voting age from twenty-one to eighteen, provides for a significant demographic change in the electorate.

The political climate has substantially changed, as indeed has the world in general and Bermuda in particular.

**Fourthly**, you should know that Bermuda's Constitution is in fact and in law, a Constitutional Order brought into being by an Order in Council under the Bermuda Constitution Act 1967. An Act not of our local Legislature but of the Westminster Parliament of the U.K. Government.

**This Constitution** is so advanced that it is the envy of many of the remaining British Overseas Territories as a model for their eventual transition to Independence. Indeed, our Constitution has been variously described by some British officials in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) as a "pre-Independence" Constitution.

**Any further** amendment which bears upon the Governor's reserved powers and the U.K.'s international obligations and responsibilities, will amount to an Independence Constitution.

**Our present Constitution** is approximately 37 years old with no fundamental changes made to it thus far.

**Previous investigations** have revealed that the U.K. has been adamant that Associated Statehood is not an option for Bermuda. Bermuda must maintain the Status Quo or go to Independence is the conclusion of the whole matter.

**The final decision** in both of these option is ultimately in your hands. The BIC invites you, the public, to join with us the Commissioners, to thoroughly investigate these two options, or any others.

**Lastly**, the record reveals that the previous investigative process carried out by the UBP and Government focused on the model of a constitutional monarchy. There are other models:

1. Indigenous Monarchies
  2. Republics(non-executive and executive) within the Commonwealth(e.g. Trinidad)
  3. Crown Dependencies(e.g. Isle of Man, Guernsey, Jersey etc.)
- to mention a few.

**Accordingly**, because no formal dialogue or enactment on the subject has taken place for some ten years since the directive given on the subject by the Premier of the day, Sir John Swan, in 1994, this task falls to the BIC to do so. I quote Sir John Swan when he said in 1994, “This is an appropriate time for a reappraisal.”

The BIC takes the view that the time has come to confront the subject of independence pros and cons candidly and forthrightly.

**The BIC** believes this approach will prove to be the panacea against, the virus of speculation, mis-information and indecision surrounding the topic of Independence.

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**To this end**, we propose to host public meetings in various venues, located east, west and central for the purpose of receiving submissions, both orally and written, pros and cons, on any topic related to Independence. Dates and places concerning these meetings will be advertised in both the print and electronic media in a timely fashion.

**We further propose** to visit our educational institutions, high schools and the college, to engage our youth in the process and dialogue on the subject of independence. We will be inviting our schools and College to participate in an Essay competition and a ‘School Debate’ on selected topics relevant to Independence.

**In keeping with our mandate** we shall seek to garnish the widest participation in this process by specifically inviting submissions on the subject from:

Chamber of Commerce

Bermuda Bar Association

Bermuda International Business

Religious Institutions

BIU

Teachers Union

BPSU

Political Parties PLP/UBP

.....and others

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**We propose to provide** for “up front and personal” contact with diplomatic and constitutional experts on the subject of independence, engaging the Commission and the community in the highest levels of discussion on the subject.

**In addition**, as information-gathers and dissimulators, the representatives of this Commission shall visit various foreign diplomatic jurisdictions and consulates, garnishing relevant information on external affairs and internal governance, as it relates to defense, international alliances, finance, citizenship, constitutional arrangements and international representative requirements, i.e. ambassadorship and foreign offices.

**Furthermore**, we propose to invite representatives of countries that have made the transition from colonization to independence in order that we may benefit from their weaknesses and strengths, failures and successes.

**Our mission** is to ensure that this community will be informed comprehensively and conclusively. Therefore, we shall provide a website with information readily available to the community. That website is currently under active construction and will be published forthwith.

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**We further propose periodically** to have articles in the print media under the heading, “You Should Know”, apprising the community of relevant information that before now was not readily available to the public.

**We have secured** a postal address, P. O. Box HM 3393, Hamilton HM PX, Bermuda for both your convenience and ours.

**In the words of Franklin D. Roosevelt** in a speech July 1938 in Marietta, Ohio quote: “Let us never forget that government is ourselves, and not some alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not presidents, senators or congressmen but the voters of that country.”

**Every country** has the inalienable right to self determination in terms of its constitutional destiny. That right has been affirmed to us by the UK Government. Its time to exercise it and put to rest the question on independence pro and con.

**Therefore, we envision** that at the conclusion of this exercise we shall have provided this community with the necessary formal and appropriate information to address the decision on independence.

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**Indeed, at the conclusion** of our investigation and deliberations, we are tasked with issuing a final report to the Cabinet on the topic of independence.

**At that instance**, we shall have exhausted our remit and will stand down. Our task shall have been formally completed.

**May it not be said of us**, as was another community in another day quote: “The people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge and because they rejected knowledge.” To the contrary may it be said, “In the multitude of counsel there is wisdom.”

**Francis Bacon put it succinctly “Knowledge is Power.”**

**In conclusion**, our destiny is in our hands and we look forward to your full participation in this process.

**Consider this acronym for BIC – Being Informed Comprehensively**

Thank you for your patience and indulgence.  
The Bermuda Independence Commission