THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION & CULTURE AND OTHER 
MINISTERS OF THE GOVERNMENT, HONOURABLE SENATORS AND MEMBERS 
OF PARLIAMENT, YOUR EXCELLENCIES AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC 
CORPS, THE CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS 
COUNCIL, DISTINGUISHED EDUCATORS, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, 
REVEREND GENTLEMEN, PRINCIPAL AND STAFF OF THE COLLEGE OF THE 
BAHAMAS, STUDENT BODY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Once upon a time the common assumption was that The 
Bahamas would never amount to much and that there will never 
be the need for Bahamians with higher levels of education and 
training. In the outside event that The Bahamas did need some 
higher skills, then it was argued that such personnel could 
always be brought in from abroad. As late as 1958 a Colonial 
Officer Adviser to The Bahamas suggested that our country did 
not even need a technical institute. To quote him verbatim -

"It is clear that the Bahamian community is too small 
and its industrial development too insignificant to 
justify a technical college or institute in the accepted 
sense of the term, that there are not now and are not 
likely to be in the foreseeable future many openings for 
men or women trained to the near professional level in 
most of the subjects which are commonly regarded as
"technical" and the opportunities for trained technicians are few and far between and that the openings for trained craftsmen or artisans are and must continue to be severely limited."

Today we are here to witness the official opening of the College of The Bahamas another tangible step forward and upward on the ladder of national development.

Today all of us recognize the fact that trained manpower is an important factor in the development process. All of us realise that our plans for national development are likely to be stymied if we do not have the trained personnel to man the proverbial battleships of industrial, commercial and public services. In recognition of this fact we have, since 1967, taken a number of steps to ensure that suitably qualified Bahamians will be available to meet the needs of the economy.

The Technical Institute which was started in 1962 was upgraded and renamed the Nassau Technical College and, two years later, in 1968, the new Nassau Technical Centre, offering a wide variety of courses in such fields as mechanical engineering, carpentry & joinery, motor vehicle mechanics, plumbing & welding, masonry and commerce, was established. The two institutions were later amalgamated in 1971 and became the C.R. Walker Technical College, which is now the Soldier Road Campus of the College of The Bahamas.
In January 1967 the new Government began to increase considerably the grants and scholarships available to Bahamians to study abroad. Shortly before then our Bahamas became a contributing territory of the University of the West Indies. In 1968, just ten years after the Colonial Office Adviser's comment and just nine years ago, the then Minister of Education, the Honourable Arthur D. Hanna, now Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, requested the University of the West Indies to send a team to advise on the establishment of the College of The Bahamas. The institution which we are formally opening today is largely an outcome of their report.

For this nation's welfare, we are determined to develop a mixed economy, one in which the private sector will play a very important role but nevertheless one which will not be entirely determined by the impersonal forces of the market place. Our economic history has been one of booms and slumps because of its very dependent nature and the lack of any clear goals for national economic development. I think that now we can all agree that the fluctuations which have traditionally characterized the Bahamian economy should not be allowed to continue. And the Government is committed to overcoming this problem by sensible long term economic planning.
To achieve the established goals we have built up or strengthened a number of institutions such as the Central Bank, the Economic Planning Unit, the Bahamas Agricultural Corporation, the College of The Bahamas, and, as soon as possible, a Development Bank. Our hope is that the activities of these various institutions will support and complement each other in our national development efforts. In this context we can see how crucial is the role of the College of The Bahamas. It is one of the very important supportive institutions in our plans for national, social and economic development.

What then are our expectations of the College? First of all we hope to see the further development of an institution committed primarily towards helping our Nation achieve its development goals. This will call for a very close liaison between the College, the various Government departments and employers, trade unions and professional groups to ensure that the College graduates are equipped with those skills or competencies which are most needed on the Bahamian job market. While the Government respects the need of the College for academic autonomy, I think that close ties with employers, trade unions and professional groups will help to ensure that our national needs are given first consideration in any programmes that are to be conducted by the College.
We hope also that the College will produce graduates who are not only technically competent but also who will have developed a social consciousness which will make them actively concerned about the nature of the society in which they live and, as informed citizens, have some views on the directions along which national development should be taking place.

In meeting our needs for qualified personnel we realize that the College will not be able to prepare people for every professional field, largely because it will be too expensive to do so. This is one reason why, in the first place, The Bahamas officially became part of a wide system of higher education, the University of the West Indies, where our students should be able to obtain training in the specialist faculties which cannot be provided in The Bahamas. But because it cannot provide education and training in all fields, the College should always see that students who would need to continue their studies overseas will be able to obtain the educational background which will ensure their ready acceptance into these institutions of higher learning.

In addition, our demand for trained personnel in some areas is very great, notably secondary school teaching. There are some 937 teachers in the secondary schools owned and operated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and some 271 in the independent schools, most of whom were teaching at the secondary level. Of those 1208 a large percentage is non-Bahamian. While we acknowledge and are grateful the contribution
being made by teachers recruited from abroad, it is absolutely essential that we produce larger numbers of graduate teachers for our secondary schools.

The establishment of professional standards in many fields is another need which requires early attention. These standards are a necessary pre-requisite before the College can help to prepare young people locally, to enter into some of these professions. It is hoped that the College of The Bahamas and the professional groups will co-operatively work on these problems. This will also apply to many other occupational areas in The Bahamas for which we need to have clearly defined standards of competence which will be expected of anyone working in these occupations.

And after all this, what will we have? Ten years from today we will have developed the University of The Bahamas. Boys Central School will have given way to the Government High School. The Government High School will have given way to the College of The Bahamas. And the College of The Bahamas will have given way to the University of The Bahamas.

Even the achievement today has been a tremendous one. I wish especially to thank all those who have in one way or another thrown in their lot to help with the development of the College. The Government recognises the leadership provided by the Minister of Education and Culture, the Honourable Livingstone N. Coakley; it pays tribute to the College Council
and its Chairman, the Rt. Rev. Bishop Eldon; it is appreciative of the loyal support of the Permanent Secretary, the former Director of Education and Dr. John Knowles, the first Principal, who has come all the way from Vancouver, British Columbia, to join us for this occasion; and it is grateful to the universities and colleges, especially the University of the West Indies and the University of Miami, which have been helping the College with the development of some of its programmes.

The task that lies ahead is a formidable one and I am sure that the present Principal, Dr. Bacchus, and his co-workers, both the academic and non-academic staff of the College, will be able to accept the challenge and build a truly national institution of higher learning which will be respected for its innovative approaches and its ideas in all parts of the academic work.

It is with a great deal of pleasure and some pride that I now declare the College of The Bahamas officially open.