Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports

National Heroes Day 2014

Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Community, Culture and Sports

Friday, 6th June 2014

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to address the Members of this Honourable House on the subject of National Heroes Day 2014.

Mr. Speaker, As we approach our National Heroes Day public holiday on Monday June 16th 2014, it is fitting that we take time to celebrate our National Heroes. Members may have noticed the National Heroes Day banners displayed on several government office buildings in Hamilton.

These banners will remain in place for the entire month of June to remind us that we must continue to celebrate and honour our National Heroes as part of our distinct heritage and our collective culture.

Mr. Speaker, National Heroes Day was first celebrated on 13th October 2008. Honourable members may recall that in 2009 the Legislature amended the Public Holidays Act 1947 such that commencing from June 2009 the National Heroes Day public holiday is observed on the third Monday in June of every year.

Mr. Speaker, With your indulgence I will take a few brief moments to remind Honourable Members of the five (5) persons who have been formally recognized to date as Bermuda's National Heroes.

Mr. Speaker, The late Dame Lois Browne-Evans DBE, JP, LLB was recognized and celebrated as Bermuda's first National Hero in October 2008. Dame Lois fought to improve the political, economic and social conditions for the people of Bermuda and in so doing attained many great honours including: the first female lawyer in Bermuda; the first Black woman elected to Parliament; the first female Opposition Leader in the British Commonwealth; and the first female Attorney-General in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2011 three (3) additional National Heroes were officially recognized in Bermuda: Dr. Pauulu Kamarakafego; Dr. Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon; and Sir Henry Tucker.

Mr. Speaker, the late Dr. Pauulu Kamarakafego was recognized for his contributions to both Bermuda and the global community as a civil rights leader, ecological engineer and parliamentarian. He is particularly remembered for his efforts in fighting for Universal Adult Suffrage and towards achieving equality for all citizens of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the late Dr. Edgar Fitzgerald Gordon was designated as a National Hero for his contributions to the people of Bermuda as a physician, civil rights leader and as the "The Father of Bermuda's Labour Movement." He was the founder and President of the Bermuda Workers' Association (BWA).

Mr. Speaker, the late Sir Henry Tucker was recognized as a National Hero for his commitment to the people of Bermuda as the first Government leader of our country after the 1964 constitution. He transformed over time into an advocate for cooperation amongst the people of Bermuda, without regard to race.

Mr. Speaker, in June 2012 the late Mary Prince was inducted as a National Hero. Mary Prince was a Bermudian woman born into slavery at Brackish Pond, now known as Devonshire Marsh in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda. Her groundbreaking autobiography, 'The History of Mary Prince - A West Indian Slave' published in 1831, was the first account of the life of a black woman to be published in the United Kingdom. The book was a first-hand description of the brutalities of enslavement, released at a time when slavery was still legal in the British Caribbean colonies and Bermuda. Mary Prince's story contributed to the anti-slavery debate in a manner different from reasoned analysis or statistical arguments, since it was a direct and authentic description from her own personal experience.

Mr. Speaker, It was never intended to name a new National Hero each year. As I mentioned in the House during the 2014 Budget Debate we will not recognize a new National Hero in 2014. However, I encourage all of Bermuda to pause on Monday June 16th 2014 to reflect on our five (5) current National Heroes and celebrate their significant contributions to our society. Take time to engage

children in meaningful dialogue about what our National Heroes mean to them. History will record these five individuals as among those who have had an influential outcome on our progress as a people here in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, in the coming months the Ministry of Community, Culture and Sports will facilitate reinstatement of a Naming and Recognition Committee responsible for overseeing public nominations and awarding new National Heroes. In undertaking this process the Ministry will encourage the public's input regarding who should be our next National Hero. It is intended that the selection process will culminate in a new National Hero being announced during a naming ceremony planned for June 2015.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.