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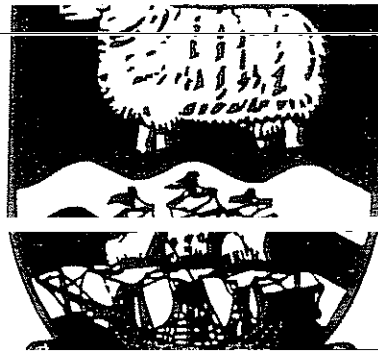
SECOND INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR THE ERADICATION OF COLONIALISM

Caribbean Regional Seminar on the implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of
Colonialism: next steps in decolonization

St. George's, Grenada
22 to 24 May 2007

Statement by Dr. Richard Dwyer

Falkland Islands 28 May 2007



DESIRE THE RIGHT

C24 CARIBBEAN REGIONAL SEMINAR
ST. GEORGE'S, GRENADA
22-24 MAY 2007

STATEMENT

THE HONOURABLE DR RICHARD DAVIES
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL OF GRENADA

2007 Caribbean Regional Seminar
Statement by the Hon. Dr. Richard Davies
Legislative Councillor, Falkland Islands

Madame Chair, your Excellencies, thank you for inviting me to this seminar. I would also like to thank the government of Grenada for their warm welcome and hospitality. Thanks are also due to the secretariat for their assistance with

my travel arrangements. It is a pleasure to be here as a democratically elected representative of the Falkland Islands, to address you on behalf of our people. I have missed our usual session, the most important week in our legislative calendar in order to be here. We take the committee's work seriously and we believe that it is important that we represent ourselves, whatever the difficulties of limited resource and isolation.

Do colonisation without self-determination. I will then briefly describe our Falkland Islands on our present status. I will then briefly describe our government and economy, demonstrating that we are no longer a colony. I

finally suggest how progress can be made.

Firstly, it is our clear and informed wish to continue our present association with the United Kingdom. This is an appropriate form of self-determination and we do not currently seek independence or integration. We have an appropriate and modern relationship with a member state of the United

Nations. This relationship will remain in place until we have reached a conclusion - a public decision which clearly demonstrates Britain's commitment to protecting our right to self-determination. For our part we

commit ourselves to abide by Britain's international obligations and the principles of good governance. This is not a colonial relationship. It is a self-determination, and which seeks to give us the greatest possible control over our own lives. This is entirely consistent with the principles and Charter of the United Nations. British sovereignty does not imply a colonial status.

Secondly, we do not wish the British Government to negotiate our sovereignty with Argentina. Falkland Islanders are strongly opposed to Argentine sovereignty and no one who visits the Falklands could have any doubt about this. We have never been part of Argentina. I am not going to rehearse the

frequently repeated. It is clear to us that Argentina has no intention of

We would become a colony of Argentina and we do not want that. It is a clearly established principle that the political future of the non-self-governing territories should be determined in accordance with the wishes of their inhabitants. It is we who should be deciding our own future, not the Argentine and British governments.

Given this deadlock, it seems inconceivable that if you pass the same resolution this year, that it will make any progress. For over 40 years the committee has heard arguments about the relative merits of self determination and territorial integrity in our case. You have passed an annual resolution calling for negotiation between the UK and Argentina, although Falkland Islanders, the people concerned in the issue, are vehemently opposed to it. We are grateful that Britain has supported our right to self-determination and has resisted this call. Resolution 1514 clearly states that "the subjugation of peoples to alien subjugation and domination... is contrary to the Charter of the U.N." Annexation of our country by Argentina cannot be the way ahead. Argentina's claim that Falkland Islanders have no political rights in their homeland is disgraceful, unjust, dehumanising and contrary to the ethos of

I will now briefly describe our economy and government.

The earlier immigrants came largely from Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia. Many recent immigrants come from Britain, South America and St Helena, but individuals from a wide range of other countries have also become Falkland Islanders and have created a distinctive and characteristic national identity. Like many other countries, including Argentina, we are a nation of immigrants, but we are certainly not a 'transplanted people' as is sometimes claimed.

In 1986 we declared a Fisheries Conservation and Management zone and since then have developed a thriving economy based on fishing, tourism and agriculture. We are economically self sufficient apart from the cost of defence. Hard work and careful use of our revenue has enabled much needed development of infrastructure, and high standards of education and medical

services. We are proud to have created a society with low crime levels, no class distinctions, no drug culture and no significant unemployment. We are proud to have created a society in which young people wish to return to after higher education abroad.

In 1949 the first elected members joined appointed members on the Legislative Council and they were elected by universal suffrage. Our 1985 constitution articulated a range of fundamental rights and freedoms. It contained provisions for the independence of the judiciary.

number. The governor is obliged to consult Executive Council in respect of his functions. He retains responsibility for foreign policy and defence although our advice of the UK government and also represents the views of EIC to the UK between governor and councillors, and this is the case.

Political parties have not developed and all legislative

absence of government and opposition other methods of accountability evolved. Each councillor takes responsibility for a particular portfolio. We do not currently have ministerial responsibility. This responsibility is exercised by working closely with the relevant departments

committees which meet in public and consult widely before sending it to Executive Council for further debate and ratification. This provides a good measure of scrutiny. Government policy is implemented by the Chief Executive, the head of our civil service.

We take our international responsibilities seriously and for example I am pleased to say that we recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol. This issue and should not be used as an opportunity for political lobbying as appears to have occurred recently. As with many other issues we are very aware of our vulnerability to climate change. We are taking active steps to reduce our carbon emissions with a view to becoming carbon neutral. These projects will

lead to significant and impressive achievements.

viauarie Chair, this is not a colony I am describing. This is a flourishing, self-sufficient island democracy. We are, by choice a non-independent territory. We are not a non self governing territory.

I would now like to say something about our relationship with Argentina. Until recently we were beginning to make progress and increase mutual confidence. This was good for all three communities – the Falkland Islands, the United Kingdom, and Argentina – as well as the wider international community. We are disappointed that the current Argentine government has changed its approach and appears to have taken steps deliberately designed to damage our economy and pressurize us to negotiate away our sovereignty. Economic sanctions such as refusal of permission for charter flights to cross

from also obtaining licences to fish in Argentine waters. In April Argentina withdrew from the 1995 Joint Declaration on Hydrocarbons. This may have little immediate practical effect but it was a door for potential future co-operation and confidence building. Now it has been closed. It is easy to close these doors, but opening them takes patient work and

issues under consideration. For example, we have invited the families of those Argentine soldiers, sailors and airmen who came to the Falkland Islands in 1982 to come and hold a commemoration ceremony in the Falkland Islands later this year. We welcome such contact between our communities, which can increase understanding and heal the scars of war.

In my view, Madame Chair, I ask you to consider that the annual resolution on the Falkland Islands is fundamentally flawed and will not lead to any progress. It ignores the views of the very people it refers to and thus cannot advance the process of decolonisation.

This does not mean that progress cannot be made – it can. There are many other areas of the world where deeply held convictions and principles appear irreconcilable, and yet progress has been made – look at the cases of Gibraltar and Northern Ireland. Instead of passing this resolution again, I ask that you encourage measures which reduce tension, which promote understanding and confidence, and that you call for decolonisation.

people involved will lead nowhere.

Madame Chair, your Excellencies, thank you for your attention.