

# Foster talks Independence

**EVERY BAJAN STUDENT of Caribbean literature should be able to answer a simple question.**

It is: what do George Lamming, Kamau Brathwaite, Austin "Tom" Clarke and Cecil Foster have in common?

At the top of the list is the excellent use of language. Next they were all born in Barbados. Thirdly, they are among the country's and the Caribbean's most celebrated authors and each has achieved literary acclaim by studying and writing outside of their native land.

"Many Barbadians earn their international spurs by going abroad and competing in the wider world," Dame Nita Barrow, the only woman to serve as Barbados' Governor General, once said in New York. "Among them are the writers."

Lamming's **In the Castle Of My Skin**; Brathwaite's **The Arrivants**; Clarke's **Growing Up Stupid Under The Union Jack** and **The Polished Hoe**; and Foster's **No Man In The House** have risen to the level of classical writings, among the literati and people at all levels of society in Britain, Canada, the United States, Barbados and elsewhere.

Now a new book by Foster, **Independence**, seems destined to join that august body of published



## Seen Up North

by TONY BEST

and awe-inspiring work.

"In his new work, Cecil used the language that reminded me of Kamau Brathwaite's 'nation language'," said Clarke, who is among Canada's best known writers. That gives the book a certain intelligence and acceptability by people who may not have been Barbadian but who could recognise the importance of independence in their lives," said Clarke. "What I found interesting is that there isn't much talk about independence from a political point of view but from a sociological point of view. That was very revealing and very liberating."

The book, explained Foster, "picks up from where **No Man In The House**, my first novel left off. Back then I looked into the island coming into independence and the last scenes in that book were about elections in the country and the decisions being made, a kind of election referendum on the country going on to become

independent. But what I set out to do with **Independence** is to look at what independence has brought. One of the guiding points for me writing the book was a line in the Barbados national anthem, 'we write our names on history's page with expectations great.' I wanted to look and see, at least in the very early years, how many of the expectations were being actually realised.

"In essence, the book is a continuation of the dreaming and the aspiration we talked about in 'No Man in the House,'" added Foster, a university political science professor. "It was also a moment of discontinuity where for the first time, the characters couldn't appeal to outsiders but in fact had to take full responsibility for them. In that sense, then, for me, 'independence' is not only a political achievement but it about a sense of personal responsibility."

Language, as Clarke noted at a book launch reception at the Barbados Consulate-General in Toronto to introduce Bajans to **Independence**, is key to the reading pleasure of those who buy the book.

"Foster's book brings back memories of my grandfather when I was growing up in St Peter," said Haynesley Benn, a former cabinet minister who



**CECIL FOSTER** says his new book **Independence** picks up from where his first novel left off. (GP)

is now the Consul General in Toronto. "I readily recalled my grandmother and the words she used when we were growing up in St Peter. The book holds your attention. It isn't flat and it has a bit of humour. It is inspiring and I commend it to Barbadians wherever they are."

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