

New Bedford, September 10, 2010

I would like to be brief, as I tend to believe in the economy of words and in the limited capacity of any audience to keep an interest in my oratory efforts, but I must recognize that with all the acknowledgements I feel I am due to make – and without being at all exhaustive - there is a serious risk of having been long even before I merely approach the heart of the matter.

Governor Deval Patrick, I lost count of the number of visits I paid to this always welcoming Commonwealth that keeps assuming, in so many important grounds, the role of forerunner in the development of the relations between our two Countries; but the annual celebration of the Portuguese Heritage Day, the Boston Portuguese Festival, the MIT and Harvard/Portugal programs, the Twinning between Massachusetts and the Azores, the integration of the Portuguese language in your State's educational system, the Ferreira Mendes Archives, the celebrations of the Holy Spirit, the vibrant activity of the Center of Portuguese Studies and the Department of Portuguese in the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, the different initiatives of the Portuguese local organizations, the Whaling Museum, the Casa da Saudade Library, high profile delegations and visitors from Portugal, the Gala of Palcus and the frequent calls from our two Consuls, you name it, don't fortunately allow me to be absent from these inviting shores for a long time. Mister Governor, your presence amongst us today confers a particular dimension to an act that is dear to my Authorities and has deep significance to the Portuguese and Portuguese-American communities living in this State; I would like therefore to sincerely thank you for that gesture, an expression of the constant attention you have devoted to the Massachusetts Portuguese communities, and to wish you all the best for your future endeavors.

Mayor Scott Lang, it is good to be back in this city where I feel so much at home; I hope that the next time you come to Washington you knock again at my door and give us the chance to pursue our talks about matters related, naturally, to the New Bedford Portuguese Community, but also to the broader fields of the Portuguese-American relations, foreign affairs and the domestic and international economic situation. I am glad to see that your good colleagues from Fall River and Taunton have also decided to join us in this ceremony.

Congressman Barney Frank, I really don't know how you find time to be so attentive and available to the Portuguese features; I wouldn't miss this occasion to publicly express my personal admiration for the way you deal with the formidable responsibilities you carry on your shoulders within the Congress and my deep gratitude for what, in difficult times and at different levels, you have been doing for my Country and for the Portuguese-American relationship; I can assure you this will not be forgotten by the Portuguese authorities.

Allow me a special and warm word of recognition to Representatives Tony Cabral, Michael Rodrigues – since yesterday the proud and deserving owner of a

Commandership of the Order of Henry the Navigator – and Chief Justice Philip Rapoza, and also Representative John Quinn, whose good advice I have always appreciated and whose permanent commitment to this Commonwealth, this Community and their Portuguese roots I could testify since the very first time I met them. I gladly recognize with them Representatives Robert Koczera and Stephen Canessa.

Let me also acknowledge the welcome presence of Sheriff Thomas Hogdson, from Bristol County.

It is with great satisfaction that I also met in this room Mr. Fernando Rosa, President of PALCUS.

Let me finally salute all the diverse and representative personalities who came from the Azores, some of them working hard on the preparation of a first temporary exhibition, devoted to the industrial phase of whaling in Faial, to be displayed in this newly branded space; thank the Cultural Attaché Guga Tavares, here representing the noble and friendly Cape-Verdian people that has been so deeply involved in the maritime adventure we celebrate today; greet my colleagues Graça Fonseca and Paulo Cunha Alves, respectively Consul in New Bedford and Consul-General in Boston, as well as our Vice-Consul in Providence, Dr. Leonel Teixeira; and specially acknowledge Mr. Renato Leal, former member of the Portuguese Parliament and former Mayor of the city of Horta, whose previous connections to New Bedford and presence among us as personal representative of the Secretary of State for the Portuguese Communities further illustrates the importance attributed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Portuguese Government to this event.

The opening and dedication of the Azorean Whaleman Gallery in the New Bedford Whaling Museum represents a most awaited event by the Portuguese and Portuguese-American Community of the South-eastern Massachusetts. Its institution was agreed through a Protocol signed between the New Bedford Whaling Museum and the Portuguese Government, in a period when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was under the stewardship of Mr. Jaime Gama, with the stated purpose of honoring the Portuguese People and their significant contribution to the maritime heritage of this city (this contribution is actually studied and documented in Prof. Donald Warrin's book "So ends this day - The Portuguese in American Whaling 1765/1927", published by the Center for Portuguese Studies at UMassachusetts, Dartmouth, and timely launched at this prestigious Museum during this year's celebrations of the Portuguese National Day). The Protocol was complemented by a very generous financial grant offered by the Portuguese Government. Its concrete and gradual set up has been, since then, the product of many hardworking hands and of many persistent wills to whose effort I would like here, collectively, to pay a deserving tribute, even if I mention today, specially, James Russell, President of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, John Garfield, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Dr. Brian Rothschild, Chairman of the Azorean Whaleman Gallery committee, and all the Committee members that have been accompanying the process and helped moving it towards a positive conclusion.

The creation of this facility sets up a new and flexible thematic approach, which allows the space of the Bourne Building, from now on encompassed by the Azorean Whaleman Gallery, to be used not only as a space of permanent exhibition on the Azorean whalers and their links to New Bedford and New England, but also to host temporary and changing exhibits, marking the historic connections to Portugal, including the wider Portuguese-Speaking World and the Portuguese presence in the Far East as well as initiatives allusive to broader themes of local history and to the American maritime and industrial history.

The Azorean Whaleman Gallery largely benefits from its insertion in this impressive building, but also brings an added value to the Whaling Museum. Happy synergies, I believe, can easily be conceived and await here to be developed. It also represents a new point of encounter between two Countries with a strong and culturally enshrined maritime tradition, whose original historical contacts, not surprisingly, were cast on the sea; and a new bond of trust between New Bedford and the Portuguese and Portuguese American Community that for generations now elected this Atlantic City as their permanent home. The fulfillment of its potential will depend now on the direction of the Museum, on the State and local authorities, on the Portuguese Government, on the regional autonomies, but also and certainly not less, I would say, on the degree of interest and in the sense of "ownership" this beautiful museum will be able to materialize among the citizens of New Bedford. The excitement I have been noticing around, the immediate opening of two exhibitions and the foreseen signature by the President of the Regional Government of the Azores, Dr. Carlos César, next October, of a cooperation Protocol between the Regional Government, the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the New Bedford Whaling National Park and the San Francisco National Historical Park, enlarging the number of agents involved and recognizing the strong historical and cultural Azorean connections across the United States, seem to me very visible signs that this promising route is already being taken.

I wish the Whaling Museum and the Azorean Whaleman Gallery a continued and long success.

Thank you very much for your attention.