

## **Response by Fred Mitchell MP**

### **To intervention in the House of Assembly**

**On 9<sup>th</sup> October by Peter Turnquest, MP East Grand Bahama, calling for Mr. Mitchell to apologize**

Mr. Speaker,

When last we met, I rose to reserve my position with regard to remarks made by the MP for East Grand Bahama that appeared to be aimed at me. I wanted to get the transcript of those remarks.

I have now had the advantage of reading the transcript and it is clear that he was speaking about me and he called for an apology because he said that this Member and Senator Keith Bell called his behavior in relation to the allegations about the abuse of Cuban detainees at our detention centre “treasonous”.

I wish to reply to that and to another allegation that he made claiming also that he was accused of siding with enemies of the state.

He also said that these remarks should not be made in relation to him because he was only asking questions about the issue.

He ended his statement with regard to that by saying that this apology was required particularly because what the person who was making the allegation against him did to the constitution.

In sum then Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the remarks are directed at this Member of Parliament, the Member for Fox Hill.

I was reading the WHO report on The Bahamas and it said this “In 1950, the average life expectancy in The Bahamas was 61 years for women and 58 years for men.” That means that as a male child born in 1953 I have already live past the age I was expected to live on average when I was born.

I repeat what I said; I do not intend to let any matter go unanswered if I can help it.

For the record, Mr. Speaker I have never made any public statement about the Member of Parliament for East Grand Bahama about this or any matter as far as I am aware or can remember. I certainly never said that his behavior was treasonous although I have heard it said about the FNM in connection with this matter. But that never came out of this mouth.

Secondly, what I said about being enemies of the state was rather more circumspect or studied than an bald assertion. And the question Mr. Speaker is whether or not my response was in scale, or proportionate to the comments directed at me by the side opposite. Again, I do not recall and I assert that I never made any such comments directed at the Member of Parliament for East Grand Bahama.

Reasonable people can be the judge in these circumstances. The Leader of the Opposition, the MP for Kilarney who sups with me in my sister's home from time to time and whom I have known from high school said without reference to me that I should resign from office or be dismissed. Presumably he had good reasons to say so; he claimed that there was a cover up by me with regard to the events in the detention centre. The party then claimed that they had evidence of a report that had been concluded into the matters at the detention centre. The next thing we knew in the public domain came documents, including photographs which purported to come from that so called report. The so called report was never tested and its authenticity to this day has not been verified.

It appeared to me that the FNM put two and two together and made it five and imputed to me knowledge of the so called report that appeared in the newspaper.

On the basis of this faulty logic and intelligence they then made their demand of me and the Prime Minister for me to dimit office.

To call that nonsense is too polite a word but it will suffice for this forum.

Shortly after that the protestors in Miami were enlivened and started the drum beat against The Bahamas.

What I recall is that there were radio talk shows immediately after that event, one of them which hosted the Chairman of the FNM and the spent his defending his party's decision to say what they said and it was the public who accused them of siding with enemies of The Bahamas. So that characterization did not come from me originally.

What I admit to Mr. Speaker is that I adopted their logic and I have repeatedly asked the question of whom and why the FNM appeared to take the position that they did where it appears that they were siding with people who wanted to destroy The Bahamas.

I stand by that.

The Honorable Member and his colleagues did not just ask questions Mr. Speaker, they went further they made an allegation which went to the heart of my ability to survive in public life. This was a serious matter to me. I do not want the Member to get way with some benign characterization after the fact.

The final straw as I think the public saw it was when the FNM statement said when the protestors were threatening our economic interests, they said they were advising the protestors not to do that and they

did not agree with it. The next thing we knew the protestors in Miami announced that they were following the advice of the FNM.

Those are the facts as I remember them and the public again, asked the question how is it that the protestors were following the advice of the FNM in this matter. Lawyers call it the improbability of coincidence. So the issue is not with me MP for East Grand Bahama.

Shakespeare says: "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves..."

So I say to the Member: physician heal thy self.

Reasonable people therefore make reasonable conclusions.

Finally with regard to the constitution and this member. I will not allow anyone to rewrite history by seeking to trivialize what was a serious act of civil disobedience on my part and which in the circumstances was absolutely defensible. I deplore any attempt to do so and the Member is invited to revisit the facts of what happened and the attempt by a corrupt judge to disbar me, he was not even a national of my country and was seeking to stop my attempt to speak freely. One day I will tell the full story.

For now sir this member will not be making any apology.

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