

**REMARKS BY JULIAN B. RUSSELL PLP CANDIDATE FOR CENTRAL GRAND BAHAMA January 27, 2012**

Mr. Party Leader (Rt. Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie) Mr. Deputy Leader (Mr. Philip 'Brave' Davis) Mr. Party Chairman (Mr. Bradley Roberts) Party Officers Stalwart Councillors  
Parliamentarians  
Candidates

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

Good Evening! It is a privilege to stand here this evening as a proud native son of the large and diverse community of Eight Mile Rock, the home of my birth and the place where my roots are deeply entrenched. First, I thank Almighty God for giving me the strength and fortitude, recognizing that it is only through His grace and mercy that I am standing here this evening. I would also like to thank Mr. Perry Gladstone Christie and the Progressive Liberal Party for the confidence they have shown in me, to be their Standard Bearer for the new constituency of Central Grand Bahama. Since the beginning of my campaign, I have been approached by many individuals who have asked me why I've chosen to enter politics.

Well, my answer is clear and simple:- • I am running because I believe that our country is going in the wrong direction.

- I am running because the people of Central Grand Bahama are hurting and suffering.
- I am running because I know that the PLP has new ideas and a new generation of leaders to bring real change.
- I am running because I believe in Bahamians.
- I am running because our standard of living is diminishing, the middle class is vanishing, and more and more people are falling below the poverty line
- I am running because we must be about the people's business.

I want to see Grand Bahama return to and even surpass its glory days, not just for myself and my family, but for you and your families, and for future generations to come.

That's why it is impossible to sit idly by while the Minister responsible for Immigration talks about the millions in revenue collected from work permit fees. He makes this boast while we have families here on Grand Bahama in which not one person has been able to find employment in years.

We have young men and women who are pounding the pavement daily, in search of gainful employment with no success.

Then we have outside contractors coming into this country from other countries, doing jobs we know Bahamians are qualified to do, while our unemployment rate is pegged at 18% to 20% and the actual rate is even higher.

Grand Bahama is hurting, people are suffering; it is evident for all to see, and yet, after years of failing to promote and support Bahamians, at election time they say “stay with me” or “anchor with me”. Well, this anchor is dragging us under. Grand Bahama, it is time to cut this rope.

The economic conditions that exist in Grand Bahama today are probably the worst many of us have experienced in our lifetime.

All around us we see ‘pillars’ of our once-thriving business community either closed or near to closure.

Over the past few months, my team and I have walked the communities of Bartlett Hill, Harbour West, Hepburn Town, Pinder’s Point, Lewis Yard, Hunters, Mack Town, Wellington Pinder, Sunrise, Bahamia, Caravel, Williams Town and Maliboo. We have had the privilege to meet and speak with hundreds of people who have welcomed us into their homes and shared their hopes and fears with us.

We have heard many stories of hardship, of dreams deferred, of crushed aspirations. We have heard the anger and frustration of Grand Bahamians who cannot believe how this government has treated us with such contempt.

We have spoken with people who have lost their jobs due to closures or downsizing, or who are simply being replaced by Non-Bahamians. Then there are others who feel that they have been labeled “obsolete” and simply thrown away.

Central Grand Bahama, you have shown me that it does not matter what side you are on or what label you wear. You have shown me that pain and suffering does not discriminate and no matter who or what you believe in, you deserve good and caring representation.

When the FNM came to Grand Bahama to ask for votes, did they offer solutions? Did they offer a vision for Grand Bahama? A path out of the darkness? No, they did nothing of the sort.

Grand Bahamians – let’s not sell ourselves short. Don’t support a government which so obviously takes us for granted. Don’t support a government which only cares once every five years.

We need a government and representatives who believe in Bahamians, who believe in Grand Bahama, a government ready to make Grand Bahama a priority all the time, not just at election time.

Ladies and gentleman, we need the Progressive Liberal Party. We are the party that created and grew the middle class.

Under a PLP government we will take immediate measures to put Grand Bahamians first. We will:

- Significantly raise work permit fees for jobs Bahamians are qualified to perform.
- Where work permits have been issued, we will work aggressively to identify Bahamians who can fill those job positions when these work permits expire.
- In instances where qualified Bahamians are not available, we will provide educational and training opportunities so Bahamians are qualified to fill those job positions going forward.
- All job vacancies will be advertised with trade unions and employment agencies before any work permit is issued for those job vacancies.
- We will work with operators like the Grand Bahama Ship Yard to reduce the number of non-nationals employed there.
- And to help facilitate the placement of Bahamians, we will expand the presence on Grand Bahama of the Bahamas Technical & Vocational Institute (BTVI).

These are only some of the items in PROJECT GRAND BAHAMA. We hope you'll learn more by visiting our website.

Grand Bahamians, if you believe it's time to put Bahamians first, if you believe it's time to invest in people, there's only one real option – the Progressive Liberal Party!

It is the oldest political party in the country, but the one with the newest and most innovative ideas.

It is led by Mr. Perry Christie, a man who believes in the Bahamas and who believes in Bahamians. He will fight for us, because he believes in what we can accomplish.

And with God's help and the prayers and support of all Bahamians who desire change and a new direction, we will be successful.

Thank you, may God bless you and may God bless the Bahamas.

