

Notes For Fred Mitchell MP

Fox Hill

Budget Debate

6<sup>th</sup> June 2012

Check against delivery

The story of Norma Hield: a Kenysian economist. She is a public servant lives in Rolle Avenue but is one of the best financiers I know. She knows how to negotiate and how to save, how to bargain and how to build, how to cut back in bad times and how to provision for her children. So when I think about economics and the country's affairs I take my hat off to her and say to her perhaps the Minister of Finance ought to take a page out of her book. She says never say die.

That is what the PLP is saying with this budget: never say die... never give up.. forward ever... backward never.

And so in this budget, the people of Fox Hill should expect some progress to finish the community centre, hopefully a pre-school for Sandilands Primary School, the Eastwood Park Development, the development of Fox Hill Village As a tourist development. All in time.

The story of Bernadette Christie, wife of the Prime Minister, speaking to me in the home of the late Beryl Hanna and the former Governor General Arthur Hanna. I was then trying to make up my mind to return to the PLP. And she said, you must come back to the PLP. I want to be able to be in a position that when I call you, you will be able to do things to help people and this is the only way that can happen.

I start out with that because it remains axiomatic, that sentiment: we are here to help do things for people. We asked for this job and we will find a way to do it, even though our opponents maxed out the national credit card and left us no space to manouvre. But they are not as clever as they think.

My regret is that we did not have the time to do what the rules contemplate and that is for a Select Committee of the House to examine the appropriations bills and thereby in public hearings call the public officials who can tell the real story of how these folk who preceded us ran the government and what they spent and how they spent it.

Each time that I make an intervention in the House, there is a video clip which a friend kindly makes available to me, and I study that clip much like they do in the National Football League in the United States. I try to look at it to see how I can improve my delivery, my message, my points. The answer is did it fulfill what was intended in the address when I started.

I also try to study the interventions of others. I thought last week that the Member for Ft Charlotte in his maiden address amongst others acquitted himself well and there is great promise there. And I mention that because I am a bit of a history buff. To me context says a lot.

Shakespeare says: the past is prologue. And what was important about that intervention was that it put into context where we are today and the opponents we face. It could not have been said any better. Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings.

Then there was the Member of Parliament for Montagu. In a word, to use a favourite word of the Member for Centreville, his intervention was extraordinary. I am seeking to be charitable here.

When I examined it, I thought to myself that the best way to express it is that there is clearly a great divide, a cultural difference, a gulf in fact between where we, the 37 are and he is the one is. As far as I can detect and tell, despite the differences in political sides, culturally we all appear to be at one with who and what we are, the 37 but he alone is the stand out.

An example. Most if not all of us, even a secularist like myself, quoted liberally from the Bible, and many gave thanks to God and then to their families. Not so the Member for Montagu.

Most, if not all, defended their record of their party in this place and tried to make points about the policies of the country. Not so the Member of Parliament for Montagu.

Most, if not all, congratulated the Speaker on his appointment unqualifiedly. Not so the Member of Parliament for Montagu.

The Member of Parliament for Montagu came into this Parliament came into this place, and took us past the last FNM government, past the last PLP government, past the 10 years of the previous FNM government, and then past the 25 years of the previous PLP government all the way back prior to 1967 to defend and uphold the dreaded UBP. As Michael Manley once said: unrepentant, unreconstructed, unapologetic. And he was the only one to do so.

So we are to go all the way back there.

We shall see how this unfolds. His political side must say whether or not this what they themselves embrace.

One thing though, and I have said it over and again: 10<sup>th</sup> January 1967 happened. There is nothing that can be done to change that. The fact is Pindling beat the forces of evil 1967. He defeated them. You can try to rewrite history, tell all sorts of stories, make up all kind of things about him. Too late. He beat you and beat you good and that is written in history. Immutable and unchangeable and cannot be challenged. So get over it. Move on and get into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Mr. Speaker,

I now wish to address matters relative to my next portfolio, Department of Immigration.

In so doing I propose to address the following: -

- ✓ Expenditure Projections 2012/2013
- ✓ Revenue Expectation
- ✓ Service Improvement Initiatives
- ✓ Enforcement Program
- ✓ Detention Centre
- ✓ Outstanding Industrial Relations Matters

To begin with, I wish to say that the overall Mission Statement of the Department of Immigration is to:-

*“Regulate the movement of people across the borders of The Bahamas so as to ensure the security, facilitate economic advancement and promote the harmonious social development of The Bahamas”.*

And therein is the dilemma faced by any Minister vested in law with the powers of the immigration minister. On the one hand, the minister is expected to protect the Bahamian labour force. On the other hand some of that same Bahamian labour force wishes, needs and demands foreign labour.

On the one hand, the work permit regime was put in place a way to restrain and regulate access of foreign labour to this market but on the other hand, the work permit regime adds almost 50 million dollars to the annual revenue of the country.

When I spoke last week, I made a general pledge to enforce the immigration laws. I can make no greater pledge today.

In doing so, I pledge to work with the Labour minister to protect and enhance the Bahamian work force and to seek to prevent illegal migrants from over taking our country.

I said last week and I say again today, illegal migration is a clear, discernible issue with well known solutions which require money and manpower. What concerns me though is legal migration and the impact it is having on the country and the upward mobility of our people?

I ask the question why after forty years of independence we have the number of work permit holders that we have in the construction sector, the banking sector and in the tourism sector. It is that sentiment which informs my decisions making.

Further, I say to myself that if the big establishments can get the workers that they want from the outside why should the ordinary citizen who wants a maid or gardener be denied that privilege.

And then I ask myself, with the thousands of young women out of work in The Bahamas, why are there so many work permits being granted for housekeepers. Needless to add the Minister of Labour and myself will have to have a chat.

Mr. Speaker,

There are several key points I wish to highlight reference the expenditure side of Immigration Department Budget.

1. Firstly, The total expenditure of the Immigration Department is twenty million, two hundred and five thousand, five hundred and sixty-nine (\$20,205,569.00) dollars.

2. Secondly, Total Personal Emoluments & Allowances including National Insurance amounts to fourteen million, seven hundred and eighty-three thousand, three hundred and thirty-nine (\$14,783,339.00) dollars. This figure is up over last years' eleven million, three hundred & eighty-two thousand, two hundred and ninety-six dollars (\$11,382,296.00) is anticipation of new staff & promotions. This figure accounts for 73.16% percent of the total Budget.

3. Thirdly, estimates are in for the capital development expenditure, the construction of two dormitories at the Bahamas Detention Centre is pegged at nine hundred and seventy three thousand, nine hundred dollars (\$973,900.00). We hope that the Minister of Finance is able to secure these funds.

4. One million (\$1,000,000.00) dollars is earmarked for the repatriation of illegal immigrants. This figure remains the same as of last year's stature.

5. Two hundred and sixty thousand (\$260,000.00) thousand dollars has been set aside for the maintenance and upkeep of the Detention Centre.

6. Also of special note is ten thousand (\$10,000.00) dollars allocated for publication of notices, advertisements and broadcast time. This is an area that I hope that the Department places greater focus on in the New Year. The Public Relations (PSA's) and General Information should be a key focus moving forward.

## **II. Revenue**

The Department is not and I repeat not a revenue making agency. That is not its focus. Although all agencies of government which creates revenue are required to submit to the Ministry of Finance a Revenue Projection, in this vain, the Department has set as it projected figure forty million dollars (\$40,000.000.00).

Now having said that, and given the existing permits and services provided by the Department, it is anticipated that with the timely and orderly collection of fees, the Department will realize its revenue goal of forty million dollars.

As of the end of May (last month) the Department of Immigration Revenue stood at forty two million (\$42,000.000.00).

## **III. Service Improvement Program**

Mr. Speaker,

This is an opportune time for me to share with colleagues and the Public at large the proposed service improvement component of the Department of Immigration as outlined in our Charter for Governance.

*I Quote from our Document.....: -*

i. In the interest of global commerce and where necessary generally, the PLP will commit to the review and response to a short term work permit within the

three (3) days and an annual work permit within two (2) weeks from completed documentation.

ii. A PLP Administration treats applicants for spousal permits in a dignified, respectful manner while ensuring that the system is not abused. Resident Spousal Permits will be speedily processed and issued for a period of seven (7) years from the date of the marriage with the right to apply for Permanent Residence after five (5) years (if the marriage subsists) giving the administration two (2) years for due diligence and approval without interrupting the status of the permit holder.

iii. On the issue of citizenship, let there be no question that this administration believes fervently in a policy of putting Bahamians first. The Government shall in appropriate cases welcome and share this God given right with others.

#### **IV. Enforcement (Security)**

Mr. Speaker,

I wish to make it clear, that this administration will place a renewed focus on enforcement and apprehension exercises. However, this will be done in a methodical and humane manner. Churches, Schools and Hospitals will continue to remain off limits in such exercises. The Bahamas does not have an integrated coordinated law enforcement response to illegal migration and alien smuggling and therefore illegal immigration is perceived as and is a real threat to our National Security.

Therefore, to counter these and other challenges to our society we will develop a written long term integrated and coordinated law enforcement policy to respond to illegal migration and alien smuggling.



As I mentioned in an earlier interview, in the case of the Haitian cases we very much wish to get to the root of this problem by dealing with the issues on the ground in Haiti, thus eliminating the desire for persons to leave their homes to risk their lives on the high seas.

## **V. Detention Center**

Mr. Speaker,

The Bahamas Detention Center is located on Golden Isles Road, off Carmichael Road. The Detention Center was officially created in 1994 when The Bahamas Government converted the old Carmichael Road Primary School into a holding facility in response to the increasing influx of illegal Cuban migrants.

The Immigration Department is officially responsible for the administration of the Detention Center. Security is taken care by the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and Social Services is responsible for preparing the meals. The Detention Center will be sanitized on a regular basis and during this fiscal year it will under go a major upgrade and repairs.

The menu will be improved and every effort will be made to apply BEST Practice in the operation and security of the facility.

## **VI. Outstanding Industrial Relations Matters**

Mr. Speaker,

In the lead up to the General Elections, there were a number of outstanding labour issues which resulted in Customs and Immigration Officers staging industrial strike for little over a week. Without going into the details of the matters which remains outstanding, I wish to give my undertaking to bring closure to these issues at earliest opportunity. It is not in the government's interest or the employee's interest when there remains a stalemate or matters can not be concluded in an amicable manner.

### **In Conclusion**

I wish to thank the many Immigration Officers and non Uniform Staff spread throughout the length and breadth of this country for their hard-work and dedication to service.

Many officers (Public Officers) make great sacrifices to protect our vast borders and to welcome our visitors and returning residents to The Bahamas.

I look forward to a very productive working relationship with Immigration Staff as we combine our efforts to build a stronger Bahamas.

I turn now to Foreign Affairs

The basis in the charter for governance of the plank on foreign affairs is the white paper prepared by the PLP's Committee on Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade which I had the honour to co-chair with the Member of Parliament for Elizabeth. The work done by them was stellar and it forms the basis of the

philosophical thrust of the charter: that foreign trade and foreign affairs will drive the economy of The Bahamas in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To this end, there must be a reformation of the central attitude of the foreign ministry which in my view is to ensure that the Bahamian citizen whether as a business person or visitor has a seamless or hassle free experience as he or she moves around the world. Everything that we do at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be dedicated to that end.

In addition, the Ministry must be more transparent, open and accountable to the public for its work and in this rubric “ the public” includes the press.

We also need a more forceful interaction with civil society in shaping the work we do and developing our interface with the international community.

In doing so, we hope to provide an expanded network of Honorary Consuls, including in the first instance in South Africa. We hope to conclude the abolition of visas for all Bahamian traveling to that country soon.

Our major ally and trading partner is the United States of America and this will remain, unchanged, immutable.

We will have a more dynamic interface with Caricom countries and are considering a High Commission in Kingston to deal with Caricom and EU matters since, most EU delegations serve The Bahamas from Kingston.

Within the budget there is a line item for operational expenses for an office in Geneva. We expect that this office will come on stream within the next fiscal year. Planning will be begin for an office in Brazil.

Brazil a key market for the financial services sector. Geneva will be the centre of activity and interface for the World Trade Organization.

We hope to restart talks with Haiti on the question of a treaty between us to establish a joint commission to review issues between us.

We expect that all Ambassadors and Heads of Missions serving overseas will have been recalled within the next ninety days and that the nominees for these positions should be in place upon the expiry of ninety days.

I want to thank all those who serve overseas and at home in the ministry for their work. I thank those who have been loyal to their country, who are Bahamian patriots and who have not forgotten their oath of office to bear true allegiance to the Queen and to serve this country, not a foreign state. We are a small country with no known enemies but we fight for our independence in ways large and small every day. Those who work in foreign affairs are in the front line of that army. When we forget our oath of office, we become traitors to our country. This country is all we have.

## 2012-2013 BUDGET: TALKING POINTS

### PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS

### LION'S SHARE OF THE BUDGET ALLOTTED TO PERSONAL EMOLUMENTS

### BLOCK 1 AND GRANTS, FIXED CHARGES & SPECIAL TRANSACTIONS:

BLOCK 90. THE LATTER , FOR THE MOST PART, RELATE TO ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

#### INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

THE BAHAMAS IS ASSESSED ANNUALLY AT A RATE OF 0.016 PER CENT

FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE REGULAR BUDGET OF THE UNITED NA-

TIONS, ITS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS, ITS INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS

AND THE CAPITAL MASTER PLAN, WHICH SI THE CURRENTLY ONGOING

RENOVATION PROJECT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS COM-

PLEX. THE BAHAMAS IS ALSO ASSESSED ANNUALLY AT THE SAME RATE

FOR ALL ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE BUDGETS OF ALL UN ORGANISA-

TIONS AND TREATY BODIES TO WHICH IT IS PARTY. THESE ASSESSED

CONTRIBUTIONS ALONE TOTALED WELL OVER 1.5 MILLION DOLLARS

IN 2011. ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS ARE MADE TO VA-

IOUS FUNDS AND AGENCIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS AS WELL.

IN ADDITION TO THE ASSESSED CONTRIBUTIONS WHICH ATTACH TO

THE BAHAMAS' MEMBERSHIP IN A NUMBER OF REGIONAL AND MULTI-

LATERAL ORGANISATIONS, THE BAHAMAS IS OBLIGED TO  
CONTRIBUTE

TO INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF MEMBER STATES FOLLOWING  
NATURAL

DISASTERS AND TO CONTRIBUTE TO ELECTORAL OBSERVER  
MISSIONS, IN

THE PURSUIT OF GOOD GOVERNANCE.

THE PASSPORT OFFICE IN NASSAU AND ITS BRANCH IN FREEPORT,

AND OUR CONSULAR DIVISION IN NASSAU, TOGETHER WITH OUR  
CON-

SULATES OVERSEAS, CONSTITUTE THE REVENUE GENERATING ARM  
OF

THE MINISTRY. FROM 1 JULY 2011 UP TO 31 MAY 2012, PASSPORTS

WERE ISSUED, GENERATING REVENUE IN THE AMOUNT OF

IT IS EXPECTED THAT THIS AMOUNT WILL BE EQUALLED DURING THE

UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR.

THE COST TO THE BAHAMIAN CONSUMER FOR A BAHAMIAN PASSPORT

IS AMONG THE LOWEST IN THE REGION, IF NOT THE WORLD. INDEED,

MR SPEAKER, THE PRODUCTION COST OF THIS DOCUMENT IS SIGNIFI-

CANTLY HIGHER THAN THE AMOUNT CHARGED THE APPLICANT.

AS THESE CHARGES ARE MOUNTING.

MR SPEAKER, VISAS WERE ISSUED BETWEEN 1 JULY 2011 AND  
31

MAY 2012, GENERATING INCOME IN THE AMOUNT OF DOLLARS.



THIS IS CONSIDERABLY LESS REVENUE THAN THAT GENERATED  
SEVERAL

YEARS AGO AS MY MINISTRY HAS ENTERED INTO A NUMBER OF  
VISA

WAIVER AGREEMENTS WITH LIKE-MINDED STATES. WE WILL  
CONTINUE

TO ACCELERATE THE REVIEW OF OUR VISA POLICY TO FACILITATE  
OUR

GROWTH AS A SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL CENTRE AND A PREMIER  
TOURIST

DESTINATION, WITHOUT COMPROMISING OUR BORDERS.

MR SPEAKER:

:

GENEVA OFFICE

FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO ESTABLISH A RESIDENT MISSION

IN GENEVA, WHICH WILL BE HOUSED IN THE COMMONWEALTH  
SMALL

SMALL STATES OFFICE IN THAT CITY. AS GENEVA IS HOME TO THE

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION, OUR PRESENCE IN GENEVA WILL  
BETTER

POSITION US TO DEAL WITH THOSE MATTERS PERTAINING TO OUR  
ACCES-

SION TO THAT ORGANISATION.

MR SPEAKER:

BAHAMAS EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, DC

OUR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, DC IS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL DIPLOMA

TIC ENTITY WHICH FUNCTIONS AS THE EMBASSY TO THE UNITED STATES,

COLOMBIA AND MEXICO AS WELL AS THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE

COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS TO THE ORGANISATION OF AMER-

ICAN STATES. THE MISSION'S BUDGET ALLOCATION INCLUDES FUNDS

FOR IMPORTANT CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AS WELL AS MONIES TO OB-

TAIN NECESSARY EQUIPMENT TO FACILITATE THE WORK OF THE MISSION

AND ENABLE STAFF TO DISCHARGE THEIR MYRIAD RESPONSIBILITIES

IN AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANNER.

IN ADDITION TO ITS ROUTINE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

THE MISSION HAS ENHANCED ITS CULTURAL AND PUBLIC  
DIPLOMACY

BY PARTICIPATING IN SUCH ACTIVITIES AS THE ANNUAL “PASSPORT  
DC

OPEN HOUSE”, WHICH EXPOSES THOUSANDS OF PERSONS TO THE  
CUL-

TURE OF THE BAHAMAS, THE EMBASSY ADOPTION PROGRAMME, DE-

SIGNED TO INFORM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT THE CULTURE

AND HISTORY OF OUR COMMONWEALTH AND THE EMBASSY CHEF

CHALLENGE . FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED IN SUPPORT OF ALL OF

THESE CULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

LATER THIS YEAR, WE WILL CONTINUE OUR NEGOTIATIONS WITH

THE US IN WASHINGTON, DC, TO SECURE OUR MARITIME  
BOUNDARIES

AND ENSURE THE PROTECTION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF OUR  
MARINE

RESOURCES.

BAHAMAS HIGH COMMISSION, LONDON

LIKE OUR EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON, OUR HIGH COMMISSION IN  
LON-

DON IS A MULTIFUNCTIONAL DIPLOMATIC MISSION, WITH  
NUMEROUS BI-

LATERAL AND MULTILATERAL ACCREDITATIONS. THE HIGH  
COMMISSION

IS LOCATED IN BAHAMAS HOUSE AT # 10 CHESTERFIELD STREET,  
WHICH

ALSO ACCOMODATES THE BAHAMAS TOURIST OFFICE. IT WOULD BE

KNOWN THAT THE GOVERNMENT OWNS THIS BUILDING, AS WELL AS THE

ADJACENT BUILDING, # 11 CHESTERFIELD STREET, WHICH SERVES AS THE

HIGH COMMISSIONER'S RESIDENCE. THESE PROPERTIES ARE LOCATED IN

MAYFAIR AND ARE OF SIGNIFICANT VALUE. THEY SHOULD BE MAIN-

TAINED TO THE STANDARDS AND LEVELS REQUIRED, NOT ONLY BY THE

UK GOVERNMENT FOR HEALTH AND SAFETY REASONS, BUT, ALSO, TO

PROTECT OUR GOVERNMENT'S INVESTMENT.

BOTH PROPERTIES REQUIRE CONSTANT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR.

INDEED, THERE IS NOW A SERIOUS NEED TO UNDERTAKE  
REFURBISH-

MENT WORK IN BOTH PROPERTIES, DUE TO NORMAL WEAR AND  
TEAR.

REPORTS SUGGEST THAT IF THE WORK IS NOT DONE IN THE NEAR  
FU-

TURE, WE WOULD RUN THE RISK OF HAVING TO EXPEND EVEN MORE

FUNDS WHEN THE CONDITON OF THE BUILDINGS WORSENS OVER  
TIME.

TO THAT END, FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED TO EFFECT SOME OF  
THE

REFURBISHMENT WHICH IS URGENTLY REQUIRED.

THE PROTOCOL DEMANDS OF THE LONDON MISSION CONTINUE TO  
BE

GREAT. NORMALLY, THE HIGH COMMISSION IS CALLED UPON TO  
RENDER

ASSISTANCE TO MINISTERS AND SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS  
VI-

SITING OR TRANSITING LONDON. SINCE THE UK GOVERNMENT  
INTRO-

DUCE FEES IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE USE OF VIP LOUNGES AT UK

AIRPORTS, THIS HAS AND CONTINUES TO BE AN EXPENSIVE UNDER-

TAKING FOR THE HIGH COMMISSION. WHILE SOME PROVISION HAS  
BEEN

MADE FOR THIS IN THE HIGH COMMISSION'S BUDGET, THE BULK  
WILL

HAVE TO BE MET FROM LINE MINISTRIES THROUGH  
REIMBURSEMENT

FOR COSTS INCURRED.



THE MISSION FUNCTIONS AS HIGH COMMISSION OF THE BAHAMAS IN THE

UNITED KINGDOM, AS WELL AS EMBASSY OF THE BAHAMAS TO BELGIUM,

FRANCE, GERMANY, ITALY AND GREECE. BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS

MEAN THAT THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IS UNABLE TO VISIT ALL OF THE

COUNTRIES ON A REGULAR BASIS, HOWEVER, EFFORTS ARE MADE TO EN-

SURE THAT HE VISITS THE VARIOUS CAPITALS AT LEAST ONCE A YEAR,

WHICH IS USUALLY TIMED AROUND THE ANNUAL RECEPTIONS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS IN EACH COUNTRY. DURING THESE VISITS, OUTSTANDING MATTERS BETWEEN THOSE GOVERNMENTS AND THE BAHAMAS ARE PURSUED.

THE HIGH COMMISSION ALSO FUNCTIONS AS THE PERMANENT MISSION OF THE BAHAMAS TO THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION. IN

