

Fred Mitchell MP

Notes on The Sports Bills

House of Assembly

Nassau, The Bahamas

6th July 2011

The stadium gift negotiated by PGC.

His statement to the Chinese Ambassador courtesy call 23rd June:

I want to say that that when I started the negotiations for this, my sole interest was to provide a gift and a legacy to the young people of our country. Yesterday's event was the capstone of that promise to the young people of The Bahamas.

There is no doubt in my mind that the stadium is for them, built for them, dedicated to them. Today, I reaffirm my commitment to the young people of our country.

When I was a young man I looked at my compatriot and friend Tommy Robinson and I remembered how he stood alone at the then Empire Games carrying our then colonial flag.

I saw the national pride it engendered. I saw the personal discipline which it brought to his life. I felt it inspire other young people.

So in my generation, we dedicated ourselves to building on that sterling example of Thomas A. Robinson so that the young people can have better facilities, a more secure financial grounding and support for their work.

The BAAAs, the Bahamas Olympic Association have all contributed together with the government and the private sector in making sure that our young people have a brighter future.

We know that "sports" is the window to so many opportunities. It is not just a window to physical well being; it is also the door to the world, a world of

intellectual fulfillment and professional improvement. It is wealth enhancing, life changing.

So I add my thanks this morning to the Chinese government and people for this extraordinary gift. I ask the young people of The Bahamas to embrace these times and these new opportunities. I pledge all my being for the years I have left in public life to ensuring that The Bahamas is a better place for them and for their children and children's children.

Important because of some criticism: why did we not negotiate a hospital? Chinese were building stadiums in the region. Investment in young people; opportunity for their education and once their intellectual capital is developed they will bring wealth to the country and we will get the hospitals and other infrastructure. But Bahamians, the people must come first.

This is the 38th anniversary of our independence.

Do not approach it seriously enough. The town looks dowdy. The celebration an afterthought.

Again Fox Hill is treated as second class citizens. No decorations.

The public square. The Prime Ministers, the founding Prime Minister's picture missing. God bless the GGs but it's the PMs

The need to move to a republic. With the 40th anniversary coming. Special convocation with both Parliamentary and non Parliamentary actors. Have constitutional conferences like the 1970s to discuss where we go, and to approve a blue print for Parliament to follow.

The Jamaicans and their 50th anniversary. The poll which shows 60 per cent of Jamaicans wish they were under the Queen. What would Bahamians say?

The young casting about for anything because there is no sense of the history of struggle. Our fault that is so.

Let's take the public parks. Before the PLP there was nary a public park. But since the PLP an explosion of public parks. Indeed it is requirement because recreation had to be a part of the life of community. Building up the common life.

Parks in Fox Hill not well kept. Freedom Park built by Carl Francis in 1967 to mark the freedom of our people in the old free African village, run down needs repaving, lights, the trees.

The Eastwood Park and the needs there. Monastery Park and the needs there.

The new communities Foxdale, Canon Pugh, Freddie Munnings Manor, Smithsville, Ambryville.

Sports and the window of opportunity. Getting young men engaged in the civic life of community.

Baseball has a problem finding the money to go away to Canada. Need 5000 dollars. With the PLP we would simply get the money for them.

Welcome arrangements to make sure the stadium runs correctly. That Bahamians will feature prominently in its execution and not be contracted out of their own stadium. Same way Iram Lewis took the lead; we need Bahamians to take the lead even as we get expertise from abroad.

End