

Remarks By Bradley B. Roberts National Chairman – At the PLP Easter Region Conclave July 21st 2011

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Remarks

By

Bradley B. Roberts

National Chairman – Progressive Liberal Party

At the PLP Conclave of the

Eastern Region Constituencies of Marathon, Seabreeze, St. Anne's, Montagu, Yamacraw, [Fox Hill](#) and Elizabeth

Thursday, July 21st, 2011

New Christian Life Center – Prince Charles Drive

Party Leader and Mrs. Christie,
Deputy Leader and Mrs. Davis,
Honorable Senators and Members of the House of Assembly,
National Party Officers,
Dame Marguerite Pindling,
Stalwart Councilors,
Distinguished ladies and Gentlemen,
A pleasant good evening to all

We have gathered together here this evening in a time when our nation is at its lowest ebb in 50 years. The theme of the Eastern Region Conclave: **“IT’S ABOUT YOU”** is indeed very timely. During these past four years many Bahamians lives have been traumatized, marginalized and turned upside down. **The level of terror, hopelessness and despondency continue to grow at an alarming rate.**

The Government is clearly clueless as to what to do about the devastating deteriorating conditions in the second city of Grand Bahama. Unemployment has skyrocketed for Bahamians whilst large numbers of work permits are given to foreigners for jobs Bahamians are qualified to do. Yet the Deputy Prime Minister Brent Symonette is shameless and brags about the revenue generated from these work permits. Clearly for the FNM it’s not about you, they are not putting you first.

Crime and the fear of crime is sapping away the very life and spirit of the Bahamian people. The high level of unemployment has turned many families’ lives upside down. Many families have lost their homes, lost their cars; many are being chased by banks for credit card debts, many are homeless, many have lost direction and many have turned to a life of crime.

Grand Bahama

Grand Bahama the so call FNM Country was hit by a FNM category 7 Hurricane.

Grand Bahama has been claimed by the governing party as FNM country. They have five members of parliament headed by Kenneth Russell, Neko Grant, Zhivargo Laing, Kwasi Thompson and Vernae Grant and Senators David Thompson and Frederick McAlpine. Since the return of the FNM in 2007, the economy of Grand Bahama has plummeted and is still in a free fall and there is no hope or help on the way from this useless, none-productive crew of seven. It is sad that poverty, hopelessness and shame hang over the so called FNM country.

The FNM's only solution to the plight of Grand Bahamians who simply wanted to work and take care of their families was to turn them into wards of the state.

The FNMs are a shameless bunch that they would go and ask these same people for a vote when they knew full well that they were incapable of delivering on the promises of jobs they made to Grand Bahamians in 2007. I must however congratulate the wretched crew of seven on providing jobs for foreigners because they failed to train Bahamians and the so call one year jobs \$25 million program is not focused on preparing Grand Bahamians to replace a single work permit holder in Grand Bahama. Grand Bahama, the general election must be about you.

Crime and the Fear of Crime

Ladies and Gentlemen the Free National Movement in its 2007 manifesto boldly proclaimed that it had a comprehensive plan to reduce crime and to eliminate it. Tommy Turnquest accused Cynthia "Mother" Pratt, our former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security of being soft on crime.

Ladies and Gentlemen, since the FNM returned to office over 4 years ago with Tommy Turnquest as National Security Minister there has been a mindboggling 395 murders so far on his watch. In this year alone there's been some 74 murders of which more are yet to be classified.

Now that the shoe is on the other foot the FNM is claiming that crime is not a political issue.

Ladies and gentlemen, The FNM and its diehard newspaper apologists boast of the decisive and effective leadership of Hubert Ingraham. Never one for humility, Ingraham himself, never misses an opportunity to declare how decisive he is: "I decide" he tells us, day and night. Clearly [the Bahamas](#) is under siege by violent crime.

Yet when we look at the sickening situation with crime, the only decision Hubert Ingraham seems to have made is to take a pass on the number one issue facing our Bahama Land. Oh, he has time for everything else, for the things that matter for him. Ingraham has decided to give 51% of BTC to a foreign company and putting hundreds of Bahamians out of work. Ingraham decided to lie about the PLP plans and Bluewater, our arrangement was for 49%, a crucial 2% difference. The PLP plans would have kept BTC under Bahamian control without any reductions, Ingraham decided to give it away, and at a fire sale price.

Those are all the decisions Ingraham made sure was done, but when it comes to crime, Ingraham decided to do virtually nothing.

MP Glenys Hanna Martin, recently in Parliament reminded the public of the words of PM Hubert Ingraham when in 2007 in the House of Assembly; He said, Mr. Speaker that in those circumstances,

MP Hanna Martin continued, “All I will say Mr. Speaker, between the steady rise in bloody violence, unabated and the weekly escalating homicide rate, the nolle prosequis from the Attorney General’s Office, the failed prosecutions and the apparent inability to obtain a conviction in numerous cases as we have all witnessed over the last few months many must be wondering what is happening here. But even more serious is the growing feeling of people that they are unable to get justice. This is serious she said.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Hubert Ingraham called Perry Christie PLP a wutless Government because of crime and the number of persons who were out on bail awaiting trial. During the past four years the numbers of person on Bail for murder have escalated and the number of murder trial have declined yet, Hubert Ingraham his proven good for nothing Government feels they should be re-elected. I say the Devil is a Liar.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the effectiveness of law and order is a direct response to a government and its policies. There is no country in the world where the onus is simply left to individuals and communities. Yes, parents and guardians have a lot to answer for but ...in the end, where communities fail; it is the policies of the government and the relative effectiveness of policing and justice that determine crime levels in a county.

One can ask whether or not the Bahamas is sinking to levels where the respect for life has dropped so low, that we are looking at becoming on par with war torn countries, where every day there are news reports of deaths that seem to go unnoticed. Or we can ask whether or not, as a progressive and informed nation is there enough being done by the government to deter crime and if the system of justice and sentencing sends enough of a message to criminals that enough is enough?

In this ever evolving, expanding and dynamic nature of crime the FNM Government must begin to recognize that the fight against crime must take a dramatic, visible and effective shift.

The FNM Government is tiptoeing when they should be stomping. The people demand action now! They want an immediate end to the carnage going on in our country. The people need to see visible action and visible change.

The Government can pave every road from the east to the west of [New Providence](#) but it won't make one iota of difference for a safer and securer New Providence. It will only mean that bank and business robbers will have a better road to drive on after the robbery. The murderer has a better escape route to get off the island. The drug dealer has a smoother ride to get where they're going.

Right-thinking Bahamians have asked what kind of national atmosphere has Hubert Ingraham and the FNM Government created during their time in office over the past four years? Has the policies of the FNM Government created such an atmosphere in our Bahamaland that people just don't care anymore? The FNM Government has said: "We can't stop people from doing what they want to do." Or that the police can't be everywhere. Stupidly that clearly is a statement of excuse. Because nothing should come before the welfare of the Bahamian people and the society. My brothers and sisters I say absolutely nothing!

Ladies and Gentlemen one can logically ask because of the atmosphere that Hubert Ingraham and the FNM Government has created, whether or not our Bahamaland is sinking to levels where the respect for life and property has dropped so low that the good name of the Bahamas in the international arena has been badly damaged.

Ladies and Gentlemen in our [Bahamas](#) today sadly today it's about what Hubert Ingraham and the FNM wants and in reality it's not about you or I. A new PLP government will put Bahamians and their needs first and we will focus on attacking crime at its core and restoring peace, love and progress. **The process will be about you, because unlike the current government, we believe in the Bahamas, and we believe in Bahamians.**

Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC)

Ladies and Gentlemen, it should be clear to all that there are some serious problems at the Bahamas Electricity Corporation.

The FNM Government has lied over and repeatedly to the Bahamian people about the BEC and their lies have finally caught up with them.

The FNM Government has badly failed the Bahamian people in so many areas and BEC is just an example of one. You may recall that the Christie Administration left in place the boards appointed by the FNM until their term expired. Alfred Jarrett was appointed executive chairman to replace J. Barry Farrington in the summer of 2002.

It was at that time that Mr. Jarrett and the new board was first introduced to the Corporation's challenges which was contained in a fresh report provided by their External Consultants, Scott Madden Associates dated June 14, 2002, commissioned by the outgoing Board.

The Report was titled: Generation Review of Bahamas Electricity Corporation. It contained 134 pages of a detailed review and analysis of BEC's management structure, management and

maintenance practices and of each plant in the BEC stock, age and capacity. It also reported on BEC's bad maintenance practices during the period from 1997 – 2002 when available capacity declined from 83% to 73%.

Other Observations from the Scott Madden Report dated June 14, 2002

The following points made in the Scott Madden report will clearly showed that BEC's breakdown maintenance practices have been a consistent behaviour of the FNM administration.

The will to manage BEC was weak

- BEC's management needs to be more forceful in addressing shortcomings of employees, equipment processes and vendors' issues.
- BEC's plant capacity reduced from 278 MW in 1997 to 200 MW by 2001
- BEC expected a peak load of 212 MW during the summer of 2002 with only a capacity of 200 MW available, due to maintenance neglect during the previous years. Luckily, the peak period only utilized 193 MW during the summer, notwithstanding massive blackouts due to constant tripping and overloading in the system.
- **A breakdown maintenance system was the culture in BEC "running to failure".**

Ladies and Gentlemen, when the FNM came to office in 2007 they found BEC progressing in the right direction. They found ongoing programs for the corporation and had they not been subject to the stop, review and cancel policy of the FNM, BEC's future would have been secured.

Instead the FNM failed to act when oil prices rose to an all-time high in 2008 which adversely affected the profitability of BEC (which they shamelessly blamed on the PLP because of the first ever reduction in BEC rates granted by the PLP in 2003). Those rate reductions were sanctioned by the FNM who claimed it only became possible because of the good shape they left BEC in, in 2002 (which the consultants clearly discounted as being a lie)

Ladies and Gentlemen, since the return of the FNM in 2007 they have failed to insure the continuation of a proactive maintenance policy in the corporation and have attempted to carryout maintenance at the **Clifton Pier Power Station at the beginning of the summer rather than the winder months when the peak demand is at its lowest. Phenton Neymour claims that BEC didn't have the available cash, notwithstanding that the Government owes BEC in excess of 50 million dollars.**

Additionally, we know from the IDB report that there are wastages including fraud and abuse resulting in high technical losses, as high as 17% of revenue generated from BECs plants. In other words ladies and gentlemen there is a lot of stealing of electricity going on.

The conclusion is that the FNM during the past four years and the previous term in office has shown a consistent pattern of Plant neglect and therefore the current blackouts are no coincidence and can be attributed to poor management of the system.

Recently BEC's chairman Michael Moss declared "No more New Providence Blackouts". Earl Deveaux recently in the House of Assembly also declared that three plants were overhauled and are back online and that no blackouts were expected. Deveaux also said that BEC will be renting a 20MW plant which was to be installed at Clifton and that the Blackouts would end on the 20th of July. This evening I can confirm that the 20MW standby Generator has not yet arrived on the island. Earl Deveaux you lied again!

Ladies and Gentlemen it is absolutely clear that the two ministers assigned the responsibility for BEC, namely Earl Deveaux and Phenton Neymour are completely out of touch and are misleading and lying to the Bahamian public. All indications are that we are in for a long, hot summer thanks to this Wutless FNM Government.

BEC Abaco

Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that a four day Commission of Inquiry is needed to investigate and provide an independent report on why a contract to build four new Generators and a new Power Plant in Abaco was ordered and agreed funding in place by the Christie Administration in 2006 is after five years and with expenditure of over \$100 million is still not providing uninterrupted electricity to the people of Abaco and its Cays.

The installation of Transmission Power lines which should have been installed before the completion of the New Power Plant is currently underway and was not completed in May as promised by Ministers Deveaux and Neymour and as of today the project is still not completed. There are qualified Bahamian linesmen are sitting unemployed and Brent Symonette granted work permits to Jamaican Nationals to install transmission lines in Abaco.

This very serious incompetent and massive mismanagement of the installation of the New Power Plant in Abaco is another classic example of how Hubert Ingraham and the FNM have been handling the affairs of governance in our Bahama Land.

The morale is low and the frustration is high of BEC staff. You will recall last year in the House of Assembly Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham promised to deal with whoever was responsible for letting BEC Abaco run out of oil. There has not been one pip from the Prime Minister on BEC Abaco since. Just the other week on the watch of Earl Deveaux and Phenton Neymour the New Abaco Power Plant RAN OUT OF DIESEL.

Both Ministers have allowed Abaco and its valuable tourist industry to suffer during the summers of 2008, 2009, 2010 and even now in 2011 because of their disgraceful botch handing of the new Abaco Power Plant. If Hubert Ingraham, Earl Deveaux, Phenton Neymour and Edison Key had any shame they would resign and be gone. They are all guilty of serious crime of massive ineptitude, incompetence against the people of Abaco. I pray that the people of Abaco have awoken and now fully understand that the BAND of five have been lying to them for years as it was about the band of five now it has to be about the people of Abaco.

Other Examples of Gross Incompetence

Ladies and Gentlemen, here are a few other examples of terrible gross mismanagement by the FNM. Perry Christie's Government got the Chinese Government to donate a national stadium. The date of construction and projected completion was no secret. The incompetent Ingraham administration failed to carry out the necessary infrastructural works that was needed to make the stadium functional. This much needed work has just begun after the stadium was completed. Where is the sense of logic in that? This means that the brand new stadium will sit there useless until the necessary infrastructural work is done. And God knows when that will be done.

Next example: the construction of the new T.G. Glover primary school was well on the way when the FNM came to power. A complaint by the contractor by several of his employees of itching resulted in the works being held up for several months and FNM ministers, Dion Foulkes and Carl Bethel stupidly claimed that the school was being built on a toxic waste dump. You will recall I issued a press statement reminding the Government that there was an infestation of monkey tamarind in the area and the test confirm that position. Here we are going on for more than five years and the school is not completed and occupied. This is what Hubert Ingraham and the FNM Government have done to the little darlings who are jammed up in a school on Nassau Street.

Another example: The new Government building immediately west of the Ministry of works on JFK was virtually completed before the FNM came to office in 2007. Millions of additional taxpayers' money was spent on that building by the FNM but today after almost five years the building is still unoccupied.

Ladies and gentlemen there are more examples but time does not allow me to share them all. Yet still the FNM propagandists including the majority of the newspapers project Hubert Ingraham as a tough and decisive leader. They say he is simply the best. I believe the Bahamian people have now clearly seen the light that Hubert Ingraham is clearly tired, worn out, and a has-been leader. A man with no vision for the future and who now is only concerned about himself and it's not about you the Bahamian people anymore.

New Providence Road Works

The implementation of the New Providence Road Works is colossal disaster as there is absolutely no logic, nor sense in the manner in which it is being implemented. There is utter chaos; there is anger, outrage and an increase of stress on the Bahamian people which was unnecessary. This all driven the ego of one man, Hubert Ingraham who imposes his will on the Bahamian people and say they must endure the pain.

Why are they digging up all over the place at the same time? The Minister of Works "Mr. Magoo" provides no explanation as to why the road works are being implemented in such a destructive manner. Clearly someone hijacked any common sense the Government may have had. Just think of the time it is taking to complete the various works. One morning you wake up you find half of a road has been dug up and the workmen disappear for

months because they have been re-assigned to go and do the same nonsense on another street.

Ladies and gentlemen I repeat what I said earlier. Paving every road in New Providence won't make one iota of difference for a safer and securer Bahamas. The interests and wellbeing of the people of [the Bahamas](#) must always come first. It must always be about you my brothers and sisters. It's time for a Government that puts Bahamians first, not special interest. It's time for a Government that believes in the Bahamas. God bless the Bahamas and Good Night.