

Ministers Statement

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Minister of Education, Science and Technology

August 1st 2012.

Mr Speaker,

The Member for Killarney during our last sitting on the 25th July 2012 asked the following questions which I intend to answer now:

1. Will the Minister of Education inform this House whether he has shares in JFK Painting?

Answer: NO

2. Will the Minister say if any painting contracts were given to JFK Painting?

Answer: NO

3. If contracts were given to JFK Painting will the Minister say how many contracts were given to the company?

Answer: Not applicable see 2 above.

Mr Speaker

I wish to state for the record so that there is no confusion, my name is Jerome Kennedy Fitzgerald and my initials are JKF and not JFK as in the famous US president John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

Mr Speaker

I also wish to state for the record that school repairs are almost complete in New Providence and Grand Bahama. In New Providence the Ministry will spend 3.3 million dollars on repairs. Those contracts for repairs were given to 74 contractors. 50 of those 74 contractors had not received any work from the Ministry in the past

5 years and 20 had never received work from the Ministry before. We at the Ministry are proud that we were able to spread the work around and empower many small contractors. We estimated that the 4.5 Million spent on repairs throughout the Bahamas created some 800 jobs over the summer.

Mr. Speaker

I cannot begin to tell you the number of contractors who have come to me and thanked me for giving them a chance to work for the Ministry after being denied for so many years. One contractor - who was extremely grateful, stated that his daughter had received a partial scholarship to go off to school and he did not know how he was going to find the balance. The contract he received allowed him to earn enough to pay the balance. Another contractor thanked me and said he will now be able to pay for his 2 daughters to remain in private school this year and last week Thursday evening a woman simply thanked me for allowing her husband to put food on the table. Can you imagine the impact that is unrecorded and the families positively impacted because we are doing the right thing, the fair thing, and this FNM Leader is coming to this honourable House with nonsense.

Mr Speaker

You will have to excuse me as I took great offence that the Member for Killarney would imply through his line of questions that I would have an interest in any company doing business with my Ministry, let alone struggling small contractors who have their contracts fixed by Ministry of Works which limits their margin to no more than 15%. In fact I am disappointed. The Member knows me well and he knows my mother and father extremely well. He knows that my family guards our character and integrity very jealously. In fact he should be ashamed of himself for attempting to muddy up my name.

Mr Speaker

Had the Member done his homework instead of just reading a list of questions given to him by a political hack he would have known that a company JFK Construction and not JFK Painting was one of the 74 companies that received contracts for repairs. He would also have known that of the 12 contracts awarded to do repairs to the 4 schools in the Marathon Constituency namely Claridge

Primary, C I Gibson, LW Young and RM Bailey. JFK Construction received 3 contracts. They were not the only contractor to receive 3 contracts as the scope of works in some schools were divided into 3 and 4 contracts. The FNM Leader - if he had just researched the facts, would have known that I do not own any shares in any of those companies either. No company received more than 3 contracts. Mr Speaker I will not apologize to anyone for awarding contracts for school repairs in my constituency to contractors in my constituency. It would not be wise for me to do otherwise. Who else should I award them too? Really now, that's the best you can do...you should be ashamed of yourself. You are the leader of your party and you cannot allow others who do not have your best interest at heart to prep you and prod you to come in here and make a fool of yourself.

Mr Speaker

It is really unfortunate that after all the hard work my team at the Ministry put in to ensure that school repairs got started earlier than any other time in recent memory, that the Member did not find it fitting to commend me and my team. Instead he took a page out of his Party's nasty dirty handbook where they just dirty up anyone's name talking foolishness, even when they know better..it's just politics to them.

Mr Speaker

I was really hopeful that the other side in changing its Leader would have entered a new dawn but it is obvious that is not the case. What a shame!!

Mr Speaker

In closing, I have been a Parliamentarian now for the past 5 years and while I enjoy a great debate I have never seen my role, or the role of any other member, as a vehicle to question or destroy the character or integrity of another Member except in the most extreme of circumstances where there is clear proof in hand. Proof! Not rumours, not innuendos and certainly not political mischief, but clear proof. If need be I can play the game too, except unlike the member I play for keeps.