

Press Statement By
D. Shane Gibson M P Golden Gates

Sen. Dion Foulkes claims that “there is evidence that the economy is rebounding and less people are laid off”

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In the Jan. 7, 2011 Nassau Guardian Newspaper article under the headline “70% Drop In Unemployment Claims”, the Minister of Labour, Dion Foulkes states that “there is evidence that the economy is rebounding and less people are laid off.” This statement is based solely on the so-called 70% drop in unemployment claims. This is an outrageous falsehood and gross misleading of the Bahamian people.

As the present policy stands, the National Insurance Board pays only 13 weeks of unemployment benefits to any eligible person. As many of the layoffs occurred in the first half of 2010, the majority of the unemployed has exhausted their 13 weeks and is no longer eligible for unemployment benefits, thus the drop in claims. This is coupled with the fact that the Bahamian people are fed up with the “white wash” job that the government is attempting to feed them and subsequently have given up hope on finding jobs. Many unemployed persons have discontinued their job search through government agencies simply because they have been demoralized and feel humiliated at the blatant lies, as in this article, which the FNM government attempts to dish out.

The truth, in fact maybe a 70% drop in unemployment claims but this is, by no means, an accurate method of measuring the unemployment rate nor the state of the economy. The absolute truth, based on this 70% drop is that 70% of the unemployed are now destitute, frustrated and desperate. The 70% will now have to find creative and sometimes unconventional ways to sustain themselves and their families.

While these persons cry out because they have lost their dignity, the FNM government remains unapologetic and continue to feed them false hope with bogus and erroneous statistics which further insult their intelligence. It is painful to see heads of households weep in desperation as they describe their present situation. Many have no choice but to lower themselves to beg friends and family for loans just to keep their heads above water, knowing they may not be able to repay.

This article also stated that the Prime Minister said, "Now there are distinct signs that the worst is over and that the tide is beginning to turn." He attributes this to the amount of foreign direct investments over the next few years; however he neglected to mention that along with these investments comes foreign labour. This leaves little or no room for the Bahamian labour force. Again a statement with slaps that 70%, whom they boast of, in the face.

It is obvious that the FNM government has no solutions and are grasping at straws in an attempt to pacify the Bahamian people. They have simply buried their heads in the sand in the hopes that the problem will resolve itself. This is being received by those most affected as an abandonment of the country's affairs since the only thing they see are the rear ends of the members of the government. This sends a strong message which resonates throughout this nation as every family can relate to the financial crunch that they face.

The recent increase in violent and white collar crimes is a direct result of the present economic situation in the Bahamas. While the downturn in the economy maybe a worldwide problem, it is the government's responsibility to find and implement programs and policy changes which will ease the burden during these times. No one can argue that the unemployment rate is in direct correlation (and terrible policies of the government) with the breakdown of the social fiber of this country and has resulted in a nation of frustrated and desperate people.

It is important that this country get back to a standard that its people have grown accustomed to. This will only happen when the government discontinue its inaccurate portrayal of the situation and deliver on its promise of truth by assessing and satisfactorily addressing the plight that our people now face.

The PLP on assuming office in 2002 found the economy of The Bahamas in a terrible state. Unemployment was at an all time high, the Government was unable to pay its bills therefore the PLP first course of action was to borrow 125 million dollars to relieve the situation. Unlike the FNM who since returning to office in 2007 with a booming economy, unemployment at an almost irreducible level has subsequently imposed two heavy rounds of taxes upon the backs of the Bahamian people.

The PLP on the other hand grew the economy and imposed no new taxes. The next PLP Government in 2012 will energize the economy and exceed its past achievements of 2002-2007. We will restore the dignity for Bahamians who desire employment to properly provide for themselves and their families rather than handouts from Social Services.

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