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Mr. Ivan Johnson
The Publisher/Editor
The Punch
Farrington Road
Nassau, Bahamas

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

Dear Sir,

Yesterday in your newspaper in Nassau Grapevine you printed an article in reference to me which was false/untrue and in fact was defamatory. I wish to set the record straight, hopefully, once and for all.

Please be advised of the following facts:

I am a Trustee of the Progressive Liberal Party and I acted as a Legal Advisor for the Party during the recent Bye-Election in the Elizabeth Constituency, which was similar to the role I was asked to perform by our Party Leader, the Hon. Perry G. Christie, both for the 2002 and the 2007 General Elections. In this position, among other matters, I was responsible for overseeing the nomination documentation of all PLP candidates, coordinating our Party's team of attorneys, overseeing the preparation of our Party's Poll workers Manual and the training of all Poll Workers for Election Day, including the very important process of Re-Counting of the ballots.

On February 16th 2010 I was responsible for our team of Election agents at Faith Temple Christian Academy, where there were six Polling Stations. My colleague Brave Davis was responsible for the remaining six Polling Stations at Thelma Gibson Primary School.

During the day at Faith Temple, it became obvious to me and others that a young man dressed in the FNM shirt and cap was following me throughout the compound as I moved from one Polling Station to the other (within the 100 yd. perimeter and when I went outside the perimeter to talk with our supporters under our tents). I spoke to several Senior Police Officers about the matter and I eventually spoke to Supt. Davis, who was the Officer- in-Charge of policing during the Bye-Election. Brave Davis and I had days before the Election arranged a meeting with Senior Police Officers involved in the Election, which meeting was chaired by the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Elliston Greenslade. We discussed various concerns on both sides, arrived at certain understandings and we exchanged

...2

Mr. Ivan Johnson
The Punch
February 26, 2010
Page 2

telephone contacts, including cell numbers, in the event that there was a need for us to contact each other on Election Day. I in no way felt threatened per se by this young man as we frequently spoke to each other by ourselves or in the presence of election agents on both sides, including certain Ministers of the Government.

I just simply wanted to advise the Police for them to be aware of the matter, as today unfortunately one cannot afford to take unnecessary chances with one's safety. Supt Davis invited me to make a written report which I declined; but I am aware that she recorded the individual's name etc. This individual is not a police officer as I was informed by a Minister of the Government, who I have known for many years and with whom I share mutual respect; and as I was informed by the police, including Supt. Davis.

If your story is correct when you stated that "**Apparently PM Ingraham had assigned an undercover cop to watch Grimes during the Elizabeth by-election campaign....**" then not only should I be concern but all right thinking Bahamians of all political persuasions should be concerned, as when I last checked we do not live in a police state nor do we live in a dictatorship. The Bahamas belong to all Bahamians of all colours, creed and political following and it is most important that we do our best to protect the fundamental rights for all, in particular future generations of Bahamians. I believe that I know Prime Minister Ingraham too well to believe that he would have made such an arrangement. He along with Perry Christie and I came up through the PLP the same old fashion way whereby we received the support of various PLP branches. We were the three youngest P LP Members of Parliament in 1977 (I was the youngest even after the 1982 General Elections). Our goals and our objectives were very clear and we stood for something, always trying to make a difference for our People.

In your article you stated "**The PM wanted to ensure that there wasn't a repeat of what happened in the May 2007 General Election. Shortly before the 2007 election, police found about 1000 ballot papers in lawyer Grimes' office.**" "**In any case, the PM wasn't taking any chances hence the cop assigned to watch ex MP Grimes**".

There is not one iota of truth to this or to any other matter closely related to and/or connected with this.

I categorically deny that the police at any time prior to and/or after the 2007 General Election visited my law office and/or found in my law office, on my person or anywhere else any such ballots whatsoever. Your article inferred that I was involved in some wrong doing with respect to the 2007 General Election, again I categorically deny that I was involved in any wrong doing whatsoever in the 2007 General Election or in any Election in The Bahamas or anywhere else.

Mr. Ivan Johnson
The Punch
February 26, 2010
Page 3

Prior to the 2007 General Election and upon my request I met with the then Commissioner of Police Mr. Paul Farquarson along with other Senior Police Officers. The objective was similar to when we recently met with Commissioner Greenslade. Also, prior to both the General Election of 2007 and the recent Bye-Election in Elizabeth, I had numerous meetings with Mr. Errol Bethel, the Parliamentary Commissioner. In many of these meetings, prior to the 2007 General Elections, representatives of the Free National Movement and other political parties were included. These meetings were held in the interest of protecting our system of free democratic elections in our country and were welcomed by all involved.

I mentioned the above because at no time did any Police Officer or any Officer of the Parliamentary Commissioner speak to me with regard to any concerns/questions that they may have had with respect to any sample ballots or in fact in any other matter. For the record, our Party has printed sample ballots for almost every single General Election, as have other political parties including the FNM. The sample ballots which were printed for the 2007 General Election were for the sole purpose of showing new voters and elderly or challenged voters how to vote using the candidates' symbols. These sample ballots are similar to but are not identical to the real ballots which are printed by the Parliamentary Commissioner's Office. They are of a texture of paper which is substantially thinner than the real ballots; and the real ballots are printed with a number on the back of them, the sample ballots did not have such a number. Real ballots are printed with a box in the bottom left corner of the back of the ballot in which box each ballot must be signed by the Presiding Officer and any ballot which is not signed by the Presiding Officer when it is being counted at the end of the Poll will and must by law be immediately rejected by the Presiding Officer; the sample ballots had no such box and were not purportedly signed by any presiding officer or any one else for that matter.

Anyone with any iota of knowledge with respect to our Election system would know that it is impossible for any of these sample ballots to be mistaken for the real ballots. Any right thinking Bahamian would know that it is impossible to adversely affect our elections by such suggested means.

On May 2nd, 2007 the day of the General Election, I denied these rumours including doing so around mid-day on one of the local radio/t.v. stations which was kind enough to afford me the opportunity. Further, around the same time that day Mr. Hulan Hanna, now Assistant Commissioner of Police, went on national radio and refuted the wild untruthful

Mr. Ivan Johnson
The Punch
February 26, 2010
Page 4

rumours that were being spread with respect to myself. My family and I were indeed grateful that he did so knowing full well that he could have just simply said nothing.

I had the privilege of representing the good people of the Fort Charlotte Constituency from 1977 to 1992, for three consecutive terms. In 1992 when I was unsuccessful at the Polls I gladly accepted that fact and decided that I would not seek re-election again. I presently enjoy the opportunity of continuing to work in and for our political system and for Bahamians everywhere; giving back to others the opportunity and privilege which was given to me when I first entered public life at the age of twenty-two. My wife and children have always been supportive of me and have been full participants in my political life. I have made numerous friends in Fort Charlotte and elsewhere of all political persuasions and I continue to treasure these friendships.

I hope that I have clarified the matter sufficiently for you and I am available to speak with and/or meet with you at a convenient time if you deem it necessary. I have attached one of my business cards with all of my contact information including my cell number.

In the circumstances, I must call upon you to print the entirety of this letter in a prominent place in your newspaper and to also to print in an equally prominent place in your newspaper an unequivocal withdrawal/retraction of the offending portions of your article.

I trust that we will be able to amicably address this matter; otherwise I will have no other option but to exercise my legal rights in this regard.

Yours sincerely,



Valentine S. Grimes