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12 September 2005

The Editor
Nassau, Bahamas

Dear Sir:

Why I support Franklyn Wilson

Please allow me a space in your editorial column to add my comments to the recent debate around the College of The Bahamas (COB), my Alma Mater. The debacle surrounding COB is now over. Let's hope we can get on with building the institution, going to University status in accordance with our strategic and national plan. As was noted previously in the press, Dr. Rodney Smith is a great man; the college, I submit, is a great college and it will make it with or without Dr. Smith. The college is an institution that is greater than any one person, no matter how qualified and how effective as that one person is, COB will go on and will succeed.

It was regrettable that Dr. Smith attempted to bring disrespect to the man who supported him most, Mr. Franklyn Wilson. Mr. Wilson went against the FNM Action Group and went against those existing lecturers at COB who wanted the position, or who simply manifested what is known as the "black crab syndrome" and just opposed for opposition sake the aspirations of any individual, especially male, to a high office of leadership in this country. Mr. Wilson stood by Dr. Smith and defended him to the very end. When the end was drawing nigh, he offered him a dignified way out - resign, take your package and leave with a promise to hold off the findings of the independent commission as much as possible. Dr. Smith, a very qualified man, could have accepted this, move on and let the matter die. It was regrettable that he wanted one last swing to "bite the hand that fed him." Mr. Franklyn Wilson should have been the last person attacked by Dr. Smith because he took a lot of criticism for his support of Dr. Smith before, during and after the incident that eventually led to his resignation from COB.

I am very happy that Mr. Franklyn Wilson has taken over as Chairman of this institution. This is just an indication of how important education is to Mr. Wilson. Anyone who knows Mr. Wilson will agree that he does not need COB or any other charitable obligations right now. He is very busy in the private sector, being a mover and shaker in the economic sphere. Mr. Wilson has been an inspiration to me and a host of other Bahamian professionals, especially those in the accounting profession.

Mr. Wilson qualified as a Chartered Accountant at a very young age when he was successful in the examinations of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Canada. All of us in the Accounting profession know just how difficult the Canadian exams are. Indeed, they follow the format of the very difficult British exams and only a handful of

Bahamians were ever able to conquer the challenges of this particular qualifying body. A lot of Bahamians begin with the Canadian exams only to switch to a different examination body after meeting some of the challenges demanded by the Canadians. Mr. Wilson, though only in his early twenties, persevered at the time when there were very few (approximately five) Bahamian Chartered Accountants. Our profession was then dominated by the British and Canadian expatriate who did not look kindly at the American CPA's (the American CPA's today dominates the local profession with the largest number of Bahamian Accountants). That was some time ago, but thanks to men like Franklyn Wilson, Clifford Culmer and Basil Sands (senior) that opportunities have opened up locally with the formation of the Bahamas Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Mr. Wilson was always a get-it-done, results-oriented individual with a lot of self confidence. What he has done in his short life is admirable and has served as an inspiration to a lot of us. I have admired this man, after getting to meet him through his brother, Reggie Munroe (the owner of The Bay clothing store on Bay Street). Mr. Wilson was then a politician, a member of the Pindling government. I went to see him speak and lo and behold, he was the first politician I knew to ever speak on technical matters without any notes. He spoke from memory, which at the time, I thought was an amazing feat. He is still a very sharp individual, and to this day, he will engage you in conversations about accounting, finance or economic theory that is at the text book level. He is obviously very well read and keeps up to date with the financial press. He has also introduced the Junior Achievement program to The Bahamas, another example of his keeping what is best for The Bahamas foremost in his mind. The Junior Achievement program teaches entrepreneurial skills to young high school students to teach them how to create wealth through their own efforts.

Another important aspect of Mr. Wilson is that he has manifested a deep and true love for this country. He has demonstrated time and time again his love and affection for The Bahamas. He is a true statesman who has demonstrated a never-say-die attitude. He was not offered partnership by KPMG (which he demanded soon after qualifying), so he formed his own firm, F.R. Wilson and Co, the pre-runner to Deloitte & Touche. He was denied a nomination by Pindling after not going along with the political program and protocol of that day; he survived and became a multi millionaire instead. He produced a strategic plan to revitalize the economy of South Eleuthera by putting together a group of Bahamian investors who, like him, loved this country. He was denied the rights to carry out his dream by a short-sighted government who appeared only interested in the messenger, and not the message. The economy of Eleuthera was suffering at the time, with almost no economic activity, yet he was denied a project that would have reversed that trend. He survived, and now, with a change of government, he is carrying out his plan. He noted a long time ago the value of land. He (along with others) was among the first Black Bahamians to foresee the development of sub-divisions and to note the importance of home ownership. He can single handedly say, that he has assisted more Bahamians in owning their own home than any other person, or government. He is a first class Bahamian, a true achiever. Evidence of the "measure of a man" is obtained by his fruits. He has two children, a son and a daughter who are very decent individuals in their own right and a beautiful and highly successful wife. These are public matters. Behind the scene, Mr. Wilson has helped scores of Bahamians to start their own business, to qualify in various professions, to achieve other quantifiable goals, including building

their own church and evangelical empires. He has quietly donated to numerous charitable organizations, supported many worthwhile causes and has become quite successful as a business and humanitarian. Yes, he has made mistakes like all of us, but overall, he has shown himself to be a fair, honest person who refuses to stay down.

I support Franklyn Wilson as a visionary, a true Bahamian who has pulled himself up by his own efforts. While a lot of the professionals of his time were seeking fortunes elsewhere, he did not leave the country but he stayed the course. He is still contributing, still leading, still ensuring what is best for The Bahamas and not what is good for him. In my opinion, Fort Charlotte lost a great opportunity when it denied him an opportunity to be their representative in the 1997 elections. I think it was his last effort for public office. He may have decided to contribute from behind the scene. I think he would make a great Prime Minister.

In conclusion, Franklyn Wilson supported Rodney Smith as well as he could. If given a choice with whom to support in this matter, my loyalties lie with Mr. Wilson. He has demonstrated a strong love and commitment to this country, to The College of The Bahamas, to the island of Eleuthera, to the Accounting profession in The Bahamas. As I noted in the beginning, the college is an institution that is greater than any one person, no matter how qualified and how effective as that one person is, COB will go on and will succeed, even without Mr. Wilson, although he is an effective leader. But we are all thankful that he has decided to contribute to our educational system, to our nation building and to our great country. When another chairman or chairwoman comes along, they would have met a good plan in place with a record of achievement that they will have to build on.

Yours etc.

John S. Bain