

# Mr. Gladstone”Stone”McEwan

PO Box AB-20925 Marsh Harbour Abaco Bahamas

Phone / Fax: 242-367-2614 Mobiles: 242-458-4247 / 242-559-8897

Email: stonemcewan@yahoo.com

---

## WE NEED A NEW WELL

By Stone McEwan

January 27, 2010

The voters in the Elizabeth constituency have been presented with an historic opportunity. How is this, one may ask? With the upcoming by-election, Elizabeth constituents are being granted the privilege of sending a critical message to both major political parties in The Bahamas—the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) and the Free National Movement (FNM)—that Bahamians are fed up with being served the same old stale bread from the same bakers.

In 1997, when I began my crusade for a truly secret ballot—the cornerstone of democracy—unbeknownst to the public at large, I tried to recruit influential Bahamians from throughout a broad spectrum of our society to assist in this noble and just cause. To comprehend just how far I reached out, I will name a few of the persons or groups whose assistance I sought—the then-seated Governor General of The Bahamas, the late Sir Lynden Pindling (R.I.P.), all of our elected officials, all the members of the Senate, the Bahamas Bar Association, the Bahamas Union of Teachers, all the news organizations, and 50 carefully chosen members of the clergy throughout the Bahamas. Despite untraceable secret ballots being the key to fair and just elections, from among all the leaders to whom I had written, only two (2) members of the clergy and eight (8) elected officials acknowledged my correspondence. Most interestingly, none of these persons offered support or assistance—this in a democracy that prides itself on fairness and justice.

To me, this was a clear indication of the reluctance associated with replacing the shackles of traceable ballots with the freedoms made possible by implementing untraceable ones. It became evident that our nation’s leaders preferred the status quo with respect to this undemocratic practice and that my campaign to temper corruption as well as initiate a move to our citizens casting their votes based on the merits of a candidate (i.e., based on what they could do to advance our country as a whole as opposed to individual persons) would be an uphill and lonely one.

I first became aware of the Bahamas Democratic Movement (BDM) and its young leaders, Cassius Stuart and Omar Smith, while reading one of the Bahamian dailies. I was intrigued by their positions on various issues *and* their courage to stand up for them. Upon introducing them to my concerns about traceable ballots, they unhesitatingly offered to render their support. The remainder is now documented history.

Some of you who are familiar with my writings might be asking, why is he backtracking on this path? Please read on to be enlightened.

**(More)**

(2)

We need a new breed of leaders. Our present well of politicians appears to be empty and the bucket seems to be dragging along the bottom. Each time we draw from the well, we pull up more sediment and silt. It is time to dig a new well, so we can have fresh clean water once again. We cannot expect change if we continue doing the same thing the same way. We cannot create new products using obsolete tools.

Over thirteen years ago, Cassius Stuart and the BDM had the vision, hope, fortitude, and courage, which, I believe, some of the more seasoned politicians and leaders in our country did not possess then and are still lacking. It is my opinion that the vision Cassius Stuart and the BDM have for The Bahamas is equally relevant today. Although it often seems safer to support what we have tried and what we are familiar with, it must also be remembered that if nothing is ventured, nothing will be gained.

Some may recall that one of the most significant issues during the 2002 general election was the short-lived ruling handed down by the then-seated Chief Justice of The Bahamas, Sir Burton Hall, which stated that there will be no marking of the voters' identification numbers on their ballots, thereby making it impossible for anyone to tell how a person voted. For the record, I want Elizabeth, The Bahamas, and the world to know the positions on untraceable voting taken by the other political parties that are contesting the Elizabeth seat.

In November of 2001, I approached Mr. Rodney Moncur (candidate for the Workers Party) for assistance with this struggle but he declined, suggesting I was wasting my time. I also asked the PLP, who were in opposition at that time, but they declined as well. Most significantly, the FNM government took away our greatest gift of democracy by leading the charge to the Court of Appeal to overturn Sir Burton Hall's ruling even though they had used the untraceable voting process during their party's leadership race.

Today, Dr. S. Andre Rollins and his National Development Party (NDP) seem to find it more prudent to lock horns with Mr. Errol Bethel, our Parliamentary Commissioner, guardian of our ballots, and one of the principal perpetrators of this evil election practice which affects all Bahamian people, over a thumb's up symbol as opposed to using their energy and resources to advocate for the reinstatement of Sir Burton Hall's 2002 ruling which would level the field, ensure fewer trips to election courts, save treasury funds, and eliminate many of the deficiencies and corrupt undertakings in our present electoral process.

Elizabeth, it would be impolite to mention all the above suitors for your hand and not include Mr. Godfrey 'Pro' Pinder, the United Christian Love Revolution Movement's (UCLRM) candidate. If someone knows, please enlighten me about the contributions Pro has made to garner true political freedoms for the Bahamian people? Why has it taken him so long to throw his hat into the political ring?

(More)

(3)

Why has he chosen to stand silently on the sidelines of so many issues that were unfair and unjust for so long? As one of the country's brightest and most successful barristers, how many pro bono cases has he taken on over the decades as a member of the bar? What are his political persuasions and convictions? These are just some of the questions I would urge Mr. Pinder to address as he introduces his party to Elizabeth and The Bahamas. I am quite confident the voters in Elizabeth will not hesitate to ask additional ones and that they will not settle for vague answers.

All over our country, people—FNMs and PLPs alike—are crying tears of frustration. There is no given right as to who will ascend to the leadership of our great nation. Throughout history, the leaders who emerged to bring substantial positive changes were all young gifted men and women. The principal members of the BDM are our sons, daughters, and grandchildren. They are the ones who will inherit The Bahamas. Think about it. Where would we be if our parents and grandparents had not given the then young and gifted Pindling and his PLP party a chance? How much more disappointment and undelivered promises should we accept before we take corrective action? How do we arrive at a new destination, if we continue to take the same route?

It is my contention that we *cannot* continue as we have. We need a new well filled with clean water. I believe Cassius Stuart and the BDM have their buckets filled with fresh ideas that will move Elizabeth and The Bahamas forward in a positive way.

It is widely accepted that one of the main contributors to crime and violence globally—and in The Bahamas—is a lack of education. The BDM is dedicated to correcting our outdated education system. Indeed, education is at the forefront of the BDM's agenda.

Presently, we allow investors to enter our country and pillage it. We actually have one of the highest leakages of funds of any nation on the planet. The BDM will not only ensure that a portion of every dollar made in The Bahamas remains here but that all who wish to invest in The Bahamas, must also invest in the people.

As implied to earlier, by implementing an untraceable ballot, we will have fair elections. The purchasing of votes will cease and political advancement will be a thing of the past. We will cultivate a better breed of politicians who are dedicated to serving their country. Power will be concentrated where it belongs—in the people. The BDM is committed to this as well.

The naysayers will argue that one man in parliament cannot do anything. However, I would argue that this is so only if we believe this to be reality. If, on the other hand, we believe power lies within the people, the reality will be that when Elizabeth sends Cassius Stuart to parliament, there will actually be over four thousand seven hundred (4,700) new voices in the house. So please do not be deceived by the mindset of one "man-one voice."

(More)

(4)

Elizabeth, you must send the message that it is time for us to move away from the existing political drudgery by electing one of our fresh, untainted Bahamians to parliament. The BDM is the longest-lived third party our country has ever had. This illustrates commitment, good leadership, and dedication.

My involvement with Mr. Stuart and the BDM has given me much confidence in our present generation of Bahamian leaders. As a registered voter, I have taken a position in protest not to vote in an election until we have a truly secret and untraceable ballot or a candidate on the ticket that is committed to fight for the same. I am certain if elected to parliament, Cassius Stuart and the BDM will lobby for truly democratic electoral processes as well as many other tangible improvements which will enhance the lives of all Bahamians. My only regret in regards to the upcoming contest is that I am not a registered voter in the Elizabeth constituency and, therefore, I am unable to cast a vote for Mr. Stuart, the BDM, and a chance for meaningful change.

We need to be aware that The Bahamas will belong to our children and grandchildren after we are gone. The condition we leave it in will determine how we will be remembered in history, the type of lives our offspring will have, and our evolution as a people. Elizabeth, the power is in your hands, wield it intelligently. Show the providers of the stale bread your desire for what is fresh. Let them know you wish to draw water from a new well given that the old one appears to be dry.

###