

News Release
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12th September, 2010

STATEMENT BY FRED MITCHELL MP AND ALFRED SEARS MP
RESPONDING TO DESMOND BANNISTER'S ALLEGATIONS

The Minister of Education ought to be ashamed of himself to try once again to make into a partisan political issue a matter that is of profound concern to the teachers, students, parents and school boards of Walter Parker Primary School of Freeport, Grand Bahama. His response to the visit by us to the Walter Parker Primary School on Thursday 9th September was entirely ill conceived.

We are parliamentary representatives of the people of The Bahamas who vote every year to allocate funding for schools throughout The Bahamas. The Constitution of The Bahamas mandates that the Cabinet be responsible to the Parliament. Therefore, we have a responsibility to monitor how the government performs anywhere in The Bahamas. No special permission is needed for a Member of Parliament to visit any public facility nor is there any invitation necessary to visit any school to speak to any teacher or teachers or administrators, provided the operation of the school is not interrupted. In our democratic system, it is the public duty of every public servant to co-operate with any legislator or indeed any member of the public when they make reasonable inquiries.

The Minister was notified that we intended to make the visit well in advance of the visit. We did so merely as a courtesy even though it was not strictly necessary to do so. He accommodated the request by notifying all the officials of our visit and the visit was facilitated at the Walter Parker Primary School by him and his officials on Thursday 9th September.

Mr. Bannister now cannot complain that the school was disrupted.

The facts are there was no disruption to the school. The teachers met with us on their break and returned to the classroom following the break without incident. In fact, it was agreed that we would meet again with the teachers on another occasion after school to listen to their concerns.

We also take grave exception to the allegation that we are in this process maligning the character of any individual. It should be noted that we have been meticulous in this exercise in calling no individual's name and making no allegation against any individual. We urge the Minister to take his own advice and not sully this process by trying to make something political that is not political.

We hope that Mr. Bannister's offer to co-operate and partner with the Opposition in developing the education of our children is genuine and we will continue to work toward the betterment of education in The Bahamas everywhere.

We expect to return to Freeport on Wednesday 15th September for a fuller meeting with teachers in Freeport, outside of school hours at the Foster Pestaina Hall at Christ The King, to listen to the concerns of teachers. All teachers are welcome to attend this meeting so that they can discuss their concerns in confidence.

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