

Fred Mitchell MP
With Alfred Sears MP &
Senator Michael Darville
At Walter Parker Primary School
Freeport, Grand Bahama

September, 2010

“I am here with my colleagues to have a look at the Walter Parker Primary School at the request of a number of the teachers at the school.

“The reports are that certain irregularities exist in the management of the school and the disposition of funds for the school. We have come to see for ourselves what the situation is and to hear direct and first hand what the views are of the teachers at the school.

“I also want to take this opportunity to answer the Minister of Education who in response to my comments in Grand Bahama on 26th August suggested that politics was the reason that I made my intervention at the start of the school year.

“My answer is: what has politics got to do with the fact that there is a significant shortfall in furniture at schools in Grand Bahama? In this school I am advised that the shortfall is so critical that chairs have to be borrowed from classrooms and the faculty lounge in order for one teacher to be able to seat her full class.

“As usual for FNM Ministers, the Minister of Education sought to blame the PLP. It is incredulous that the Minister could say in answer to the allegation that there is a shortage of furniture in the schools in Grand Bahama, that the PLP ordered cheap furniture from China between 2002 and 2006 and that is the reason there is a shortage of school furniture in Grand Bahama. The PLP has been out of office since 2007. How long is the FNM going to blame the PLP for these matters? The simple fact is the furniture needs to be provided for the children. That is not politics. That is a cold hard, factual reality.

“It is important also for the Minister to tell us how in fact the decision to put a fence down the middle of the Jack Hayward High School campus to create a junior high school is actually working. This was described as a disastrous decision because of the bureaucratic nightmare that it has created and the expense to the system. All of this expense ought to have been avoided and could have been avoided had the FNM administration made the decision to continue with the plans to build the Heritage School and if they had even put an adequate number of classrooms in the Sister Mary Patricia School. There are not enough classrooms there, so we have this halfway house that now exists.

“It is not the Minister and his children that will suffer, but the children of Grand Bahama.

“The Minister must come clean on the continued shortages of teachers in both the primary and secondary schools. He must come clean on the shortage of furniture and accept responsibility for his defaults and omissions. He must come clean and accept that he has made a mistake with the administrative changes in the school system here in Grand Bahama, the immediate problem here at Walter Parker Primary.

“We understand that a forensic audit is being conducted in two schools in Grand Bahama to determine what has happened to school board funds. We expect that this audit will be done quickly and that the results will be publicly disclosed so that the larger public interest will be served.

“My colleagues will continue to monitor the situation in Grand Bahama.”

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