

STATEMENT BY RT. HON. PERRY CHRISTIE MP
LEADER OF THE PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL PARTY

*RESPONDING TO THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE BUDGET
WALKOUT AND BAHAMAR*

14th June 2010
Nassau, The Bahamas

Quite frankly, the statements issued yesterday by the Prime Minister on the Opposition's Budget performance and the Bahamar project are a profound embarrassment. It is a sorry attempt to deflect attention from the real issue.

The question that must be asked is whether or not the Prime Minister is seeking deliberately to scuttle the BahaMar project. We are astonished that the Prime Minister says that he would not have supported the BahaMar project without answering the question of what he would have done to produce the 10,000 jobs for Bahamians, which this project promises to create. When we approved it, there was no question then of 5000 or any other number of Chinese labourers. Indeed at that point in time there was no Chinese involvement at all. The PLP agreed to the project to enhance our tourism industry, diversify the tourism plant so as to create a strategic counterbalance to the dominance of Kerzner and Atlantis; and to create jobs. Mr. Ingraham, in talking down this project, has no answer to any of these points.

The real issue is the abject failure of the Ingraham government. The issue is not Perry Christie and the PLP. Instead the issue is the government of the Free National Movement that has driven our country dangerously into debt and dramatically increased the burdens on the poor, the working class, and the middle class in our country. No amount of rhetoric or grandstanding on Mr. Ingraham's part can change those unchangeable facts.

Indeed one should go further and ask what could possibly be operating in the minds of the Free National Movement and its leaders at this time of deep recession when they would issue a Sunday statement to try to vilify the PLP, when the whole country knows that the problem is not the PLP but the FNM?

Let us take the issue of constitutionality raised by the Prime Minister. It is amazing that in the Prime Minister's summary of the events that took place in the House of Assembly on Thursday 10th June, that he neglected to say that he was complicit in what took place. It was the Prime Minister who heads the Cabinet and who is the Minister of Finance who stood up and agreed that the amendment to the budget bill could be put by the Member for Fox Hill. Implicit in that was that all the constitutionally mandated pre-requisites for the amendments had been satisfied.

Let the record be clear that the Prime Minister and his colleagues voted to deny additional aid to indigent families to bury their dead.

But frankly we were not surprised by this conduct. It is typical of the kind of insensitive governance we see under the FNM and it is what we have come to expect.

The Prime Minister accuses the PLP of smoke and mirrors but the truth is he himself has been shown to be the master of smoke and mirrors.

For example, the Prime Minister is fond of saying that he does not pay attention to anything that the PLP has to say. Indeed, as late as the recent budget debate when we suggested that there was an unprecedented need for a bipartisan approach to the financial problems facing our country, he rejected that notion. He scoffed at it saying that there was no need in law to consult the Opposition on any financial matters.

Now with the full power in law to make an immigration decision, he wants to share the decision of whether or not 5000 Chinese workers should come to build the new Cable Beach hotels, he suddenly wants the PLP to share in the decision making. Talk about smoke and mirrors and trying to pass the buck.

As the Prime Minister is always so anxious to show how decisive he is, he should have no hesitation in exercising his authority and deciding the matter in the same way that he decides everything else : entirely on his own without any help from his own colleagues, much less the Opposition! This whole notion is simply outrageous, especially coming from someone who has so much contempt for those who are opposed politically to him.

We admonish the Prime Minister, however, that irrespective of whether he

approves the Baha Mar project or not, thousands of Bahamian children are coming out of school this June. They are joining the tens of thousands who are already out of school and cannot find decent jobs in the country of their birth. He must find an answer to the 30,000 jobs that are needed in this economy. That is his job, not the PLP's job.

We hasten to assure the public, however, that if and when, with God's help and the support of the electorate, we return to office, our priority will be putting the country back to work.

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