

Press Statement by  
Bradley B Roberts MP  
National Chairman  
Progressive Liberal Party

Bahamas Electricity Corporation Load Shedding in New Providence, Abaco, Eleuthera,  
and Andros

June 22nd 2010

The Jr Minister of State Phenton Neymour and MP for South Beach during a recent contribution in the House of Assembly boldly assured New Providence and Paradise Island residences that the Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) had made the necessary preparations for the summer months and that power outages were not foreseeable.

Contrary to the assurances given by the Jr. Minister, the residences of New Providence have been constantly burdened with major power outages for the past ten days. Minister Neymour has been noticeably silent on this matter. Information coming to the attention of the Progressive Liberal Party strongly advises that the summer of 2010 is likely to be a very miserable one and will bring further hardship to residences in particular the elderly and the young.

The PLP is very saddened by the large number of families (estimated at some 10,000 including Grand Bahama) who are without electricity. Further, the numbers of homes being disconnected by BEC without any hope of reinstatement are growing daily as unemployment continues to escalate.

Electricity rate increases in Grand Bahama by the Grand Bahama Power Company is adding further burden on the backs of hard hit Grand Bahamians who are experiencing the worst economic time in recent history. Ministers Earl Deveaux and Neymour have announced that New Providence and the rest of the Bahamas will be hit shortly with a round of heavy rate increases by BEC; this adds insult to injury.

The PLP asserts that as a result of the imposition of failed policies by the FNM Government, BEC faces a number of challenges:

BEC finds itself in a very serious financial state as it struggles to meet employee payroll.

BEC is also seriously challenged to pay its fuel supplier and unable to underwrite the cost of timely scheduled maintenance and is seriously handicapped and unable to purchase critically needed spare parts.

BEC's Accounts Payable is bursting at the seams.

BEC suppliers, we are advised, are demanding payment in advance before releasing shipments.

BEC is utilizing expensive Diesel fuel rather than the less expensive Bunker C fuel due to the inoperative boiler plant which is in need of repairs. Staff morale is at an all time low.

All of these issues affecting BEC were confirmed in part by BEC General Manger Kevin Basden in this morning's edition of the Nassau Guardian.

While it is not the policy of the PLP to attack civil servants, we are compelled to ask GM Kevin Basden if he endorsed the rate reduction when same was presented to the Cabinet and approved in 2003?

The people of Abaco are also terrible victims of the Stop, Review, and Cancel Policy by Hubert Ingraham and his FNM Government. Under the Christie Administration a site was selected for Abaco's New Diesel Driven Power Plant and was contracted in advance of May 2007. The plant was put on hold and the site changed at the behest of special interest in Abaco and placed in an environmentally sensitive area. We now understand that the new Power Plant is scheduled for operation in early 2011. The people of Abaco and visitors have suffered during the summer of 2009 and continue to suffer greatly from power outages on a daily basis, thanks to a visionless and heartless FNM Government. Stories of visitors cutting short their visit to Abaco can be seen on the World Wide Web.

The people of Eleuthera, including Harbour Island, are also bearing the brunt of power outages and despite numerous promises to fix the problem no believable definitive solution is in sight.

Andros has its share of black outs as was evidenced during the recent Crab Fest. No plan and no solution are in sight there either.

To add insult to injury, Hubert Ingraham and the FNM Government are clueless as to what to do having presided over the destruction of a once successful Government Corporation and the only response is to blame the PLP, but finds the time to Jet half way around the world to watch soccer matches and to hobnob with the elite in South Africa with two of his very ineffective Ministers. This is an example of tried and proven leadership, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham is simply the best.

-- end --