

Hon. L. Ryan Pinder
Member of Parliament Elizabeth Constituency
Remarks June 15, 2010
P.L.P. Open Air Meeting

Fifty-six years ago this very night, PLPs assembled themselves in their very first Convention as a symbol of their commitment to fighting for the advancement of all Bahamians, disenfranchised by a Government whose interests were self serving and held no regard for the plight of ordinary Bahamians. In those days, just a handful of men benefitted from a Bahamian economy not at all designed to encompass the needs and aspirations of the majority of Bahamians.

Through the hard work and dedication of our Party historically, the first organized political institution in our Country, after years of struggle we achieved a myriad of rights, freedoms and opportunities for and on behalf of our people. I submit however, and I do so sadly, that under this FNM administration we have gone full circle, and notwithstanding our many political and social advancements, the FNM has once again fully removed our economy out of the grasps of the majority of Bahamians.

And this is why we are here tonight. This is why 56 years later we assemble ourselves in this open air meeting to put on display our continued solidarity with the Bahamian people at a time when they are being led by a Government who has no interest whatsoever in taking us one step higher, one step closer to being full class citizens in our own Country.

We are here tonight because we remain committed to the tenets of our Party which gave birth to a movement, which although it took fourteen years, ensured that the walls of oppression in all their ugly forms, came tumbling down for our people and through the attainment of majority rule created a Bahamian society where ordinary men and women from over the Hill, as well as ordinary men and women from our Out Islands, could aspire to be whatever they dreamed to be in this Country of ours.

By this scores of Bahamians took advantage of the PLP Government's education policy which gave Bahamians access to free education, primary, secondary and tertiary.

You check the records, even in the last PLP administration's term in Office, there is always a greater commitment to providing assistance in education for our people. I ask you to examine what is the FNM's track record in comparison to your PLP Party? Government guarantee loan program - gone; and subsidies to certain private schools as well as the College of The Bahamas, slashed.

The same is the case for other social programs and health initiatives under the FNM as compared to the historical P.L.P. Urban Renewal as envisioned by the Rt. Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie has become a shell of what it was intended to be. Why? Because this present Government does not understand the plight and the needs of ordinary Bahamians and are out of touch with our society! What could have become stronger communities and systems of support for the less fortunate in this time of recession are increasingly becoming war zones. Just ask the family of the four year old shot in Pinewood yesterday.

What we need is the return to a P.L.P. Government with a holistic plan for the development of a Bahamas for all Bahamians. A P.L.P. Government who was on the road to delivering National Health Insurance in keeping with the many institutions in our Country established under the P.L.P.

But the FNM's colossal failure has been in their management or mismanagement I should say, of the Bahamian economy.

They have failed to ensure an economic environment where Bahamians are poised to create new wealth. They have failed in creating jobs for our people, thousands who sit employed and thousands of our young people who will join that line by the end of this month. And so having failed us and having put us in a very vulnerable position as a Country, they brought a Budget of pain and taxation this year hoping that it would pass without any serious resistance from your loyal Opposition which historically has fought all manner of giants on your behalf.

They couldn't take it! They couldn't take how prepared we were to point out their deficiencies and failures and how through positive ideas we were able to demonstrate how much more visionary we on this side are in comparison to them.

They couldn't take that we turned the lights on and exposed that this FNM Government has been fumbling their way in the dark and has landed us in the mess we now find ourselves in. So they attempted to shut us up, to shut us down, and to shut us out!

But historically it has been the case as it remains today that the PLP can never be shut up, shut down or shut out. When pushed to this point we bring our message to the people. When pushed to this limit on your behalf, we pack our things up in Parliament, walk out, take off the suits and ties and hit the streets with a real message of compassion and vision.

This FNM Government is so embarrassed about having failed us that all they do is try to distract us from their dismal performance. I have been elected to the House of Assembly because of one of their games designed to distract us. I can't get over it yet how months before they come to us with the truth of the state of our economy, they spent hundreds of thousands, maybe millions of the Bahamian people's money to try to win a seat so that one man could make it into Ingraham's Cabinet.

As I said in Parliament, I am grateful to Elizabeth to have been elected but it seems the money spent in their attempt to win Elizabeth could have been used now on more important things.

But as in Elizabeth where the P.L.P. beat the FNM because of a message of fresh ideas with a fresh face with a fresh team and sent them running with their tails between their legs, we reiterate tonight that the FNM will not be allowed to distract the Bahamian people from the truth – the truth of their mismanagement of our economy, the truth of their inability to provide jobs and opportunities for the majority of our people, the truth about their track record on providing social and educational advancements for you.

And what of our Middle Class, which the policies of the PLP Government over the years created and sustained in large numbers? Our middle class is under attack; it is rapidly shrinking; the mismanagement of this FNM Government has caused our middle class to come under siege. This is not what we fought for over the years. In fact hand in hand with this Party's commitment to political and social advancement has been an economic empowerment plank which should now be the greatest focus of any Bahamian Government.

Until we spread the wealth of this Country more equitably among more of our people, further development of our Country will remain stagnant. The PLP understood this historically as over the years we steadily closed the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" in our Country by empowering a healthy middle class. All of our educational and social efforts were directed toward this goal. In fact the anchor project policy of the Christie administration was not just to see the development of mixed properties throughout our Country but to have the spin-off opportunities surrounding these properties cause there to emerge more wealth for ordinary Bahamians with the innovation to capitalize from these new prospects thereby expanding our middle class and even catapulting a few Bahamians to the status of competing with the Bay Street Boys.

This is not the case with Ingraham and the FNM. The special interests who support them and instruct them are the only ones making money in this tight economic climate. And they do so at the peril of a middle class specifically empowered by an historical PLP which sought to help some Bahamians up the economic ladder so that they can reach down and lend a helping hand to others on their way up.

It is also a travesty that so many Bahamian professionals having gone off to school with the hope of returning to a Country ripe with opportunities find themselves either in jobs with no guarantee of a long term prosperous future or simply unable to find work where they can put their education to use.

We in the PLP must therefore continue to advance our ideas for a stronger economy and safer communities throughout this archipelago. I ran and won in Elizabeth with a message of achievable goals of job creation and small business development complete with reeducation and training. I am holding true to my pledges and commitments – this month I will be launching a small business development training course.

Our Party has adopted some of my ideas for assisting entrepreneurs in our Country and through the visionary leadership of Mr. Christie, putting thousands of Bahamians back to work. We must return our Country to the economic path we were on under the Christie led administration which saw our economy expand not shrink by over four percent.

We can only do this however, through my continued call for partnership with and among all of our people. This is what ensured the eventual victory of the PLP all those many years ago – a partnership with the Bahamian people, a covenant to always work for and on your behalf.

And so I call on you to partner once more with this historical colossus of a Party. I implore you as we struggle through what remains a dark night due to an unending recession to forge partnerships with your neighbors and communities. I encourage you to develop local partnerships with existing businesses – support them and help them to discover ways to support community initiatives if only for our young people who may sit idle during this difficult summer season.

Let us return to a sense of partnership with our police, our churches, and other civic organizations so as to lend a helping hand in curtailing the escalating incidents of crime and violence plaguing us all. Partner with us in the PLP to send the FNM on their way whenever the next election is called so that we can return our Country to the able stewardship of the PLP and get back to the task of creating opportunities for all Bahamians throughout the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

PLP – All The Way!

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