

Press Statement
By
The Progressive Liberal Party
April 6th 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subject: Request for appointment of Commission of Inquiry to investigate all matters connected to, and the circumstances of the deaths and property damage at Freeport Grand on Monday 29th March 2010 following upon the tornado on Grand Bahama.

It is the considered view of the PLP that a Commission of Inquiry ought to be convened to investigate all matters connected to, and the circumstances of the deaths and property damage at Freeport, Grand Bahama on Monday 29th March following upon the tornado in Freeport on that day. It is clear that this is the sensible thing to do in the circumstances. It is our view that this is the most appropriate way for the public to get the answers that are needed to explain how this tragedy unfolded, who is at fault, and what the lessons are for the future. When the PLP was faced with a disaster at sea involving civilian marine shipping it held a Wreck Commission to determine the facts. We also caused a Commission of Inquiry to determine the facts on the MV Lorequin drug sting operation.

A Commission of Inquiry, properly resourced by the Government and with three Commissioners with experience from varied backgrounds would also give the confidence to the country that there is no official cover up of the events of Monday 29th March.

The Inquiry would have the mandate to hold public hearings. It would be able to subpoena witnesses from the Government including politicians, the employers and employees of the container port. It will be able to delineate the facts of what happened including establishing a time line and apportioning responsibility. It would also investigate the performance or lack thereof of the Met Office and the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA).

We do not have confidence that the promised departmental inquiry by the Minister of the Environment will be sufficiently vigorous. We do not believe that an internal inquiry will meet the test of objectivity. Indeed the Minister is part of the problem. We believe that any internal investigations whether departmental or government wide are already prejudiced by the Prime Minister's statement to the country on Tuesday 30th March that he considers the work site where the deaths occurred to be a safe work site.

We have spoken to both the employers and employees. They both have different stories. There appears to us to be a fundamental disconnect between the two versions of events. An objective Board of Inquiry is required.

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