REMARKS BY FRED MITCHELL MP FOX HILL

INDUCTION OF PLP BRANCH OFFICERS

ST. MARK’S NATIVE BAPTIST CHURCH

Fox Hill

8th August 2010

Today, I wish to congratulate all the officers of the branch of the Fox Hill PLP on their coming to office for another year of leadership in our community. Our branch leadership is the main support of the party in between elections. They are responsible for the outreach tot eh community and for keeping the message of the party alive until it is election time.

The message which we have to spread is that we put people and their concerns first. We believe that the people of The Bahamas should have the first call on the resources of The Bahamas. We strive in this part of our country not only to spread the message about the work and beliefs of our party but to take the message back as to what the people of Fox Hill are thinking, feeling and experiencing.

To do that, it will be most important for us to continue to accept people as they are without fair or favour or prejudice. Politics is a volunteer business and should not be restricted by artificial rules and regulations but by respect for people and their views and most often taking people as you find them and meeting them where they are, not where we want them to be.

My first position in our party was that of a Branch Chairman in the then Centreville Constituency back in 1975. I have served in every post in the party except those of national leadership, including that of National General Council member, Senator and now Member of Parliament. It is something which requires great patience but most of all an understanding of people and how they behave. As long as we are in this business, what we want is a positive result. In other words, the aim is for more people to vote for us than o vote for the other side.

We have a formidable challenge in Fox Hill today. We have a constant opponent who despite being defeated continues to work. We have a bad economy which has badly affected our people in this area. Many people are out of work. Hunger and poverty are on the rise. Many people do not know where to turn to, and often turn to a political party to help. We must try to help where we can.

As with so many of the institutions in our country, the branch is now run by women. It seems to me that this is a portent of things to come. I remember well an early conversation that I had with the late Sir Lynden Pindling who told me that he chose and depended on women to do the job because he found that men were becoming unreliable.

Of course the facts show whether men are unreliable or not that women are increasingly, and after generations of educating themselves, the backbone of our institutions both religious and civic. What does this mean?

It means in part that the concerns of women ought to now become central to the political process and only women can do this.

During the campaign of 2007, I was shocked at the silence of women in the fight for National health Insurance. One young women 18 years old said that she would not be voting because no political party was doing anything to help young people I asked her whether or not she knew for example that young women in The Bahamas were at a high risk for breast cancer greater than in other countries. That our party had a programme of national health insurance which would defray the costs of health care for women. She was indifferent. And yet, each year scores of women in this country are struck down by this disease at enormous costs and by not voting for the PLP, there is no national health insurance to pay for the expense of this and other sicknesses that disproportionately affect women.

PLP women must speak up for national health insurance.

You who are PLP women should be speaking up to defend Cheryl Grant Bethell, who worked for 20 years and trained herself to become the Director of Public Prosecutions of our country, but who is being needed the job for reasons that seem less than rational. She is the widow of a former PLP Minister Peter Bethell. She is the widow of a former Deputy Leader of our Party Peter Bethell. PLP women should let their voices be heard in answer to the vicious attack on her by the government of the day for reasons that are wholly unjustified.

Finally let me urge you to also make an effort to encourage more men to join the work of the branch. It takes two to tango, they say. That is so in politics as well. There should be a concerted effort to get more men involved in branch work. There ought to be a concerted effort to ensure that more young people join the branch.

So over the next year then, work hard. Meet people. Get to them where they live. Be united. Serve our Fox Hill community. Elections will be upon us sooner than you think.

God bless you all and thank you for the support which you have given me and the people of Fox Hill.

End