

Address by Dr. Daniel Johnson
PLP Candidate, Carmichael Constituency
Jobs Creation and Economic Summit

28th September 2011.

Party Leader and Mrs. Christie;

Deputy Leader and Mrs. Davis

Party officers, family and friends, good evening.

I am the Progressive Liberal Party's Candidate for the Carmichael Constituency and represent a new generation of PLP leadership that together form the proverbial bridge to the future. I am a member of this great party because of our shared values that created the modern Bahamas and made us a great country. Shared values such as social justice, equal opportunity and access, economic justice, freedom, Bahamianization and strong Christian values have guided and shaped the policies, programs and quality of governance by our party for more than fifty years. I am confident that these timeless values will continue to propel us well into the future.

Tonight in my constituency and all over this country the Bahamian people know that something is wrong in our land and they are desperately seeking answers and solutions as to who will fix it. When will it be fixed and how will it be fixed.

In The Bahamas today, jobs are non-existent and where jobs do exist, they are in scarce supply. The glue less band-aid the FNM has placed on the gaping wound of unemployment through its national jobs training programme is a numerical farce and only the very elect of the FNM get the call to so join. Yes people, our once proud and dignified people are being asked to sell their very soul for a handouts and a visionless FNM dream.

In the area south of Gregory Arch and ending at the shoreline at South Beach and Marshall Road and looking south west to the round about at Coral Harbour – a mother and a father and a brother and a sister know that at our current rate of violence, their 16 year old brother may not come back home tonight. Instead of returning from a fun filled evening at a sweet 16 birthday party, his bullet riddled body will be hauled away by a hearse and that family will have the now all too routine task of identifying their son's body through the little portal window outside the Rand Laboratory on Thursday morning.

We put the Police in our schools. Mr. Ingraham took them out. Four years later in shame and disgrace he sends them back. We began the process of Urban Renewal which at its core would give our young people role models to look up to other than the Drug Lords and Criminal gang leaders running amok amongst them. Mr. Ingraham stopped Urban Renewal. Then he down sized it. Then he tinkered with it.

We have heard the excuses from their Minister of National Security – he has said on multiple occasions that the general population need not fear because criminals were killings criminals.

On a recent talk show the Minister of National Security summed up the unacceptably high rate of murder as “essentially criminals are killing criminals” and “these bad boys live by the sword and die by the sword”. The Minister further said that his focus is applied to random killings, not domestic violence nor retaliation or drug related conflicts.

My fellow Bahamians, could the Minister of National Security really be adopting such a casual attitude towards murder? –What kind of message is that to Bahamians, to the world? –How disconnected from reality must someone be in order to say such a thing?

First, many, many Bahamians who have been murdered are innocent victims. –About these lives, and the devastated families they leave behind, we hear almost nothing from this government. Not one word for these families whose wounds are not closed because 3 to 4 years later, they are still waiting for the trial of the person accused of murdering their loved one.

And, of course, even when criminals are being killed, this represents a tragic failure of our society, on multiple levels, requiring a vision and a seriousness of purpose commensurate with the tragedy.

There is only one party in The Bahamas with a track record of pioneering successful anti-crime programs, and only one party with a comprehensive plan to reduce violence.

As part of our new covenant for national renewal, the Progressive Liberal Party believes reducing crime is the nation’s top priority. I invite Bahamians to review PROJECT SAFE BAHAMAS; this bold and innovative plan is divided into four parts. They are:

Operation Cease Fire. This involves rapid response strike forces, saturation patrols in crime hotspots, intensively-trained Violence Breakers to prevent revenge killings, increased surveillance of those out on bail, murder trials within twelve months to prevent release of murder suspects on bail, and Shock Treatment, a tough love program to expose at-risk youth to the consequences of gun violence in hospitals and morgues.

Urban Renewal 2.0 is an updated version of the program so many Bahamians remember well. We’re going to add FIFTY BAHAMIANS, a new mentorship program, because nothing is as powerful as someone who believes in you. Urban Renewal is all about leveraging resources to

prevent crime – citizen solutions, community courts, faith-based initiatives, public-private partnerships. We must build a nationwide coalition to reduce violence.

Swift Justice is the coordination between the police, prosecutors and others involved in the administration of justice to ensure criminals are “swiftly caught, swiftly tried, and swiftly punished.” Additionally, sentencing guidelines will be amended to specify cases requiring death penalty sentences. Further, anyone who threatens or tampers with a judge, juror, prosecutor, witness, policeman, social worker involved in giving a social inquiry report and anyone else involved in the administration of the criminal justice system will be tried within six months.

Safe Bahamas Initiative will involve the expansion of the intelligence unit of the police force; increased defence force patrols; improved gun interdiction at ports; drug rehabilitation; expanded tourism policing and new support for programs to prevent teen pregnancy.

This plan was built in consultation with law enforcement experts, clergy, concerned citizens, and a new generation of PLP leaders and candidates. We have pioneered successful anti-crime programs in the past, and we intend to do it again.

The PLP believes that fighting crime must be part of a broader strategy for national renewal. We must build stronger families and strengthen our core Bahamian values. We intend to double our investment in education, supporting and improving education at every level, from pre-school to graduate-level programs. We must grow our economy, creating long-term jobs that people can count on. Building on a proud tradition of putting the dreams and aspirations of Bahamians first, we in the PLP believe that working together; we can break the back of crime, make our communities safe again and accomplish great things.

How is that I’m talking about crime during a Job Creation Summit? The first duty of a government is to keep its citizens safe. The second is to offer opportunities. Communities with high crime do not experience economic growth. And nations with skyrocketing drug and gun and murder problems are not considered family-friendly vacation destinations. There are plenty of moral reasons why we need to reduce violence, but there are economic reasons too. When people are afraid, they do not invest, businesses do not grow, and people stay home.

So creating and maintaining safe neighborhoods and a safe Bahamas is the right thing to do *and* the smart thing to do for our economy.

I notice that the Prime Minister has finally decided to address the nation on crime. Let’s wait and see what he says – the PLP is ready for a sincere partner in this battle to win back our streets. But let’s be clear: The Bahamas needs a Prime Minister who cares about fighting crime all the time, not just at election time.

We are the PLP. And we are on the move. And before us again is the challenge to build a nation healthy wealthy and proud. A country where men and women do not shirk from hard work. We

believe in The Bahamas. We built the modern Bahamas. We love The Bahamas. You are The Bahamas. Join us on the march forward, upward and onward together as the world marks the manner of our bearing.