

Remarks by

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For

The Kennedy Constituency

Delivered

At the P.L.P. Southwestern Job Creation and Empowerment Summit

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Workers House

Tonique Darling Highway

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Party Leader The Rt. Hon. Perry Gladstone Christie and Mrs. Christie, Deputy Leader, The Hon. Phillip Brave Davis and Mrs. Davis, National Chairman Bradley Roberts and Mrs. Roberts, Parliamentarians, Party Officers, Stalwart Councillors, Members of this Great Progressive Liberal Party, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Evening.

It is a privilege and profound pleasure for me to address you tonight as our party's standard bearer for the great Constituency of Kennedy. PLPs, allow no one to deceive you, whether they be an independent, red, or green party candidate, Kennedy my friends is PLP and PLP all the way!

Ladies & Gentlemen, make NO mistake, THE PLP is by far the best party to lead this country because of its mixture of youth and experience, and as seen, its **new** generation of leaders. The PLP is the only party with a tough and innovative plan to reduce violence, "**Project Safe Bahamas**". And as we're starting to show Bahamians with this Summit, the PLP is the best party to expand the economy and create **Long Term jobs for Bahamians**.

I joined the PLP because its “Bahamians First” philosophy has always been based on policies designed to assist the majority of Bahamians. These are the salt of the earth people who have made this country great.

My campaign team and I are working hard -- we are walking the streets, knocking on doors, and listening to the concerns of the constituents. The people of Kennedy are fed up -- they're tired of newspapers filled with murder headlines, they're tired of worrying about keeping their families safe, they're tired of trying to find good jobs that don't seem to exist anymore.

The way they see it, the FNM was handed a strong and vibrant economy in 2007, one that was projected to grow even more in 2008. During the Christie years, the economy was booming, growing faster than the US economy!

It's true that soon The Bahamas had to deal with trouble in the worldwide economy. But while other governments decided to cut taxes during the recession, and stimulate their economy with big projects, and invest in people, this FNM government did everything they could to make the economy worse:

- They raised taxes just when times were toughest.
- They failed to invest in people.
- And, for purely petty political reasons, they delayed important and legitimate projects started by the PLP, projects which could have kept the Bahamian economy afloat.

This isn't just a matter of opinion – look at the Central Bank's Quarterly Financial Digest for evidence.

The FNM delayed the construction of the Straw Market; they delayed the BahaMar project for three years; they delayed the I-Group project in Mayaguana for more than four years; they delayed the European Union funded infrastructural upgrades in the Family Islands and they canceled school construction projects in Salina Point, Exuma and North Andros. To add insult to injury, they were unable to attract any new and impactful Foreign Direct Investment in 4-1/2 years of governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen, bad policy decisions made by the FNM government accelerated our descent into this recession. Many good-paying jobs for Bahamians were lost as a result of these harmful and reckless policies. The FNM clearly put politics first, not Bahamians, and they must be called into account for this.

The economic stimulus package the PLP left in place upon demitting office, i.e., the multitude of public and privately funded projects such as infrastructural development, Albany, Bahamar and the I-Group would have provided **LONG TERM jobs** for Bahamians and buffered the Bahamas from the negative impact of the looming global recession and provide for a softer landing. The delay and cancelation tactics of the FNM resulted in an economic crash landing and the pain and suffering felt by our people today as a result are incalculable.

Within six months of assuming office, the Bahamas Contractors Association publicly lamented that 70% of contractors were either unemployed or underemployed. This was the direct result of FNM policy decisions and not the global recession. Now you tell me if they did not willfully strip away YOUR economic buffer and exposed you to the harsh and unforgiving elements of the looming recession?

Standard & Poor's stated that because of FNM policy decisions, "important economic momentum was lost." We are all now familiar with how this horror story turned out: Our sovereign rating was downgraded twice by Standard and Poors, and Moody's recently downgraded our economic outlook from stable to negative.

Our leader is on record warning the FNM government that they could not just turn the Bahamian economy on and off like a faucet; I agree with him.

Our charge against the FNM is simple: They mismanaged the economy, thus making a bad situation worse and they placed their narrow political interests ahead of the interest of the Bahamian people which is a betrayal of the public trust. In short, they did not put Bahamians

first. Our charges and claims are supported by reputable organizations such as the Central Bank, the IMF, Standard and Poors and Moody's.

Bahamians, BELIEVE IN BAHAMAS! Bahamians can build roads, so why do we have non-Bahamians building our roads? Under the PLP, those were contracts given Bahamians! The money remained in the Bahamas to boost OUR economy. Why are we outsourcing our jobs all to the benefit of others while Bahamians sit idly by unemployed with no food on the table?

The record showed that in 2005, our economic growth outpaced that of the United States. That was because we put Bahamians first, we had a jobs plan and it was for Bahamians. **Kennedy, can you hear me!?!?**

To fix this egregious mismanagement of our economy and facilitate the creation of long term jobs FOR BAHAMIANS, we propose the following:

1. A 3 year business license holiday to wholly owned *Bahamian* companies engaged in the production of school uniforms, sports uniforms, Police and Defense Force uniforms, uniforms for Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Cubs, Brownies, Boys' Brigade and Marching Bands.
2. A PLP Government will immediately identify and award contracts to *Bahamian* companies for the repair and construction of docks, bridges, roads, airports and seawalls throughout the Family Islands. This will be funded by international agency loans at favorable interest rates, and public private sector participation in the upgrades. This investment will create immediate jobs and will attract investment to the Family Islands. Local contractors will be utilized where possible and other contractors will be required to use local island labor to the extent practicable.
3. A PLP government will maximize the opportunity for employment of qualified Bahamians; the PLP will strengthen and institutionalize an apprenticeship program in which the company sponsoring a work permit application must identify a Bahamian to be an

apprentice to the work permit holder to develop similar technical skills and expertise. The PLP will also significantly increase work permit fees for categories of workers for which there are qualified Bahamians. Unlike the FNM, the PLP will not use the Department of Immigration as a principal revenue generating center, essentially displacing thousands of Bahamian workers. Our work permit policy will be administered to protect *Bahamian* jobs, expand training and educational opportunities for Bahamians and facilitate the modernization of our economy.

Bahamas and Kennedy in particular, I assure you that your concerns have been registered with the central command of the P.L.P. —we are a party that does listen. We have started sharing our ideas and proposals and we're going to keep doing so until we form the new government, when we'll start putting these proposals into action on Day One. I encourage my people in Kennedy to hold on, better days are ahead!

When this new history is written, it will record that at one of the most difficult and vulnerable periods in our country's history, the PLP leaders of the South West Region of New Providence – leaders like Renward Wells, Dr. Kendal Major, Leslie Miller, Cleola Hamilton, Shane Gibson, Dr. Danny Johnson, Michael Halkitis and yours truly -- rose to the occasion and joined our party and leadership in beginning to roll out a package of workable, practical and innovative ideas to put Bahamians back to work, put Bahamians first, restore their dignity and ultimately place The Bahamas on firm economic footing.

This is the beginning of a national conversation about our plans for restoration and prosperity. We invite all Bahamians to join in this conversation and have their say. Working together in selfless love for country and with God as our guide, there is no mountain of hopelessness and despair that we cannot remove.

PLP, PLP, PLP, ALL THE WAY!!!