

The Freeport News

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Political debates much overrated

Hillary Clinton got the best of Donald Trump, generally in the series of debates they had as the Democratic and Republican parties' nominees respectively, leading up to last November's presidential election in the United States.

Trump however bowled her over with Electoral College votes and is now rounding out into a president with some promise, within the first 100 days.

Mitt Romney cleaned up the ground with Barack Obama during their first debate prior to the 2012 US Presidential Election. However, the end result was a second term for Obama. Thus, the case can be argued and made, that while presidential debates have proven quite popular through the years, especially since John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon went at it, they don't necessarily determine the best choice in the minds of voters.

Now, presently the leader of the hapless Democratic National Alliance Party (DNA), Branville McCartney and two-term Prime Minister Perry Christie of the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) seem eager for a national debate among the chief political standard bearers.

Dr. Hubert Minnis, Leader of the Free National Movement, has been lukewarm to the idea and accordingly has drawn criticisms from certain quarters. Dr. Minnis seems bound to stay on his course of moving about the country and spending quality time interacting directly with the people, one-on-one in as many instances as is possible.

Can he defeat the more eloquent Christie and McCartney in a national debate? That is indeed doubtful. They would sound better than him even if he brings substances on issues and they are vague and non-committal. A lot of debates have been won more by style and presentation, rather than substance.

The view here is that it would be best, at some point before the general election date of May 10, if Christie, McCartney and Dr. Minnis agree to afford a select group of leading journalists, a forum to fire questions at them on their ideas for the future of this country.

In the case of Christie, it would be the appropriate opportunity also to question him in depth about his successes and failures. Such a scenario would be a better guide for the voters than a pure debate.

A debate would be a welcome event for Christie and his supporters though. That would be his element. He could prim the mouth and go into a diatribe against his rivals, or offer very appealing words to listeners. On stage, if one is only hearing words, Christie is one of the smoothest operators ever. So, yes, he would love a debate.

McCartney on the other hand would have an opportunity to gain some respect and appear leader-like. His party has not connected with the general public as expected and it is dangling at the moment. To be on stage with Christie and Dr. Minnis would give the DNA some relevance.

As for Dr. Minnis, if he keeps the current course and allows the DNA and the PLP to push the debate idea, while focusing as he is now, on emphasizing his party's motto "It's The people's Time" that would be best for him, we think.

In any event, political debates, as proven in the past, are overrated.

STATEMENT

West End Invitational boat races postponed, new dates set

In a statement (from Stuart, Florida) late Monday afternoon, organizers of the West End Invitational Boat Races not only announced the postponement of the event, but revealed the new dates it will be held. Following is the statement in its entirety.

"To bring the village of West End, Grand Bahama Island and The Bahamas the most positive economic impact, International Boat Racing Association an-

nounces the postponement of the West End Invitational. Originally set for April 19, 2017, the West End Invitational is now scheduled for October 6 - 8, 2017.

International Boat Racing Association's number one commitment has been and will always be to make the most positive impact on our host communities and committed sponsors possible. With this in mind, the West

End Invitational will enjoy much more preparation and promotion to bring tourism, fresh capital and the fastest action the beautiful waters of the village of West End have ever seen. The additional lead time will ensure a bigger and faster event for all.

The International Boat Racing Association thanks The Bahamas Ministry of Tourism for their support of the postponement. IBRA also thanks our

committed sponsors Environmental Manufacturing Solutions, Old Bahama Bay Resort and Yacht Harbour, Commonwealth Brewing Limited, Coca-Cola and Island Coast Charters. Most of all, International Boat Racing Association thanks the residents of the village of West End for their continued support and hopes to serve the community with the most stellar event imaginable October 6 - 8, 2017."

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Christie turned carnival into a merry-go-round

Dear Editor,

To some Bahamians, the world came to an end when Perry Christie postponed carnival.

If only we had more pressing issues in this country to get excited about. Like maybe if we had an election coming, or about our crumbling economy, or crime, or the perilous state of our education system.

These issues have to wait, because we must first wine and dance and shake-up we self. Wining and gorging won't solve anything, but at least we will get a nice buzz while doing it.

And to underscore that he is a flawed leader who craves approval but caves at the slightest blowback, Christie later reversed himself and said the on-again-off-again carnival on May 4-6 was now on-again.

Carnivalistas need to chill. So the third annual running of Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival got pushed back a few days? Big deal. The vendors would have been out of pocket, the few tourists would have had to tussle with airlines and hotels about changed travel dates and with employers about changed vacation schedules.

For the rest of the festivalgoers, if Monday falls on a Friday they don't care. They just want to party.

The mother of Caribbean carnivals, the pre-Lent bash held in Trinidad & Tobago has been postponed a few times since 1845 when it first started. As recently as 2015 there was advice given to the government there to postpone carnival as a precaution over the Ebola fears. It went ahead anyhow.

In 1972 carnival was postponed from February to May because of a fear over polio. How did the Trinis react? In song, of course. Their jokey lyrics about the postponement were made ever more hilarious by the fact that the heavy rains of May washed away the festival that year.

It was not the end of the road back then. Carnival roared back. It has come close to postponement before, but mostly because of funding issues. Funding issues have led to postponement of carnival in other jurisdictions also such as Jamaica.

But money won't stop we carnival. Christie will scrape every last penny from the VAT cookie jar to make sure the carnival committee has money to waste.

I submit, that in our faux outrage over the postponement of carnival we missed the larger point about the failure of leadership and about poor political judgment. Christie failed miserably on both. He postponed carnival in a wishy-washy attempt to try and get us to disassociate frolicking in the street from the solemn duty of voting.

He weaseled out of taking responsibility for his postponement decision by saying that it was the carnival organizers who had recommended it. Then Christie somehow woke up the hibernating Minister of Tourism Obie Wilchcombe and said "my brother this on you".

Wilchcombe quickly passed that poisoned chalice to the functionaries in his ministry and promptly went back to his dreams about lottery tickets and gaming.

Christie's judgment was called into question again, because once again he rolled the dice on an important social issue and he came up seven-out (i.e. he luck bad). If given a chance, Christie will continue to play craps with the economy and with the society for another five years.

Weak and indecisive leadership

will not get the ship of state off the rocks and back on course. These times demand a leader who will stand up for what he believes in and will defend it, provided it is a wise and prudent decision in the first place.

Those visitors who rushed to pay the \$250 airline change fee when Christie first made the postponement and now have to pay another \$250 to change it back, can vouch for the fact that indecisiveness can be costly. Now think about our \$6 billion national debt and how weak leadership will cause us to have to pay more in interest to service that mortgage.

For the rest of us who know Perry Christie, his flip-flopping was just business as usual. However, running a country isn't like an illicit game of throwing bones in an alley. You probably stand better odds of winning a dice game, than you would waiting for Christie to show some true grit.

Maybe carnival headliner Trinidadian Machel Montano can give Christie a few tips on how to lead "Like a Boss".

~ The Graduate

GAMBLING CULTURE CHALLENGE

Dear Editor,

I wish to refer to *The Nassau Guardian* of March 16, 2017 and in particular to the opinion page entitled, "The dangerous consequences of a growing gambling culture."

I wish to thank and commend the author for an excellent article, so much so that I wish to highlight some of the relevant paragraphs, hoping they will be read by church and state: i. The rise of a gambling culture, fueled by a few business houses will adversely and negatively affect The Bahamas for decades.

ii. Many Family Islands, with limited financial resources and economic opportunities, are being drained of money. Little of this money is ever returned to those communities.

iii. "Spinning" is the common game of chance for most and it is thought to be highly addictive. More women are spinning than men. With women heading most households, and being the main bread winners, this is especially alarming.

iv. What is happening in our country is profoundly inequitable, and an offense to social justice and national progress. Over decades we will see the considerable opportunity cost of allowing a few to live lavishly, while thousands of Bahamians will remain poorly educated.

v. Unlike other economic enterprises, those who run the gambling houses produce nothing of economic value, in terms of the numbers business itself. Instead of allowing these persons to hoard our money for themselves, a public lottery with the bulk of the proceeds being returned to the Bahamian people would be better for the country.

I share the above information, hoping concerned citizens, especially pastors and priests, will be challenged to think about the negative impacts of web shop gambling, and would like to leave them with the words of William Merrill: "Rise up, O man of God! Have done with lesser things. Give heart and soul and mind and strength, to serve the King of Kings."

Let me finish with the words of

the honorable minister for gaming in The Nassau Guardian of March 13, 2017: "There is still work to be done, but we are making progress."

I would like to challenge the honorable minister with the following:

1. Introduce regulations and enforce them, so that people under 18 are not allowed in web shops.

2. Give serious thought to web shops being open for only six days a week, closed on Sundays. This will provide a few more dollars for lunch money, tennis, books, etc.

3. Give serious thought to increasing the percentage of the gross take. At present it is a crying shame.

~ Patrick J. Bethel

BIASED REPORTING

Dear Editor,

Watching the evening news on ZNS Monday March 10, I was stunned with the blatant bias shown with regard to its coverage of the PLP's mass rally, while absolutely nothing was said about the FNM's inaugural opening of its Central Grand Bahama headquarters. May I remind the

principals of ZNS that the station doesn't belong to the PLP, it's the people's station. Please, as we go into this election, show some professionalism and stop the bias and one-sided reporting. You are still practicing ancient behavior, try raising the bar.

~ Kelly D. Burrows

Quote in Time

LETTERS & COLUMNS GUIDE

Because of the many unsigned letters and those with doubtful names, *The Freeport News* requests that letters submitted for consideration must be accompanied by the full name, address and telephone number of the sender so that they can be verified. Letters without these details will not be accepted. However, these details will be omitted on request.

• All LETTERS & COLUMNS must be emailed to: fred@nasguard.com and barbara@nasguard.com

THANK YOU

Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.

~ Francis of Assisi

The Best of SIDEBURNS

