

# The Freeport News

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# Pack your bags, Jerome Fitzgerald

Dear Editor,

I say to the MP from Marathon, pack your bags, Jerome Fitzgerald. You are toast.

Shame on you for trying to seal what presumably would have been very lucrative contracts with the Baha Mar resort for brokerage, trucking and limo services through companies that are purported to be Fitzgerald family businesses. I also have to say kudos to Sarkis Izmirlian for sticking to his guns and awarding contracts based on merit — “cost and ability” — as is only proper.

When responding to an article in *The Punch* about Fitzgerald’s possible abuse of power and con-

flict of interest regarding his family’s dealings with Baha Mar, the minister’s reply earlier this week was in direct contradiction to his emails that were leaked from the China Construction America (CCA) company’s server. In Thursday’s paper (20 April) *The Tribune* printed several of these emails, allegedly written by Fitzgerald, dating back to 2013 and 2014. In them, there is no question that he is seeking contracts for various jobs at Baha Mar for the family business, jobs that could be fulfilled through what are believed to be his family’s businesses.

Yet when recently asked, Fitzgerald responded by saying, “I have no interest whatsoever

in, no dealing with Baha Mar, none, zero.” I’m sorry, Jerome Fitzgerald, but those correspondences say otherwise. In addition, according to *Tribune Business*, Bahamas Cargo and Logistics Ltd. was a creditor when Izmirlian tried to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2015.

It is ironic that it is an email issue that has condemned Fitzgerald this time around (as opposed to an undisclosed Rubis fuel leak report, among other things). While Fitzgerald tried to demean and disgrace some of his political rivals in the House of Parliament (March, 2016) by reading their private emails into the public record, it is now his leaked emails from the CCA

company’s server that come back to haunt, demean and disgrace him. The courts ruled against Fitzgerald for infringing on the constitutional rights of his rivals and he was fined the sum of \$150,000. You know what they say: “What goes around, comes around.”

Mr. Fitzgerald, maybe you should just get in one of your fancy limos that “only cater to high end customers” and ride off into the sunset. Be sure to pass by the Marathon gas station in your constituency for fuel first, since there is, or was, never any reported fuel leakage into the community’s water table there.

~BT

# PLP heightens push for NHI

Amazingly, after almost 20 years of promising the people of The Bahamas, National Health Insurance (NHI), the Perry Christie Government still has not come up with a comprehensive program and is now rushing to get something in place prior to the general elections of May 10.

The government sent its emissary, NHI Permanent Secretary Peter Deveaux-Isaacs to Grand Bahama this week to solicit signees. Deveaux-Isaacs is a well-grounded, veteran civil servant. His task is a daunting one though, because he is pushing a program, while being unable to satisfy Bahamians that what the government is touting, is something ideal.

Frankly the registration has been low because generally people don’t really relate to what the government has presented thus far on NHI. At the very outset, when Christie used NHI as his major campaign platform plank, leading up to the 2002 general elections, the view held by Bahamians, was that they would be afforded an option more reasonable than the standard private health insurance program but just as accommodating.

For five years, after assuming the government in 2002, the Christie Government failed to put NHI in place. The PLP lost the government in 2007 but regained it in 2012. This is now 2017, five years removed once again from another point of full control, to establish NHI, and there is a rush job going on.

One has to be suspicious.

The situation is compounded by the reported admission of the Minister of Health, that for the future, the government has not earmarked where funding will come from.

This begs a particular question. What will happen if funding for NHI runs out?

Perhaps it is the fear of such a situation that makes it necessary for Deveaux-Isaacs to encourage Bahamians to “keep their private health insurance.” Bahamians had better heed that advice. Given the history of the Christie Government, regarding NHI, nothing is guaranteed.

Despite the uncertainties linked to NHI, the government is seemingly desperate to have something called National Health Insurance on the books prior to May 10. The numbers registered, indicate that there are a lot of people who support the governing party, who are not sure about NHI.

The government has not done a good job of selling the idea to the people. Meanwhile as it fumbles, the people through their paid taxes are funding this apparent broken project.

Deveaux-Isaacs disclosed that just 600 Grand Bahamians had enrolled for NHI and 3,000 overall in the country, as of his visit on Wednesday.

The reason for the small amount is simple. The people have no faith in this government’s approach to NHI.

## IAAF/BTC World Relays Bahamas 2017 volunteers

Dear Editor,

The IAAF/BTC World Relays were watched in person, on TV and online by many people all around the world. Have you ever wondered what it takes for something of this magnitude to actually happen? I will tell you one component that is absolutely necessary, and that is hundreds of volunteers.

I will go on record saying that we have the most professional and dedicated group of volunteers.

We have a team leader for

every single section of the volunteers.

Everything from team attachés, to transportation, to uniform distribution, to ice, water and meal distribution — nothing is left uncovered. We had a WhatsApp chat group just for the team leaders so that we could all stay on top of everything that was going on.

I can’t begin to tell you how many messages went through that chat group every single day for months, until every single athlete, media person and IAAF person had been safely deliv-

ered to the airport. We all worked extremely hard and helped whenever and wherever we could.

I must give the most credit, though, to the person who was our leader and the glue that held us all together.

That man is Mr. Tarahan Mackey. Without him, our group of leaders and volunteers wouldn’t have been as successful as we were. I don’t think he has had more than a couple of hours of sleep each night for months, because he was messaging at midnight and then

again first thing every morning.

This man is professional, dedicated, a real leader and one of the classiest people I know. He handled even the worst situations in a professional way and always with a calm head.

So, Mr. Mackey, I thank you for your dedication to this event. This is my third year volunteering and I can’t imagine it going off as well without your leadership. I hope the local organizing committee realizes what a gem they have in you.

~Susan Glinton

## COMMENTARY

# Fitzgerald and Gibson: Business as usual in the PLP

The most recent scandals engulfing Education Minister Jerome Fitzgerald and Labour and National Insurance Minister Shane Gibson are emblematic of the rot in the PLP, which has metastasized over nearly half a century of the party’s existence.

The PLP is dominated by a greedy oligarchy that uses political power for the benefit of their economic interests. Over the decades the PLP elite have amassed untold millions at the expense of the Bahamian people.

The elite are enabled by various mandarins and bag men who serve at the pleasure of the hierarchy. The enablers include certain legal and other firms.

The PLP is mostly a business with a political front. There is a vast culture of corruption in the PLP. Over its many decades as a political organization the PLP has been dogged by innumerable scandals.

It so often seems that when the PLP is in office, its mandarins try to get a cut or percentage of just about every foreign investment or matter requiring government approval. The pernicious greed knows few boundaries.

Perry Christie’s promise before

the 2002 election to reform the culture of the PLP was a sham and a public relations ploy. Anyone who tried to reform the party would be doomed. Corruption is rife in the higher echelons of the PLP.

In 2002, Christie introduced a code of ethics. He declared at the time: “If public confidence in the integrity of the political directorate of The Bahamas is to become a hallmark of our political culture, it is of first importance that the prime minister and other ministers of government observe — and be seen to observe — the highest standards of probity in public life.”

The 2002 code, including these provisions, reads: “8. While in office ministers should make good judgments about investments so as not to create conflicts of interest...”

“9. A minister should readily remove himself from Cabinet meetings and the duration of discussions in which a subject matter may affect his private interest.”

“10. Where a minister is called upon to exercise any power or discretion which could give rise to a conflict of interest, he should immediately inform the prime minister and refrain from taking any action in the meantime.”

“12. Ministers must avoid recommending their former firms or businesses to persons seeking the government’s favor or continued favor.”

### CASH COW

Consider these provisions and the brazen conflicts of interest by various PLP Cabinet ministers and their families who used or attempted to use Baha Mar as a cash cow.

Despite this code of ethics, from 2002 to 2007 Christie presided over a party that was rocked by questionable dealings and from one scandal to the next, including: alleged victimization at BAIC, the Korean fishing boat scandal, the phantom Bluewater attempted takeover of BTC, the Anna Nicole Smith-related scandals, the Great Mayaguana land giveaway, and others.

After Sidney Stubbs resigned



as executive chairman of BAIC in 2013 Christie said in the House of Assembly: “I made it very clear to the Bahamian public, I have made it very clear here and before, if any minister or chairman, any parliamentary secretary, transgresses rules and they are brought to my attention, I would ask them to resign.”

Fast forward to 2017. It was easy for Christie to rid himself of a weak and dispensable Stubbs. But he would not dare touch Gibson or Fitzgerald.

The prime minister, who exhorts the omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience of God, can’t bring himself to deal or even speak about the unethical and improper conduct of these Cabinet ministers. Christie is farce writ large. He has become a cliché of himself.

What is striking, though, typical of Fitzgerald and Gibson, is the blazing arrogance of the men as they belligerently ignored Cabinet protocols in order to enrich themselves.

It is difficult to be fired from a Christie Cabinet. Gibson resigned from a previous Christie government only because the Anna Nicole Smith scandal became an international embarrassment for the country and the PLP.

A telling example of the unfettered arrogance of Fitzgerald and his dismissiveness of public sentiment was the way he handled the Rubis oil leak in his Marathon constituency.

He was so concerned about his political interests and survival, that he withheld information from his constituents. He potentially put their health at risk because of his selfish need to remain viable within the PLP. His actions were contemptible.

### ARROGANT

Instead of expressing remorse for his behavior, he became even more arrogant and dismissive, reportedly bragging that there was no way he could lose Marathon.

Fitzgerald’s arrogance and con-

tempt for the public good knows few to no bounds. With braggadocio and smarmy glee he read emails he was not authorized to in the House of Assembly.

The minister, who went trolling for the emails of others, got his comeuppance when his exchange of emails with former Baha Mar developer Sarkis Izmirlian was recently made public.

The stupidity and arrogance of Fitzgerald was revealed in his cavalier willingness to beg for contracts for his father’s business via email. His solicitation was clearly in violation of Cabinet protocols. But, clearly he did not care about being so brazen and blatant.

His hubris came back to haunt him. His actions are a major embarrassment to the government mere weeks before the general election.

Fitzgerald’s greed is typical in the PLP. Not only did he want a limousine contract; he wanted a trucking contract, a brokerage contract and \$20,000 a month. This is breathtaking greed.

Even Attorney General Allyson Maynard-Gibson, who has her own family conflicts of interest at Baha Mar, must have been impressed by Fitzgerald’s insatiable greed.

Christie had as his two main Cabinet negotiators at Baha Mar, two individuals who intended to use the mega-resort to enrich themselves and their families at the expense of the Bahamian people.

Given his past public conduct, it comes as no surprise that Shane Gibson received approximately \$94,000 from the controversial Peter Nygard, who reportedly donated \$5 million to the PLP before the 2012 general election.

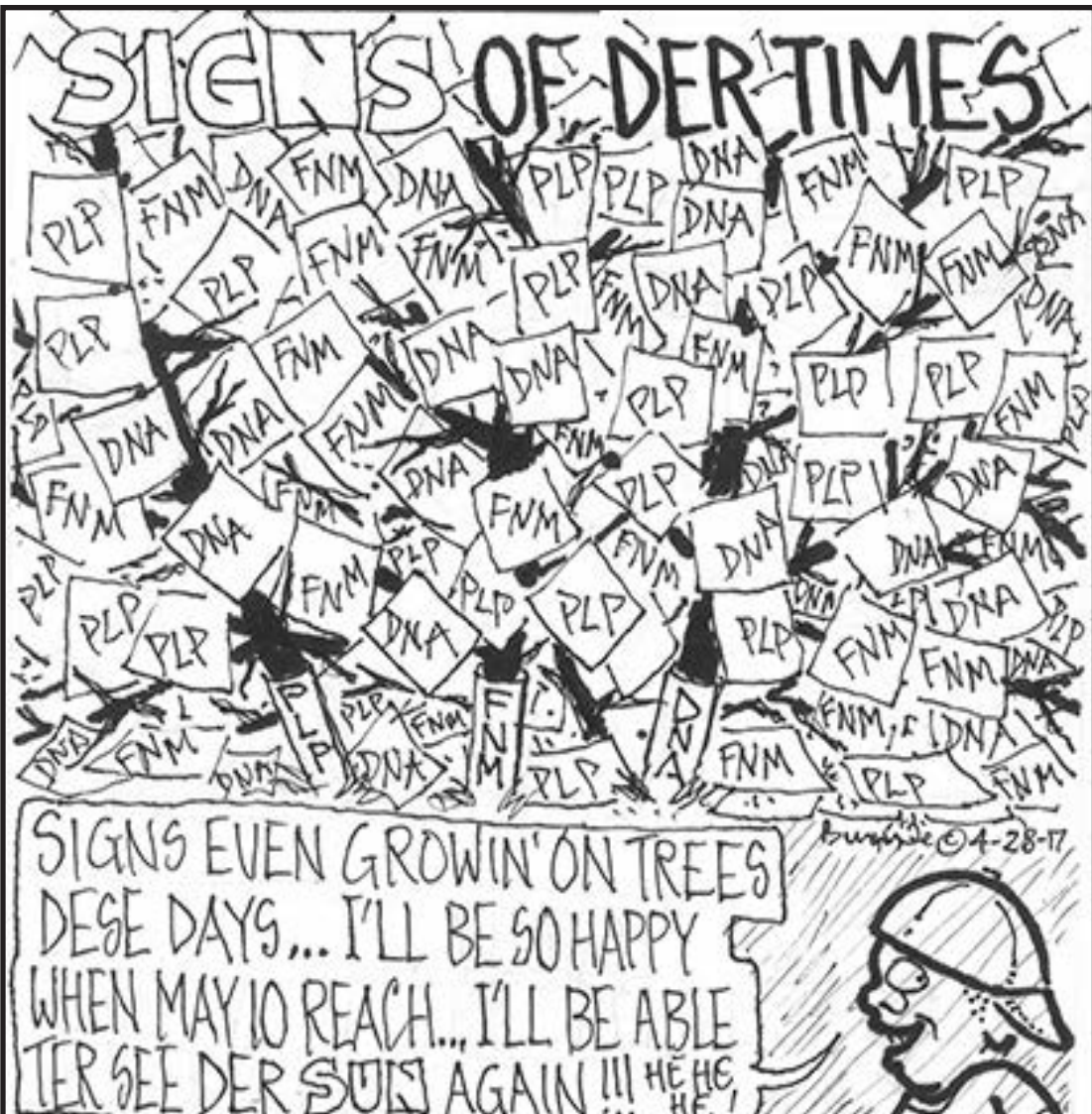
Nygard claims the money was for professional services, which means that Gibson would have been in violation of Cabinet protocols and the PLP’s own ethics code.

But this is all business as usual in a party that cannot properly account for VAT revenue and typically refuses to account for its misdeeds, corruption and breaches of the public trust.

Fitzgerald and Gibson are the true and representative faces of a party that has demonstrated no appetite or will to reform a culture that well serves the economic and private interests of a very few at the expense of the majority of Bahamians.

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