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AUGUST 2017

**BACK TO SCHOOL: SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT INSIDE TODAY**

# Unions warn govt - be very careful

## WILCHCOMBE ATTACKS PR FIRM HIRING

By AVA TURNQUEST  
Tribune Chief Reporter  
[aturnquest@tribunemedia.net](mailto:aturnquest@tribunemedia.net)

FORMER Tourism Minister Obie Wilchcombe revealed yesterday the Ministry of Tourism saved the government \$3.5m in agency fees and commissions last year as he defended the capacity of the ministry's in-house public relations team.

SEE PAGE SIX

## Details needed on deficit plans

By RASHAD ROLLE  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
[rrolle@tribunemedia.net](mailto:rrolle@tribunemedia.net)

THE National Congress of Trade Unions of The Bahamas, an umbrella organisation representing thousands of Bahamian employees, put the Minnis administration on notice that it will be watching closely to ensure the country's workers do not "suffer unduly" so the government can meet its political promises at their expense.

The NCTUB said while some of the government's new austerity measures are reasonable, they have to be implemented with "sensitivity and wisdom" to ensure workers are not negatively affected.

The union also wants the Minnis administration to be more specific about its plans and policies, releasing a statement yesterday that calls for the administration to live up to its transparency pledge.

During his national address last month, Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis announced a ten per cent cut in spending in all government ministries and no new public sector hiring.

He also said there will be no renewal of contracts for salaries which exceed \$100,000 per year, adding he said he will ensure his ministers "adhere to their budgets and to financial constraints".

SEE PAGE SIX

## AVOIDING DOWNGRADE VITAL 'AT ALL COSTS'

By RICARDO WELLS  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
[rwells@tribunemedia.net](mailto:rwells@tribunemedia.net)

THE conservative fiscal measures undertaken by the Minnis administration were introduced as a means to avoid another downgrade, according to Labour Minister Dion Foulkes, who yesterday contended that the nearly 6,000 public service hires by the Christie administration played a significant role in past credit downgrades.

In an interview with reporters outside the Office of

the Prime Minister on Tuesday, Mr Foulkes, responding to calls by the Department of Statistics for more resources, insisted the government remains "hard pressed" to meet its financial commitments and stands unable to "add people to the government payroll".

"We want to avoid another downgrade at all costs," he said. "If we begin to add people to the government payroll, it will not be favourable for us (as it relates to) the international ratings agencies."

SEE PAGE SIX

## HONESTLY, I AM THE PRIME MINISTER



PRIME Minister Dr Hubert Minnis taking part in the verification process for all public service employees, assisted by Donna Delancy, deputy treasurer and co-ordinator of the verification process. See page five for the full story.

## SACKED BAIC STAFF: WE THOUGHT OUR ROLES WERE PERMANENT

By RASHAD ROLLE  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
[rrolle@tribunemedia.net](mailto:rrolle@tribunemedia.net)

A 41-YEAR-OLD mother of ten is wondering how she will take care of her six school-aged children now that she has been let go from the Bahamas Agriculture & Industrial Corporation.

She is one of the 15 workers sent home from the corporation on Monday.

"I didn't work for three years before I got that job in May," the mother, who asked not to be identified, said yesterday. "I thought things were finally coming together for me, but now look; it's hard with no help."

She's not alone. A father of six who left his job at Atlantis in May seeking the favourable benefits government employees receive told *The Tribune* he's wondering about the life he will provide for his nearly two-year-old daughter and her siblings after he too was fired on Monday.

"I applied for that job three times and I took it only after the human resources representative assured me it was a permanent job, and now look at the position they've put me in," the father, who also did not want to be named, said.

The fired workers were hired in May. The father of

six said he was hired one week before the election and the mother of ten said she was told on May 8 that she would get the job. *The Tribune* saw at least one other contract for a fired worker that was signed on May 9 - the day before the general election.

As the Minnis administration embraces a conservative approach to public sector hiring - placing a freeze on new hires - the experiences of the fired employees highlight the no-win situation the administration faces as it tries to curb expenditure in part by undoing the public sector

SEE PAGE 11

## REFUGEES ARE LET DOWN BY LEGAL FAILURE

By AVA TURNQUEST  
Tribune Chief Reporter  
[aturnquest@tribunemedia.net](mailto:aturnquest@tribunemedia.net)

FOR more than two decades, the Bahamas has not met its obligations as a signatory to a United Nations treaty on the rights of refugees, according to a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative.

UNHCR Assistant Protection Officer Deneisha Moss Balboni told *The Tribune* yesterday that while the commission has observed positive developments, there were still gaps in meeting member state obligations due to the

SEE PAGE FIVE

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THE ICONIC Star Club in West End has now partially collapsed.

# Ten months on - and West End



KENNETH WILSON, owner of Da Bight Better Days Restaurant & Bar, which sustained severe hurricane damage and still awaits some assistance. Photos: Denise Maycock/Tribune Staff

By DENISE MAYCOCK  
Tribune Freeport Reporter  
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

IT HAS been ten months since the passage of Hurricane Matthew, and not much has been done regarding repairs and rebuilding in the West End, Grand Bahama community.

There are still lots of damaged homes and structures along Bay Shore Road that are vacant, uninhabitable or condemned.

Many residents who once occupied those homes have relocated and are now living in temporary housing in the nearby settlement of Bootle Bay on a government rental assistance programme.

Just before the general election, repair work had commenced in West End, but since the change in government, some residents told *The Tribune* the work has been halted.

Elijah Stuart, of West End, believes that the Free National Movement government is moving too slowly on home repairs in West End.

Mr Stuart's home was being repaired on a National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) contract, and he was not happy with the stoppage of repairs.

"They should be moving much faster than they are doing now with these houses in West End," he said, complaining that officials

are wasting too much time conducting assessments.

"They are taking too much time interviewing people. They need to do something. I am an FNM, and we did not change the government for them to come here and for us to be out of jobs," he said.

Last November, when *The Tribune* visited the small fishing village about a month after the storm, it was like a war zone.

Today, there are some signs of improvement: the community has been cleaned up; little food booths have been rebuilt along the roadside and some homes and businesses have been repaired.

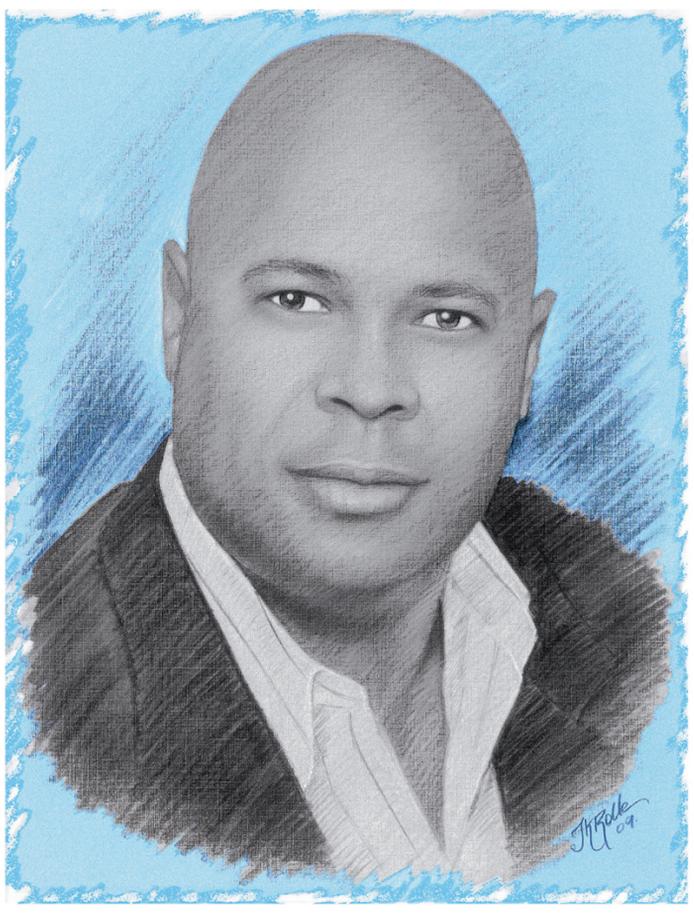
But for many, help and assistance has not yet come.

West End resident Errol Miller's home was severely destroyed during the storm, and he has not received any help with repairs.

"We need help, oh we need help here in West End," said the 72-year-old, who this newspaper found sitting inside his severely damaged house.

"I have been trying for months and since the storm to get some assistance," Mr Miller said. Some packages of shingles, roof material and a few boards of plywood were provided to him for repairs just weeks before the election.

Mr Miller is one of many residents who is living with



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DA Bight Better Days Restaurant & Bar, still showing damage ten months after the passage of Hurricane Matthew.

Photos: Denise Maycock/Tribune Staff

# still waits for hurricane repairs

family in temporary housing in Bootle Bay, but he comes down to his house in West End every day, hoping that help will come soon.

"I am hoping the new government right now will help us with repairs. The past government came to do work, but the election came, and the government stopped. I am hoping one day they will return and (work will resume)."

His three bed, two bath house is destroyed and needs to be rebuilt. His family lost everything - furniture and appliances. However, still hanging on a wall displayed for all to see was his prized Father of the Year plaque.

"I have been living here more than 21 years. I come here every day hoping and praying that someone will come and do something. I am not criticising the old or the new (government), I want the government to help me," Mr Miller said.

Area resident James Roker's entire home was swept away.

"I was hoping to get some assistance by now. I was wiped out by the hurricane; my three bed, one bath house was destroyed," he said.

The father of five now lives with relatives in West End.

"Since last October it has not been easy. I am actually on the floor. I have not gotten any assistance," Mr Roker said.

He said that he had sought answers from various agencies, including Social Services.

When asked whether anyone from Urban Renewal had visited him, he said: "Does Urban Renewal still exist? I have not seen Urban Renewal personnel around



A BUILDING still without a roof in West End after the storm.

here for some time now.

"I am here every day, and I am hoping some good news will come through for West End because there are others in the same situation like me. I haven't seen anybody come by and say we will assist you with this or that. I am just here waiting," said Mr Roker.

He said that residents who lost their homes are concerned that they won't be given any government assistance for rebuilding.

Kenneth Wilson, 89, owner of the Da Bight Better Days Restaurant & Bar, in The Bight, West End, said he too had received no assistance for the past ten months.

"Urban Renewal came here three or four times, and nothing happened yet. I have not received any help at all. I feel terrible because at my age I can't do anything for myself and I need some help,"

Mr Wilson said that nothing had changed since *The Tribune* visited him last November.

His building is one of the oldest structures in West End. Mr Wilson had hoped to pass on his legacy to his children and grandchildren. The structure is on the verge of collapsing, and wooden planks are erected to brace the second floor. Mr Wilson has owned and operated the business for 56 years.

The iconic Star Club, owned and operated by the Grant family of West End, has now partially collapsed.

Earlier this month, *The Tribune* reported that the government does not yet have a timeline of when repairs will be completed on homes damaged as a result of Hurricanes Joaquin and Matthew, which ravaged part of the country in October 2015 and 2016.

According to Press Sec-

retary Anthony Newbold, while it is certain the homes must be repaired there will be no hurricane czar as was the case during the Christie administration.

He said NEMA and the Ministry of Works will oversee these efforts.

Mr Newbold also said as each member of Parliament has received their \$100,000 capital grants, the public should see some repairs to homes shortly.

"(We) don't have a timeline yet," Mr Newbold said on August 1.

"We just got budgets and ministers can start to get to work. I imagine we will see some of that happening now. For example, as I said the constituency allowances are now available (and) the parks and beaches board has now been constituted. I spoke to the minister of the environment and he says "listen we are ready to go with this thing."



ERROL Miller at his home in West End.



KENNETH Wilson at his damaged bar.



JAMES Roker standing where his three bed, one bath wooden house once stood.



A DAMAGED home in West End.

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## Bahamians - understand the past to find the future

PHILIP "Brave" Davis, who now heads an Opposition of three members in an FNM parliament, although admitting that his party made mistakes during its five years in office, saw no reason to apologise to anyone for those "mistakes". Not only was he not going to apologise, but he wanted Bahamians to note that after only three months in office the FNM have shown that they have no plans to eradicate crime.

"As the prime minister observed," said Mr Davis, "crime continues to plague our society. During the campaign, he (Prime Minister Minnis) promised that they had the answers, that once in government, he and his team would unveil a crime-fighting plan, which would successfully tackle the problem."

"Rather disappointingly, just last week we now have the Minister of National Security admitting that they don't have the answers," said Mr Davis. Wasn't this the same predicament that Mr Davis and his PLP found themselves in at the end of their five year term?

So far, the PLP are cutting a very poor figure as Mr Davis, their spokesman, attempts to distort political facts. Has he forgotten that before the 2012 election the PLP erected large placards in strategic areas of the island to broadcast the growing number of murders under an FNM government? The PLP even made certain that the placards were erected in areas where the tourists — the lifeblood of this country's economy — were made aware that the Bahamas was no longer a safe place to visit. A comment made at the time by then Prime Minister Christie seemed to indicate that such empty promises could get a pass during election season even though advertising crime so blatantly might damage our tourist industry.

Bahamians, by then desperate to be able to sleep at night without their homes being desecrated or being awakened by gun fights, wanted any political party that could remove the criminals from their midst. The PLP made a solemn promise - no ifs, ands or buts about it - they had the secret formula to eradicate crime. They were elected on their promise — to hear them tell it during the campaign, it was more than a promise, it was a guarantee. A guarantee when once elected they found they could not deliver, because they had no secret formula. They had fooled the people. It was then that crime really took off, formula or no formula, there was no stopping it.

Instead of beating his own chest with many mea culpas, Mr Davis astonishingly now tries to point an accusing finger at the FNM. "Rather disappointingly, just last week we now have the Minister of National Security admitting that they don't have the answer," says Mr Davis. At least, if this is in fact what Security Minister Marvin Dames said, he, unlike Mr Davis' PLP, was telling the truth. If we remember correctly, the PLP maintained to the bitter end that they had the secret formula, whereas at least the FNM Minister has made no such claim. The FNM might not have the answers, but at least they are starting off in a position of "zero tolerance" — whoever does the crime, will have to do the time. It is a slow process, but in time it should pay dividends.

Mr Davis then turns to the comments by Prime Minister Minnis about providing resources for society's "poorly guided young men" brought down by the drug trade. Mr Davis said that the Prime Minister's attacks on the drug

trade made no sense.

"The average age of people committing crimes over the last several years has been between the ages of 17-25. Those persons would not have been around in the 1970s and '80s. The prime minister should be careful about blaming 'history' for all our challenges," said Mr Davis.

What an unthinking, stupid statement. It reminds us of Topsy — that delightful little slave girl in Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stow. When asked how old she was she replied: "I s'pect I just growed. Don't think nobody never made me."

Well, our present generation of drug pushers did not live during the drug years, but it was certainly during those years that their embryo was formed.

If Mr Davis as a child had ever stood on the seashore and skipped a small pebble onto the surface of a calm sea, he would have seen on landing how it disturbed the water creating a small wave that would keep growing as it moved from wave to wave until absorbed into the mighty ocean, he would then understand cause and effect, and what has happened in our community. The hand of the child on the seashore was the cause and the disturbance of the calm water was the effect that kept growing until it was a mighty ocean. That, Mr Davis, is one of the laws of life, and what we have today is the result of the drug trade that took over these islands in the '70s and '80s and kept growing into today's social menace.

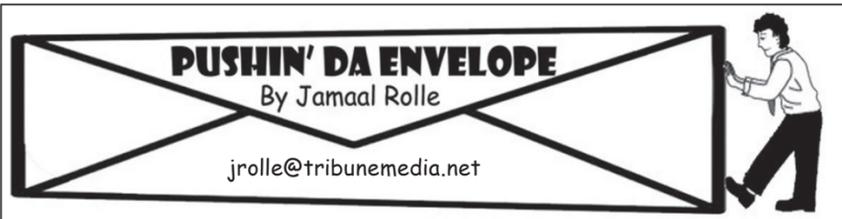
Read *The Tribune* of those years and it is easy to trace what we have today from its early beginnings. In fact, Paul Thompson, who a few weeks ago celebrated his 90th birthday, was in the Royal Bahamas Police Force's Criminal Investigation Department in those days. At that time, he was one of the few police officers that we could trust. One day in a conversation with him, he predicted exactly where we would be today, if something drastic were not done then. And so, like Topsy, who didn't know when or how she was born, our criminal class just kept growing, because little was done to turn the tide in time.

We shall never forget the words of Prime Minister Pindling in his New Year's day address in January 1986 — at the end of the Commission of Inquiry into drug peddling — when he encouraged Bahamians to take advantage of the "opportunities" provided by his Cabinet to become a millionaire. We are not suggesting that he was encouraging them to go into the drug trade, but in those days the fastest way to become a millionaire was to get into the business of drugs.

In our files, one can also find the complaints of teachers about the subject of many of their students' essays. Seeing the extravagant lives being lived by their fathers, and uncles and friends — who only a short time before were nobodies, but were then moving in what they thought was "high society" — made them decide that that was the path they wanted to follow. Teachers were not only concerned, they were alarmed for the future.

And now here we are with the results of those years and Mr Davis is still asking why?

If Mr Davis and his party do not understand where we have come from and the major cause of our problems today, then we need a new generation of leaders who, understanding our past, might at last find a solution for our future.



## MINISTER SATISFIED WITH UNEMPLOYMENT NUMBERS



# Major's Carnival maths

EDITOR, *The Tribune*.

PAUL Major, the former chairman of the Junkanoo Carnival boondoggle is a banker by profession and supposedly he knows a thing or two about numbers.

He spent a lot of time in Trinidad & Tobago understudying carnival there so perhaps he learned that the Trinis like the expression "doltish" because that's the only way to explain his flawed mathematics used to justify wasting public money on a mimicked faux celebration.

Over the years, Major took a trailer-load of musicians and culturalists to Trinidad to see how they play mas there. Their National Carnival Commission no doubt would have sat him down and explained that carnival has been around so long in Trinidad that it is an institution as germane to the Trini identity as Junkanoo is to us.

Major thought he could take a festival that was 300 years in the making for Trinidad and make it a uniquely Bahamian experience in just three years.

The Trinis have another word for a person who gets taken advantage of very easily: bobolee.

Major went up against Paul Thompson, a Trini-Bahamian who is a card-carrying carnivalist who knows whence the Trini carnival bands come and who plays mas better than whom. In such a dust-up, the smart money has to be on Thompson.

The allegation is that the government of Trinidad and Tobago spent US\$134m on carnival celebrations in Port of Spain, San Fernando and Tobago over the last three years. The real num-

## LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

ber spent was \$114m but for some people when it comes to government money, what's the odd \$20m difference between friends?

By contrast, we spent \$25m in the same period and Major's argument is that this was great value for money to the Treasury.

Trinidad's Central Statistical Office reported that in 2016 a total of 35,483 people visited Trinidad over the carnival period.

Not surprisingly the vast majority of them were Trinis returning home to celebrate.

Just 3,267 "tourists" were recorded and it's a safe bet that two-thirds of them came from three Caribbean countries — The Bahamas, Jamaica and Barbados.

In 2015, the government in Trinidad allocated TT\$340m for carnival (about \$44m).

Faced with budget constraints as the price of oil started plummeting, they decreased the budget to \$40m in 2016 and even more drastically to \$30m this year.

Given the size of their carnival compared to ours, it is plain to see that the Trinidadian tax payers got more bang for their bucks than we did over the same period, even if you capitalise a chunk of our expenditure as "start-up" costs.

With a population of 1.3 million people, the cost per Trini taxpayer to host 2015's carnival was \$32. That same year every taxpayer here paid \$34.

The major (no pun intended) difference between Trinidad and us is that they use the government's money to prime the

pump to get the economic ball rolling in the private sector.

Costume-making, big truck mobile studios, elaborate outdoor stages and party planning are big business and the private sector pitches in to reap the rewards.

Nobody works in Trinidad between Saturday and Wednesday of carnival so all other economic output takes a hit.

I have no doubt that economic activity is generated here from the junkanoo carnival. We, like copycats in Miami, Nottingham, New York, and Toronto all try to outdo the mother carnival in Trinidad, with varying degrees of success.

Trinidadians push their government to export carnival because it is good for business. Many of the skimpy costumes on display here were conceived, designed and manufactured by the masters in Trinidad, no doubt earning a tidy sum of foreign exchange for them.

But for us it defeats the purpose of carnival which, when last I checked, was to boost tourism and foreign exchange earnings here.

Spending to promote art and culture is always a good investment. But spending public money to promote someone else's culture looks like plain old "follow-fashion" to me.

By the way, if we are going to keep up this charade at least let's stop calling it Junkanoo Carnival. It has nothing to do with Junkanoo and it will give some people the false impression that if they have seen carnival they have seen Junkanoo.

THE GRADUATE  
 Nassau,  
 August 15, 2017.

## Invite lost in the post?

EDITOR, *The Tribune*.

THIS WEEK was the anniversary, of The Bahamas exchanging diplomatic relations and recognition, with the People's Republic of China (during the Ingraham Government). I believe it might be the 23rd or 24th year.

Watching our TV News, I was shocked to see how few people, and I mean the

banquet room at The Hilton was empty, attended the event which I am told usually is very well attended.

Was this an embarrassment, caused by the non-existent Postal Service?

If no one has noticed, you mail something today, the person it was sent to might receive it in 3-4 weeks, or even longer, have been witnessed and the Ministry responsible

seems totally oblivious to the issue. It was bad under the PLP, and has not improved under this new group.

Clearly if you have a function, do not try to send the invitations by Bahamas Mail, as it will arrive anytime up to three months after the event!

J. A. ALBURY,  
 Nassau,  
 August 13, 2017

# DIPLOMAT APPOINTMENTS AWAITING RESPONSES FROM HOST COUNTRIES

By **AVA TURNQUEST**  
Tribune Chief Reporter  
aturnquest@tribunemedia.net

FOREIGN Affairs Minister Darren Henfield said yesterday the government was awaiting responses from host countries before new diplomats are deployed. He told *The Tribune* that

all diplomat appointments had been finalised.

In June, Mr Henfield revealed his office had requested that all foreign service workers appointed by the Christie administration “tie up their offices” by late July, as the Minnis administration prepares to soon name their replacements.

At the time, the North Abaco MP admitted that there was no clear timeline in place for any official transition.

Shortly after the FNM was elected to office, party Chairman Sidney Collie indicated that the FNM would begin making appointments to government

boards, committees and diplomatic posts in two to three weeks.

Mr Collie, a member of the administration’s transition team, at that time said the party’s “first order of business” was to get to Parliament and approve its initial budget; subsequent to which the party had proposed to

make its appointments.

When it served as the Official Opposition, the FNM was very outspoken on the Progressive Liberal Party’s appointments.

Then shadow minister of foreign affairs, former St Anne’s MP Hubert Chipman raised concerns about the former government’s

diplomatic appointments, referring to the Christie administration’s approach to them as “drip, drip, helter-skelter announcements.”

Several diplomatic posts went unfilled for more than a year under the Christie administration.

The new fiscal year began July 1.

# 30 months in jail for firearm possession

By **NICO SCAVELLA**  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
nscavella@tribunemedia.net

A 23-YEAR-OLD man was sentenced yesterday to 30 months in prison over firearm and ammunition possession charges after pleading with the chief magistrate not to view him as a gangland thug for his actions.

Durrell Hanna, of Hospital Lane, told Chief Magistrate Joyann Ferguson-Pratt that the black Kel-Tec .380 pistol and five live rounds of ammunition he was previously found with by police were only for his protection, and not because he was involved in any gang activity.

Chief Magistrate Ferguson-Pratt accepted as mitigating factors Hanna’s guilty plea at the earliest convenience during his initial arraignment on Monday, stating that he had a clean record before his sentencing. She also noted the Crown’s statements that Hanna was co-operative while being questioned by police.

Charging that “it can never be right” to “compound a problem by breaking the law” however, she sentenced Hanna to 30 months each for one count of possession of an unlicensed firearm and one count of possession of ammunition, with both to run concurrently. The sentences take

effect from August 14.

Hanna was arraigned just days after police reportedly seized a handgun and ammunition not far from the Magistrate Court’s complex.

According to initial police reports, shortly after 6.30pm on August 11, Selective Enforcement Unit officers acting on information went to South Street near Hospital Lane, where they encountered a male suspect. The officers searched the man and found a .380 Kel-Tec pistol with five rounds of ammunition in his possession.

The man was subsequently taken into custody in connection with the discovery.

# JUDGE SKIPS HOLIDAY TO ENSURE HUMAN TRAFFICKING TRIAL PROCEEDS

By **NICO SCAVELLA**  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
nscavella@tribunemedia.net

THE chief magistrate yesterday expressed her desire to “expeditiously” conclude the trial of a Jamaican woman facing allegations of human trafficking after it was delayed for a month because of the malfunctioning air-conditioning system at the Magistrate’s Court complex.

Chief Magistrate Joyann Ferguson-Pratt, presiding over day one of 20-year-old Abigail Wilson’s trial, told the court that although she was scheduled to be on vacation, she cleared her calendar specifically to adjudicate Wilson’s matter primarily because of the national and international

significance it holds.

Wilson had previously appeared before the chief magistrate in July for what was expected to be the start of her case on four counts of trafficking in persons allegedly committed between March and May of this year. The charges were brought under Section 3(1) (a) of the Trafficking in Persons Prevention and Suppression Act Chapter 106.

It is alleged that Wilson recruited, received, harboured and transported a woman to and within the Bahamas for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Wilson pleaded not guilty to all of the allegations when they were read by Chief Magistrate Ferguson-Pratt yesterday.

Wilson was expected to stand trial on July 12 and 13. However, the case was adjourned by 24 hours because the court complex had to be closed at 1pm due to a malfunctioning air-conditioning unit. The chief magistrate later explained to Wilson that the matter would have to be adjourned to August 15, 16 and 17.

Yesterday’s proceedings saw testimonies from two police officers, Detective Corporal Nathaniel Farrington of the Central Detective Unit’s (CDU) Selective Enforcement team, who was present at Wilson’s initial arrest, as well as Detective Sergeant James Colebrooke, a crime scene investigator.

The trial continues today at 11am.

# REFUGEES ARE LET DOWN BY LEGAL FAILURE

from page one

absence of any domestic legal framework.

She acknowledged the long-term detention of refugees at the Carmichael Road Detention Centre as an example of those “gaps”.

“In the absence of domestic legislation, just some form of formalised procedures that would guide in how persons are identified, how they are screened and how they are admitted into a process and so on. That’s on one end of the spectrum, but if you look at the people who are admitted into a process and have access to UNHCR, there are still ongoing gaps because there are no guarantees under Bahamian law for people who are recognised as refugees.

“So things that are protections that are provided for in the refugee convention that people don’t have access to, for example the right to be issued ID documents and whatever necessary residence permit to facilitate a refugee’s continued stay in a country of asylum, or a right to gainful employment so they could become self-sufficient or the right to access basic healthcare and education.

“The fact that you don’t also have those things enshrined in law means that there are difficulties ensuring that those rights are actually respected because there is no legal basis in which to do so.”

leased from the CRDC last month, more than two years after they received the refugee status.

Eight additional migrants were released from the facility earlier this month, including a Kenyan man who had been held for six years without charge.

It was confirmed that among those migrants were several persons of concern to the UNHCR, which is a programme mandated to protect and support asylum seekers, refugees and stateless persons.

Ms Moss Balboni said: “Once you’re granted that (refugee) status your freedom of movement should be reinstated, but again there is no legal framework. So without a legal framework that recognises who is a refugee, what their individual rights are that comes from the refugee convention, those are the gaps or outcomes of not having legislation in place.”

The Bahamas acceded to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 Protocol, in 1993.

“Although The Bahamas has acceded to that treaty in 1993,” Ms Moss Balboni said, “it hasn’t actually established any domestic legal framework to formally recognise or protect the rights of refugees. There isn’t actually any policy or regulatory framework to implement the obligations under the 1951 convention, so in that context in the absence of a legal framework obviously there is a need for guarantees against refoulement to be instituted.”

She continued: “Basically identifying people who may be refugees and giving them access to a refugee status determination procedure is really a fundamental, and is key and necessary before any removal or repatriation takes place.

“I think especially when you look at the volume of irregular migrants that move through The Bahamas, it’s really important. A lot of those people moving through come from known refugee producing countries and what we see as fundamental is the implementation of protection-sensitive screening mechanisms to be in place so that people who need international protection are systematically identified and have access to procedures.”

Ms Balboni Moss maintained that the UNHCR’s local office worked closely with the government, and was pleased that the member state has expressed an intention to address current gaps by instituting formal mechanisms in the absence of legislation.

She pointed to the Migration Task Force, within the Office of the Attorney General, and the Refugee Unit established by the Department of Immigration.

“The UNHCR plays an advisory role and that’s something really positive that we’ve observed with the Bahamas and look forward to helping to continue to develop procedures and eventually legislation on refugee protection. We do have a positive outlook for the future.”

# MINISTERS LEAD THE WAY FOR VERIFICATION

PRIME Minister Dr Hubert A Minnis and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance K Peter Turnquest led the verification process for members of Parliament before participating in the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Dr Minnis and Mr Turnquest were two of 15 Cabinet ministers to take advantage of the opportunity provided by officials from the Public Treasury Department who were at the Cecil V Wallace-Whitfield Centre to conduct the verification process for public service employees there.

Other Cabinet ministers undergoing the verification process included: Brent Symonette, Senator Carl W Bethel, Desmond T Bannister, Jeffrey L Lloyd, Marvin Dames, Frankie A Campbell, Dionisio J D’Aguilar, Michael C Pintard, Darren Henfield, Dion Foulkes, Kwasi Thompson and Elsworth Johnson.

Minister of Environment Romauld Ferreira, Social Services Minister Lanisha Rolle and Minister of Public Service and National Insurance Brensil D Rolle are off the island. Health Minister Dr Duane Sands had already completed the verification process.

The verification of the Cabinet ministers/members of Parliament is part of an ongoing national verification exercise for government monthly and weekly employees, senators and members of Parliament.

Verification centres were established at public schools in New Providence and



DEPUTY Prime Minister Peter Turnquest verifying his identity at government offices in Grand Bahama and the Family Islands since the process began on Tuesday, August 8. Verification ends Thursday, August 31.

The five verification centres in New Providence -- H O Nash High School, T A Thompson Junior High School, C C Sweeting High School, C R Walker High School and Doris Johnson High School -- will cease operations as of the close of business on Friday, August 18 in preparation for the upcoming school year. Operations will be relocated to the Thomas A Robinson National Stadium.

Treasury officials say public officers who are assigned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Tourism overseas offices, are expected to verify at their respective locations, “following the procedures that have been forwarded directly to them by the Treasury Department”.

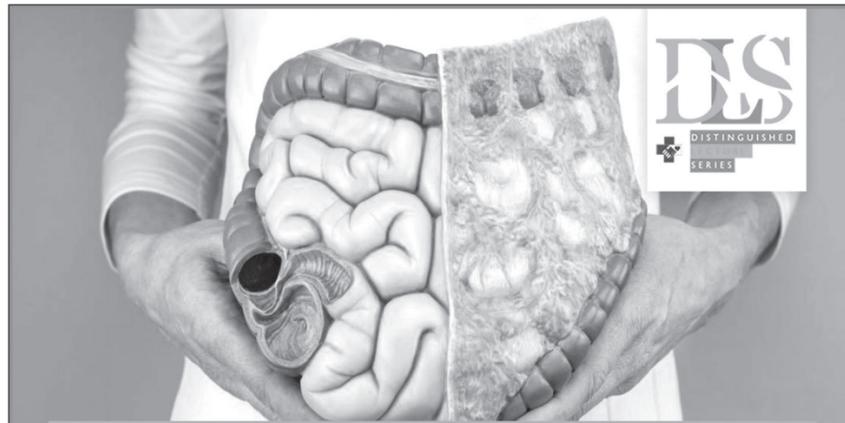
Persons who fail to present themselves to be verified will have their salaries interrupted -- not ceased -- beginning September,

2017, until they comply with the verification and reinstatement process.

Treasury officials further say the 2017 verification process is not new in government, as “some form of the process has been undertaken by all serving treasurers”.

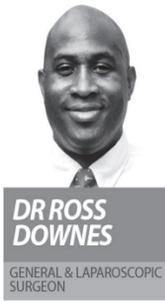
“The verification process actually protects the public service employee because in addition to ensuring that they are legitimate public service employees, it also ensures that we have the correct data on each employee,” an official said.

Allowances have been made for public service employees on vacation within and outside of the Bahamas. Those travelling outside of the country whose return date will not allow them to return ahead of the August 31 deadline, can verify at any Bahamas Tourist Office (BTO) or foreign affairs mission abroad while those within the Bahamas can verify at the administrator’s office in any Family Island, along with the Public Treasury (Central Abaco and Freeport, Grand Bahama).



## TREATING DIVERTICULAR DISEASE WHICH SURGERY AND WHEN?

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2017 AT 6:00PM / DOCTORS HOSPITAL CONFERENCE ROOM, DOWDESWELL STREET



Diverticular disease is a relatively common condition that happens as a result of aging muscles in the wall of the large bowel. Small bulges or pockets develop in the lining of the intestine and when those pockets become inflamed or infected, diverticulitis occurs. It’s estimated that five percent of the population will develop these pockets by the age of 40 and at least 50% by the time they reach 80.

In mild cases, rest, a liquid diet and some oral antibiotics for a period of time can resolve the issue. But for patients with severe symptoms or who have had two or more severe attacks of diverticulitis, surgery may be necessary. Join us Thursday, August 17 when General & Laparoscopic Surgeon Dr Ross Downes will talk about Diverticulitis – it’s causes, symptoms and when and if surgery is necessary.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Don’t miss next month’s lecture when Dr Nikkiah Forbes talks to us about “Antibiotics.” Thursday, September 21, 2017

### BONUS!

Get your FREE Blood Pressure, Cholesterol and Glucose testing between 4:45pm and 5:45pm

# Unions warn govt - be very careful

from page one

Dr Minnis also announced a reduction in government vehicles as part of a "new era of financial discipline."

Reacting to the planned cuts in government spending, the NCTUB said its "closely monitoring this austerity exercise."

"While we wish to assure Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis of the assistance of the workers of the nation in bringing the economy of The Bahamas into order, we also put the government of The Bahamas on notice that the NCTUB is closely monitoring this austerity exercise," the union said.

"In his first address to the nation, Dr Minnis announced a number of initiatives he said were intended to 'create the economic and social environment in which the talents of the Bahamian people can flourish and in which we can live in peace and prosperity.' Those initiatives impinge directly or indirectly on the lives of the nation's workers, and as such are subject to the scrutiny of the NCTUB, the recognised voice of labour in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas."

The group also said: "In this era of austerity, what steps have the government taken to ensure that it can properly supply and equip the Royal Bahamas Defence Force to enforce the vigilance to which Dr Minnis through his National Security Minister Marvin Dames has called for? How does the Ministry of National Security intend to handle the critical matter of minimising the risk to

defence force officers' lives to as low a risk as possible, acknowledging the nature of the job with which they have been tasked?"

"No new public sector hiring? Salary freezes over \$100K? Reduction in the number of government vehicles? These are all reasonable measures, and as long as they are implemented with sensitivity and wisdom, the NCTUB supports these measures. However, we will be watching carefully to ensure that the workers of the country are not made to suffer unduly in order for political promises to be kept at the expense of the good of the nation's workers."

Last month, Dr Minnis also announced numerous policies as well as the establishment of several committees/councils responsible for examining ways to reduce the burden state-owned enterprises placed on the country and ways to improve the ease of doing business.

The administration has not disclosed the people who have been appointed to these groups.

The joint statement from NCTUB President Bernard Evans and General Secretary Zane Lightbourne said: "We take special note of the appointment of a special committee to advise on state-owned enterprises, 'with a view to reducing the burden of such enterprises on public finance'. This is perhaps subtle language intended to reintroduce the discussion of privatisation."

"However, the fact is that a significant portion of the 'burden of such enterprises on public finances' is the compensation of the



**BERNARD EVANS**, president of the National Congress of Trade Unions Bahamas.

workers who make these state-owned enterprises run. "Who is on this special committee? What are their terms of reference? What is the specific timeline against which they are being held accountable? Who represents labour on this committee? Similarly, who is on the National Economic Advisory Council appointed to advise the Minnis administration on specific proposals for economic diversification and economic growth? Is the voice of labour absent from this council? When were they appointed? Un-

der what terms of reference exactly are they operating? And again, the Ease of Doing Business Committee announced by the prime minister must bear the same scrutiny: who are its members and what are the terms of reference? For this administration that places such a premium on transparency and accountability, and that has committed itself to freedom of information, these are questions to which the country's workers demand answers."

The NCTUB also asked for details on the subcom-



**ZANE LIGHTBOURNE**, NCTUB General Secretary.

mittee of Cabinet ministers appointed to address the issues facing the New Providence Landfill.

"Who is on this Cabinet subcommittee," the group asked. "What are their terms of references? What is the specific timelines against which they're being held accountable? What measures exist to ensure they are serving the needs of the workers of the Bahamas, rather than their own commercial and self-interest?"

With respect to education, the NCTUB is seeking answers from the adminis-

tration concerning its revelation that it has "recruited a number of new teachers."

"What contract terms (exist) with regard to these new teachers?" the group asked. "Where have they been recruited from? What protections exist for them, and how are they to be integrated into the industrial agreement prevailing between the government of the Bahamas and the Bahamas Union of Teachers? Does this number satisfy the teacher shortage expressed for some years now?"

## AVOIDING DOWNGRADE VITAL 'AT ALL COSTS'

from page one

Mr Foulkes pointed to the Christie administration's hiring strategy as "one of the reasons" the Bahamas was downgraded twice during its tenure and teetering on a third shortly after being voted out of office in May.

To that end, he maintained the Minnis administration would rather limit public service hiring than face another downgrade to the country's sovereign credit rating.

"If we are to avoid a downgrade, a further downgrade, we have to tighten our belts," the senator said before heading into a Cabinet meeting.

"The prime minister said it in his national address, the deputy prime minister and the minister of finance

has said it and that is the reality," he added.

"The whole point is for the economy to get strong. That is what we are trying to do. The key element in this is the private sector.

"We are very pleased that Baha Mar will employ an additional 2,500 persons by the end of next year. All three of the hotels will be operational by the end of next year and that will be a massive injection in our economy.

"There are some big plans that will be announced shortly in Grand Bahama, I am not at liberty to say anything, but the appropriate minister will make an announcement shortly.

"There are a lot of good things happening as far as the economy is concerned, a lot of opportunities for Bahamians," Mr Foulkes said.

Last Friday, the Department of Statistics reported the country's unemployment rate dipped below 10 per cent for the first time since the 2008 recession.

The Labour Force Survey, conducted between April 24 and April 30, put the country's unemployment rate at 9.9 per cent – a 1.7 per cent decrease from the results of October's survey.

The decline came as 7,770 people gained employment while there was a decrease of 3,485 unemployed people.

According to the survey, the unemployment rate in New Providence was 10.4 per cent; in Grand Bahama it was 12.4 per cent and in Abaco it was 7.8 per cent.

In a statement released Monday evening, Mr Foulkes applauded the report, but called for adjust-

ments to survey's methodology.

He continued yesterday: "The significant amount of those jobs were temporary jobs related to (Bahamas Junkanoo) Carnival, the 52-weeks programme and election hiring; especially in Abaco, Grand Bahama and New Providence.

"A significant amount of those persons are now unemployed; those who were employed on a temporary basis," Mr Foulkes added.

"As a government, Prime Minister Minnis has instructed all of us to do whatever we can within our ministries to create jobs; permanent jobs, not necessarily government jobs, but private sector jobs.

"Our economy is generally driven by small businesses and by large businesses.

"We are trying to do everything in our power

to encourage the business community to employ Bahamians and to increase the employment base."

In the months since taking office, the Minnis administration has overseen several layoff exercises, the latest coming Monday at the Bahamas Agriculture and Industrial Corporation.

Fifteen workers said to be hired on three-month contracts were let go Monday after their contracts expired.

According to a well-placed source in the Minnis administration, the workers were Progressive Liberal Party "operatives" all hired just before the May 10 general election, a claim Mr Foulkes denied yesterday.

Deputy Prime Minister K Peter Turnquest, last month denied claims that the Minnis administration is seeking to inflict "pain" with its

conservative fiscal measures, insisting the government will not participate in "any action that is going to further cause the Bahamian people to suffer."

Mr Turnquest, also the minister of finance, said the government will "not be using a blunt instrument for which a precision scalpel is required" as it attempts to reduce spending, but will aggressively seek to "bring discipline to government finances and rationalisation of the programmes we are engaged in."

Mr Turnquest also said the government was not seeking to stifle the essential services provided by such entities as the Department of Social Services and Ministry of Education in its attempts to introduce fiscal reform, but is more focused on "the wastage and the excess in these ministries".

## WILCHCOMBE ATTACKS PR FIRM HIRING

from page one

Reacting to reports that the ministry has re-engaged global PR firm Weber Shandwick, Mr Wilchcombe said it was unfortunate the Minnis administration would prefer to spend millions creating employment overseas.

He underscored that the cadre of young professionals at the Ministry of Tourism must not be overlooked or shunned.

Mr Wilchcombe said: "Bahamians have the capacity and have proven to be equal to the task of any professional in the tourism industry. We have been in the business for almost 55 years now. We must reduce our dependence on foreigners and give more responsibility to qualified Bahamians, black, white, FNM or PLP."

He continued: "We should spare no efforts in getting the best of our young people engaged in the sustained growth and development of our number one industry. I dare say it is most unfortunate that we would prefer to spend millions creating employment overseas as opposed to spending even less in creating employment for qualified, creative and competent Bahamians to develop an enviable communications division that could only grow in the interest of the Bahamas."

Weber Shandwick was dropped in 2013 by the former Progressive Liberal Party administration after an 18-year long run with the ministry.

The PR firm was reportedly re-engaged by the Ministry of Tourism in recent weeks; however, Minister of Tourism Dionisio

D'Aguiar declined comment yesterday.

Notwithstanding the savings, Mr Wilchcombe pointed to the numerous international accolades awarded during the last term as he recounted the Christie administration's decision to sever ties with the global PR firm and instead utilise Bahamian talent. He noted that the relationship ended on good terms, and praised the firm as an industry leader.

"When we severed our relationship with Weber it was predicated on a vision to bring all components of communications, including public relations in house utilising qualified, competent and creative Bahamians to run the division," Mr Wilchcombe said.

"In fact, the division was headed by Mia Weech Lange who was attached to Weber during my 2002-

2007 tenure to become familiar with the operations of a major public relations agency. She and her team of young Bahamians represent the premium quality of Bahamian talent. Through their work the exposure of this country of multi-destinations sky rocketed."

He continued: "Our team stood head and shoulders with all professionals in the industry. The acclaim of the Bahamas team was seen by the myriad of awards including winner of USA Today's Readers' Choice Award for Best Caribbean Celebration (Junkanoo) for two consecutive years; winner of the World Tourism Award for Leading Wedding Destination; winner of the Luxury Destination Award and numerous print awards.

"In 2016, the Bahamas was ranked in the top ten

most searched destination globally by Expedia in its summer travel report showing a five per cent increase over the previous year. "In 2016 Bloomberg ranked The Bahamas the number one vacation spot for America's wealthiest. Through the division's initiative our culture was taken to the world through the famed Music Voyager 6 series - 30 minute episodes that won numerous global awards."

Mr Wilchcombe noted the ministry's plans to establish a fully equipped communications division with a digital platform headed by young Bahamian professional Andre Miller.

He added that the Ministry of Tourism's communications team generated more than \$600m worth of media exposure for the country during the December to May 2016 period.

The Weber Shandwick

contract follows redundancies in the Ministry of Tourism's Grand Bahama office earlier this month that affected 11 persons. In July, 12 persons were recalled to Nassau after the ministry amalgamated its Washington, DC, and Los Angeles offices with New York and Houston.

Mr D'Aguiar had previously said that move would save around \$1m a year.

Mr Wilchcombe previously defended his decision to increase the size of the ministry's staff by 55 per cent during his 2012-2017 term, telling Tribune Business the move was done within the ministry's budgetary constraints.

Yesterday, he said the ministry had seen tremendous progress and was slowly filling its human capital needs through an extensive search for the "best and the brightest."



A VEHICLE drives into a group of protesters demonstrating against a white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, on Saturday, injuring a number of protesters and leaving one woman dead. Photo: The Daily Progress/AP

# The rise of hate and the debate on removing statues

THE deadly weekend violence in Virginia sparked by a white nationalist rally in support of a Confederate memorial is alarming for more reasons than one.

According to the New York Times, the racist Daily Stormer neo-Nazi website has been calling 2017 the "Summer of Hate" in the United States, and identifying Charlottesville as ground zero.

But overlooking this more tangible threat to America's liberal democracy (which we love so much), many Bahamians have taken to social media to argue over the pros and cons of removing historical statues from public places.

That's because the Charlottesville violence flowed from a decision by that city's governing council to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E Lee from a public park, where it had been installed in 1924.

This is not an isolated case. There are thousands of Confederate monuments around the US. Some memorialise the dead of civil war battles, but others simply glorify the top white supremacists who fought to

## TOUGH CALL



Larry Smith

entrench slavery.

Most were erected during the decades of Jim Crow laws and segregation in the American south, specifically to intimidate blacks. Some are still being installed, and there is support in many communities for the retention of these monuments.

This is not a matter of confusion. There is absolutely no doubt what the confederacy stood for. It was formed in 1861 with the specific aim of preserving black slavery to support the lifestyle of white slave owners. At the time, slaves accounted for about a third of the southern population and about a quarter of the white population were slave owners.

As noted by Mississippi's secession document: "Our position is thoroughly

identified with the institution of slavery — the greatest material interest of the world...A blow at slavery is a blow at commerce and civilisation."

Texas was even more pointed: "We hold as undeniable truths that the governments of the various states, and of the confederacy itself, were established exclusively by the white race, for themselves and their posterity."

At the end of the Civil War, former slaves received citizenship and (in theory) equal protection under the law. But within a decade or so, white supremacy had been restored in the south—enforced by armed terror groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

Official segregation maintained sharp inequalities between whites and

blacks for over a century following emancipation. It was not until the civil rights movement of the 1960s that African-Americans achieved any significant political and social gains.

So those are the historical facts. But what about the argument over monuments? Is it really a matter of heritage over hate?

Well, the Confederate heritage that some like to celebrate or justify is exactly that - hate. Racism, slavery and segregation are inseparable from hate. And how can any modern American glorify the great 19th century treason in defence of slavery?

As journalist Roberto Ferdman has noted: "If you celebrate the hoisting of a battle flag in front of your state's capitol, and you have roads all over your state that are named after Confederate generals, and you celebrate this 19th century past, it should surprise absolutely no one when people pick up on this and imagine that the South is still at war with the North over whether blacks deserve terror rights and representation, or even life."

The most rational counter-argument to this was put by legal scholar Alfred Brophy. He contends that the removal of Confederate monuments would "erase an unsavoury — but important — part of (the) nation's history."

In their Facebook posts, most Bahamians applied Ferdman's logic to the statues of Queen Victoria in Rawson Square and Christopher Columbus at Government House.

Similar views have been expressed about statues of the British imperialist Cecil Rhodes in both South Africa and the United Kingdom. The erection of a statue of Oliver Cromwell at Westminster was opposed by Irish nationalists. And statues of Lenin and Stalin have been toppled in many formerly communist countries.

According to historian Madge Dresser, "statues are lightning rods, symbols of the prevailing values of the society. When those values are not shared...a debate needs to be started...Many of the people celebrated in statues have been responsible for death and destruction. Do we start taking them all down?"

Ms Dresser suggests there is another way for more recent statues to be handled. For example, the positive plaques and interpretations on these statues could be replaced by those that make clear what their true legacy was.

"The argument is that it is better on the whole to keep the statues, but to re-contextualise them," she

said. Others advocate a simple test to guide such decisions. If an historical figure is being honoured principally for an act of human oppression — for instance, leading a pro-slavery rebellion — that honour should be removed. But if a school, bridge or town is named to recognise a positive contribution to society, it should stay — even if that person has other negative associations.

Columbus, the Italian navigator who landed in the Bahamas in 1492, was responsible for opening up the New World to European colonisation, which had a terrible impact on the indigenous people. His statue was erected on the steps at Government House in 1830 in honour of the landfall.

Queen Victoria reigned over Britain (and the Bahamas) for over 60 years. Her statue was erected in the public square in 1905, four years after her death. It underscored Victoria's status as a symbol of the empire, the Bahamas having been a British territory since the 17th century.

These statues were part of the normal context of the time. They were not erected after independence, or to glorify the Spanish conquest. The Bahamas was deserted when the British settled here, and there was no war to get rid of them.

Both Government House and Parliament Square are unfit for the modern role they play today. But they are among our most historic places. It has long been suggested that they should become living museums, with new facilities built elsewhere to replace them.

As part of a museum district, these two statues would be placed in their proper context in history - just as Vendue House downtown has been placed in its proper context as a former slave market by the creation of the Pompey Museum.

The big difference between these examples and the violent contention over the removal of Confederate symbols is that no-one is currently calling for the restoration of the British Empire or the oppression of Amerindians.

But in the US today, there is a large, so-called "Patriot Movement" composed of various white nationalist, neo-Nazi, radical religious and militia groups—including the KKK. Law enforcement agencies have identified over 400 armed militia groups in all 50 American states.

This movement offers something for everyone. And it feeds on weird conspiracy theories - such as

the belief that the Sandy Hook primary school massacre was part of a government plot to control guns. Timothy McVeigh, who killed 168 people in a terror attack in Oklahoma 22 years ago, is perhaps the best known 'Patriot' activist.

Neo-Nazis - like those who demonstrated in Charlottesville over the weekend - are part of this movement. While they also hate other minorities and homosexuals, Jews are their main target, and social problems are often traced to a worldwide Jewish conspiracy.

The alt-right, or alternative right, is a loosely defined group of people with far-right ideologies who reject mainstream conservatism in favour of white nationalism, principally in the United States. White supremacist Richard Spencer coined the term in 2010 as an attempt to re-brand white nationalism.

It has been listed as a key factor in Trump's election win last year, and White House Chief Strategist Steve Bannon is associated with the alt-right. These people look back to what they imagine to be a golden age for white people and believe that "identity" is everything.

The rally in Charlottesville starred several of the alt-right's leading figures, and photos of the event show Confederate flags, Nazi insignia, and militia members with high-powered weapons.

According to a recent article by Yale University professor James Whitman, "In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, America led the world in race-based lawmaking, as a broad political consensus favoured safeguarding the historically white character of the country."

"European racists took note. Among them was Adolf Hitler. In Mein Kampf, Hitler called America the 'one state' making progress toward the creation of the kind of order he wanted for Germany."

It is undeniable that the United States was founded on white supremacy. The civil war re-ordered the country's values to a degree, and in the second half of the 20th century those values began to be enforced.

The Trump supporters who demand their country back, and the domestic terrorists who run private armies, must be seen in the light of that history - as must Trump's equivocal response to the Charlottesville violence.

• What do you think? Send comments to lsmith@tribunemedia.net or visit www.bahamapundit.com.

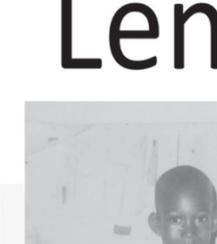
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Lennie



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# 'FNM are using PLP policies'

By RICARDO WELLS  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
rwells@tribunemedia.net

PLP Chairman Bradley Roberts said a recent statement from Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes on job figures and plans to increase employment showed the government has simply adopted Progressive Liberal Party pro-growth policies

established by the Christie administration.

Mr Roberts' comments came a day after Senator Foulkes welcomed a slight decrease in the unemployment figures but added that many of those workers are likely now on the unemployment line because their jobs were temporary.

Senator Foulkes said

the Minnis administration is focused on job creation and highlighted the planned expansion of the National Training Agency and discussions with the Inter-American Development Bank to finalise the implementation of the National Apprenticeship Programme as a way to better train young people to enter



PLP chairman Bradley Roberts.

the job market.

Mr Foulkes also said the opening of more hotels at Baha Mar in Winter 2018, the reopening of the Grand Lucayan Resort in Grand Bahama and an increase in new businesses as a result of government confidence will all increase job opportunities.

In response, Mr Roberts said: "While the Labour Minister Foulkes lists a number of programmes to cause for further job creation. . . his exercise was nothing more than a wholesale adoption of the pro-growth policies of the Christie PLP administration where the heavy lifting established a firm and solid foundation of progress on which to build. The PLP has made this point over and repeatedly and finds it necessary to remind Bahamians of the same once again."

Mr Roberts claimed after the election campaign "bluster" labelling the PLP as a failure while in office, the FNM has not advanced any new or original policy or programme.

"The use of the National Training Agency (NTA) to respond to the training needs of young Bahamians is a PLP policy," Mr Roberts said. "Thousands

of young Bahamians were trained with job ready skills between 2012 and 2017.

"The apprenticeship programme for young Bahamians is in full swing and the Grand Bahama Shipyard apprenticeship model is one to emulate regionally, thanks to the PLP government.

"The opening of additional hotels at the Baha Mar Resort in the winter of 2018 was negotiated by the Christie administration in August of 2016, but the FNM is just now coming to their senses on Baha Mar after literally years of self-denial and blatant lies which they arrogantly refuse to apologise for now that the truth has seen the light of day.

"The negotiations with the Steve Wynn investment group of Canada for the reopening of the Lucayan hotel (in Grand Bahama) complex were in the advanced stages with a heads of terms already prepared. Quite frankly the FNM government should have closed that deal by now if they were focused on governance.

"The Citizens Security and Justice Programme was another landmark programme that the Christie government developed in partnership with the IDB to

address youth truancy and meet the job skills training needs of our young people. This was the last major programme spearheaded by our dearly departed colleague and brother, the late Dr Bernard J Nottage, (former) minister of national security.

"These PLP inspired programmes are in fact 'bold and innovative policies' that are 'designed to provide permanent and sustainable employment for our citizens' as the labour minister rightly pointed out, vindicating the PLP government yet again. The caveat for success rests with the FNM government's ability to execute these programmes without dropping the ball and botching these programmes as the Opposition Leader Davis pointed out to House members during the budget debate.

"It is unfortunate that the FNM has started its tenure of governance on a losing wicket by sabotaging the national economy through among other decisions, talking down the economy, massive tax concessions to the rich, unnecessary and excessive borrowing and conducting mass firings while blaming all of their ill-advised actions on the PLP."



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## Full Military Service for

### Immigration Officer GR II LASHANDA NIKENYA PERCENTIE, 36



a resident of Sunshine Road, Gamble Heights, will be held at New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Bailleou Hill Road South, on Thursday, 17th August, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. Officiating will be Pastor Mario Moxey, assisted by Bishop Hubert Kemp & Pastor Alfred Stewart (Host Pastor). Interment follows in Woodlawn Gardens, Soldier Road.

Left to cherish precious memories are her **Husband:** James Oliver Percentie; **Stepson:** James Oliver Percentie Jr.; **Mother:** Sandra Lewis-Gaitor; **Fathers:** Albert Major, Albert Gaitor; **Mothers-in-law:** Melonie Ward & Dorothy Ward Johnson; **Sisters:** Alvashan & Alvanique Gaitor, Abbigail, Kiyoshi, Natrice, Shavaughn, Denise, Eulisa, Eugina, Antoinette & Latrenda; **Brothers:** Albert, Jamaine, Daniel, Deniro, Akeem, Malik & Miguel Major; **Sisters-in-law:** Claudette Whymms & Shekiera Calma; **Brothers-in-law:** Reginald Ingraham & Julian Ward;

**Grandfathers:** Edmund Samuel Lewis Sr., Lloyd Ranger Sr., Clarence Major & The Late Humphrey James Arthur Percentie of Harbour Island; **Grandmothers:** Thelma Major, Geraldine Lewis & The Late Ruby Hanna Percentie MBE of Harbour Island; **Aunts:** Elaine Sands, Deidre Ferguson, Anetria Lewis, Patrice, Denika, Deborah, Latoya, Cookie, Candy, Keyma, Janet, Sandra and Mary Major, Charlotte, Janae, Garry & Geneva Cooper and Persephanie Ranger; **Uncles:** Anthony Lewis, Lloyd Jr. & Darryl Ranger, Edmund Lewis Jr., Edmund Jerome Lewis, Tawian, Dwayne Dion, Don & Ross, Leevan Sands Sr., Keith Ferguson Sr., Larry & Junior Major; **Uncles-In-Law:** Wilmott Ward & family, Edison Ward, Raymond Ward & family, John, Humphrey, Lea, Elvis & Martin Percentie; **Grandaunts:** Cynthia 'Mother' Pratt, Patricia Moxey, Laurial Lewis, Daphne, Dorothy, Brenda, Deborah, Cecile, Pastor Rosilyn Astwood, Bernadette, Patricia, Linda, Sheila & Patsy Moxey, Cyprianna Strachan & Elsie Burrows, Olga Percentie-Higgs of Harbour Island & Ella Lewis; **Granduncles:** Rev. Charles & Edmundo Moxey, Tyrone Strachan, Sammy, Tony, Dudley, Rhodrick, Brian, Clifford, Carlton Hanna; **Aunt-In-Laws:** Rosemary Ward & Family, Cora Johnson & family, Mary Russell & family, Virginia Cartwright & family, Ila, Valerie, Nancy, BJ, Juanita Percentie, Paulette Ferguson, Karen Catalyn & Keisha Kemp; **Numerous nieces & nephews including:** Emmanuel Gaitor; **Cousins including:** Shenika Moxey, Nicole Pratt, Candice & Brianna, Paula Ranger, Alia, Vandia & Bria Sands, Raina Hanna, Tina Schroeter, Latoya Rolle, Juankah, Troy, Seanray, Stacy Lewis, Latrell King, Keithrelle, Danielle Capron, Janelle, Dr. Tonya Lewis, Tanya, Ms. Flowers, Livingston Moxey & family, Jason Moxey, Keith Jr., Keidre, Clyde & Brian Schroeter, Leevan "Superman" & D'Angelo Sands, Demarco, Jamith, Lamont, Llewlyn, Ron, Sebas Bastian, Alvin Jr., Don, Juan & Sherelle, Julian & Barry Pratt, Antonio Lewis, Kevin Moxey, Micheal, Gino, Jenarosa Johnson & family, Daphnie Mckinney & family, Beatrice Hall & family, Jody Wilson & family, Daisy, Dr. Laran, Ryan and Anthon Knowles, Eaisha, Javar, Adrian Pinder, Marrotte Wilson, Pamiko Reckley & family, Jeremy Johnson, Shevan Ward, Candy Adderley & family, Dennis Whymms, Sabrina Lowe, Nicole Adderley & family, Nathea Skyers & family, Nathan Ward & family, Beleka Watson & family, Shavourne Brown & family, Jillian Gray & family, Molly Moss & family, Helena Neilly & family, Rose Mackey & family, Mr. & Mrs. Elijah Brice & family, Mrs. Eloise Knowles & Family, Children and Grand Children of the Percentie Clans (Herman, Anna, Henry, Victor, Duke, Anthony, Olga & Humphrey Percentie) especially Joenesca, JJ (Prince of Dunmore), Kestantin, Iesha, Elvis Jr., Teasha, Wanda, Rayon, Christopher, Jammie, Ferdie, Amelia, Iris, Joneka, Jasmine, Imani, Kenneth Jr., Kendyce, Kenderia, Dominic & Kelly. **Other Relatives:** Rosemary Ward & family, Cora Johnson & family, Wilmott Ward & family, Mary Russell & family, Virginia Cartwright & family, Edison Ward, Raymond Ward & family, Jenarosa Johnson & family, Daphanie McKinney & family, Beatrice Hall and family, Jody Wilson & family, Tamiko Reckley & family, Jeremy Johnson, Shevan Ward, Candy Adderley & family, Dennis Whymms, Sabrina Lowe, Nicole Adderley & family, Nathea Skyers & family, Nathan Ward & family, Deleka Watson & family, Shavourne Brown & family, Jillian Gray & family, Molly Moss & family, Helena Neilly & family, Rose Mackey & family; **Godparents:** Woodley & Rhonda Carroll, Antoinette Bain, Katherine Demeritte, Sherry Kemp; **Godsisters:** Keno, Nishitae, Delisia Knowles, Leanne; **Godbrother:** Adam; **Special Friends:** Carla Deveaux and family, Tia Deveaux, Angeliq Ferguson, Da'Reesia, Frances Palmer, Mott; **Special Thanks:** Staff of Doctor's Hospital, Director Dr. William Pratt, Training Officer Mr. Rudy Ferguson and Staff of Bahamas Immigration Department, Mr. Kirkland Neely Overseer Enforcement Unit of the Bahamas Immigration Department, Staff of Accident & Emergency Department of the Princess Margaret Hospital, Commissioner of Police Ellison Greenslade & Deputy Commissioner of Police Anthony Ferguson, Chief Superintendent Dennis Sturup & the Police Force Band, The Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Percentie, Hanna, Heastie, Tynes Families and a host of other relatives and friends too numerous to mention.

Friends may pay their last respects at Demeritte's Funeral Home, Market Street from 10-6:00 p.m. on Wednesday & on Thursday at the church from 10:00 a.m. until service time.

## HOSPITAL CHIEF OF STAFF APPOINTMENT PRAISED

By RICARDO WELLS  
Tribune Staff Reporter  
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HEALTH Minister Dr Duane Sands yesterday praised the appointment of Dr Caroline Burnett-Garraway as the new medical chief of staff for Princess Margaret Hospital, calling her career experiences in emergency medicine "symbolic" to what the Minnis administration intends to do throughout the sector.

Dr Sands in an interview outside of Cabinet on Tuesday, said Dr Burnett-Garraway's new role allows her to serve as the "ultimate and final authority" on physician activity at the hospital, placing more focus on emergency care as a holistic view of healthcare.

He also said "more changes" are on the way for the healthcare sector.

Dr Sands said: "Dr Burnett and I go back a very long way. She would have been my senior registrar when I was the director of emergency services at the Princess Margaret Hospital."

He added: "I've had the opportunity to watch her develop into an exceptional physician leader, she was my right hand in the emergency department, ultimately took over running Accident and Emergency, she was one of a number of consultants in emergency medicine."

"This new role allows her to serve in the capacity of medical chief of staff as the ultimate and final authority in terms of physician activity in PMH.

"I have always defined A&E as ground zero in our acute healthcare setting and so to have someone who is the medical chief of staff who is versed in emergency medicine, I think says an awful lot (and) is really



DR Caroline Burnett-Garraway.

symbolic of what we need to do as we renovate our approach to health care in the acute care setting," Dr Sands continued.

"So we have spoken about improving dignity to improve service, to get people to feel as if their loved ones are getting the type of care that they need to get.

"So to have a new medical chief of staff who is particularly focused on emergency care as a holistic view of healthcare is really exciting."

Dr Sands added that the government is aiming to improve physician participation and supervision throughout the sector, insisting the redeployment of physicians will, in time, improve the level of care that patients get.

Dr Burnett-Garraway's appointment fills the role left vacant last November by the resignation of Dr James Johnson, who stepped down in protest after health officials moved forward with plans to recruit foreign doctors despite months of back-and-forth discussion over the changes.

#### Town Meeting

Dr Sands yesterday also revealed that health offi-

cially will host a forum this evening to update the public on various health issues that have arisen in recent months.

The Elizabeth MP said the government is doing all it can to ensure the public is aware, informed and educated.

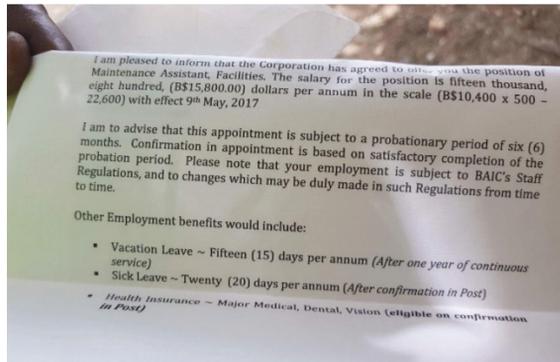
According to Dr Sands, the forum will take place at 7 o'clock tonight at Garvin Tynes Primary, and will feature updates on the New Providence landfill crisis, the Zika pandemic, the Rubis fuel spill and issues at Clifton.

Dr Sands said: "We've had several public health disasters, one was Rubis and that, unfortunately, was badly mishandled. The dump is yet another problem and we have a growing environmental issue at Clifton."

He added: "So the role of public health and surveillance is extremely important to protect the public and the public needs to know what is happening on their behalf, behind the scenes."

Deputy House Speaker Don Saunders is also expected to attend.

# Sacked BAIC staff: We thought our roles were permanent



**A PHOTO** sent to *The Tribune* of the employment offer from one of the workers let go from BAIC earlier this week. Some of the workers claim they were hired with the promise of full time employment and were shocked to be let go from the government agency.

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excesses that characterised the Christie administration's tenure.

An official in the Minnis administration said the workers were let go after their three-month contract ended. The source said the employees were brought on ahead of the May 10 general election and seen as Progressive Liberal Party "operatives".

However, a contract of a fired worker seen by *The Tribune* showed no three-month limitation

on his work. And others who spoke to this newspaper denied their period of work was only for three months. The contract this newspaper saw said the appointment was "subject to a probationary period of six months" and that "confirmation in appointment is based on satisfactory completion of the probation period".

The father of six, who worked in the maintenance department at BAIC, also insisted he had no political ties to a party and was no "operative". He criticised the new

chairman of BAIC, Miriam Emmanuel, for refusing to meet with the fired employees. He criticised the government for failing to help them secure a new job.

"When I was accepted in May for the job I specifically asked them if it was a permanent job," the father said. "They told me 'yes' and that's the only reason I left Atlantis. I would not have accepted it if it were a short-term job or a contract job. Since that's what they told me, the least they could've done if they were going to fire me was put in a word with Atlantis to help me get that job back."

The father of six doesn't buy the argument that expenditure cuts in an era when the country faces costly credit downgrades are so necessary that the government has to let people like him go.

"If you saying there needs to be cuts, you should be looking at the people who on pension and still on the payroll," he said. "If you on pension, still employed, that's double dipping. They should start their cuts with them, not with innocent ones like me who trying to make it through."

The Minnis administration has pledged to counter the practice of rehiring pensioners. The status of its efforts to do this is not clear.

The fired workers told *The Tribune* that since being hired they were paid for the first time Monday when they received a cheque along with a letter informing them that their services are no longer necessary.

"We were working like everybody else, going

into the field like everyone else so they can't say they didn't need the bodies," the father said. He said he made several failed attempts in recent weeks to meet Attorney General Carl Bethel after the general manager of BAIC told them higher powers would decide on their employment future.

"My family of six in my house," he said.

"All my children under-age. One is 22 months old. One is seven, one nine, one 13, one 15. I was living off my saving funds for four months because they weren't paying me. My wife don't work.

"This the position they put me in where I have to now jump on every part time job to maintain my family."

As for the mother of ten, the Marathon resident admitted she was a major, vocal supporter of the Progressive Liberal Party and she suggested she got her job through help from former BAIC Chairman Dion Smith.

However, she said: "I didn't think when I got the job that if the FNM came in I would lose it. Whether it's FNM or PLP, we all lose if people don't have work."

She said two of her children are working, but both have families of their own to sustain. "I still don't know which way to turn," she said.

She added: "They gave us no notice that we were being fired. No one even came to say they appreciated the work we did. And what's so bad is they gave us the letter at 4pm and had security guards in the room like we were some kind of threat."



**AMBASSADOR** of the People's Republic of China Huang Qinguo making a courtesy call on Prime Minister Dr Hubert Minnis on Monday at the Office of the Prime Minister. Photos: **OPM Media Services**

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**YOUNGSTERS** pictured above and below at the South Eleuthera Mission's summer programme, which ended last month.

# From readers to leaders at Eleuthera summer camp

UNDER the theme "Today a Reader, Tomorrow a Leader," 58 primary school students attended The South Eleuthera Mission's literacy and numeracy summer programme which ran from June 26 to July 21.

Funded by a grant from the Cotton Bay Fund, formerly the Cotton Bay Foundation, the summer school intervention programme is designed to offer much needed assistance to non-readers, those reading below their grade level as well as those struggling with basic math. At the end of the school year, students were recommended by their class teachers and letters of consent were distributed to the parents/guardians of these children, enabling them to attend the programme.

Classes were held on the campuses of Tarpum Bay Primary, Rock Sound Primary, Wemyss Bight Primary, Green Castle Primary and Deep Creek Primary to facilitate students who attend those schools and live in those communities. To effectively cater to them, the programme began with pre-testing to ascertain each student's competency level, they were then placed accordingly.

A typical day in the summer programme began with fluency exercises; where the students practiced reading at their independent level or received assistance that

would help them to read at their appropriate grade levels. They would then receive whole group, small group and/or individual instruction and help with phonemic awareness or phonics activities.

The aim was to ensure that students were exposed to targeted instruction and positive reinforcement in order to improve in noted problematic areas as it relates to phonemic awareness, phonics, grammar and comprehension; as well as math concepts, computation, application and mental math.

As part of a well-rounded programme, each child was provided with a healthy snack and drink daily. They also partook in an educational field trip with a visit to the historic "Preachers Cave".

Ade Pinder, programme co-ordinator, said: "SEM's intervention programmes work. In our continued effort to promote reading, we launched The Book Busters Reading Club this summer, a club that targets strong and avid readers. Remarkably, most of the students who are now a part of that club, were once enrolled in our afterschool and summer intervention programmes. It testifies to the strength and effectiveness of what we do."

The programme culminated with a closing ceremony at the South Eleuthera



Mission on Friday, July 21. The ceremony heavily underscored literacy as students demonstrated their improved reading through poetry and choral reading. In attendance were teachers, families and members of the community.

Teacher Sharon Carey, who worked with the programme said in her summation, "I have seen the benefits of SEM's intervention programmes, as a teacher I can say with certainty that the summer programme is

most effective. I have seen the marked improvements in children who could not read or properly hold a pencil transform into confident readers and writers."

Eight-year-old Taliah Evans of Wemyss Bight Primary, loves to read and write stories but was having difficulties with math.

She said: "I was happy for summer school because I got to go over the math I didn't understand in school. I can do better now."

For Jenny Joseph, a

fourth grader of Rock Sound Primary, summer school gave her much needed help.

"I got help everyday with my reading and spelling and I am glad about that, I wanted to read better," she said.

Director of the South Eleuthera Mission Errol McPhee said at the closing ceremony he had profound pleasure at the impact of the programme and lauded the commitment of the teachers who delayed their

vacation to lend their expertise.

Certificates of participation and report cards were distributed to each student.

The South Eleuthera Mission is a non-profit organisation that seeks to strengthen students, schools, and communities through educational offerings. It partners with the Ministry of Education and The One Eleuthera Foundation to bring quality and impactful programmes across the island of Eleuthera.

