



REMARKS

**JANYNE M. HODDER,
COLLEGE OF THE BAHAMAS PRESIDENT**

PRESS CONFERENCE: COB-UTEB NEGOTIATIONS

JANUARY 11, 2010

1:00 P.M., A BLOCK BOARDROOM

Good afternoon,

Thank you Dr. Carey-Baines.

For the past several months, we have been negotiating with the duly elected representatives of faculty, believing in the integrity of the process. Not once have we bypassed the union and tried to negotiate directly with faculty outside the framework. We have been silent out of respect for the negotiation process and because we know that agreements do not get signed anywhere except at the table.

The union has now taken labour action outside the framework of negotiations, indicating that it does not respect that process. We must now speak.

You have heard from Dr. Carey-Baines, I have two additional messages.

The first is to our faculty.

We believe in our faculty and we believe that they have the skills necessary and the courage required to demonstrate that the work of The College meets international standards of academic integrity and excellence. No one in this country questions the talent and qualifications of our doctors, our engineers, our architects, our lawyers, our dentists. Being a university professor is also a profession which has international standards and if we are to build a national university, our faculty must meet those standards. Many already do. Where others need our help to do so, we give it. Over the past 15 years, 55 Bahamians working at The College have been granted paid study leave and 31 of these have either earned doctoral degrees or are nearing completion. In the past two years alone, The College has supported 11 Bahamians registered in doctoral degrees. We have spent over \$.5M a year in the past two years alone and this year, 10 faculty are currently on fully paid study leave to earn further degrees. Today, over 31% of faculty have earned doctoral degrees. This has been a part of building The College for over thirty years and it continues to be part

of university-building and nation-building. There are some in the union who say that we are not ready to become a university and there is no doubt that lack of faith is part of the resistance we are encountering.

No university equals no demands to meet university standards. We say no to this.

We are an excellent College and we now need to demonstrate that we can be an excellent university. Of course, we need to improve our facilities and we are doing so and will continue to do so. Yet, a university is not primarily a set of buildings or pretty lawns. It is a community of people; smart, disciplined, educated people helping others to become smart, disciplined, educated and carrying out research that makes a better world. We have such people at The College. We have them on faculty; we have them in the student body. We have them in the country. It is for them and for future generations of Bahamians that we are working to come to an agreement that creates the conditions for excellence to flourish and to be recognized as excellence throughout the country.

As you have heard from Dr. Carey-Baines, we have never in this round of negotiations sought to decrease existing benefits – not permanent establishment status, not pensions, not health insurance, not study leave, not job security. Nothing. Not once. What we have sought is to have a productive conversation about how we will build a sustainable tomorrow. About how we should recruit and seek to retain talented faculty, Bahamian and non-Bahamian to help build the University and support and drive national development.

We are today releasing the full text of our proposal. I invite the faculty to read it and to see what we are proposing. A critical reading of the full text can only help as we try to move this process forward.

My second message is to our students. We care deeply about the quality of your education. We regret today's disruption and we regret any disruption yet to come. We will do all we can to make sure that you receive the education to which you are entitled and which you

deserve. We want to come to an agreement and we will work day and night to get there. What we will not do, what we cannot do, is jeopardize the future of this country by being afraid to stand up for standards of excellence today. For your information, we are also setting up a help line where we can answer your questions and get information. I also encourage you to use your cob email so that we can contact each of you easily.

This is a difficult time for The College, but it is important to remember that you do not build excellence by running away from effort. Both teams have worked for over a year. Ours is prepared to work every day and night until we reach agreement. We must reach an agreement and it must be an agreement in which we come together for a cause greater than any single one of us – the building of a national university to serve the sustainable development of The Bahamas.

That day will come and when it does, we will all be proud of what we will have accomplished accomplish together.

Thank you