

SPORTS



FEMALE SPORTS/TOURISM — Minister of Youth Sports and Culture Michael Pintard pictured making the opening address at the Primary female basketball invitational tournament in the country. The occasion was the first day of the HOYTES Geneva Rutherford Girls Basketball Invitational event. Pictured next to Minister Pintard is HOYTES Founder Coach Gladstone "Moon" McPhee. (PHOTO: SHAYNE STUBBS)

Office of PM in GB cognizant of sports focus importance

Minister D'Aguilar blasted by McPhee

The Government of The Bahamas, the governing Free National Movement and Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis are appearing more and more paradoxical as the days go by. I will not go into the government's handling of all the significant national issues, some of which are quite puzzling.

However from this forum, I seek always to focus on the big picture of the national sports fraternity; opportunities for all and sundry who help to drive our sports brand and equal treatment being afforded by the Government of The Bahamas, no matter which political group is in charge.

There are for sure, the decisions that appear quite self-contradictory on the part of the Dr. Minnis administration. In particular, today, I wish to address the inconsistency of the FNM Government regarding sports.

On the one hand, we have a Minister of Sports (Youth and Culture) who is delivering a hands-on approach that is meaningful and highly appreciated. He goes to great lengths to be a presence at sporting events, national and international. He attends regular meetings of sporting organizations and sees that ongoing financial commitments are processed.

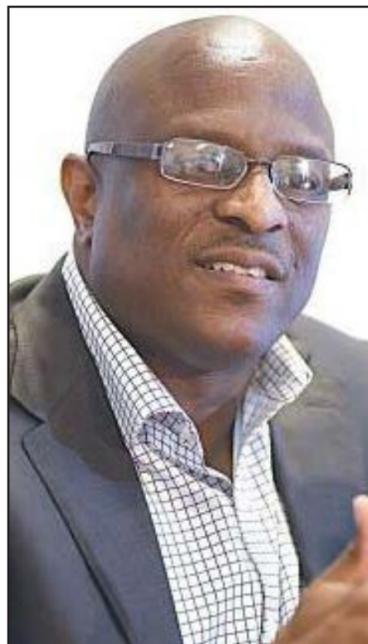
In Grand Bahama, there is the Office of the Prime Minister, headed by Minister of State, Senator Kwasi Thompson. De-



**Prime Minister
DR. HUBERT MINNIS**



**Minister of Tourism
DIONISIO D'AGUILAR**



**Minister of Sports
MICHAEL PINTARD**



**Minister of State
SENATOR KWASI THOMPSON**

spite the tightness of the budget allocated for the GB Office of the PM, Thompson finds a way to assist as many of the island sports programs as his budget would accommodate.

Then, on the other side of the coin, there is the Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguilar. While he is effusive about the international sports partners of The Bahamas, and seemingly has no difficulty authorizing

heavy amounts of the taxpayers' money for their respective events, it doesn't look as though he sees the need to extend the sports/tourism outreach to all of the authentic local sports organizers.

To give a perfect example of the imbalance, I refer to the recent HOYTES Geneva Rutherford Girls' Basketball Invitational Tournament in Grand Bahama.

For some six years consecutively, the Ministry of Tourism, recognizing the domestic sports/tourism impact, had provided funds to cover the costs for transporting the visiting teams while on land, upwards of \$3,000.00. The gesture was helpful and anticipated every year.

This time around though, with tourism under D'Aguilar, the transportation sponsor was cut off.

HOYTES Founder and the greatest driving force in the country for the promotion of female basketball, Coach Gladstone "Moon" McPhee, is livid.

"It was a slap in the face for the young people, (the young girls in this case) who are thankful for the opportunity to showcase their talents in a big way. It is counter to what we are trying to do. After getting that first negative word about the transportation, I called back to the office here in Grand Bahama, just

to see if there was a change of heart. Apparently, the Minister just wouldn't allow them to help us.

"People who are elected to high office need to understand that there are some things that should always be happening to give the young people good options and to assist them in understanding what it means to function with togetherness and still grow as individuals.

"Domestic tourism is equally as important as foreign tourism. It's supposed to be one package with different aspects. Here it is, I'm trying to struggle with events like the girls' tournament and he appears to be acting like the big bully, with our money. Six teams flew in for the tournament, accompanied by parents and fans. That's what domestic sports/tourism is all about," said McPhee.

With tourism dropping off the sponsor list for the annu-

al HOYTES girls' basketball invitational, organizers had to struggle to cover all of the costs for an event that is an excellent dimension to the national sports brand.

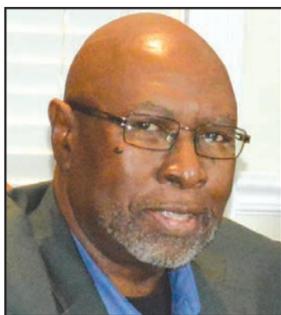
It is Prime Minister Dr. Minnis who has been an advocate for lifting up the smaller people and the little organizations and programs. There are no questions about those within the government, who comply and render assistance across the board.

The strong suggestion here is that PM Dr. Minnis try his best to re-direct those who are not in line with the balanced approach he preached while on the campaign trail, leading up to May 10 of 2017 when he was chosen by the people to be the nation's chief executive.

(To respond to this column, kindly contact Fred Sturupp at sturupp1504@gmail.com or on WhatsApp at 727-6363).

SPORTS SCOPE

By Fred Sturupp



"It was a slap in the face for the young people, (the young girls in this case) who are thankful for the opportunity to showcase their talents in a big way. It is counter to what we are trying to do. After getting that first negative word about the transportation, I called back to the office here in Grand Bahama, just to see if there was a change of heart. Apparently, the Minister just wouldn't allow them to help us.

~ GLADSTONE "MOON" MCPHEE