



Remarks

by

Hon. D. Shane Gibson, M.P., J.P.,  
Minister of Labour and National Insurance &  
of The Public Service

on the Occasion of  
The Board's Annual Leaders' Conference

British Colonial Hilton  
Monday 27 January 2014

at 9:00am

*“In this life we get nothing save by effort”*  
~ Theodore Roosevelt

Officials from the Ministry of Labour & National Insurance;  
Father Dr. James Moultrie, Chairman, and Board Members;  
Rowena Bethel, Director Executives;  
Mr. Winston Moss, President of the Public Managers Union;  
Ms. Sharon Martin, President of the Union of Public Officers;  
Leaders of the National Insurance Board;  
Invited guests, ladies and gentlemen,  
Good morning.

It is my great pleasure to be here this morning with the movers and shakers of the National Insurance Board for the start of this 2014 Leaders' Conference. What will happen here in these two days is expected to have great impact on the advancement of our social security program and organization.

Your conference theme is a powerful statement that signals the tenor of the upcoming years at NIB: *“A transformed NIB – doing business smarter and better.”* It is a most appropriate theme, given the charge - which you at NIB bear as keepers of the National Insurance Fund and as servants of the people. You are doing the people's business and as such, you are responsible for protecting, building and strengthening this vital organization through the administration of two dynamic programmes – the National Insurance Board and the National Prescription Drug Plan, and for providing a vital service to the people of The Bahamas in general and its workers in particular.

It is interesting that your theme speaks of transformation – which is defined as “a complete or major change in something's form or appearance” and hence, to a transformed, responsive and relevant NIB. Transformations, when effective, are not arbitrary because the vision and mission are reviewed in accordance with national needs, the strategic plan or roadmap is thereafter developed, and specific measurable goals are set and implementation regularly monitored and evaluated. They require collective buy-in, time, commitment, planning, proper execution and systematic ways of moving the agenda forward –

and success is only a possibility if everyone is fully invested, committed and move as a united force towards a common vision and purpose.

Leaders of NIB, the recent reports that I have received have shown that the Director and the Executive team have spent time mapping out the organization's triennium strategic plan and specific business goals to achieve that plan. You are satisfied that you know where NIB wants and needs to be. But we know that change is not easy. It is easier to create a culture in a brand new organization, than to change the culture of an existing organization; particularly one like NIB that has been around for decades and has been successful.

When an organizational culture is already established, people must unlearn the old values, assumptions, and behaviors before they can learn new ones. Individuals must decide to change their behavior to create the desired organizational culture. I implore you over the next two days where the stage will be set for this business transformation journey, to focus and to be fully engaged participants, as you, the Leaders of NIB must champion the message and be the change agents for the outcomes you desire.

There are many elements that will have to be employed in this journey to a transformed NIB. I think of two in particular: Executive support and training. I am satisfied that your theme is supported collectively by the Executive. I expect, therefore, that there will be tangible ways in which this support is demonstrated as leaders must lead the way by changing their own behaviors.

Secondly, there is the matter of training, awareness and clear expectations. Transformation depends mainly on behavioral change. Expectations and new policies and new ways of operating must be clearly articulated and fair to all stakeholders. Training must be accelerated, relevant and ongoing at all levels. Craft practical goals with your staff, create teachable moments, guide, encourage and ensure that each member realizes his importance in achieving the goals and maintaining the standards and providing the services of NIB. It is imperative that the new vision remain foremost in everyone's mind.

Leaders of NIB, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is here and the old ways that kept us in good stead yesterday, are not going to carry us successfully into the future. If ever there was a time when workers should be about

preparing themselves to perform better and smarter, that time is today. It is undeniably clear that we are facing one of the most challenging periods in the history of our country.

We continue to feel the impact of the global recession that started in 2007, where even the most advanced industrialized countries are challenged to broaden their economic base, and to be creative and pro-active in the creation of new and equal employment opportunities and safety nets for their citizenry.

The decisions made in 2014, therefore, will have far-reaching effects as they will not only help to ensure the continued safety and equilibrium of the National Insurance Fund, but will have a resounding impact on the future growth and development of our nation, and on the quality of life of all residents.

This year, the National Insurance Board will observe the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its existence. For four decades, National Insurance has been the bedrock and the bulwark for workers of The Bahamas. The benefits and assistance that NIB provides have kept seniors going in their golden years; they have sustained mothers and fathers through lay-offs and injury and pregnancy and sickness; and they have stood in the gap for widows and orphans in the absence of their breadwinner. Yes, National Insurance has been very significant to so many people across our archipelago, and as I look back over the course of 40 years, I must conclude that you deserve to celebrate, and to be lauded for past contributions and achievements. But, as the old saying goes, you cannot afford to rest on your laurels. By all means, let us celebrate, but even in our celebrating, let us prepare for the challenges of tomorrow.

As your Minister, there are some changes I would like to see at NIB. I would like to see NIB become a more responsive, result-driven, customer-centric organization. Every day I am bombarded by your customers who complain about the service and response times at NIB. While I am aware that every customer is not right and every complaint is not valid, there is a consistent thread that runs through the complaints that reach my office, which leads me to the conclusion that NIB is not as responsive to the needs of its customers as it ought to be.

With the advancement of technology, customers have become smarter, more tech savvy and more demanding of enterprises. They demand excellent service, whether it is Kelly's, NIB, a bank or a government agency. Customers have come to expect, and are entitled to, ease in doing business, a faster

response time to their inquiries or applications, and a seamless, efficient and effective system for the delivery of services.

The processes, policies and procedures that have been implemented over the years of NIB's existence, have changed, improved, and have been updated in response to an ever changing environment. These systems were created by you in the best interest of both the internal and external clients – you and your customers. You are, therefore, obligated to articulate and advance them in such a way that your customers know what they are and understand them.

It is important that every staff member be engaged in the process of customer satisfaction - and should see the transaction to the end and the complaint to a successful conclusion even if the customer moves through several departments to complete the transaction. It is called "end-to-end" customer service resulting in customer satisfaction. We have to do a better job of explaining things beyond the web-site, brochures or commercials – and a better job at saying why.

Documentation is a weakness across government services. Properly documented policies, procedures, instructions, customer communications, explanation of benefits and assistance are vital for informed decision making, documenting the situation's history and a non-reliance on institutional memory. Put it down in black and white and use these tools to help in delivering high quality, consistent, standardized customer service by all staff. This process not only helps with repeated customer queries but also in the event there is a change of officers dealing with a matter.

Leaders of NIB: NIB is still taking too long to process claims for Industrial benefits which is unacceptable. Industrial benefits – Injury and Medical Care – are paid in an attempt to get the injured worker back on his feet in as short a time as possible, and so, it means we have to approve claims more quickly. We have to secure appointments more quickly. We have to pay benefits and bills more quickly. The truism here is that "time is money" – and the ultimate cost is to the people of The Bahamas.

The words of Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> President of the United States said it most powerfully: "Inefficiency is a curse; and no good intention atones for weakness of will and flabbiness of moral, mental, and physical fiber."

We simply have to be more responsive and results-driven with our customers! And, we must be seen to always be fair to them. We must preserve at all costs and at all times, the human dignity of each customer no matter how they look or where they come from.

Similarly your internal customers – employees of the National Insurance Board – must be treated fairly. They too have a right to service and treatment that is respectful, responsive and courteous. As some wise HR practitioner said:

*“people don’t need management; they need development. You develop people to manage things.”*

That’s powerful. Use your skills, leaders of NIB, to motivate employees and to make them feel a part of the team.

In motivating employees, you need to maintain accountability at all levels, and there must be rewards or consequences for good and bad behavior and outcomes. I’m hoping that during these two days of meetings you’ll take some time to more fully explore this idea.

In addition, you must add in the mix the understanding that whatever you do, greater fiscal responsibility must be exercised in cost containment and cost reduction. You must also find ways to increase compliance and improve revenue collection.

As a 21<sup>st</sup> Century organization, I am happy to see that NIB is moving in the right direction of performance management, because no longer is social promotion the norm. I think of the way increments are paid here at NIB; and my belief is that increments should be paid based on measurable, value-added accomplishments, because there should be a direct correlation between salary increases and productivity.

Additionally, the Government will be counting heavily on you as it seeks to do what all responsive governments must do – broaden the country’s economic base and create new and equal employment opportunities and safety nets for our citizens. One such example of this can be seen in this Government’s intention to have National Health Insurance implemented within the next two years.

Government also relies on NIB's investment dollars to make life easier for citizens and to improve infrastructure in the country.

You all know of the contribution NIB has made to the health infrastructure of the country. To date, 20 health care facilities have been constructed, equipped, furnished, and turned over to the Ministry of Health. Several more remain in varying stages of completion on New Providence and the Family Islands.

NIB is also funding on behalf of the government, a number of capital works projects which include the construction of a mega-government complex that will be situated on the old St. John's Playing Field. This project is an exciting one – a flagship of Government buildings that will house one of the largest business and convention centres in the country, along with several Government ministries and departments.

We are also planning to construct another complex on JFK Drive , next to the NIB-funded complex that currently houses the Office of the Attorney General, to house the executive arm of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Ministry of National Security, among others.

Renovations, on the other hand, are scheduled for the Rodney A. Bain Building, the Courts of Appeal, *La Playa* at Goodman's Bay, four judge's residences in New Providence and a property occupied by the Royal Bahamas Defence Force in Grand Bahama. These are only a fraction of what NIB is doing to facilitate the social and investment agenda of this administration.

So you see, ladies and gentlemen – leaders of NIB – you provide services that are critical and fundamental to the survival of this nation.

I am pleased to have been with you for these few moments and wish you every success in your deliberations over these two days. As a result of it, I expect to see a transformed NIB, doing business smarter and better.

Good morning.