

Providing the Economic Leadership in St. Vincent and the Grenadines

by

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Introduction

It is an expected fact that providing leadership to countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where there are no tangible assets like oil and gold, and where the main features of the economy, is that it is small and open, with a scarcity of resources, is a challenge for modern day political parties.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines has a history of underdevelopment, buffeted by the challenges of globalization and trade liberalization. From time to time, the country is affected by natural disasters which wreak havoc on an already fragile social fabric, leading to destruction of houses, crops and infrastructure, and sometimes loss of life. Already we see the sort of issues which will test the leadership mettle of men.

And then into this mix, we place certain challenges like the fall-out from one of the worse global economic crisis from 2008, the adverse impact of the CLICO and BAICO meltdowns, the virtual dismantling of the preferential regime for bananas in Europe, and the huge increases in the price of a barrel of imported oil.

It is these incidents and occurrences that challenged the leadership of most small island states in the Caribbean, including St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Quest

After the election of March 2001, which brought the ULP administration to office, Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, presented his party's strategic quest, to build a modern competitive, many-sided post-colonial economy, which is at once national, regional, and global. This quest recognizes that life, living, production and reproduction, demand that small countries like St. Vincent and the Grenadines, create an atmosphere for their citizens to sell their goods and services, particularly in the export market. This means that Vincentians must work harder and smarter, along with the leadership that the ULP is providing.

Given the extant condition of the size of our country, the scarcity of resources, and the legacy of underdevelopment, it is critical that the leadership of the ULP, thinks "outside the box", in creating opportunities for economic development. So for example, the ULP has had to carefully fashion a regional and international foreign policy, to fit our national interests, within the context of a bilateral and multilateral solidarity across nations globally.

This explains a number of critical development activities in our country, including the construction of the bridge over the Rabacca Dry River, the realization of the international airport at Argyle, the building of the modern diagnostic centre at Chile, and the provision of numerous scholarships for Vincentians. Most of this is possible because of the activist foreign policy implemented by the ULP administration.

Poor NDP

It is this lack of understanding of our country, which has led to the poor performance of the opposition NDP, at the polls. The NDP, under Arnhim Eustace, has demonstrated a lack of leadership, and has shown that it is unable

to provide a developmental narrative for the people of this country. That's because the NDP and its leaders don't understand many of the issues which are critical for economic development. Indeed, they have shown that they do not have the capacity to learn, and so history will condemn many of their backward positions on matters related to economic development. Even under a new leader, in Godwin Friday, the NDP refuses to learn and to adapt.

This explains their positions on things like the international airport, the modern diagnostic centre, the proposed hotel development in the Mt. Wynne Peters Hope area, and the Education revolution. They have nothing to offer Vincentians, and so they resort to a series of lies, in a vain effort to gain relevance and support. All this has failed and will continue to fail, in the face of superior leadership and governance by the ULP.

Just look at some of the precious initiatives that the NDP wants to roll back, if they get into office in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

1. The International Airport at Argyle
2. The Education Revolution
3. The Petro Caribe agreement
4. The lives to live housing programme
5. The low income and no income housing projects
6. The YES and SET programmes for our young people
7. The geothermal project
8. The plan for the new city at Arnos Vale
9. The Mt. Wynne Peters Hope hotel project
10. The farmers support company
11. The extensive protection and upliftment of the poor and the elderly.

And the list goes on. In short the NDP does not want anything good for Vincentians.

Conclusion

It is clear that the ULP administration is the best government in the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The ULP has delivered on its promises and pledges to uplift markedly, the condition of life of our people and our nation, in a number of ways. The ULP has a profound love for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a love that is unmatched in the history of the country.

The ULP has on offer a compelling developmental narrative for the present and the future, building sensibly, on the tremendous and monumental achievements thus far. The simple truth is that there is no other credible alternative path, elaborated or available, except that which has been articulated, in theory and in practice, by the ULP.