

July 16<sup>th</sup> 2021

## **THE ULP WOULD NOT BE DISTRACTED FROM DOING THE PEOPLE'S WORK**

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### **Introduction**

The task of governing a Small Island Developing State, with an open economy demands high levels of focus, innovation, efficiency and overall leadership. The many challenges facing states like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines on a daily basis require the strength of leadership that many large countries wish they possess. Over the last 15 months, this country has seen one example after another, of just how critical it is to elect the right people to lead, especially when the going gets tough. It is no exaggeration to proclaim that SVG is lucky to have the ULP in government, with Comrade Ralph as Prime Minister at this time. The calmness and focus with which this government has carried out its work, managing dengue, the Covid-19 pandemic, the explosive eruption of La Soufriere and the flooding that have occurred since the start of the rainy season, makes governance look easy. While leaders of countries in this region have long been warning of their government's inability to pay wages and service debts, suggesting that it may be one or the other, this country has never defaulted on a debt payment nor missed a single payment of wages to public sector workers. Instead, the government has, along with meeting its financial obligations to state sector workers, also provided income support to various categories of workers impacted by job loss during the pandemic. Thousands of employees in the tourism, agriculture, fisheries, pre-school (early childhood), and other sectors have received and some continue to receive regular payments from the government as income support during these very difficult times. The focus of the government to deal with these challenges, managing this country and dealing with the business of the people has been laser-like, with regular meetings of the Cabinet and the Parliament to ensure that measures are implemented in accordance with the laws of our country, and in line with good-governance practices.

## **Seeing Beyond the Distractions**

While the ULP administration remains focused on doing the work it was elected by the citizens of this country to do, the parliamentary opposition continues with the politics of distraction that has so far failed to offer any positive results to its agenda. The clear and obvious difference can be seen in the approach as the government is focused on addressing the issues affecting SVG, while the opposition is desperate to gain power at all cost. The legislative agenda of the government at the Sittings of the House of July 5, 2021 and 7, 2021 included the reading of very important bills that touch at the heart of poverty reduction and the improvement of the lives of Vincentians. On the Order Paper of that meeting were among other things two Bills, one dealing with amendments to the Zero Hunger Trust Fund Act and the other dealing with amendments to the Stamp Duty Act. These two very important pieces of legislation touch the lives of ordinary poor and working-class families, with the former providing meals and much needed support to hundreds of students in primary schools across the country as well as support for some elderly individuals and the latter, addressing the transfer of land between family members. There are countries where the legislature has reduced significantly its work because of the pandemic, but in SVG, the Parliament meets just as regularly as before the pandemic, and the cabinet continues to meet with the same regularity with additional meetings as needs be to address the pressing and ever changing needs of a country that has been rocked by one disaster after another. Our government understands that the effective management of this country requires of our elected leaders, the ability to handle multiple tasks with a high degree of efficiency, always putting the needs of the country first. By contrast, the parliamentary opposition, like a petulant child, still dissatisfied with its electoral defeat in November 2020, continues to agitate through various methods of lies, misinformation and attempted disruptions of the people's business in the House of Assembly to thwart the will of the people as expressed in those General Elections. The unruly and disrespectful behaviour during the meeting of Parliament in May, was nothing more than an attempt to cause chaos and obstruct the proceedings of the House and the legislative agenda. The continued appeal to their base to rise up and

fight against some imaginary ills, conjured up in the minds of desperate party leaders seem not to be gaining momentum, hence disruptions to proceedings of the House of Assembly have become the activity used around which the respondents to their call must rally. It was no wonder, that during the sitting of Parliament on July 7, 2021, Vice President of the opposition and MP for Central Kingstown, found it fitting to disrupt the proceedings because of an unsubstantiated claim by some individual. The idea was clearly to cause public fear and alarm in an effort to stir up emotions among the few individuals they had managed to convince to leave their daily routine and gather outside the parliament, but even that attempt failed and the MP was left visibly embarrassed. Yet another failed attempt to distract the focused ULP government from its progressive legislative agenda that continues to deliver benefits to the people of this country.

## **Conclusion**

This country continues to deal effectively with the impacts of a number of challenges that have affected us over the last 15 months, primarily because the ULP government that was re-elected for a fifth consecutive 5-year term, has made governance look easy. In the face of political side-shows including attempts at public disruptions by a desperate opposition, the government remains focused on doing the business of the people. This ULP government will continue to provide income support to affected workers including farmers and fisher folk, address the macro-economic issues, address regional and international issues through its progressive foreign policy and maintain a transparent legislative agenda. The ULP like the prophet Nehemiah will remain on course and not be distracted by the anti-progressive forces.