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The ULP is the Party of the future

Introduction

When the Unity Labour Party was elected into office on March 28th, 2001, it met existential issues at its feet. Among these were poor garbage collection, dilapidated public infrastructure, high levels of corruption from Ottley Hall Marina project to the then National Commercial Bank; the bank almost went bankrupt because it was used as a wallet by then high ranking NDP members. The country was blacklisted by the European Union due to lack of stringent laws to tackle corruption. St. Vincent and the Grenadines recorded an indigent poverty rate of 29 percent resulting from a backward NDP government policy encouraging squatting and lack of real opportunities for our young people.

It took this Unity Labour Party led government to correct all those issues including receiving debt relief of nearly \$175 million dollars on the Ottley Hall Marina. The ULP modernized state garbage collection which is managed through the Solid Waste Management Unit and offered on a weekly basis to residents throughout our multi island state. The privatization of the then National Commercial Bank, now the Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, has seen the bank grow from EC \$ 370 million dollars in assets in 2001 to over EC \$1 billion dollars currently. The ULP government reduced indigent poverty to 2.9 percent and introduced the Possessory Title Act in 2004 ensuring that persons living on land continuously for 12 years or more can claim title to property: such titles can be used as a collateral for loans to improve the standard of living of the ordinary citizen. These and many more were some of the achievements done in the first ten years of the ULP government.

The way forward

In looking ahead, this Unity Labour Party recognized that young people must be at the center of its policies in building the foundation for a better future. Hence, in 2005, this ULP government introduced the Education Revolution Act which paved

the way in ensuring 100 percent enrolment of all students into secondary school against 39 percent under the NDP. The use of its “friends of all and enemy of none” foreign policy approach in securing and increasing numerous scholarships abroad in various States (Mexico, Azerbaijan, Venezuela, Cuba, Taiwan, Russia, New Zealand, Turkey etc.); these scholarships have assisted in ensuring students from poor and working-class families are afforded increased opportunities in advancing themselves academically.

Additionally, there has been the introduction of the disadvantaged student loan that has seen government as guarantor of these loans taken by students across St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This initiative targets those from poor, marginalized homes, with the aim of improving the standard of living by enabling children to return home and work, as most of these families had no collateral to access a loan. To no surprise, this very education revolution was opposed time and time again by the NDP, as they lack preferred the “good old days” of the NDP to remain, where only the elite class had the opportunity to travel abroad and study at various Universities across the globe. We must never take these things for granted.

Furthermore, in building a better SVG under this Unity Labour Party, youth received more opportunities through the YES and SET programs that offer not only experience, but also a salary to gain that experience and training in the labour force that will assist them further in their own educational advancement and careers. This too was opposed by a backward and shameless NDP. The NDP has stated that this government is a killer of jobs, but it is the very NDP that has opposed every job creating initiative that this government has pursued which includes the construction of a Geothermal Energy project, the Mt. Wynne/Peters Hope Hotel Development Project. The leasing of various fishing facilities across SVG involved in the processing of seafoods for export, the construction and operationalisation of the Argyle International Airport that will increase trade and thus providing jobs directly and indirectly. The establishment of a Cocoa Company here, the sale of lands in Canouan that saw expansion in major hotel developments such as Pink Sands Hotel and the Buccament Bay Resort that will reopen shortly, will add cumulatively, thousands of jobs in the local labour force.

It is therefore no surprise that this government, in foreseeing the skills that will be needed to supply such a job market, has modernized the programs offered at the Community College, where students are offered Associate and Bachelors Degree programs. As a result of the franchise agreements with the University of the West Indies and Humber College, many that pursue programs in hospitality employed in the tourism sector and other skill-based professionals, get the requisite training through these programs as well as the TVET (Technical Vocational Educational Training) programs.

Lastly, in furthering the economic development and shaping that modern future of SVG, the ULP government will embark on Port modernization, by relocating the Port facility to downtown Kingstown. This will undoubtedly enhance the city of Kingstown and move to start the construction of a new modern city at Arnos Vale. The ULP government is pursuing the production of medicinal marijuana a move that is highly received by farmers; farming cooperatives have been formed to purchase leased lands for initiatives including the production of coffee and cocoa, which are produced and processed here for export. All these initiatives and many more, that are opposed by the NDP, will create jobs and increase wealth and by extension the standard of living for us all in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Conclusion

It is therefore evident, that the NDP is spewing “hot air” or rhetoric, hoping that it will stick somewhere in the minds of you the people. They believe that many of us are ignorant and oblivious as to what is happening around us, as they continue to oppose job-creating initiatives, thereby being highly hypocritical. We, in the ULP, are the real agents of real change and transformation. Never running out of fresh ideas, and ideas that indeed will further assist in in the socioeconomic development of our country through job and wealth creation. Let us continue to be messengers of this good news and ready ourselves to take advantage of the limitless opportunities to come.

Labour is the only way!