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The NDP continues with its hypocrisy and disinformation

“Disinformation is distinguished from misinformation in that it is intentionally fraudulent.”
— Ellen P. Lacter

Introduction

In October 2016, lawyer, Kay Bacchus Baptiste, current NDP Senator, wrote a letter to Sir Louis Straker demanding that he provide evidence that he has renounced his U.S. citizenship in nine days or resign, claiming that he was in breach of Section 26(1) of the Constitution. Section 26 (1) states that “*No person shall be qualified to be elected or appointed as a representative or senator if he is, by virtue of his own act under acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign power or state*”.

Presumably, this would have resulted in him being disqualified to be a member of parliament. She further lamented in her letter to Sir Louis Straker, that “This is a very public issue since you have and are still being paid by the people as a validly elected Minister of Parliament. We anticipate your prudent and responsible action. The constituency of Central Leeward rightfully demands to know this.” Later, it was revealed publicly that Sir Louis Straker, the Deputy Prime Minister, renounced his US citizenship on February 1st, 1994, disproving the false claims by some mendacious, Janus-faced individuals, especially from the NDP hierarchy.

This brings us to the highly controversial and legally contentious issue, where claims are being made, suggesting that Dr Lorraine Friday, President of the NDP and Opposition Leader, has a Canadian passport and is therefore entitled to certain rights and privileges. This, in our view, is one that merits serious discussion, one based on principle and other on legality, as Dr Friday is aspiring to serve in the highest office and we cannot allow the possibility of some with allegiance to two States, influencing policy and laws affecting our daily lives.

Matter of Principle

The book of Matthew, chapter 6 and verse 24, sums it up very well, in that “no man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.” Evidently, you cannot want to serve the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines while also pledging your allegiance to another State. It is either one, or the other. While vying for the highest office in the land, it is of paramount

importance that you have complete allegiance” to the State and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because to do otherwise, will certainly be a conflict of interest and could create national security concerns. Imagine if there is a diplomatic breakdown or a trade issue between Canada and SVG and we have a Prime Minister who also is Canadian citizen. Whose interest will they support and defend?

The Legal Issue

In St. Vincent and the Grenadines, our Constitution, allows for Commonwealth citizens, over twenty-one years and residing in SVG for a specified time before nomination day, to qualify to sit in Parliament under Section 25. Also, Section 26 disqualifies members to sit as a member of parliament as mentioned in the Introduction.

Similarly, in Australia, another Commonwealth state, whose laws are similar to that of SVG, and where since Section 34 of Australia is similar to Section 25 of SVG, a High Court ruling was made in *Re Canavan* [2017] HCA 45 (the "Citizenship Seven Case"), questioning of the eligibility/ qualification of seven parliamentarians to sit as MP's.

It was decided that five of the seven, who held dual citizenship, being citizens of other Commonwealth states such as United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand, were disqualified to sit as Members of Parliament having breached Section 44 of the Australian Law.

The key issue here, is that any member who “is under any acknowledgment of allegiance, obedience, or adherence to a foreign power or is a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power,” is disqualified. The Judges came to such a decision after looking at the precedent cases of *Sykes v Cleary* 1992 and *Sue v Hill* 1999, where they were of the opinion that the members were disqualified, regardless of whether they knew of the citizenship or engaged in any voluntary act of acquisition of such citizenship and that to be deemed eligible, that they must have taken all the necessary steps before nomination, to renounce their citizenship.

The Hypocrisy

Therefore, given that this is within the Commonwealth, this case can be used persuasively in guiding us in any legal matter, to ascertain whether Dr Friday is eligible to sit as a member, given the fact that he holds a Canadian passport, which also grants him certain rights and privileges as a Canadian citizen. Clearly, if he acquired citizenship voluntarily, based on the ruling in Australia, a reasonable man will suggest he is in breach of the law.

The NDP was quick to harass and spread innuendos on Sir Louis Straker, with claims that he was a US citizen, which was proven a lie. However, while genuine questions can be asked of Dr Godwin Friday to do the right and principled thing, the NDP is stating that the ULP, is using this issue to distract the public. Did persons like Senator Kay Bacchus Baptiste and other NDP members say that were distracting the people when she wrote the letter to Sir Louis Straker to renounce and resign?

Conclusion

The NDP, on one hand, tried to spread disinformation on the ULP and Sir Louis Straker while seeking to downplay and ignore a grave concern and issue, as to whether their Leader, Dr Friday has breached our laws and lacks principle in putting St. Vincent and the Grenadines first, and not another foreign entity.

The NDP spin doctors, will continue to spread disinformation on this and other issues including the AG's reference bill but they will not succeed. So, Dr Friday, should heed the words used by Senator Kay Bacchus to Sir Louis Straker, that "this is a very public issue since you have and are still being paid by the people as a validly elected Minister of Parliament. We anticipate your prudent and responsible action. The constituency of Northern Grenadines rightfully demands to know this."