

## **More hypocrisy by the opposition New Democratic Party**

### **Introduction**

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2018, two major Bills were laid before the House of Assembly, namely, the Climate Resilience Levy Bill, and the Attorney General's Reference Bill. Both Bills, are highly progressive, and were supported overwhelmingly by the Unity Labour Party. Sadly, but expected, the Bills were opposed by the New Democratic Party.

The Climate Resilience Levy, presented to the parliament by the Minister of Finance, Mr. Camillo Gonsalves is geared towards raising revenue to assist in building resilience to the effects of man-made climate change.

The Attorney General's Reference bill, presented by Prime Minister and Minister for Legal Affairs, Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, makes provision for constitutional and other questions to be referred to the Court of Appeal, by the Attorney General.

### **Climate Resilience Levy**

***“A prudent person foresees the danger ahead and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.” Proverbs 27:12***

The purpose and intent of this Bill is to build resilience to the adverse effects of man-made climate change, through a levy of EC\$8 dollars per room for persons staying in hotels for less than thirty days. The revenue raised through this levy will be deposited and retained in the contingency fund, to meet the costs of climate change related activities. The NDP, which boasted of having surpluses during their time in office, never paid attention to the issue of climate change. Hence, they never made arrangements to put aside any monies to address the costs associated with climate change.

The Unity Labour Party understands that the issue of man-made climate change and its effects are of great importance as it affects every stratum of human life and activity, from fishing and farming with damage to agriculture and infrastructure, to damage to sea vessels, and tourism, with the erosion and disappearance of our beaches as a result of an increase in the sea levels.

Thus, the ULP government made a pledge and reaffirmed that pledge by stating boldly in its 2015 manifesto on pages 47-48 “Comprehensive Disaster Management: Saving Lives and Property, Building Resilience in an Era of Climate Change”. This is a clear intent by the ULP that climate change is an existential issue which goes to the heart of our very existence as a country.

We have all experienced the ravages of man-made climate change in our beloved country. In 2013, 15 percent of our Gross Domestic Product disappeared in less than 24 hours, with loss of life, destruction to property and displacement of residents.

It is the ULP administration which has provided the issue of disaster management with a new focus. It is this ULP led administration, in 2001, who established the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO), inclusive of a permanent, well-staffed Headquarters. Under the NDP, there was only one person employed under the local government office, with responsibility for disaster preparedness.

Furthermore, this administration has shown its seriousness and commitment in tackling man-made climate change through a number of activities, like the banning of Styrofoam products, constructing solar farms at the Lowmans Bay power plant and Argyle International Airport, the construction of the Geothermal Energy plant, the construction of a coastal protection project at the Layout Waterfront.

Others include the relocation and re-construction of many homes that were damaged as a result of natural disasters or were in highly vulnerable and hazardous areas. Then there is the building and rehabilitation of numerous bridges, roads, river defenses and back walls that will see SVG as a leader when it comes to protecting the environment and tackling man-made climate change.

Therefore, it was either willful ignorance or the usual propaganda tactics of the NDP, that saw the newly appointed NDP Senator, Kay Bacchus-Baptiste, making nasty statements, such as likening the Bill as climate change prostitution and making a mockery of the issue of man-made climate change, that has resulted in loss of many lives.

She poses the question “what it is the government doing to prevent climate change”. Does this question make any sense? After all, SVG cannot prevent climate change since small island developing states contribute less than 1 percent of carbon emissions that contributes to global warming which also accelerates man-made climate change. Did the learned Senator do any research on the matter? If yes, then what was stated was an intent to deceive and mislead the public, but if not, then it was sheer ignorance which speaks volumes.

SVG can only mitigate, adapt and build resilience to man-made climate change, but not prevent it. Resilience is about anticipating, planning and reducing disaster risk to effectively protect persons, communities and countries, as well as their livelihoods, health, cultural heritage, socio-economic assets and ecosystems. The ideas of ‘bounce back’, ‘spring forward’ and ‘build back better’ are often used in the context of resilience. Hence, this government is on the right track through this levy that will be used to fund repairs caused by climate change activities. It will also build resilience so that persons and communities are in a better position to respond when a disaster strike.

## **Conclusion**

Vincentians must always remember the attitude of the NDP to climate change and the efforts of the ULP administration to build resilience. Many of you have seen the effects of the storms, hurricanes, droughts and heavy rainfall. Many of you have experience despair, and anxiety, wondering how you are going to pick up the pieces, after a climate change related event. Many of you have seen the anguish and sorrow on the faces of friends, relatives and families who have had to go through these experiences. The NDP don't care about you, about how you prepare, and how you recover from these events. It is the ULP administration, in love and in communion with you the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who will provide the strategies aimed at uplifting the quality of life of every Vincentian.