

September 21st 2018

ULP Creating Jobs and Combatting Crime

Recently, the New Democratic Party held walks both on the windward and leeward side of the island dubbed “a walk against crime and for jobs”. The walks, spearheaded by the hierarchy of the New Democratic Party, were held ostensibly to bring awareness on the crime situation in SVG and address the issue of unemployment. This is primarily because the NDP wrongly believes that unemployment is strongly linked to crime and is one of the major causes of crime. If we are to accept this view, St. Kitts and Nevis, with a population of 54,000 persons, that has the highest homicide rate in the OECS with a rate of 33.6 murders per 100,000 citizens would have had the lowest homicide rate within the OECS. This country has the lowest unemployment rate of four percent, and fastest growing economy in the OECS.

The walks were a dismal failure from every conceivable standpoint. The people reject the NDP’s gimmicks and scaremongering.

The people correctly recognises that crime is multifaceted and multidimensional and can only be prevented and solved with a multifaceted and multidimensional approach. We have seen an increase in jobs since 2001 and the formulation and implementation of a 14- point strategic plan on prevention of crime.

ULP for Job Creation

Based on the 2012 census data, under the Unity Labour Party administration, over 6000 jobs have been added to the local economy, amounting to a 14 percent increase since 2001. The government’s focus on empowering the youth for the world of work through the education revolution is ensuring that the economy of SVG continues to expand, building our services-based economy pushed by tourism, and agriculture, fisheries and construction sector. Within the public sector, between 2001 and 2012, we have seen 300 more school

teachers, with an additional 212 graduate teachers, 250 more police, prison and coastguard officers, 93 other nurses, and an increase of 136 staff employees at MCMH.

Furthermore, additional jobs are being created under the ULP administration through various initiatives bolstered through increased foreign investments, and as a result of the Argyle International Airport. This modern state of the art facility has already resulted in increased trade, thereby creating the demand for processed agro-based and seafood products to be exported in niche markets, as we have seen with Bequia Seafood Company, Cocoa Company and Shenton Coffee Company. We have also seen the increased hotel and resort development in Canouan such as the popular Mandarin resort because of the constructed Canouan Jet Airport, all of which have created thousands of jobs for ordinary Vincentians.

Moreover, additional jobs will be created under this ULP administration through Hotel development at Mt Wynne Peters Hope, with both government-owned and private owned hotels along with the Buccama Resort, all of which collectively will create thousands of jobs and generate wealth for young, hardworking Vincentians. Already, discussions are ongoing with a Call Center investor that will see operations established in Kingstown employing 120 persons.

Other initiatives are being done to create jobs such as the Partial Credit Guarantee Corporation, which will become operationalised in December 2018, that will give credit to small businesses which will act as an engine to enable entrepreneurs and business people to work and grow businesses to create employment. Also, the government's intention to procure sizeable second-hand fish trawlers will allow for the larger catchment of various seafood, that will increase our exports in seafood including lobsters and increased employment in the fisheries sector.

ULP Combatting Crime

Commendation must be given to the members of the Police for ramping up their efforts in ensuring peace and security in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Because of their efforts, perpetrators of previous crimes were swiftly caught and arrested in less than 24 hours with the help of CCTV cameras. Among these were the stabbing and death of a security guard and also the attempted rape at Indian Bay.

It is for this reason, since February this year, the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines announced as part of its plan in fighting crime, is the granting of concessions to businesses that will import high-quality CCTV cameras that allow for facial recognition. Furthermore, with the assistance of the Taiwan government, the initiative of having CCTV cameras in high traffic and busy areas installed will become a reality.

However, we cannot forget other initiatives taken in seeking to deter others from committing crimes. These efforts include increasing of penalties for illegal firearm and ammunition; establishing mobile police units in crime hot spot areas; the enactment of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act of 2011; establishment of the National Commission on Crime Prevention (NCCP) to assist in the fight against crime and the rehabilitation of criminal offenders.

Moreover, we saw the police force being equipped far better than ever before with motor vehicles, crime-fighting equipment, mobile Police Units, and modern telecoms equipments; establishment of Police Force specialised crime-fighting units such as the Rapid Response Unit; the Major Crimes Unit, the Sexual Offences Unit, and the Trafficking-in-Persons Unit; and acquisition of more and better-equipped Coast Guard vessels/Interceptor Boats. The government will have its first Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) here by October this year.

NDP's Mishmash on Jobs and Crime

The two walks held by the NDP on jobs and crime were a façade. This, in no way has assisted in the creation of jobs nor combatting crime. It was a publicity stunt for partisan political motives. It is quite ironic that during the NDP's political campaign they were in full support of

austerity measures to cut public sector jobs. This would have led to increased unemployment but the NDP is now having a march for jobs. Is it that the NDP believes that Vincentians have a short memory? How can one support increased job cuts in the public sector but at the same time walk for jobs? Using their argument, had they been in government, with increased unemployment through public sector job layoffs, we would have seen an increase in crime.

It was no surprise to us all that the two walks the NDP had were a dismal failure with an abysmal turnout and quite noticeably, the absence of many young persons among them. The reality is, that while they had their walk for jobs, many young persons were actively seeking employment and going to work. After all, we all have seen the numerous job offerings in both printed media and online via social media.

It is quite shameful, for a mass political party to politicise crime. The NDP used the recent crime where Minister Saboto Caesar's wife was held a gunpoint in the execution of a robbery, to send a press release on the matter using it to score political points. Shame and disgrace!! Even worse, there were some persons, who are close NDP affiliates in this country and the diaspora, who rejoiced over the fact that the wife of the Minister was held at gunpoint in the execution of a robbery. They cared less that she had a child with her and is also a mother. All they saw was the wife of a ULP politician and government minister. Such individuals are sick, twisted and demented and should be far away from the corridors of power and influence.

Conclusion

The NDP continues to show the people of this country that they are incapable of handling the affairs of state. There is little or no evidence to show that the primary cause of crime is unemployment. We all would have seen reports on crime even where the perpetrators were employed. The NDP's route in politicising crime is a dangerous one as crime does not discriminate. It is clear and evident that ULP is the party of vision, ideas and strong Leadership. A party for job creation and upliftment and empowerment of people. Not like those in the NDP who advocate for job cuts. Let's continue to give both the government

and police all the necessary support that is needed in fighting and solving crimes because crime has no colour nor party and we too as citizens have a responsibility to ensure that there is peace either in our communities or even our homes.