

Feb 23rd 2024

**COMRADE RALPH'S
30 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE IN PARLIAMENT**

HERE WE ARE: LET'S CELEBRATE

On February 21, 2024, Comrade Ralph recorded thirty years of unbroken service to the people in the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He was first elected to Parliament on February 21, 1994, as the representative for the people of North Central Windward on the ticket of the SVG Labour Party/Movement for National Unity. In all subsequent general elections (1998, 2001, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020) the Comrade was returned to Parliament by the people of North Central Windward, by huge majorities, as the candidate of the Unity Labour Party (ULP). The SVG Labour Party and the MNU merged a the ULP on October 16, 1994; at the time of the merger, Comrade Ralph was the ULP's Deputy Political Leader; on December 8, 1998, he was elected as the ULP's Political Leader and has remained in that position since then. He served as Leader of the Opposition from October 1999 until his appointment as Prime Minister.

On March 29, 2001, Comrade Ralph was sworn in as our country's fourth Prime Minister, having led the ULP to office in the general elections of March 28, 2001. The Comrade has been the longest serving Prime Minister in SVG, and CARICOM, — a continuous period of 23 years, thus far. The Comrade has marked the commencement of the date of his political activism in SVG and the region as October 16, 1968 — over 55 years ago. Service on behalf of the people has been his life work! We commemorate and celebrate the life and work, thus far, of this distinguished Caribbean personality.

POLITICAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND PROFESSIONAL WORK

Since 1994, and before, Comrade Ralph's political activism has been accompanied by high quality intellectual and professional work. Elsewhere his activism and accompanying work has been documented. Today, we write about his post-1994 endeavours. His work as a lawyer, up to his election of Prime Minister, is legendary; and his intellectual output, measured in part, by his published writings has been prolific. Among his post-1994 writings are 13 published books on various subjects within the broad area of life, living, production — the political economy and good governance in SVG, the Caribbean and globally. Most are available on Amazon. They are in the National Public Library.

PARLIAMENTARY WORK (1994 – 2024, thus far)

The high quality of the Comrade's representation of the people is evident in his numerous speeches in Parliament (available in Hansard), especially his Budget Addresses as Minister of Finance (2001 – 2017) which are available in four published volumes; his Chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee as Leader of the

Opposition; the numerous Bills, inclusive of those which he piloted, that bear his imprint (available in the published Laws of SVG); the incredible output of transformative, domestic policies and programmes made flesh, which have improved immeasurably the lives of the people of SVG (inclusive of those in North Central Windward); his sterling leadership on regional, hemispheric, and foreign policies of his party and government; and his day-to-day communion with his people, whom he loves dearly, on a myriad of practical concerns, individually, constituency-wise, and nationally.

The Comrade's dedicated, tireless, high quality and compelling work on behalf of the people, done with cheerfulness, selflessness, and love, in a joyous manner, marks him as an exemplary representative and leader.

NATIONAL WORK

Comrade Ralph's national work on behalf of the people of SVG has been truly impressive. All this has been documented elsewhere and is a matter of record. Every aspect of life, living, and production has been transformed for the better through the Comrade's efforts, including: The Education Revolution; the Health and Wellness Revolution; the Housing Revolution; the ICT Revolution; Poverty Reduction; Economic Growth and Transformation; Job Creation; Increased Wages and Salaries; the Physical Infrastructure Revolution (International and Jet Airports; Port Development; Bridges, including Rabacca Bridge; Roads; Sea and River Defences, Public Buildings); Disaster Preparedness and NEMO; Social Development and Equity; Ennobling our Caribbean Civilisation, inclusive of its magnificent Vincentian component; Sports, Culture, and the Arts; Grenadines Development; Water and Electricity; Public Transport; Citizen Security; Law and Order; Good Governance; Banking and Finance; NIS, Social Security, Public Assistance; Regionalism; and Foreign Policy.

All Vincentians have had improvement in their lives especially the poor, the disadvantaged, and the marginalised; women and youth have been prioritised. Working families and their children have witnessed an unprecedented opening up of large opportunities for advancement. The tripartite economy (the private, cooperative, and state sectors) has been working in a harmonious whole for the people's benefit, in the transformative quest of building a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy which is at once local, national, regional, and global. Undoubtedly, SVG has advance hugely under the leadership of Comrade Ralph and his political representation — at once responsible and responsive to the people.

Amidst all these phenomenal advances and changes, SVG has remained profoundly free and democratic; indeed, its liberties and democracy have been broadened and deepened considerably. SVG's political stability over the past 23 years has been absolutely outstanding and remarkable, despite being buffeted by will-winds from the power-hungry and backward elements internally and their aligned malignant forces eternally.

SOME SPECIFIC CONTITUENCY ACHIEVEMENTS

The national policies implemented under Comrade Ralph's leadership have impacted positively the people of North Central Windward. A few examples will suffice: The Home-Help Programme for the Elderly and the broadening of the social safety net (including public assistance) have touched deeply the constituents of North Central Windward; similarly, the policy of universal secondary education; so, too, the tuition Scholarship programme for university education — last year 109 persons from North Central Windward benefitted or over 8 percent out of a total of almost 1,300 recipients of tuition scholarship nationally. And so on.

However, let us list some specific achievements in North Central Windward under Comrade Ralph's watch. These were done under his leadership, but through the tremendous efforts of various agencies of government:

A) **EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The following is a summary as to what has been done:

- (i) Opened George Stephens (Senior) Secondary School at Colonarie.
- (ii) Built a modern school for Children With Special Needs at Georgetown.
- (iii) Built Early Childhood Centres at Georgetown (for the Methodist Church's ownership and management); Park Hill (Pearl Best Centre); South Rivers; Colonarie.
- (iv) Built Pamelus Burke Primary School at Byera. [The plan and start-up were laid by the previous government.]
- (v) Completely rehabilitated the primary schools at Georgetown and Park Hill; and relocated the one at Colonarie.
- (vi) Expanded, and upgraded, considerably the Georgetown Technical Institute
- (vii) Built Learning Resource Centres at South Rivers and Colonarie (Comrade Ralph donated the land for the LRC at South Rivers; in opposition, he had purchased it with his own monies for that purpose from the Cabral family.

B) **HEALTH FACILITIES**

- (i) Built the Modern Medical and Diagnostic Centre at Georgetown.
- (ii) Built/rebuilt the Georgetown Smart Hospital.
- (iii) Completely rebuilt the old limited clinic at Georgetown as a Modern Health Centre.
- (iv) Built a substantial facility to house temporarily the South Rivers Clinic.
- (v) Built, with the NIS, the Golden Years Centre at Black Point.
- (vi) Established weekly garbage collection and disposal.

C) **HOUSING**

- (i) Built housing settlements for the poor and working people at Colinarie, Manning Village (Byera), Three Rivers.
- (ii) Built numerous low-income houses and Lives-to-Live houses in various villages.
- (iii) Distributed housing lots in various communities including at Colinarie, Georgetown, Dundo Hole (Park Hill).
- (iv) Distributed building materials for hundreds of persons.
- (v) Numerous public servants in North Central Windward have benefitted from the “no- down-payment” housing programme at the NCB/BOSVG.

D) **PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE** (Bridges, Roads, Sea and River Defences)

- (i) Built brand-new bridges at Belle-Vue, Colinarie, Byera, Mt. Young, and Caratal.
- (ii) Re-built (as part of the Windward Highway reconstruction) the road from Belle Vue to Caratal.
- (iii) Fortified with special concrete, at considerable expense, the tunnels at Byera and Park Hill which were disintegrating.
- (iv) Built sea defences at Black Point, Brown’s Town, Georgetown – Caratal.
- (v) Built river defences along the Colinarie River at various points, at Byera, Mt. Young, and Caratal River.
- (vi) Built/rebuilt various feeder roads and village roads throughout the constituency.

E) **WATER AND ELECTRICITY**

- (i) Built the major Jennings Valley Water System. [CWSA under Daniel Cummings did a good job here.]
- (ii) Provided ample pipe-borne water to several areas which were hitherto badly served including at Chester Cottage and Park Hill.
- (iii) Strengthened the Perseverance Water System (which supplies Georgetown among other places).
- (iv) Rebuilt, modernized, and enhanced the Hydro-Electric Plant at South Rivers.
- (v) Expansion, enormously, of telecommunications services.

F) **SPORTS FACILITIES**

- (i) Built multi-million dollar playing fields at Park Hill and South Rivers (South Rivers has lights installed).
- (ii) Rehabilitated/upgraded the Chili Playing Field and built a Pavilion.
- (iii) Developed further the Black Point Facility.
- (iv) Upgraded, including the provision of seating and other facilities, the Chili/Georgetown Hard Court at a cost of \$1.2 million.

G) **CITIZEN SECURITY**

- (i) Built a modern Police Station at Georgetown
- (ii) Provided a Fire Tender Service at Georgetown

H) **PRIVATE SECTOR/COOPERATIVE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**

The ULP government has encouraged and facilitated the setting up, and expansion, of initiatives by the private and cooperative sectors. All the communities in North Central Windward are buzzing with small private sector entrepreneurial activities in retail, tourism, entertainment, and eating facilities. The Government Employees Cooperative Credit union (GECCU) has a regional headquarters at South Rivers and has invested over \$1 million in the tourism facility at “River 14”. The Kingstown Cooperative Credit Union (KCCU) is currently pursuing the construction of a regional headquarters at Georgetown on land sold to it by government, adjacent to the massive sea defence recently constructed.

I) **30TH ANNIVERSARY PROJECTS**

In each community in North Central Windward there are projects being rolled out in this 30th anniversary of the Comrade’s representation. The following are the major examples:

1. Colonarie – Belle Vue: The \$16 million Cultural, Educational, Artistic Production Hubs at Belle Vue financed by a soft-loan from the Saudi Fund for Development.

Further, more housing lots are to be distributed at Colonarie. Roads and drains are to be built at the Colonarie Housing Development.

2. Park Hill: An Educational, Artistic and Wellness Centre (above the Playing Field) is to be constructed with monies from a \$3 million grant from Taiwan. The land has already been acquired by the government.

The Clinic will undergo renovations. The Community Centre is to be upgraded and repurposed, given the modern centre to be constructed as outlined above.

3. South Rivers: A modern Health Centre estimated to cost \$6 million is to be constructed from soft-loan monies from the Saudi Fund for Development.

The temporary clinic is to be repurposed. The old clinic is to be rehabilitated as a Wellness Centre and Gym.

4. Byera (including Gorse/Mangrove): The government has agreed with the Anglican Church to purchase the lands formerly occupied by the Chapel and the old primary school. A Temporary Clinic is to be built there at a cost of \$600,000. The money is earmarked in the 2024 Estimates.

The old clinic is to be demolished and rebuilt as a modern Health Centre with loan monies from the Saudi Fund for Development. The design is completed.

The community will be consulted on the overall development plan for the former Anglican Church lands.

The Gorse Playing Field is to be rehabilitated.

5. Chester Cottage: Lands are being negotiated to be purchased from private owners for distribution/sale for housing development. There is a real need; a huge demand.

The Chester Community Centre is to be enlarged and rehabilitated.

6. Georgetown: The internal roads are to be upgraded and paved/repaired. A contract has already been signed.

A market is to be built at the site of the former property of Rafi Crichton. The property has been acquired by government and the payment made.

The market has been designed. Resources are in Budget 2024. The estimated cost is \$1.2 million.

SUMMATION

Excellent representation continues! “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” [Romans 8:28 NIV]. We know too: “If God is for us, who can be against us?” [Romans 8:31]