

**April 1<sup>st</sup> 2021**

**TWENTY YEARS OF STERLING LEADERSHIP  
AND GOOD GOVERNANCE, PT 2**

**Introduction**

The celebration of the Unity Labour Party continues this week as we continue to examine some of the most popular policies of this people-centered government over the last 20 years. There can be no denying that what this country has achieved over the years of governance under this great party can only be described as magnificent. The leadership of the ULP remains resolute in its dedication and commitment to the people of this country to ensure that we keep lifting SVG higher.

**Housing**

Prior to the ULP taking office, home ownership was something that was generally beyond the reach of the working class. The reality was that even for families where two members were employed in the public sector, it was difficult to get a mortgage for two reasons, the low salaries earned and the onerous requirement of the deposit from the lending institutions. This meant that workers in the public sector either owned homes close to retirement, or their homes took years to

build, as they would normally dependent on help from members in the community who assisted with the construction on weekends.

To address this very undesirable and unsatisfactory situation that crippled this country's hard-working public servants, like teachers, nurses and police officers, the government had a plan. The state-owned bank, the National Commercial Bank would begin offering one hundred percent (100%) mortgages to qualified public sector workers to construct their first home. This policy removed the need to raise the ten percent (10%) deposit previously required, allowing many who would not have been able to come up with that deposit, to now apply. The campaign promise of the ULP to construct 500 low and middle income homes was the other housing initiative that began in the ULP's first term. The Housing and Land Development Corporation set about constructing houses in Peter's Hope, Clare Valley, Diamond and San Souci. For many public sector workers, this was a double blessing, as they were now able to access 100% mortgage to purchase their low or middle income house. It must also be mentioned that the government also constructed "no income houses" for individuals with very specific circumstances, who didn't pay for those homes and are allowed to live rent free until death.

Today because of this policy, hundreds of homes have been constructed, or purchased by public officials who remain grateful to the ULP for making home ownership possible.

## **Education**

For many Vincentians, this represents the single most significant policy implemented by the Unity Labour Party, as it has and continues to impact the lives of tens of thousands. Almost every family has been positively impacted by this policy that was able to deliver, compulsory

primary education, universal secondary education, state-funded early learning childhood education, expanded post-secondary education that includes teacher training, nursing education and technical vocational education. This country is also on track to achieve the target of one university graduate per household on aggregate by 2030, because of the education revolution.

The process began with the immediate renovation of all schools the very year the ULP took office, and included creating additional space by building wooden structures. A few short years later, when the government was ready to implement universal access to secondary education, these very wooden structures provided the space needed to accommodate the additional students. These were students who didn't pass the common entrance exam, but were however being given access to secondary school education. Schools such as Thomas Saunders Secondary, West St. George Secondary, George Stephens Secondary and the Sandy Bay Secondary School are examples of schools started as a result of universal access to secondary education.

The Government has upgraded technical centres across the country and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College now offers a wide range of programs including locally developed associate degree programs as well as franchised programs in partnership with other institutions. The Division of technical and Vocational Education continues to offer more courses through improved facilities, including their hospitality institute at Diamond and their state of the art automotive department.

As of 2020, the number of scholarships, exhibition awards and bursaries given by the government to facilitate university studies was 58, this is up from 47 the year before. When one considers that by 2001, the NDP gave a maximum of 4 national scholarships, the true extent

of the emphasis placed on support for our students' university education can be fully appreciated. These numbers do not include the hundreds who get assistance towards their education through the Public Service Commission or the National Lotteries Authority. It must be highlighted that the government through its proactive foreign policy has also negotiated scholarships for our students who have gained university degrees at institutions in Austria, Azerbaijan, Cuba, Mexico, Morocco, Russia, Taiwan, Turkey and Venezuela. With the full implementation of the government's policy on education, the improved performances of our students at CPEA, CSEC, at the Community College and the results from universities across the globe, all attest to a very successful education revolution.

## **Conclusion**

It's is obvious that this article in 2 parts could not cover all the policies of the ULP administration over the last 20 years in office. Many more projects that emanated from policies of this government have not been mentioned, to the disappointment of many. Some of these include, climate change adaptation and mitigation where we continue to build climate resilient infrastructure, improvements in healthcare, constructing polyclinics, renovating and upgrading clinics and health centres, expanding MCMH and the construction of the Modern Medical and Diagnostic Centre in Georgetown; infrastructure development, repairing roads and reconstructing bridges across this country after disasters and of course the largest capital project ever undertaken in this country, the Argyle International Airport. It cannot be denied that the stellar leadership provided by the ULP over the last 20 years, is worthy of celebration, but we will not become complacent, we will continue "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

