

December 18TH 2020

THE PARTY THAT GOVERNS FOR ALL VINCENTIANS

Introduction

Since the victory at the polls for the Unity Labour Party in 2001, the hapless opposition NDP, unable to come to terms with its massive loss posited a number of reasons to explain why they were removed from office. What was clear, as they exhausted one possible reason after another, was the fact that the party had not accepted responsibility for their actions while in government and as such sought to blame any and everyone for their electoral demise. The outcome of the 2001 General Elections, saw the ULP winning 12 of the 15 seats with approximately 55% of the votes cast, a massive mandate by any measure and a clear rejection of the NDP. With such an overwhelming loss at the polls, the opposition resorted to the strategy of division in the hope of stemming its haemorrhaging popularity and salvaging whatever remained as their base support. The party in a coordinated manner took to the airwaves with one spokesperson after the other unleashing a barrage of attacks of the worst kind, on the leadership of the ULP and its supporters. There began the campaign of hate, bitterness and division by the NDP and over the last 20 years, they have been unrelenting in their campaign that continues to this day.

Labour Love vs Tough Love

The overriding mantra of the Unity since the 2001 election victory has been “together now” and this theme of love has been the foundation and driving force of the ULP administration’s policy. The Social-Democratic philosophy of the ULP was very evident in the way

the government carried out its work and shaped public policy, ensuring that the poor, marginalised and most vulnerable were not left behind nor fell through the cracks. In education, the ULP ensured that children of primary and secondary school age were ensured space, through compulsory primary education and universal secondary education. It has since included the 3-5 year old as part of the revolution providing early childhood education through government facilities. Primary school children also benefit from an expanded and much improved school feeding program where not just the poor, but any student who wishes can have a nutritious meal form EC\$1 per day. The social assistance program also includes uniform, books and transportation assistance for needy students as well as those experiencing other challenges that warrant financial assistance. The elderly who received monthly public assistance of \$60 under the NDP saw several increases, to its current \$250 and \$275 depending on the respective categories. The public servants, police officers, nurses and teachers saw significant increases in salary and improvement in their working conditions. Through the then National Commercial Bank, the ULP administration provided 100% mortgages to this same categories of workers (something the NDP referred to as madness) which allowed them to own houses. The construction of more than 1900 middle and low income housing for young professionals and low income earners as well as no income housing for the most vulnerable who had been affected by one type of disaster or other are all examples of a caring government. Healthcare has seen remarkable improvements with new services added through the construction of polyclinics, the renovation of health centres and the construction of the Modern Medical and Dagnostic Centre in Georgetown. The government continues to subsidise healthcare including the provision of medication in excess of 90% with a \$5 stamp being the price paid by most of the population for their medication and those under the age of 16 and above the age of 65 being exempted from charges. The MMDC in Georgetown offers

many services at heavily subsidised costs to patients such as dialysis which costs \$100 per treatment.

On the other hand, the hate-filled NDP proposed an attitude of “tough love”, one that states that there are too many individuals on public assistance and that they should be made to work, this will primarily affect negatively the elderly and those school children orphaned or from needy single parent households. After proclaiming in 1998 'not a damn cent more for them" (referring to public servants request for a wage increase) and followed it up by proposing a 33% increase and other perks for parliamentarians, the NDP refused to implement 100% mortgages, and later claimed that government secured student loans would “buss de bank”. All this pales in comparison to the call from the MP of South Leeward, to cut off any and all support to family members who refuse to vote for the NDP, and the MP for Central Kingstown suggesting to a caller that he sends money to the NDP that he intends to cut off from his elderly mother if she votes the ULP.

If however you thought that you had seen or heard it all, you couldn't be more wrong, as the outcome of the November 5 elections has angered them even more to the point they cannot restrain their anger. There are now widespread calls from some very vocal quarters of the NDP to boycott businesses perceived to be owned by supporters of the ULP with names of these entrepreneurs and their businesses being published on social media. There is even the ridiculous rant from those claiming to send barrels; thatchy won't be sharing the contents with friends simply because they supported the ULP. While some may laugh, these and other public sentiments by leading spokespersons and activists for the NDP expose a chronic hatred and deep divisions that they promote in this country.

Conclusion

The Unity Labour Party stands by its call after 2001, of “together now” as an important message of healing then, which is still very relevant today. This party would continue by word and practice to govern with love, showing fairness and equality to all Vincentians regardless of political affiliation. We continue to encourage all Vincentians to focus on nation building now that the elections are over and continue to be our brothers’/sister’ keeper. We condemn in the strongest terms, all attempts by the opposition NDP and their supporters to divide this country with their hateful and divisive rhetoric, we are better than that.