**THE HOUSING REVOLUTION TOUCHES ROSE PLACE RESIDENTS**

**Introduction**

Since coming into office in 2001, the comrade Ralph lead ULP administration has implemented a number of policies that have changed the sectors concerned in a way that’s most appropriately described as revolutionary. It is therefore no cliché to hear mention of the “education revolution” that has transformed or society, broadening the middle class and creating real opportunities for the children of the poor and the working class, or the “health revolution” expanding community health services through the building of polyclinics and upgrading health facilities around the country. This week however, the focus is on the “housing revolution with its many aspects, all coming together to create vibrant communities with proud homeowners, most of whom have benefitted directly from one aspect or the other of the government’s policy. Most of these housing communities are as a result of the construction of low and middle income houses, but other communities have come about from the necessary action of relocating individuals whose houses were damaged by disaster. There is however a third category, those whose relocation are as a result of a government project, an example of which is the community in Harmony Hall that came about from relocation of residents from Argyle to accommodate the construction of the international airport. The residents of the newest housing community in this country, collected their keys to their houses on Monday January 31, 2022 at a handing over ceremony befitting the occasion. This is indeed a remarkable gesture by the government, to ensure that the construction of the modern port, a necessary project to national development, didn’t at the same time cause unnecessary hardship for residents of Rose Place, through displacement. This project is an opportunity for those residents who occupied less than adequate accommodations in Rose Place to live in a community that upholds their human decency and their nobility as Vincentians.

**Lifting the Housing Standard of Relocated Residents**

The current housing situation of many of the Rose Place residents is less than ideal, both in terms of the physical conditions of the structures inhabited by some as well as sanitary and other conditions that exist. To refer to some of the structures that some residents lived in as houses, would be a bit of a stretch since they were actually make-shift shacks, put together to provide temporary shelter for the individual and/or his family. Poor sanitary conditions relating to sewage and refuse disposal, no or poor drainage, and the absence of some basic amenities describe accurately the conditions of many of the residents affected by the construction of the modern port. To be clear, while the general term “residents of Rose Place” is being used to refer to the individuals being relocated, the area in question is limited mainly to the beachfront and not all of Rose Place. The individuals are those who live on the bay in an informal settlement and therefore were unable to benefit from the formal provision of amenities of road, light and water. This should give a much better idea of the reality that exists currently at the area in question and offer an appreciation for the efforts made in ensuring that the relocation provides an improvement in the living conditions. An assessment of the the homes of all the homes on the bay, to determine the value resulted in an overall value for the homes and their contents at approximately $250,000. It would not be difficult to determine the average value of each, by dividing that total by the number of individuals or families (49) who are being relocated to Bowman’s Bay.

The new community in Bowman’s Bay that would now be home for the relocated residents has all the amenities that were absent or inadequate at the Rose Place location. The houses constructed included single room duplexes, two room duplexes and and three bedroom single houses that cater to the needs of either the individual or the family that will take possession of them. The road infrastructure, proper drainage and well defined layout of the housing community contrasts starkly with what the residents would leave behind. This housing project is estimated to cost in excess of EC$ 4.8 Million and is being financed by the government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. It is the recognisable truth, that the ULP administration, lead by comrade Ralph, respects the dignity and nobility of our citizens and remains dedicated to alleviating poverty, and lifting the living standards of all Vincentians, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised among us. No doubt these 49 individuals and families will feel the pride that comes with homeownership offered to them by the caring and people-focused ULP administration. Very soon, residents above the dry river, would have their opportunity to benefit from this housing revolution when they receive their keys to brand new homes, but for now, we celebrate with the soon to be relocated residents of the beach front in Rose Place.

**Conclusion**

History would record the contrasting responses to the housing needs of the working poor of this country by the ULP administration that has built hundreds of no-income homes for our most vulnerable citizens and NDP administration that built zero houses during its 17 years in office. The attempts by their spokespersons and leaders at revising history in order to paint a more favourable picture of their efforts are embarrassingly futile. The truth remains, that no other administration has done more for housing in the history of this country than the ULP, by offering title to land at significantly reduced prices, providing 100% mortgages through the government owned NCB/BOSVG to public servants, police, nurses and teachers and by building hundreds of low and middle income houses. The government recognises the importance of homeownership and will continue to expand the housing revolution to ensure that more Vincentians experience the joy and pride that comes with homeownership.