

**June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023**

## **We Shall Not be Ignoble! Citizenship Is Not For Sale!**

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### **Introduction**

As a small developing nation with many challenges to our growth, development and survival, any government of this country must be creative in its pursuit of these goals and so not destroy this nation under the guise of building it. The virtual absence of minerals and the like from which to generate revenue for the state, dictates that the government must secure by taxes and other levies the finances to cover necessary expenditures. These spending are real as they are needed, for here we are talking of paying the cost of supporting material wellbeing from quality education to healthcare, and from job creation to physical infrastructural development, all part of ensuring what we in the ULP call decent citizenship. And, when one recalls that our small islands are the most vulnerable to exogenous shocks, and natural disasters that can devastate islands in a matter of hours, the acute need for state revenues becomes most apparent.

The ULP has demonstrated a many-sided approach to generating these revenues including through efficacious use of our instruments of sovereignty and independence. In this regard we continue to form new partnerships while strengthening existing ones as part of our development thrust that ensures decent citizenship. The ULP's development path is one of further ennobling of people and civilization, hence the selling of our passports, which in essence in the prostituting the highest office of this nation, namely that of citizen, is repugnant to us.

### **Rebuilding our Country's Documents and Reputation**

When the ULP came to office in 2001, SVG's reputation was in tatters. We were on several international "blacklists." Further, the country's passport was treated as very suspect in quite a few ports of entry around the world, as it had no sophistication whatsoever in terms of security features, and therefore could be very easily altered by anyone so criminally inclined. Simply put, the SVG passport could have been easily forged. And, passports were being issued by SVG overseas offices, and this presented problems including the departure from protocols and procedures for issuance. This ULP government brought this latter practice to an immediate halt, requiring that all passports be issued from the relevant office in Kingstown.

The birth certificate, used as the basic document in the application for a passport, was handwritten and fraught with problems resulting from the same from registration to issuance. This government with its philosophy of further ennobling our people and civilization, of which decent citizenship is a part set about ensuring integrity of our documents testifying to the same. It moved swiftly, and by 2007, we had machine readable passports, the world standard. The registry was modernised and issues electronic birth certificates. In 2014, this country became the region's first to issue e-passports, the ultimate in international standard today.

One key result of these improvement to the SVG passport, is that it is now regarded as a very secure document. This coupled with the improved reputation of SVG globally — the result of the great work of our Prime Minister, and other Ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs including our distinguished diplomats — has lead to Vincentian passports holders being granted visa exemptions to travel to countries within the Schengen zone and other countries. Holding an SVG passport now equals hassle-free travel in many parts of the world.

Securing hassle-free migration of our people is part of this government's philosophy of ensuring decent citizenship. It is ignoble, prostitution of our sovereignty, belittling of our civilization, the cheapening of our people's birthright, a serious threat to the national security, and the dollarization of this nation's decency to even entertain the disgraceful notion of selling our passports. It matters not the name -CBI, CIP- this ignoble process is called; it is plain and simple, the selling of our patrimony, of our citizenship, putting a price tag on the highest office in the land. The ULP gives the solemn commitment that this WILL NEVER happen once we are entrusted with the governance of the land.

## **Conclusion**

The lazy approach to governance that characterises the opposition NDP is evident in the fact that they see the selling of Vincentian citizenship as a corner stone of the same. Virtually every plan they put forward depends on this sell for its financing. This government knows that this is NOT the path to securing our sustainable development. Indeed, our development is much more than raising revenues, as important as that is. The point is being Vincentian is noble in and of itself. You don't sell your nobility! Consequently, we shall guard the integrity and honour that the office of citizen of this land carries. We shall NEVER sell our passports. Continue to protect the integrity of our passport that this government worked hard to restore to something of pride, something of value, something respected globally. But make no mistake, the sale of our passport will feature prominently in the upcoming general elections. Your decision at the polls will determine whether we desecrate our national document through its reckless sale, or we maintain this stance that "We Shall Not be Ignoble! Our Citizenship Is Not For Sale! Next week, we would look at the NDP's plan to put a "for sale"

sign in the metaphoric shop window at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs based on their intention to switch diplomatic relations from Taiwan to China, to engage in selling out our patrimony. We must expose their plans to sell out SVG's passports to the highest bidders while protecting the integrity of our principled foreign policy that will never be transactional under this ULP administration.