

**June 28<sup>th</sup> 2019**

## **Of Skeptics and the NDP**

### **Introduction**

The opposition New Democratic Party is now finding itself between and rock and a hard place. By itself, being in opposition, in the wilderness years, is not a good thing, especially where you cannot see an election victory in sight. Things are further bleak when you consider the ages of some of the key persons in the NDP, who are seeking office for the first time.

So for example, people like St. Clair Leacock, Daniel Cummings and Kay Bacchus Baptiste, will be closing in on their seventieth birthday, and will be seeking to be first time ministers of government at that age. This is not going to make them attractive as political candidates, and the voters will of course take notice of this.

Then there is the issue of the level of skepticism which the NDP has displayed over the last eighteen years, an issue that they have not handled properly, and which has caused them a loss of popularity and support. There is an understanding in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, that the opposition is suppose to act as watch dogs over the government, to keep them on the straight and narrow road. Indeed the role of the opposition in the modern context goes far beyond the “watch dog” role. People expect the opposition to participate in the development of the country, to provide alternative advice and or support, for the developmental work of the government of the day.

In this and many other things, the opposition has failed miserably, and its skepticism has been on display for the entire country to see.

### **Level of Skepticism**

Perhaps the greatest level of skepticism shown by the NDP in recent times, was their opposition to the country’s bid to occupy a non permanent seat at the Security Council of the United Nations. As far back 2010, when the ULP administration revealed its interest in the Security Council, the NDP heaped scorn and derision on the idea. In fact the then leader of the NDP, Arnhim Eustace, stated that China will veto our membership, clearly showing a lack of understanding of the process. He could not have been more incorrect.

The rest is history, and on June 7<sup>th</sup> 2019, St. Vincent and the Grenadines became the smallest country to gain a non permanent seat at the Security Council of the United Nations. Much has been said about this achievement and the accolades continue to pour in. But perhaps the statement that has astounded the NDP, was the declaration from the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Allen Chastanet, that his country will provide some assistance to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in terms of the cost of administering the UN office at this time.

This must be a blow to the NDP. Despite their skeptical statement offering congratulations on this achievement, the NDP and their spokespersons have constantly sniped at this issue, hinting that the country cannot afford the costs associated with the Security Council, and questioning what benefits will be derived. This is nothing new from the NDP, even in the face of putative knowledge.

This is what is driving the supporters of the NDP crazy. They cannot understand how the leaders of their party could be so skeptical in the face of evidence that is before their very eyes, that the country is progressing well. For example, their supporters see that the tourism sector is doing well, and that they are earning money, buying second and third vehicles and so forth. Yet the leaders of the NDP pour cold water on this development, and fail to acknowledge the work of the ULP administration in this regard.

Thousands of people use the new, ultra modern international airport at Argyle, and people are seeing, and using, the international flights out of New York, Miami and Toronto. At this time, many Vincentians and visitors are using the international flights to travel here for the carnival festival in general, and to see families and friends in particular. Rather than rejoice over the fact that the country has an international airport, to facilitate this travel, the NDP in its usual skeptical way, would rather spend time being critical of this important project.

## **Conclusion**

From January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, the country will begin occupying its seat as a non permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. All this requires serious preparation, particular at the country's UN mission in New York. Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves has already announced that there will be an increase in staff at the mission, to cater for these changes. There will also be a need to increase the support staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kingstown.

The ULP administration is indeed humbled by the overwhelming support the country received, from the 185 states that supported its membership effort on June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The ULP administration is further mindful of the great responsibility that is associated with this development, and has pledged to adhere to the rubric of absolute respect for the equality of states, the

maintenance of peace and security all over the world, and to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

The ULP administration will demonstrate that the faith placed in our country, is not misplaced. St. Vincent and the Grenadines will demonstrate that as a small country, it will inspire other vulnerable, less developed and resource challenged states, to participate at the highest levels within the international area.

The NDP will continue with its skeptical ways, in the face of tremendous progress in the state of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.