

March 1st 2024

## BELIEVE WHAT YOU SEE – PART 1

---

### **THE ISSUE**

The folk wisdom of our country teaches, among other things, that it is wiser to believe what you see than what you hear. This truism is all the more important in the age of social media where the “internet crazies” of the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) go wild with vile propaganda, lies, falsehoods, and misinformation. These “internet crazies” want you to believe that SVG has gone backwards under the ULP government; they pull down everything that is good in our country; they create negative vibes about every achievement of the government; they create and promote dissatisfaction without any justification whatsoever; and they propagate a complaints industry every hour of every day on radio, social media, Instagram, and online publications. These “internet crazies” stuffed with the bile and anger of the NDP leadership and enwrapped with opportunistic personal agendas are the proverbial arsonists but with a twist: “Burn everything to the ground but give the NDP a chance to rebuild what is destroyed.” That is the essence of their political arson!

So, in this climate “believe what you see”. Let us not talk cold statistics today; let us see with our own eyes clearly on a bundle of relevant matters.

### **HOUSES, ELECTRICITY, WATER, TELEPHONES, APPLIANCES**

In 2001, when the ULP took office the number of houses was below 30,000. Today, SVG has over 46,000 houses. And the houses are far better constructed and bigger.

In 2001, a whopping four-to-five out of every ten of the 30,000 had pit toilets in the yard; NDP had a pit toilet building programme today almost every house has flush toilets.

In 2001, only 21,000 houses had pipe-borne water and electricity; today, 45,000 houses have pipe-borne water and electricity. In 2001, only a small number of houses had telephones — landlines; today, there are over 120,000 cell phones in a population of under 110,000.

In 2001, only a small number of houses had television sets; today almost every house has at least one TV set; most homes have more than one. In 2001, large numbers of households did not have stoves or fridges; today, almost all have stoves and fridges, and of good quality. In 2001, only a small minority of households had washing machines; today, most houses have washing machines.

So, believe what you see; not what you hear from the “internet crazies” of the NDP and its leadership.

### **GARBAGE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL**

In March 2001, garbage from households was collected only in Kingstown and its immediate environs. Today — in fact since October 2021 — garbage is collected weekly from every house on St. Vincent and twice weekly in Bequia, Union Island and Canouan. The unsightly, open garbage dumps at Arnos Vale, Bequia, and Union Island are no more. In 2001, there was one land fill on St. Vincent; since then, the ULP put in place another, at Belle Isle on the Leeward side of the island.

The place is much cleaner! Believe what you see!

### **MOTOR VEHICLES**

In 2001, there were less than 8,000 vehicles on the road; today there is over 35,000 vehicles — more than four times the number in 2001. More and more working people are owning vehicles; in 2001, only a small minority owned vehicles.

Further, there are far more passenger paying vehicles on the road — mini buses, taxis, Noahs, and SUVs — than ever in our country’s history. As the economy is being transformed, and improved, and internal travel increases, there is an explosion of vehicle ownership, including passenger vehicles.

Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **ROADS, BRIDGES, RIVER AND SEA DEFENCES**

In 2001, only the North Leeward Highway was in good condition. The Windward Highway from Kingstown to Fancy was in a complete and utter state of disrepair; so, too, the South Leeward Highway; and the Vigie Highway. The ULP government rebuilt these highways at a cost of over \$150 million; and we have maintained them well.

Dozens of bridges were in a state of utter disrepair in 2001; the ULP government rebuilt them all. Among the major ones are: Plan and Sharpes in Chateaubelair; Cumberland-Spring Village; Retreat and Francois; South River Road (Middle Bridge), so-called “Bridge-over-Troubled-Water”), Bridge near to NEMO headquarters; Peruvian Vale; Mt. Grenan; Colonarie; Byera; Mt Young; Caratal; Basin Hole; the iconic Rabacca Bridge; Overland and Orange Hill; and Bridge to Cottage in Fancy.

Since 2001, river defences have been built at every major river on St. Vincent, either upstream or downstream or both. So, too, numerous sea defences, including major ones at Layou, San Souci, Black Point, Georgetown, Caratal, and Langley Park; the massive sea defence has started at Sandy Bay.

Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **AIRPORTS AND SEAPORT**

In 2001, there was no international airport; there was a very limited, small airport at Arnos Vale, E.T. Joshua; there was also a small, almost non-functional runway at Canouan. The ULP government built the Jet Airport at Canouan (opened in 2007), and the Argyle International Airport, opened in February 2017. The NDP said that both were impossible to be done but ULP did them. These airports have been transformative of the economy and society.

The old Kingstown Port built around 1960 started to fall apart during the time of the NDP government which decided to build a small, inadequate, poorly-constructed port at Campden Park. The ULP government is now constructing a modern port in Kingstown costing some \$650 million; this modern port will be opened in May-June 2025.

Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **HOSPITAL FACILITIES, POLYCLINICS AND CLINICS**

In 2001, the hospital and clinic facilities were rundown, ill-equipped, and poorly staffed. All that has changed under the ULP government.

The ULP government has, among other things, rehabilitated massively the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital; built the Modern Medical and Diagnostic Complex at Georgetown; rehabilitated/rebuilt rural hospitals at Chateaubelair, Georgetown, Bequia, and Union Island, built polyclinics at Stubbs, Buccament, and Mespo; completely rebuilt the Mental Health Centre; built a temporary Lewis Punnett Home for the Elderly; built two Golden Years Centres; built modern clinics in several communities all over SVG and put in place pharmacies at all of them. In January 2024 or thereabouts, we will commence the construction of the Acute Referral Hospital at Arnos Vale at a cost of nearly \$300 million.

In 2001, there were no facilities for CT Scans, none for MRI, none for hemodialysis. All these are now in place. There was in 2001 an old-fashioned X-Ray facility at MCMH; now there are up-to-date X-Ray facilities at MCMH, Modern Medical in Georgetown, and at the polyclinics in Buccament and Mespo. The availability of personnel for specialist medical, nursing, and health care has grown exponentially. And the Medical Missions such as WPP have been welcomed, embraced, and integrated into our health system.

Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **JOBS, SALARIES, WAGES**

More people by far are working in SVG today than in 2001. The best proxy for this are the numbers of active registrants (active workers) enrolled at the NIS. In 2001, the number was 30,000; in 2023, the number was over 43,000; and the population as a whole has increased by just over 1,000 since 2001.

The salaries and wages have jumped way above the increases in productivity measured by the minimal Gross Domestic Product. On March 1, 2024, minimum wages are to rise sharply.

In every material respect, workers are far better off today than in 2001. Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **GOVERNMENT FINANCES**

Despite all the historic legacies of underdevelopment, the limited resources of small SVG, the challenges from the global political economy, and natural disasters, the ULP government has kept its finances not only afloat but in a progressive and consolidated position of prudence and enterprise.

Through all the travails of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so far, the ULP government is the only one in CARICOM that has not gone to the IMF on an IMF programme; we have never been late in paying salaries for central government employees; and we have resisted the unspeakable temptation of selling our passports and citizenship as others in our region have done.

This year, 2024, the central government has budgeted to spend \$388 million on wages and salaries and \$70 million on pensions for central government employees — \$458 million in all for the year or \$38.1 million per month! And we find the money!

Believe what you see, not what the NDP crazies tell you!

### **SUMMATION**

There is much more to document from your own eyes. Please do so. The ULP government in solidarity with the people has done mighty things; and more is being done. Whenever you are dissatisfied about this or that, remember, too, your satisfactions. Remember the journey we have travelled together and the progress made. There is still much more to do together. Let us build SVG even better. Only the ULP can lead in that direction.

Please note that in this article we have not asked your eyes to gaze upon all the mighty things you see what the ULP has done in the Education Revolution, Sports, Culture, Social Safety Net, Agriculture, Fisheries, private sector investments, and more! This article is just a foretaste!