

**November 15<sup>th</sup> 2019**

## **Some thoughts on our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

### **Introduction**

On October 27<sup>th</sup> 2019, St. Vincent and the Grenadines celebrated its 40th anniversary of independence in a number of ways, chiefly through the military parade at Victoria Park, and along with the activities to mark the Renewal at 40! initiative.

It was an amazing sight to see the level of patriotism exhibited by Vincentians, young and old, male and female, from the countryside and the built-up areas around Kingstown. It was a clear sign that the love for our beloved country is growing, despite efforts by persons within the leadership and the rank and file of the opposition New Democratic Party, to sully the name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The men and women of our uniformed forces exhibited their skills with precision and pride on the parade ground, witnessed by thousands of Vincentians who applauded their every move. Many Vincentians who attended the parade, as well as the other events, were not afraid to demonstrate their national colours. The owners of vehicles were not to be left out, displaying the national flag on their cars, vans and SUVs.

### **The activities**

There were three activities which dominated the independent celebrations, the agricultural exhibition at the ET Joshua tarmac at Arnos Vale, the further distribution of land titles at the Chatoyer Memorial Park, and the Everything Vincy exposition which was organized and hosted by Invest SVG.

All three activities were hugely successful. The two exhibitions demonstrated the creativity of our Vincentian farmers and small entrepreneurs. Our farmers demonstrated that the agricultural sector was alive and well, with huge potential for the future. Not to be outdone, our small business persons demonstrated their creativity in a number of ways, an indication of the skills which are present in the market space, awaiting proper development. In both cases, the interest shown by the general public was so intense, that the organizers had to extend the exhibitions beyond the original dates.

The event at the Chatoyer Memorial park, where land titles were handed out to persons in the North Windward area, was a further demonstration of the strategy adopted by the ULP administration, of turning dead capital into live capital. The recipients are getting an opportunity to purchase land at knock-down prices and will now be in a position to use the land as collateral, for economic and social development.

## **Our Renewal**

In our 40<sup>th</sup> year of the reclamation of independence, Renewal at 40! it is important that we correctly apply our historical lessons. First, it is wrong to ignore our history, it is not bunk; it has shaped us. Secondly, we must not sanitize or white-wash it. That approach is likely to deny us our very essence, thus adding to our burdens. Thirdly, we must not live in history and stylize our sufferings in a permanent victimhood. That approach will hold us back by impossibly looking forward to a past while other nations are moving to the future.

Instead, what must we learn from our history? Let it be a noise in our blood, and echo in our bones, and embrace it to uplift ourselves, without rancor, though with sense and sensibility.

Most of all, we must deepen our understanding of our past so as to avoid the desecration of the future. We must hold no malice or grudge against anyone; we are not better than anybody, but nobody is better than us! We resolve differences through dialogue; we are for peace, not war; we embrace partnerships and multi-lateral engagements; we reject hegemony and hold aloft international law, the precepts of justice, and the settled, time-honored principles which elevate humanity and the civilized relations within, and between, nation-states.

## **Proud Vincentians**

As Vincentians, we have much to be proud of, when we look back at our forty year history as a nation, and in particular, since the year 2001. It is clear that our country has developed by leaps and bounds. Our Education Revolution has provided our young citizens in particular, with the tools to allow them to soar like eagles with their wings unclipped, and they have been soaring to great heights. Our international airport at Argyle has brought us into sharp competition with the other CARICOM countries, and the tourism playing field has developed a competitive edge, and we must take advantage of this.

In our 40<sup>th</sup> year of independence, we will be on the world stage, as we take our seat as a non-permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations, the smallest nation in the world, to achieve this feat. Some 185 nations supported our quest, an indication of our international profile, and the status in which we are held. Expect more great and positive things from the ULP administration, as we continue to make our country proud.

## **Conclusion**

As we mark our 40<sup>th</sup> year of independence, we recognize that there are many challenges facing our country. Yet, these challenges and threats do not paralyze us into inaction and learned helplessness, or prompt us to adopt unsustainable approaches to development or any faddish mirages of the day.

With our traditional friends, and globally, we, in partnership with other nations in the region, shall overcome our challenges; we shall remain focused and creative; we shall further fortify our hard and smart work; and we shall be our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We shall uplift further our nation. We shall not be idle or faint-hearted, nor weary in our efforts to exalt every valley, make low every mountain of obstacles, turn the crooked straight, and smooth that which is rough.