

October 27th 2023

44 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE – BRIDGING THE GAP!!!

Introduction

As we embrace another milestone in this country's derivation, we are brought to a place of reflection, where the work of this government to embrace a bright and prosperous future, is self-evidently robust and sustainable. There are many examples that can be found during the tenure of the ULP administration that points towards the continuity and longevity of, not just the party, but the nation of SVG, in remarkable ways. This government has always been, and continues to be future-focused, opportunity-focused and education-focused, amidst all the challenges both locally and in the wider global environment.

This 44th anniversary of independence has revealed several pertinent pillars of this government's approach to establishing a well-oiled, emboldened and distinctly effective consortium of strategies, that have positioned this country to remain en-route to being competitive, not only on a local front, but regionally and internationally, notwithstanding our minute size, geographically and demographically.

The core element of this party's mandate towards creating this self-sustainable human and social economy lies, indelibly, with the *youth!!!*

The youth are the focus. The youth continue to be the driving force behind any and every ULP policy. This should go without much debate and resistance, as in any society, a leadership that neglects the young people, advertently incapacitates the progression of the population, and by extension, the nation! The ULP government continues to exalt the youth, supporting and facilitating them through various empowerment regimes, policies, programs and institutions. This empowerment can be seen through the drive that has been enhanced by the *Education Revolution*, which, according to some opposition flunkies, has not borne fruit and is a "failure". But as usual, political myopia will continue to impair the vision of the vision-less!

What kind of political party will berate policies that seek to reinforce its nation's strength and durability through education?

How can we take any political party seriously, when they disparage and neglect the importance of the youth, only using them as ornaments in their social media circus shows that highlight a desperate attempt to be relevant, rather than genuinely embrace the most important part of the human resource of any country?

The pillars of the ULP lie heavily on the shoulders of the young people, and we have seen and will continue to see how this government will respond to the need for youth empowerment and development, as we march proudly towards the big 44!!!

Bridging the Gap through Youth Investment

As we celebrate 44 years of political independence, this government has reaffirmed its commitment to creating opportunities for the expression, empowerment, education and elevation of young people in this country. This is nothing new to this party since it took office in 2001. From the birth of the *Youth Empowerment Service*, otherwise affectionately known as the “YES Program” in 2002, to the *Support for Education and Training* or “SET Program” in 2019, this ULP Government has revolutionized and improved on its mandate to offer support, training and development for young people in a number of areas.

Investment in young people in terms of education and training was miniscule during the NDP administration. Even their present-day attitude reflects this same lack of interest or dedication to the youth. Where were the scholarships? Where were the programs that were geared towards youth development? Where was the support?

This government boasts transformative and nation-boosting policies that are youth-focused in all sectors. The *ON-SITE* internship program offers training, strategic placement and personal development in the work environment for young people. The *PRYME* program continues to offer financing to young entrepreneurs, allowing them to spread their proverbial wings and soar to new heights.

Balancing Experience with Youth

This week, on Monday 23rd October, 2023, this ULP Government was the first administration in this country’s history to launch the Youth Advisory Council. This was a significant milestone in youth progression and elevation in this great nation. The members of this Youth Advisory Council were drawn from young people nationwide, of diverse backgrounds and skillsets, and will now be called upon to discuss and recommend practical, feasible, youth centered development initiatives. A very important goal will undoubtedly be to bridge that gap between young and older persons in the areas touching and concerning government administration, politics and policy.

This Youth Advisory Council could not come at a better time, where the issues of youth degradation, marginalization and unemployment are the hot topic worldwide. The way in which this government designs these revolutionary strategies is to embrace the main pillars of a progressive, modern and post-colonial society. You must have a strong human resource to mobilize policies and initiatives, you must have strong leadership to guide and direct, and you must create the proper institutions for implementation and management of your goals and directives.

Notwithstanding, the youth are an integral part of the human resource, in any nation. By establishing initiatives such as the Youth Advisory Council, you kill three birds with one stone, so to speak. The Youth will be the human resource; the youth will then matriculate into the leaders of tomorrow; then, the youth will assist in the creation of the relevant institutions that are modern, transformative and sound as this nation continues to pave the way forward.

What a Government!

Conclusion

The animation of *fresh hope* cannot be truly realized without the *youth*. Over 1300 tuition scholarships, 26 national scholarships (compared to under 5 under the NDP administration), 200 plus Vincentians currently studying a variety of courses at the UWI Global Campus, and the list goes on and on, is a testimony of this government's overwhelming commitment to youth development, youth empowerment and youth resilience. This ULP administration will continue to invest in the young people of this country. We will not be burdened by a legacy of conservatism, resistance and colonial hegemonic ideologies, which continue to cripple the opposition party, leaving them in a never-ending merry-go-round of disillusionment and discombobulation. We are setting up our party and our nation, to take the next logical step towards achieving our sustainable development goals, none of which can be realized without a vigorous and zestful investment in the young people of this nation.

A happy and a safe Independence to all Vincentians!