

September 13th 2019

The Education Revolution Marches On

Introduction

It's the month of September 2019, and the word on the lips of most Vincentians, is education. Parents are talking about education for their children as they determine what's next for them. Teachers are talking about education as they survey the expectant faces in the classrooms, ready for learning. And children are talking about education as they prepare to receive knowledge and skills, to take them to the next level.

All this is possible because of the work of the ULP administration, under the leadership of Dr. Ralph Gonsalves. The ULP has transformed the delivery of education, in terms of access, spread and quality, by tailoring the current process, for living and production.

It is an accepted fact that the Education Revolution, the flagship programme of the ULP administration, has touched the lives of every single Vincentian, every single house hold, and every single family, from Fancy to Union Island. Since 2005, when the ULP delivered universal access to secondary education, this national policy has been like a clarion call for all young Vincentians, calling them to get an education, calling them to gather intelligence, calling them to begin to participate more fully, in the socio-economic development process of the country.

As Vincentians, we have come to the realization that we are a magnificent component of our independent authentic Caribbean civilization, with the knowledge that there is scope for even further ennoblement. At the campuses of the University of the West Indies we number more students than all countries save and except the host country. Our students rise every year to become valedictorians at graduation exercises at the UWI. The truth of the matter is that the Education Revolution has touched the lives of entire families in the State, for the better.

The New School year 2019 to 2020

It follows therefore, that the government will pay great attention to aspects of the Education Revolution, as it marches on. One important aspect relates to the condition of our education facilities, as they exist in the State. Last month, after careful analysis and evaluation by education officials, the government released some EC \$6.5 million, to repair 93 educational institutions in the state.

Some institutions will get a major face lift, for example the Calliaqua Anglican Primary School. In this regard, the government has arranged temporary classroom facilities for the children at this, all within an 18 day period. This is truly remarkable. A similar situation has affected children at the primary schools in Park Hill and New Grounds. It is important to note that in the three examples mentioned above, that the ULP administration held Town Hall meetings with the parents of the students, to get them involved in the decision-making process. So there was consultation, something that the opposition NDP doesn't know anything about.

Apart from the facelift process, the ULP administration had to provide furniture for a number of schools, consequent upon the lack of care which is applied at some of these schools. That process is complete, but that has triggered another concern. Clearly there is not enough supervision at our schools, particularly in the period close to the end of term. Our students, if not supervised, tend to get into mischief, and will sometimes get involved in acts of vandalism. Thankfully, the Ministry of Education is devising a strategy to deal with this.

The Canouan Secondary School

Of particular interest to the nation was the opening of the new secondary school on the Grenadine island of Canouan. There has been a lot of discussion on this development, as members of the public debate the pros and cons of this matter. Nevertheless, secondary school education has been established on Canouan, and the students there, don't have to travel to the mainland, or to other Grenadine islands, to further their education.

So now there are secondary schools on Bequia, Canouan and Union Island, and they will function just as good as the other secondary schools in the State. It is important to note that in the seventeen years of the NDP administration, 1984 to 2001, no consideration was given to have a secondary school on Canouan.

Indeed leading members of the NDP, including their President at the time, James Mitchell, felt that that this venture was not feasible. So, the people of Canouan, who placed their political future in the hands of the NDP, had to turn to the ULP, a party that they did not support, to get secondary school education on the island, for their children. The NDP should be flogged literally, at the polls, for trying to take credit for this development. It's a shame and a disgrace!!

The Future

It is clear that the Education Revolution has been a spectacular success, but as always, more needs to be done, and the ULP administration will not stand on its laurels. At the moment, education officials are working towards three goals, namely, (1) establishing more assuredly, a well managed, effective and efficient education system that focuses on quality, relevance, living and production; (2) promoting further standards of excellence and professionalism; and (3) promotion

further community involvement, and opportunities for continuing education through adulthood.

There is an enterprise surrounding the Education Revolution. Every day, the country has to move over 45 thousand students and teachers from their homes to their education institutions, within a particular time period. This means that the public transportation system has to be very active and competent. This competes with another eight thousand public servants, and a similar amount of private sector workers who are trying to get to work on time.

This is truly a great interaction which takes place daily, and the ULP administration ensures that this is done smoothly, with little fuss.

What a government!!!!