

October 18th 2024

LEADERSHIP: ENERGY AND WILL, VISION AND SKILL

GETTING GOOD THINGS DONE

In uplifting our lives, living, and production, it is essential to get good things done. This is true in every area of human activity by people from all walks of life. In the matters of government and politics leadership is vital in getting good things done. Top quality political leadership is what drives transformative change, in the people's interest, to better immeasurably the lives and living of the people in any nation. To be sure, there are persons elected to top leadership positions who tinker here and there and manage this or that little thing, but nothing much changes for the better; they are really not fit to lead at any time, especially challenging times of times of urgency. To do mighty things, in the people's interest, you need a transformative leader in the mould of Comrade Ralph.

Admittedly, leadership alone cannot effect transformative change for the better, but it is the crucial driving force. The transformative leader, among other things, must function within a quality collective group of other leaders, bolstered by an effective organisation, and in tandem with an informed and supportive people. This is what you get with the ULP government.

To be transformative, as distinct from tinkering here and there, demands that the leader possess in abundance energy and will, vision and skill. These attributes contribute greatly to ensuring that the leader is a deliverer of "the goods", alter the conditions of the "ancien regime", build better and stronger sustainably, and in every material respect lift the country higher. A leader of energy and will, vision and skill, not only inspires the people but draws out of them that which is of high quality, goodness, and nobility; oft-times to draw out of them high quality, goodness, and nobility which they [the people] may not as yet know that they possess.

Leaders who are mere tinkerers, not propound thinkers and doers of mighty deeds, have no dynamic thrust; no depth, very shallow. They are instinctively conservative and not progressive; at best they manage, oft-times poorly, what exists; they are satisfied with stasis which leads inevitably to backwardness and suffering; indeed, such leaders are poor in every way; they are invariably lazy and eat the bread of idleness; their minimalist actions and grave inactions invite political instability; they tend to look forward to a past that never was, an illusion which raises to the lips a cup of bitterness and gall; in short, they engender a country of "look behind", a future that is behind them. It all ends in grief, pain,

and suffering for the people. This is the leadership type that you find in someone like Lorraine Friday in the opposition New Democratic Party.

COMRADE RALPH: THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEADER

Comrade Ralph is a transformative leader and deliverer of better, by far; he has demonstrated the requisite qualities of leadership of the highest order; currently, in our challenged times of urgency he shows it mightily; and his energy and will, vision and skill ensure a continuation of the transformation and consolidation for the better, in the future. And of all time, only the future is ours to desecrate; to avoid the desecration of the future, our nation requires the quality, ongoing transformative leadership offered by the Comrade and his team, buttressed by a quality organisation of the state administration delivering good governance, and in communion with the people.

The alternative provided by the opposition NDP is weak, lazy, vacillating, visionless, unskilled and inexperienced in the art and science of governance. They constitute a brigade of “grumpy old men”, Friday, Leacock and Cummings, for example; an awful team of little or no merit or promise, no coherent or uplifting policies or programmes, backward to the core, leading to a dead-end. The NDP’s leader is NOT possessed of a sufficiency of energy and will, vision and skill; and he has no enduring link to the people; a Canadian, through his voluntary act, with his Canadian passport “proudly” in his front pocket, and his Vincentian passport merely in his back pocket. Inside of the bowels of the NDP, there are more than mutterings that Lorraine Friday is not up to the leadership task-at-hand. He is not even in charge of his party which consists of a rabble of wannabe electoral elites stuffed with opportunism, personal gripes and complaints, vainglorious personal pursuits, malice, anger, bile, and a thirst for power; they hunger for revenge against ULP leaders, activists, and supporters.

TRANSFORMATION FOR THE BETTER

Since the dawn of the 21st century, nearly 24 years ago, the ULP government under the transformative leadership of Comrade Ralph has successfully embarked on a quest to alter, fundamentally, for the better, in the people’s interest, the inherited colonial/amended colonial economy which existed from 1763 (the year which marks British colonial conquest and settlement of exploitation) to the end of the 20th century (the terminal period of the NDP regime) — a total of 237 years. The ULP’s quest has been, since 2001, to build a modern, competitive, many-sided, post-colonial economy which is at once national, regional, and global; every word here is pregnant with real meaning. In a mere generation, the ULP has altered the economic paradigm of the previous 237 years, for the better. That paradigm shift, a transformative process, is still ongoing, is being refined, and consolidated in fresh hope, faith, and love, daily, in the people’s interest. It has been, and is, an amazing journey, unprecedented in our country, and with dazzling speed and effectiveness, despite many

challenges, and contradictions, arising from the process itself, the nature and unfairness of the global political economy, and the vulnerabilities of a small island developing state, amidst its strengths and possibilities.

The colonial/amended colonial economy revolved around the following critical foundations: (i) An unlimited supply of cheap, unskilled labour; (2) a low level of applied science and technology in the production processes; (3) subsidies at home and preferential market treatment for exports, mainly agricultural products (centrally at various times: sugar, arrowroot, cotton, banana); (4) a governance apparatus largely unresponsive to the people's concerns; and (5) foreign relations tied unequivocally to the colonial inheritance and modern imperialism/hegemony.

The modern, competitive, many-sided post-colonial economy, has as its central features the following: (1) An abundant supply of skilled labour priced at a competitive level within the changing context of the international division of labour; (2) a high, or hugely enhanced, level of appropriately applied science and technology in the production and distribution of goods and services; (3) competitiveness in the national, regional and global market places for our goods and services, save and except for some limited special niches, in an era where "preferential market treatment" is a thing of the past; (4) a governance apparatus of responsiveness to the people's concerns and responsibility to the people; (5) a foreign relations framework which is independent, non-aligned, and efficacious, and distinctively anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-hegemonic.

ENERGY AND WILL, VISION AND SKILL IN PRACTICE

All the big transformative projects and initiatives of the ULP government were vehemently opposed or rubbished by the opposition NDP, including: The Argyle International Airport; the Modern Port in Kingstown; the Education Revolution; the Modern Medical and Diagnostic Centre; the Rabacca Bridge; the Sir Vincent Beache Stadium for Athletics and Football; the modern Arnos Vale Cricket Stadium; the state-owed Holiday Inn Express and Suites; the successful Housing Initiatives and Programmes, including the no-down payment for housing mortgages at the state-owned National Commercial Bank/BOSVG for public servant, teachers, and police officers; the modern Acute Care Hospital at Arnos Vale; the proposed modern city for Arnos Vale; and SVG's successful bid to sit on the UN Security Council and its holding of the Presidency of CELAC.

Let us take, for example, the energy and will, vision and skill required by a leader to ensure the building of the Argyle International Airport. For 50 years before, politicians of all stripes promised to build an international airport on St. Vincent. If it were easy to be done, someone would have done it before. Vincentians, at home and abroad, longed for it but they settled in their minds that it was an impossible dream. But Comrade Ralph and the ULP thought that the realization of this dream is at hand.

At first, Comrade Ralph explored possible financing from traditional entities: The Caribbean Development Bank; the World Bank, the European Investment Bank, the European Union; and the governments of the USA, Canada, and the United Kingdom — our traditional allies. They all thought that the Comrade was crazy; they all thought that he was “a fabled man from the La Mancha tilting at windmills.” He never gave up on the international airport at Argyle becoming a reality. So, he and his team conceived a creative alternative financing framework: A Compact of the Willing, globally, to build it.

Accordingly, he visited umpteenth countries, knocked on dozens of doors, and spoke to dozens of leaders. He put together an improbable coalition of countries which assisted in accordance with their means and extent of solidarity: Cuba (under Fidel and Raul); Venezuela (under Chavez and Maduro); Taiwan (under Presidents Chen and Ma); Trinidad and Tobago (under Patrick Manning); Mexico (under President Fox); Turkey (under Erdogan); Iran (under President Ahmadinejad); Libya (under Muammar Ghaddafi); Georgia (under President Saakashvili); Austria (under the Social Democrats). Financial support came, too, from the CARICOM Development Fund, and Vincentians at home and in the diaspora. Locally, we were creative with some resources from the National Insurance Services, the First Caribbean Bank, and the local branch of the Bank of Nova Scotia (utilising credit facilities of the Export-Import financing from Canada to finance the Airport Tower). We established the International Airport Development Company (IADC) under the leadership of a talented Vincentian, Dr. Rudy Matthias, to build the airport; we founded the state-owned National Properties company as an important plank for airport financing. After the airport (aerodrome and terminal building) was constructed, we sought and obtained loans through the Export-Import financing mechanisms of the governments of the USA and the United Kingdom. At every stage we engaged the regulatory body, the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority (ECCAA).

For starters, we had to move two mountains and two sizeable hills; fill four valleys; span a stream and a river; put in sea and river defences; remove and cause to be built elsewhere 140 middle-and-upper-middle income houses; remove a small hotel and two guest houses/apartment buildings; remove a church and a cemetery and cause them to be built elsewhere; remove and secure the historic petroglyphs of the Callinago and Garifuna.

Through all this and more, the NDP and their fellow-travelers opposed us; traduced us; vilified Comrade Ralph in and out of Parliament; mocked him as a man fit for the mental asylum; conspired against him with the vilest and even criminal falsehoods; petitioned foreign entities not to support the Comrade and his alleged “airport madness”; accused the Comrade falsely of corruption on the airport project; and so forth. Amidst all this bile, anger, falsehoods, conspiracies, and more, against Comrade Ralph and the airport project, he never wavered, he was never uncertain. Never has a political leader been so pilloried for doing a

transformative good for his country. Lorraine Friday averred, dismissively, that in building a beautiful, high-quality airport, that the Comrade had “champagne taste but mauby pocket.” Opne week before the airport opened in Februayr 2017, Friday in a most unpatriotic and stupid act, wrote to ECCAA to stop the opening on spurious grounds; he was mightily ignored.

The airport project cost EC \$750 million to build, including grants, in-kind assistance and loans, all accounted for; today we owe under EC \$200 million.

A similar opposition barrage against the Comrade and the ULP government was evident on all the other transformative capital projects, including from foreign investors such as those for the massively important Sandals Resort, and the Rainforest Fish Processing Complex at Calliaqua.

TOWARDS A SIXTH TERM

A political novice, and raging opportunist, currently in the NDP has screamed hysterically as an infantile school boy that “Ralph can’t even run a single”. Why should he when he has the biggest six to hit — a sixth consecutive term. Only one general dey inna de yard!

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