

UPP TIMES

The Progressive Voice of the People



United Progressive Party Newsletter Vol 4

February 10, 2019

A MONUMENTAL DISTRACTION

It has been announced by Government that the procedure in which the annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure are presented in the House of Assembly will be changed and is being hailed by some as a “Monumental Change”. From what we understand, the ministers along with their permanent secretary and technocrats of the ministry are to be quizzed by other ministers, backbenchers and the Opposition Leader on their plans to spend money allocated.

The real shift which has occurred is that for the first time the Civil Servants have been brought to Parliament within the centre of a political debate to answer questions publicly from politicians. This is absolutely wrong. The United Progressive Party expects to hear from the Trade Union Movement and all Civil Servants should take note.

Barbados has centered its stability on a civil service that is apolitical and that can be expected to carry out its duties no matter which political party assumes office. This change will for the first time put the Barbados Civil Servant in a position where he or she may be considered political if they defend Government policy too strenuously; or may be seen to be unsupportive of Government policy if he or she does not come across as enthusiastic. On the one occasion where we expect to see ministers demonstrate a command of their portfolio, they have chosen to hide behind Civil Servants.

Bringing the civil servant within Parliament in the very maelstrom of the political debate is a grave error. It must be seen for what it is - a frontal attack on the institution of the Public Service. This move will bring no greater transparency in Government. Meanwhile, the more effective Integrity in Public Life Bill still languishes in a Joint Select Committee of Parliament; the Government still has no growth strategy; there is still no transparency at Coverley; and the catalyst for

“..because the ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do.”

- Steve Jobs



Estimates of Expenditure and Revenues to be presented this week in Parliament

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A Virtual No-Growth Pattern

With the Estimates debate about to take national prominence in a few days, the economic position of the country will again come to the fore. The United Progressive Party has lamented the fact that the Government had put in place austerity measures which Barbadians would suffer for 15 years but with no growth strategy in sight.

Worse yet, the recent Central Bank economic projections for 2019 predicts no growth. Comparatively, the Caribbean Development Bank projects that region will see 2% positive growth in 2019. The CB report further indicated that economic activity contracted by 0.5 per cent during the first nine months of 2018. In the last quarter the country's economy had contracted a further 0.1 per cent. The UPP has been of the view that Debt Restructuring alone would not cause Barbados to emerge from this economic crisis.

This crisis is already being felt by many people. It is no excuse to say that all 26 Cabinet members were dealing with the IMF. The IMF plan which the BLP accepted was not much different from the IMF plan which the DLP was seeking to implement.

When growth is so anemic in your country one would think that a growth strategy would be of equal importance as debt restructuring. Is it that the Government has neither the energy nor the intellect to undertake this task? Anyone running a household in Barbados would know that borrowing money to pay your light bill ultimately requires that you earn money to pay back the loan. Unless you plan to default again as a strategy! Let's hope they are up to the task, for all our sake.

On a Point of Order



The introduction of Ministers' question time in pursuit of transparency might not be as great a development as one might have imagined. It is actually not unusual for opposition members and backbenchers to take Ministers to task and this has been done on several occasions in the Barbados Parliament. So this is nothing new. Neither will it improve transparency.

CRIME ON OUR MINDS

In January 2019 we witnessed an alarming increase in instances of gun related crime. We wish to extend our deepest sympathies to all those who have been affected by this recent spate of violence.



The UPP called a press conference to make recommendations for resolution. We understand that the Royal Barbados Police Force has initiated a number of measures to address rising crime and we commend them for their efforts. While in the past gun related crime seemed to have been limited to those who engaged in some level of criminal activity themselves, recently it has spilled over into the society to affect ordinary Barbadians carrying on their ordinary lives.

The United Progressive Party recommends reducing some of the matters before the Court by implementing community mediation to resolve conflicts between neighbours and family, to resolve matters of maintenance of children; and in addition to introduce an administrative ticketing system for minor traffic offences. This would leave the Court free to deal with many of the more pressing issues before it.

Two key policy platforms of the Progressive Party are education reform and rebuilding our communities. These are long term solutions but must be pursued with equal vigour as those which might satiate our immediate hunger for action.

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