



The Prime Minister  
St. Vincent and the Grenadines  
West Indies

January 25, 2022

Mr. Cyprian Neehall  
Editor  
"The Vincentian" Newspaper  
**Kingstown**

*Dear Cyp*

**RE: SLOPPY JOURNALISM AND DEFAMATION**

Repeatedly, in recent years, The Vincentian newspaper, under your editorship, has done something remarkable: It has enhanced, markedly, its proclivities for sloppy journalism, untruths, and routine defamatory comments. The most recent example is in your newspaper's issue of Friday, January 1, 2022, on page 5 thereof, under the caption "Former MP Questions Speaker and CMO's Role". The "news" story signals that it was written by one "KH" who presumably is one of your journalists, Kenville Horne. It is a story based on a Facebook posting by the former member of Parliament for North Leeward, Roland "Patel" Matthews.

The relevant part of the "news" story of which I complain quotes Patel Mathews as follows:-

*"As PM Ralph had to come in contact with all the persons who tested positive. The question is, why isn't the PM isolated for a few days until it is certain that he doesn't have COVID.*

*"Instead, he is in Parliament behaving like a school yard bully. What does this say about the Speaker who isolated herself because of coming into contact herself with an infected person? Furthermore, where is the CMO [Chief Medical Officer] in all this drama? After all PM Ralph says he speaks to the CMO for advice, at least three or four times per day. There is a law for some people but this doesn't apply to Ralph Gonsalves. He is higher than the law of the land."*

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Let us deconstruct this briefly. First, the idea of a newspaper regurgitating a Facebook post as though it is gospel, offends the very basics of objective journalism. Secondly, your journalist did not report on any comment which any of the relevant persons in the article (the Speaker, the CMO, and the PM) made in response to any queries posed to them by your journalist; there was no such comment because he failed and or refused to ask the Speaker, the CMO, and the PM about Matthews' allegations dressed up as facts. I happen to know that Matthews is wrong and misleading in his Facebook post. It is pure partisan political bile, of an infantile kind. For example, I know that Matthews' representation of the Speaker's situation is quite misleading.

The facts in relation to me are as follows: On Saturday, January 8, 2022, parliamentary representatives Saboto Caesar and Curtis King, tested positive for COVID on PCR tests done on Palm Island. On Sunday January 9, 2022, I tested negative on a PCR test on Palm Island where Saboto, Curtis, and I attended the wedding of Carlos James, the man who defeated "Patel" Matthews in North Leeward in the general elections of November 5, 2020. A negative PCR for vaccinated persons [I am vaccinated with two doses each of the Sputnik and Pfizer vaccines] was required within forty-eight hours prior to Parliament's meeting on Monday January 10, 2022, at 4:00 p.m., as per the approved protocol by the Speaker and the CMO.

Further, as required by the protocol, I took a rapid antigen test every morning — at the Official Residence of the Prime Minister — in that parliamentary week for the Budget Debate [Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (when there was no meeting), and Friday]; on each occasion I tested negative. On the post-lunch resumption of Parliament on Wednesday, January 12, 2022, at 5:30 p.m., the Speaker determined, upon the CMO's advice, that every member of the House be tested on the PCR after Jimmy Prince tested positive in the luncheon period subsequent to the Leader of the Opposition's response to Camillo's budget speech on Monday evening (January 10<sup>th</sup>). The Opposition members refused to be tested, and did not return to the House on Wednesday evening. All the remaining members on the government side (Attorney General, Carlos James, Orlando Brewster, Keisal Peters, Ashelle Morgan and Ralph) tested negative on the PCR. On the advice of the CMO and the Speaker, I moved the suspension of Parliament, to enable the relevant personnel to sanitise the building; I moved the suspension of the House until Friday morning (January 14<sup>th</sup>). All the tests done on me were on the advice of the CMO, and they were communicated to the Speaker.

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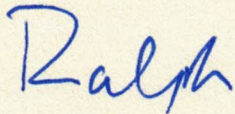
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Clearly, as Prime Minister and Leader of the House, I wanted to know that on every day I was tested negative (PCR or rapid), particularly in view of the enforced absence of Camillo (Minister of Finance) and Montgomery Daniel (Deputy Prime Minister). I never offended any protocol in relation to testing, and I broke no law. For your newspaper to repeat "Patel" Matthews' defamation of me that I broke the law, is itself an offending republication of the defamation. Had your journalist asked me, I would have answered, as always.

My Dear Cyp, is this the level now of your newspaper's journalism?

Sincerely yours,



Dr. The Hon. Ralph E. Gonsalves  
Prime Minister

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