

# **ULP CONVENTION 2024: A MASSIVE SUCCESS**

**BY**

**UNITY LABOUR PARTY**

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## **THE FACTS**

On Sunday November 24, 2024, the Unity Labour Party (ULP) held its National Convention at the Bethel High School, Campden Park. The huge expansive hall at Bethel was jam-packed to overflowing with over 1,300 delegates present, inside, at the time when its Political Leader, Comrade Ralph, rose to speak at 11:40 a.m.; outside the hall, there were some 400 delegates, decked out in battle-red, who were unable to get in, but they stayed there all day.

It was an amazing turn-out of ULP comrades. The internal rules of the ULP call for 20 delegates per constituency, but the surge of political support for the party on the ground made those rules irrelevant. Every constituency in St. Vincent sent delegates way in excess of the number of required delegates. Even the two Grenadines constituencies exceeded the number of delegates, mandated by the rules.

There were particularly massive turnouts from the constituencies of North Leeward, South Central Windward, East St. George, North Windward, East Kingstown, Central Leeward, Marriaqua, North Central Windward and South Leeward. West St. George and South Windward recorded delegates almost three times the requisite constitutional numbers. The Humble African's absence- he was away on state business – did not dampen the spirits or numbers from South Windward. Central Kingstown and West Kingstown had more than twice the requisite number of delegates.

Given the inclemency of the weather across SVG, which occasioned a later than advertised start of the Convention, the commitment, passion, and energy of the ULP comrades in their turnout were hugely impressive.

Of great significance were the large numbers of young delegates from every constituency. They provided a lift, and amazing energy, to the proceedings which buoyed the spirits of the older comrades. Overwhelmingly, women turned out to support their ULP which has delivered so much to women, their children, their families, and which promises to deliver more in the future.

At the “Open Forum” in the closed session of the Convention, twenty-four delegates spoke. They commended the ULP, Comrade Ralph and the Ministers on their excellent work for the people of SVG; they also raised queries about a number of issues, including post-Beryl housing, roads, and candidates for particular constituencies.

The “Open Forum” thanked Comrade Montgomery Daniel for his tremendous contribution to the people of North Windward and to SVG generally, especially in the areas of housing, lands, roads, bridges, education, health, and social protection.

### **EMERGING FACES**

At the Convention, two outstanding stars emerged in the people’s affection — Dr. Grace Walters of North Windward and Keisal Melissa Peters of West Kingstown. They joined the pantheon of other ULP stars: Comrade Ralph, Montgomery, Curtis, Saboto, Camillo, Orando, Carlos, Gustus, Jimmy, Grenville, Benarva, Shackell, and Ashelle — a veritable galaxy for the present and the future. It was great to see at the Convention Chevonne Stewart, a distinguished health professional from the Southern Grenadines, who hails from the Stewart family in Union Island and the De Roche family in Canouan; she mingled well with the delegates from the Southern Grenadines. So, too, was the presence of Rodan John, a young man from South Windward and on the staff of the Community College, who is completing the field work for his PhD in information technology/computer science at a university in Taiwan; he holds a Bachelors and Masters degree in these subject areas; the delegates from South Windward interacted well with him. The popular Marvin Fraser of Paul’s Avenue, former president of the SVG Football Federation, who assisted in mobilising delegates from Central Kingstown, sent a warm message to the party’s leadership; he was unwell and could not attend. Carlos Williams of the Northern Grenadines whose yeoman endeavours in Bequia, post-Beryl, came in for high commendation from the delegates of the Northern Grenadines. And the young veteran, Rhodes Scholar, economist, mathematician, and lawyer, Luke Browne, beamed with delight among the delegates from East Kingstown.

Before the end of January 2025, it is expected that most, if not all of the candidates, would be formally endorsed in the relevant councils of the ULP.

The Political Leader, in his comments in the closed session, predicted that Grace Walters and Keisal Peters would ignite, big time, the ULP’s election campaign. This “Amazing Grace” has been in service to the people of North Windward and SVG for over twenty years as a Staff Nurse, specialist in Midwifery, and Hospital

Administrator. She holds a Masters Degree in Nursing, a Masters Degree in Nursing Administration, and a PhD in Hospital Management. The people of North Windward are saying “Gomery had led us safe thus far, and Grace will lead us home.”

Keisals Peters who hails from the bosom of the working people excelled at Girls’ High School, the University of the West Indies, and the Hugh Wooding Law School. She practiced law successfully for ten years at the esteemed Law Chambers of Stanley “Stalkey” John before joining the ULP government in 2020. She is a talented singer and convivial personality. She distinguished herself as Foreign Minister for nearly four years, and is now doing impressive work as Minister of National Mobilisation, post-Beryl. She has Daniel Cummings on the ropes in West Kingstown; he hysterically attacks this beautiful black woman, an exemplar of our Caribbean civilisation, in the most demeaning and crazy manner. Cummings will pay for all this next election.

The ULP’s electoral slate for 2025 is shaping up as among the best ever offered to the people of SVG!

### **COMRADE RALPH’S SPEECH**

At the open session of the Convention, Comrade Ralph delivered a wide-ranging, though focused, speech which lasted about 90 minutes or so. A central aspect of the speech was sketched at the beginning: The ULP has done magnificent work thus far, for the people of SVG, especially for the working people, but the tasks are not yet complete; more work is left to be done. He quoted, without attribution, the majestic dialect poem of the Jamaican/British poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson, entitled “Di Anfinish Revalueshan”:

*“histri bigga dan mi an yu yu know  
time cyan steal but it can heal  
soh shake di dew from out yu hed  
wipe di cobweb from yu face  
we gat nuff work fi dhu  
far wi no reach mount Zion  
yet.”*

Comrade Ralph proceeded to provide details for his seven factual assertions:

- (i) Labour is working!
- (ii) SVG and its people are far better off today than ever before in every material particular of governance, life, living, and production despite multiple challenges, limitations, and weaknesses.
- (iii) SVG is on the right track under the ULP. To be sure, there are dissatisfactions but the satisfactions are real and growing, and the future is promising, encouraging, hopeful under the ULP. We looking good. And perfection must not be made the enemy of the good. Love, faith, and fresh hope are the watchwords of the ULP. The Comrade bolstered his declarations with a quotation from Paul's Letter to the Philippians [Chapter 4, verses 10-14] which includes the telling line: "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Let us not therefore forget how far we have come in real progress; too far to turn back now.
- (iv) The ULP is stronger than ever, our support is firmer and greater than ever. The ULP has the vision, the philosophy, the policies, the programmes, the organisation, the unity, the quality team and the leadership to lift SVG higher, always in communion with the people and the genius resident in them. No other political party, entity, or organisation in SVG or the Caribbean possesses those vital elements for progressive upliftment to the same extent as the ULP. We are simply the best. We know it; and everyone else knows it; in their hearts the NDP people know it, too, but they do not want to accept it. The ULP is on track to score a victory on the scale of 2001.
- (v) The ULP has been the most successful political party ever in SVG both in terms of electoral triumphs, and towering achievements for the people of SVG.
- (vi) The ULP has led SVG for almost 24 years of the 45 years of our country's reclamation of independence in 1979 — more than one-half of the time. Indeed, since the era of internal self-government in 1969, 55 years ago, Labour (the SVG Labour Party and its successor, the ULP) has led the country for 37 of those years, or more than two-thirds of the time since 1969. SVG is Labour country. And around us, the massive developments and modernization are almost exclusively the handiwork of labour.

- (vii) We pray always, not to leave behind any unfinished task. Thus, our rightful quest for a 6<sup>th</sup> term whenever the elections are called next year.

Within this frame, our Comrade Leader detailed the major favourable outcomes for our people under the ULP in every area of governmental activities, including its alteration of the colonial/amended colonial economic paradigm into one of a modern, competitive, many-sided post-colonial economy that is at once national, regional, and global. The Comrade detailed the central policy and programmatic initiatives of the ULP government.

The Comrade stressed that these phenomenal achievements were chalked up despite the challenges and limitations, namely:

- (i) The limitations in the resource base of a small island developing state;
- (ii) The historical legacies of underdevelopment (native genocide, the enslavement of African bodies, indentureship, colonialism);
- (iii) The contemporary challenges of the global political economy dominated by monopoly capitalism (unfair trade arrangements, collapse of the preferential market for our bananas in the UK, crises in monopoly capitalism and their knock-on effects, and impactful global conflicts, etc.);
- (iv) Public health epidemics from overseas such as SARS and COVID-19;
- (v) Climate change issues (hurricanes, storms, landslides, droughts);
- (vi) Internal challenges and dissonances (mindless and unpatriotic opposition, activities of a criminally-minded minority, and volcanic eruptions).

Comrade Ralph sketched the towering achievements in 2024 alone, despite Hurricane Beryl of July 1, 2024. He discussed, broadly, the successful, ongoing Post-Beryl recovery and reconstruction. He outlined, too, some big-ticket items in the offing for the 2025 Budget and the visionary project for the development of the area of the existing Port Kingstown linked to a modern city in Arnos Vale by a tunnel under Cane Garden Point. Still, as always, he emphasised the necessity and desirability to get the small things right.

The Comrade rubbished the possibility of the NDP as a credible alternative. He pointed to their weak, lazy, and ineffectual leadership; their absence of a

connected vision and any compelling developmental narrative; their poor team and their internal confusion/divisiveness; their opportunism and backwardness. The Comrade tore to bits their proposals to reduce VAT by about 20 percent, to shift from Taiwan to China, and their renegade proposal to sell our passports and citizenship. He showed how these proposals would make things worse for ordinary folks; these proposals of the NDP will benefit in the case of VAT reduction the supermarket owners and merchants; in the case of selling passports/citizenship, the benefit would go to the vagabonds overseas and in SVG; shifting relations from Taiwan is plain nonsense which the people do not support.

In contrast, Comrade Ralph emphasised the realisation of a 6<sup>th</sup> term for the ULP based on its record of achievements, its policies and programmes, its quality leadership and quality team, its bolstered party organisation at all levels, and its preparations for general elections.

### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

In the Closed Session of the Convention, the leading officers of the Party were re-elected for two more years: Chairman – Edwin Snagg; Deputy Chairman – Curtis King; Political Leader – Comrade Ralph; Deputy Political Leader – Montgomery Daniel.

### **RAMPED UP PREPARATIONS**

Over the last two weeks, the ULP held its National Council (548 delegates); a retreat of its Central Executive (40 members); and its National Convention (1,700 delegates). Currently, the ULP is preparing the Estimates for 2025 to be laid, and passed, in Parliament before Christmas 2024; the Budget is early January 2025. The ULP bird with its two wings (political and governmental) is in full flight. Watch this space!