

ROLLING OUT THE VISION BEFORE OUR VERY EYES

BY

UNITY LABOUR PARTY

THE ISSUE

The people-centred vision of the Unity Labour Party (ULP) for the upliftment of SVG is being rolled out, day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year, before our very eyes.

Over 23 years ago, on March 28, 2001, the people of SVG first elected the ULP to govern our nation. Since then, at five-year intervals (2005, 2015, 2020) a free people, in free and fair elections, have re-elected our great party to government under the leadership of Comrade Ralph. The Comrade has been the longest-serving Prime Minister not only in the history of SVG, but also in the entire political history of our Caribbean.

The fundamental tenets under which the ULP has been repeatedly elected to government revolve around the following:

- (i) A people-centred vision to uplift SVG as a whole and all our people in their lives, living, and production.
- (ii) The further ennoblement of our Caribbean civilisation, and its magnificent Vincentian component, in every material particular.
- (iii) The building of an integrated, wholesome society upon the basis of the philosophy of advanced social democracy as applied to our own circumstances.

- (iv) The pursuance of a quest to build a modern, competitive, many-sided post-colonial economy which is at once local, national, regional, and global. This quest is to be grounded, among other things, upon a cohesive tripartite economic approach involving the private, cooperative, and state sectors.
- (v) The delivery of good governance, inclusive of an alive constitutionalism; transparent, accountable, responsible, and effective government; and the bolstering of citizen security.
- (vi) The promotion of a mature regionalism through the relevant Caribbean and hemispheric organisations.
- (vii) The elaboration and implementation of a progressive, effective foreign policy within the interest of our people's humanisation.
- (viii) The fashioning of appropriate policies and programmes to deliver uplifting outcomes in every area of governmental activity for the benefit of the people as a whole.

As reflected in the results of the last five general elections, the people have bought into the ULP's uplifting vision and its accompanying tenets of governance, and have expressed confidence in the ULP's performance in government.

To be sure, at times, some of the people have hesitated or even disapproved of aspects of our vision and performance; that is understandable in a free and democratic society. But, at every turn, on a careful weighing of all the circumstances and options, the people, as a whole, have endorsed the ULP's vision, philosophy, quest, policies and programmes. We remind ourselves that even some of the Hebrew people under the leadership of the great Moses and God's covenant, grumbled in much dissatisfaction and

contention on their journey from slavery in Egypt to the promised land! Some, such as Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rose up against Moses; they even falsely accused him of “lording over the people”, and corruption. The God of Abraham helped to vanquish and destroy those oppositionists.

MORE THAN ONE-HALF OF OUR JOURNEY

The ULP under Comrade Ralph has led our blessed nation, thus far, for more than one-half of our country’s forty-five years since our reclamation of independence. We have built massively upon the base bequeathed to us by Ebenezer Joshua’s PPP (1957 – 1967), by Milton Cato’s Labour governments of (1967 – 1972; 1974-1984) and some efforts of the NDP administration (1984-2001) under James Mitchell and Arnhim Eustace.

The impressive achievements of our country under the ULP government (March 2001 – March 2024, thus far) are there for all to see including in the following areas: Economic growth and transformation of real significance; job and wealth creation; poverty reduction, enhanced safety nets and social security; the Education, Health, and Housing Revolutions; Water, Electricity, Information Technology; Airports and Seaports; Roads, Bridges, Sea and Air Defences; Disaster Preparedness and Resilience; Culture, the Arts, and Sports; Good Governance and Citizen Security; the Empowerment of Women and Young Persons; the Uplifting of the Working People and Peasantry; the Protection and Promotion of the Disadvantaged and Marginalised; Mature Regionalism; and a Progressive, Effective Foreign Policy.

Some basic indicators tell the compelling story: Nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at Market Prices rose from EC \$750 million in 2000 to over \$3 billion in 2024; annual per capita GDP increased from \$7,000 to almost \$30,000; actual employees (active registered workers) increased on the NIS roll from 30,000 in the year 2000 to some 44,000 in 2023 even as the total population remained basically

flat; poverty and indigence have fallen sharply; the Human Development Index (HDI) has moved sharply upwards from a Middle Level HDI to a High Level HDI according to the United Nations Development Programme; the housing stock increased from under 30,000 houses in 2001 to over 46,000 houses in 2023; water and electricity were in 70 percent of the houses in 2001, but are in 98 percent of the houses in 2024; only 39 percent of the 12-year olds have been in secondary schools in 2001, but all 12-year olds have been in secondary schools since 2005; only a handful of young people were at college and university in 2001, but over 4,000 are enrolled today; wages are up sharply; inflation is low; and so on and so forth. You get the message of progress! Yet the oppositionists' negatives continue to be uttered, falsely, wickedly, and maliciously!

HUGE ADVANCES ON-GOING

In every area of government activity there are huge advances ongoing. The recent (May 2024) IMF Concluding Statement on the usual Article IV Consultation praised the economic performance of, and favourable outlook for, SVG. Our economy has been one of the top performers in the Caribbean in the last four years (2021, 2022, 2023, 2024); this year real economic growth is forecast at 4.9 percent; and next year, the projection is for over 3.5 percent. Capital expenditure is rising; so, too, current revenues. Private sector investment especially in tourism and construction are at an all-time high. SVG is attracting investors and visitors as never before. Big things ah gwaan!

DOWNSIDE RISKS

There are downside risks, mainly externally-sourced: Deleterious impacts of climate change; dangers arising from contradictions and upheavals in the global economy; and knock-on effects from global political turmoil.

Two downside risks are internally-sourced: (i) Demographics: An ageing population and too few births from women aged 25-35 years; (ii) Criminal misbehaviour, especially crimes of violence by a handful of young males.

Both of these are multi-faceted challenges and demand all-of-society approaches, not merely governmental intervention. It is to be welcomed that people are living longer, but a population replenishment and sustenance require an average per woman of 2.1 births; the current average is way below this. It is evident that the Education Revolution, rising living standards, and modernity have impacted negatively on the birth rate in SVG.

The arresting of violent crimes demands active, optimal involvement of the family, schools, churches, the communities, the media, music and culture, non-governmental organisations, regional and global institutions, and the State. This is a complex issue requiring ongoing dedicated work all around. There is no quick-fix to this behavioural anomie by a small group of young, alienated males. But we see signs of progress here. And SVG remains a safe place in which to live, work, and visit, despite anti-patriotic falsehoods to the contrary.

OPTIMISM AHEAD

There is great optimism for the continued upliftment of our people despite the downside risks, aforementioned. The ULP is performing quite well and is on track for a sixth consecutive term in office by the end of 2025. The people are saying: “Always ULP for SVG!”

Further, the people will never vote for a backward outfit like the NDP to be in government; moreover, the people will never countenance the election of the Canadian Lorraine Friday though born in Bequia, as a leader of SVG! Never!!