

An Opportunity in Dominica for Civil Society's Influence in National Policy Formulation

by Mona George-Dill

What ever politicians may say, however eloquently they may say it, we must remember that the resolve of politicians, given powerful foreign influences, can only be as good as We the People, the civil society, ensure. Remember the old saying "people get the government they deserve".

If we are going to take the position "my party forever - right or wrong" or "Minister So and So said it so eloquently so I believe him" and sit back and expect him to fulfil his promises then WE are setting the right conditions for a dictatorship, and a national policy which favours powerful foreign interests at the expense of our own.

Remember, the foreign interest does not leave it up to the will of the politician, he designs a system of encounters and pay-offs which will ensure his success. They call that lobbying. WE therefore CANNOT leave it to the politician, or for that matter, to the "Opposition" either. Under the present system THEY ALSO have Party interest axes to grind - frequently at the expense of the nation.

It is time that we wisen up and make it OUR responsibility to be each other's guardians (keepers), guiding each other towards the national goal. Dominica's national goal should (ideally) be painstakingly designed and pursued by the whole nation - including Dominicans overseas. They also have an important part to play.

For the national goal to be implemented effectively, people should align themselves with interest groups. Members should define the mandate of the group, monitor the group's activities and the content and manner in which it represents its members. It is the representatives of these groupings which will interact officially with the national decision-making system mainly at pre-determined periods.

After 21 years of independence Dominica is yet to design a democratic system that works for us, we are still a young nation. I see Dominica's current coalition situation (a new one to the Caribbean) as an attempt at fulfilling the prophesy which says "a little child shall lead them." Geologically, Dominica is the youngest island in the Caribbean - if not one of the youngest lands in the world. In terms of size it is "little". The boyish and unpretentious presentations of our new leader adds to this fresh, youthful aura of the nation. Someone just came in and told me he feels energised like he had a re-birth since the elections results and the follow-up discussions. I could also talk about the spirituality of the land itself but perhaps this is not the right time or place.

What I am trying to say by all this is that the opportunity has presented itself for us to grasp that illusive thing we call "unification". Let us stop the tearing down. I am short tempered and guilty of the hasty responses myself as can be seen from some of my messages, and I am not in the least bit pretending at holiness, but I can know an opportunity when I see one.

What I see is a nation of loving beautiful people who have been through slavery to colonisation to political exploitation. (But it must be mentioned that there was a short enabling period during the Premiership of E.O. LeBlanc). This nation is being given a chance to forge its own direction. We should not lose sight of this.

Even if the politicians are speaking with "forked tongues" let us call their bluff. When they say what is correct for them to say, instead of doubting, we should take them seriously and MAKE THEM TAKE THEMSELVES SERIOUSLY. Do we care enough to see this through? The answer lies with me and you.

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