

# Everyone a Tipping Point for Good

## A response to Dominica's Rising Crime Rate September 17, 2006

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Every reasonable Dominican can agree that our crime rate is rising in manner which is unacceptable. Our people have been known as generally peaceful and law abiding. Yet, today, we are faced with a torrent of bad news born of criminal activity amongst our citizens, and against visitors to our beloved homeland. It is for that reason, that we must examine the root of the problem and follow the suggestions outlined below.

### **How to Avoid a Breakdown of the Social Order:**

Dominica has a history of violence born of colonial subjugation of the native people and enslavement of Africans. However, we also have a noble history of resistance to such violence. We built a system of social democracy in Dominica as a result of the trade union uprisings which shook the Caribbean in the 1930s, and led to the growth of working class parties which brought access to opportunity for the vast majority of our citizens. It is for that reason of fulfilled expectations, we have known social peace. That is not to ignore the turbulent 1970s of the Dread War or the Black Power movement. Surely, those events exposed that we were still not a perfect society. Indeed, those movements – whatever quarrels we may have with the methods they espoused – sought to address social ills of what was an inequitable society. That considered, each generation has a duty to ensure that life will be improved; better than that which preceded it. However, progress is not certain: we make progress happen by the positive action taken to build a better Dominica

To avoid social disorder we must define the root of the problems, and build up the resources necessary to resolve the problem. If we do not resolve the problem of crime, we will not have the social peace without which development is impossible.

### **The Problems Defined**

#### **Too Much Negative TV Viewing - Garbage In – Garbage Out!**

We are in a time of computers. Programmers will tell you that if you enter garbage into a computer that is exactly what you will get out of it: Garbage! It is for that reason we must re-examine the role of TV in our society. Has it been helpful or healthy where we inundated with media garbage? Our young people

who are fed on such garbage end up with depraved mind and mimic the same behavior they see on screen.

### **Too Much Abuse of Marijuana, Other Drugs & Alcohol:**

Let us be frank: Marijuana use is chronic among too many of our people. Even some professionals who should know better use the drug or have become apologist for its use. As a result we have a generation who are operating at a low level of culture and who cannot learn the skills needed to operate in a competitive world. Our society must therefore fight the scourge of marijuana and other drug use, by engaging in a massive education campaign. Those who speak of the medicinal values of the marijuana plant must first get a PhD in pharmacological engineering and then isolate that which is good in the plant under the best scientific conditions, prior to being given any credit for the utility of the plant. If they can do that, as opposed to simply sit by the roadside doing nothing, they may be worthy of a hearing. Otherwise, they are a danger to themselves and our community. Remember, simply because marijuana is a plant does not make it good. There are poisonous plants and the use and abuse of marijuana has been poisonous to our society.

### **The Impact on the Mind**

Marijuana use reduces learning ability. Research has been piling up of late demonstrating clearly that **marijuana limits the capacity to absorb and retain information**. A 1995 study of college students discovered that the inability of heavy marijuana users to focus, sustain attention, and organize data persists for as long as 24 hours after their last use of the drug. Earlier research, comparing cognitive abilities of adult marijuana users with non-using adults, **found that users fall short on memory as well as math and verbal skills**. Although it has yet to be proven conclusively that heavy marijuana use can cause irreversible loss of intellectual capacity, animal studies have shown marijuana-induced structural damage to portions of the brain essential to memory and learning.

### **The Impact on the Body**

**Chronic marijuana smokers are prey to chest colds, bronchitis, emphysema, and bronchial asthma.** Persistent use will damage lungs and airways and raise the risk of cancer. There is just as much exposure to cancer-causing chemicals from smoking one marijuana joint as smoking five tobacco cigarettes. And there is evidence that marijuana may limit the ability of the immune system to fight infection and disease.

### **Alcoholism**

It is noble to defer. That we have a brewery and some rum distilleries in Dominica is no license to abuse alcohol. We now drink too much in Dominica. We need to cut down on the consumption of beer and rum. The abuse of alcohol has robbed our savings accounts of monies that could have been better spent on books and business development. Every adult should commit to drinking less or not at all.

We now have more vagrants on our streets because of drug use and alcoholism. The damaged state of these citizens makes them agents for criminal behavior. They are non-productive and prone to committing robbery and burglaries

## **Too little Civic Training**

One cannot compete if one is not practiced and learned in the particular field. What have we done in twenty five years of independence to build up a Civic Leadership? Civics must be taught, practiced, learned. How much focus have we had on that subject at schools or in the wider society? Very little. Most of our prominent civic leaders are still from the colonial period where they learnt such skills as community service; even where the colonial tradition had its limitations. However, we have no regular TV production of Dominica centered themes where leadership in our community is shown at work. We have no serious national civics text book in our schools and as a result most young people have a poor sense of commitment to Dominica. Most of them do not participate in the Civic community organizations, such as cubs, guides, cadets, scouts, youth groups. Even the student federation and student councils are now dormant. The lack of strong communities is the result of an absence of Civic values among the masses.

### **Solutions:**

By forging ahead with the solutions noted below, we can arrive at a tipping point for good. Every citizen will have to play a part. This is a work that we must do, starting on the basis of individual initiative and commitment. Once committed on an individual basis then we will have to form organizations, or join those already existing, to play our part. This is about saving Dominica from a descent into the failed state status that rampant crime brings.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH COMMITTEES:**



We must look out for our neighbors. If we do not look out for our neighbors who will look out for us? Point out criminals in our midst. We know who they are. Try to guide them. Yes, we are a compassionate people so I say:

Try to talk to them. Try to steer the delinquents onto the right path. However, do not be afraid to report them, where they commit crime. Where you shield them or make excuses for them, you are actually harming them and the whole society. Where they will not take warning and guidance then we must make sure they feel the full weight of the law.

Neighborhood Watch Committees are a form of community policing, as the committee members will work with local police to make their communities safer. They will have regular forums with their police partners to educate everyone on crime prevention techniques.

To that end, we will provide information on how to form neighborhood watch committees in each town and village in our lovely Dominica...

## **Annual Moonlight Walk against Crime**

We cannot let the robbers steal the night from us, and have us be prisoners in our homes.

From now on, we will have an **Annual Moonlight Walk against Crime**. Maybe we may have to have it every quarter. In the old days, people went out on moonlight walks and strengthened their friendships. . We have forgotten those island traditions. TV watching now has us cooped up in our homes and we have lost the sense of neighborhood. By walking together at night, having a small gathering at a street corner or park, patrolling our neighborhood, we can restore our sense of neighborhood. This is a form of collective security.

## **Clean Communities**

Studies show that where communities are clean, crime tends to be low. Cleanliness is next to Godliness. It shows we care. Therefore the Neighborhood Watch Committees must concern themselves with making sure the neighborhood is clean. They must raise funds to each have wheelbarrows, brooms, spades, rakes and dustbins to ensure their streets are clean. Our dirty streets make a mockery of our marketing efforts which say we are the Nature Island. Let us really make it the Nature Island we love by showing some respect and getting rid of trash in our communities. So we must rid our neighborhood of garbage; especially empty water bottles. Collective effort in building a clean community will assist the anti-crime drive. We will work to enter a contract with community development and the public works department to fill our potholes as soon as they appear. That way we adopt the motto, "A stitch in time, saves nine." If we fill the potholes quickly, we protect our vehicles and we prevent rain and wheel erosion from making the holes bigger. We will also work to provide decorative plants so that the Neighborhood Watch Committee can plant nice flowers and the like. Crime is ugly. By beautifying our surroundings we make them inhospitable to crime.

Remember, no one can do that for us. We Dominicans must save Dominica ourselves. Let us not let our country fall to the ground.

## **Join a Civic Organization:**

Be it the new Neighborhood Watch Committees, chamber of commerce, Jaycees, Rotary Club, Cubs, Guides, Scouts, Cadets, Special Constables, Red Cross, Social League, Student Council, Village Council, 4H Club; please join a civic organization. Too many people are uninvolved in national development. Development is not a spectator sport. Do not expect the Government to do everything for you. Government is “We the People” doing for each other. Foreign countries and foreign investors will not bring development to us. Rather, we must make development happen by our efforts. All our foreign allies can do is help us. As the Bible says: God helps those who help themselves. So join a Civic organization today. By such team building we can help the delinquent get on track or we can stop him in his tracks.

In particular, we need for the adults in our community to applaud and support the young persons who join the cadet Corp, Scout, Cub, Guide, Pathfinder and other disciplined youth organizations. As the Dominica Cadet Corps is a government sponsored organization, it represents your tax dollars at work. So encourage young cadets in your midst to uphold good values and encourage them by giving them credit where they do well, and cautioning them where you see them engaged in errant behavior. Also encourage them to be part of the leadership in your community. Encourage youngsters who are lazing about to join the Cadets and other disciplined groups as an idle youngster is potential recruit for criminal elements.

## **Truancy Officers and Sanitation Inspectors**

We must bring back Truancy Officer and Sanitation Inspectors. As government has difficulty in raising funds to fill new positions, we may have to appoint already trained officers to fill that role. However, we may have to call on regular citizens to volunteer and Government will provide the training and means. However, the Truancy Officers in each community will keep a register of truant kids and so mitigate the problem of truancy. Sanitation Officers will be guardians for clean surroundings and cite persons where they maintain unsanitary conditions. The magistrate court program for truancy and sanitary hearings will be televised. Such television will educate our people about the law and the importance of complying with it. Such TV is better than the filth coming over TV which does nothing to better our reality.

## **Manners Maketh Man**

Perhaps it is a cliché, but good manners are a hallmark of civilization. Where good manners are on a decline, the society will soon follow. Good manners show that we respect each other. So we must refrain from profanity, untidy dress, nudity in public, and eating and drinking in the street. “Yes, Sir” “No Sir” “Yes Ma’am, No Ma’am” “How can I help you?” “Thank you. Please.” Using those terms do not rob us of anything. In fact they set the conversation on the right path. Let us all commit to having good manners at home, school, at play and at work. And remember how you act among children; children are what they learn.

## **It is a cliché A National Patriotic Education**

How will, as Dominicans, attain victory? Well, it starts with being serious, disciplined, and ethical. Many states greater than ours in the populations and wealth they possess have failed where they lacked such disciplined and ethics. Such disciplined focus on development is what we call Patriotism... A patriot puts Dominica first, not his or her pockets. All of us, including our leaders, must ensure we send the right message. If not, we shall lack the credibility to attack crime. Criminals are classic opportunists: they prey on weaknesses. So, as a people, we must call on the whole society to embrace the concept of NATIONAL PATRIOTIC EDUCATION –NPE!

NPE stands for constantly teaching at schools, the office, and at home, devotion to the needs of the country; particularly in areas of science, arts and superior management of our limited resources. At this time, we have an education curriculum which trains our young for export and which does not impart to them sufficient nationalistic principles which favor service to our country: Dominica. Chinese focus on building China; Germans focus on building Germany. Dominicans, have been brainwashed to focus on building up other peoples countries, and selling out our own. We must change that now, and fast. We do not have the luxury of time. It is that lack of focus which allows Dominicans to abuse fellow Dominicans and visitors, because we have lost self respect. As owners of this country we cannot keep it, or develop it, where we do not respect each other and the communities of which we form part.

Remember crime fighting is not the sole province of the police. We must all play our parts. In so doing, we will defeat the crime problem, while focusing our energies on building up our beautiful homeland, with freedom and justice for all; not just some.

Together we do better!

God Bless Dominica!

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