

Power Sharing in Parliament

by

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Since Parliament is the Seat of Power in democratically elected 'governments', it is only reasonable to expect that all parties represented in Parliament should share this power equitably on a proportional basis. This seems the only logical way to ensure that the people represented by the parties have equal opportunity for full participation in governing their country.

In the case of Dominica, an island state in the Caribbean, of the 21 elected House of Parliament, there are presently 11(Dominica Labour Party), 2(Dominica Freedom Party) and 8(United Workers Party) members. Power should be shared in the following proportion: 10% (DFP), 40% (UWP) and

50% (DLP). Assuming there were 10 ministries, then we should expect 1(DFP) minister, 4(UWP) ministers and 5(DLP) ministers.

There would be a Cabinet comprising all parties with the majority party (DLP) having the Prime Minister and the second party (UWP) having the Deputy Prime Minister.

Now wouldn't this create a Government of national unity where party politics stops at the polls?

When the idea of Power-sharing was presented for discussion on the Message Board, Cakafète.com, one commentator observed:

"I quite follow your logic of proportionality, as it regards a chance, a real chance for the opposition to move beyond mischief making and engage in actually running the country, as opposed to opposing simply for its sake only.

"That can 'only' be accomplished if and when the 'opposition' is given the kind of 'equality' as it entails the right to stamp its thinking, too, on the body politick through those laws that flow out of parliament, and that which ultimately governs the nation.

"That kind of arrangement promises to complete the ownership of government of, for and by the people, akin to what obtains in the United States, where the Constitution informs the political landscape for the 'good' (though not perfect) governance of the people.

"With the US Constitution as the seminal formula for 'good' governance notwithstanding, we simply cannot escape the penchant for latent factionalism that seem to characterize primordial human beings, and that so readily come to the fore once interests are at stake. It is so

remote not to imagine that no matter our best intentions, common interests will always engender a herd mentality, made obvious through factions, interests groups and partisanship.

"On the question of whether or not the existing system serves us well, the problem is, I believe, one of education - or the lack thereof. Not to cast blame, but there's a malady, as old as the inglorious remains of slavery, afflicting us in DA. (In all the islands!) And that is our so-called political emancipation or independence, while the West Minister model still rules the day.

"For even as we were supposedly freed from the shackles of colonization, a governing structure, unfamiliar and unfavorable to us, strangles us. As we were 'let go' from the fields with no way of providing for our posterity, so too, with 'political' independence came the clutch of

a West Minister model, which allows merely that ascent to the reigns of power go to any who dare to aspire - never mind their lack of preparation for so esteemed a job. The result is an adherence to the status quo. Thus, the more things (governments change) the more they remain the same.

"Lack of formal preparations - by way of even the most elemental knowledge in the science of politics and attendant governance - I think, is a huge impediment to Dominica's overall development. And it is this the public should begin to address.

"It is not my contention that government 101 be mandated by law for those aiming to rule this nation. But that political growth and maturity (after 24 years!) should by now inform the masses, for whom the media ought to be the

watchdog of democratic rule, that nincompoops need not apply."(PV)

The above quote says it all in a nutshell. **Since Statehood we have been denied the opportunity to fully utilise our potential by being tied slavishly to a system that encourages retrogression rather than progression.** The present state of our economy is no accident.

It is difficult to accept that serious politicians are not aware of the debilitating effect of their party politics on the development of our country. Accordingly, it is not too much for them to understand that unity can be achieved, eventually if not immediately, by recognizing and working from the constitutional fact that true political power lies in Parliament. The suggestion of sharing that power aims at undermining this age-old party politicking from the inside out.