

## **THREE SETS OF EVENTS**

*(September 21, 2003)*

### **1. FAILURE TO AGREE AT WTO MEETING:**

*Sir S.S. Ramphal told me in an interview in February 2003, "I was on the streets in Seattle. That was the people of the world attempting to say 'It can't be like this. Decisions can't be made in little green rooms on issues that affect us and we are excluded.' And a process began in Seattle is still continuing. We have to fight for the soul of the WTO."*

*The fight was carried right into the WTO meeting at Cancun, Mexico. And when it was reported (Sept.14 2003) that the meeting failed, I was elated. The African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP) and other "developing" countries refused to cave in to the "developed" and the powerful. I prefer a failure of that nature than some "damass" agreement that is weighted against the poor people of the world.*

*The lesson is clear: if ACP countries unite with China, Latin America and others in matters of world trade, the materially rich and powerful nations will have to make meaningful concessions in terms of agriculture policies, etc... If we cannot do without them, they cannot do without us either as a united entity.*

### **2. HERO OF KOSOVO:**

*This weekend, ex-President Bill Clinton "stole" the limelight. On Sept.19, 2003 he was given a hero's welcome in Kosovo, and ethnic Albanians honored him for leading an international coalition against genocide.*

*In Srebrenica (Bosnia) in 1995 over 7000 Muslims were reportedly massacred by Bosnian Serbs. It was Europe's worst massacre since WWII, and was one of the key events that caused the Clinton administration to intervene in Kosovo to avoid another such event. President Milosovic was toppled and put on trial. Karadzic and Mladic are still wanted for crimes against humanity.*

*On Sept.20, 2003 Clinton opened a new memorial for the victims of Srebrenica and gave a very moving address. He made reference to the men and boys "massacred in what must be called genocide or madness." "60,000 troops from Europe, Canada and the United States came here and I hope they will stay here as long as they are needed."*

*It was a disguised reference to a belief that the Bush administration, pressured by the unsatisfactory Iraqi situation, will pull American troops out of the former Yugoslavia where they are still critically needed.*

*Clinton cautioned us not to allow leaders "to define one person's dignity in terms of another's humiliation," and "to dehumanize those who are different." I could not help thinking that such ethnic divides are not evident in Dominica today, but sometimes we are equally guilty in our politicking, which we carry to an absurd, divisive degree.*

*Let us "hope Srebrenica will be a sober reminder of our common humanity," Mr. Clinton said. He urged people "to choose the open hand over the clenched fist...", and choose "tomorrow's dreams over yesterday's nightmares."*

*This is an appropriate point to come to the recent commemoration of the "I MAKE A DREAM" speech of Martin Luther King. Meanwhile let Mr. Bush understand that the rest of the world is not as gullible as his American supporters. We know the difference between those who come to liberate (as in Yugoslavia) and those who come to steal oil (as in Iraq). At no time in history will Bush get this spontaneous hero's welcome in Iraq that Clinton got in Kosovo.*

### **3. FORTY YEARS AFTER THE DREAM:**

*Thousands assembled in Washington DC (August 23 and 24, 2003) to review the current status and sequel to the dream. There were orators in all their rich variety: not one was satisfied. Before all this there is this instructive reminder from BBC.*

*The "I have a dream" part of the speech was relatively unimportant; it was almost left out. Until the late Mahalia Jackson urged MLK, "Tell them about your dream, Martin." So, if it were not primarily about his dream, what was the single salient feature of that speech?*

*MLK's widow Coretta, Human Rights Activist and Radio Talk Show Host Mark Thompson, Al Sharpton and others, all reminded us this year that the 1963 speech was mainly a call for justice, with MLK making an analogy with a dishonored cheque:*

*"... we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote ... the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness... America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check - a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice."*

*In my opinion, that was one of the greatest speeches in the history of human development.*

*In August 2003, Al Sharpton thought the cheque returned not so much for insufficient funds but because there was a "stop payment" intervention. And Jesse Jackson referred to the "deficit culture" that squandered the massive surplus which present President Bush inherited from the said Mr. Clinton. It is on record that Bush gave back US\$400 billion to 1% (of America's richest people).*

*Those "tax breaks" are provided with high hopes that the rich recipients will invest and create jobs for American workers, including our Caribbean relatives who regularly remit some assistance to us down here. But what investments and which jobs?!? Since coming to office Bush*

*lost 3.5 million jobs - more than lost under the last eleven (11) presidents combined. (Source: Dick Gephardt, Democrat, C-SPAN, Sept.1, 2003).*

*At the 40th anniversary there were speakers, all Americans, many of whose names I had not heard before. But they were saying things you might have read before in this column. Here is a small sample for the record.*

*KIM GANDY is president, "NOW" (National Organization for Women). She reminded us all that the daughters of America are to be judged by their ability, not by their anatomy. She spoke so sweetly that the depth of her meaning can be lost on some; like when she described the Bush regime as the "Finest administration money can buy."*

*Well-known Coretta Scott King said, "Non - violence must become the foundation of American foreign policy." Meanwhile, the President, National Council of Churches warned that people must choose peaceful co - existence or face violent co - annihilation.*

*Precisely because he is a Rabbi, I was surprised by the Shalom Center Director, Rabbi Arthur Waskow. "Who is Pharoah?" he asked ... "The present administration of the United States attacks a nation that is already so weak as to be a threat to no one." Incidentally, I am now more convinced than ever that the Bush/Blair coalition will find those weapons of mass destruction in Iraq when they "plant" them there.*

*Damu Smith, CEO of Black Voices for Peace, quoted US\$ 350 billion a year spent on the U.S. military, and US \$1 billion per week then being spent occupying Iraq.*

*26- year- old Rev. Markel Hutchins, National President and CEO of National Youth Connection asked whether it was all worth it: in every state, he said, more black men are in jail than in college.*

*Finally, there was Billy Thye` of the American Indian Movement. "We know who the terrorists are," he said ... "The United States government. They have an insatiable appetite for what is below the earth." Obviously he meant the earth's resources, including the oil of Iraq.*

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