

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

P.D.M

CONGRESS OF DELGATES,
COLIHAUT, APRIL 15TH 2007

CO-ORDINATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Chairman,

Our Guest Speaker Dr. John LaGuerre.

Other members of the High Table.

Sister and Brother Delegates,

Sisters and Brothers.

God Bless. We are here today. We've come a long way since my resignation from the Post of General Secretary of the ruling Labour Party. And we've come a long way since I turned down the invitation sent to me on radio by UWP leader, Earl Williams, to join his Party.

I left the Labour Party on January 3rd 2006. And on leaving I had this to say. And I want to quote from my letter of resignation. First of all:

Since the May elections and the taking of power by its leaders, things have got worse for the Party, instead of better. Before the elections leaders proclaimed themselves to be servants of the people. Now, with power in their hands, leaders are now masters of the people. Rank and file members and supporters without whose loyalty, sacrifice and hard work victory at the polls would not have been possible, have been given no role whatsoever in the running

of the country. And the Party as an organisation....has ...come to a stop.

It was also written:

It seems to me that the Dominica Labour Party of today has abandoned the ideals and mission of its founding fathers and mothers...it is mere shell of what it was in the last days of the Pierre Charles regime. Where are the links with the people? Where are the various committees set up by Pierro at the St. Joseph National Council meeting to rebuild the Party..... Where is the programme of political education to raise the consciousness of Party members and supporters.....

I came to the following conclusion:

What passes for the Labour Party is nothing more than a hero followed by a crowdThe Party is not serious about giving the people a meaningful role in the country's government and development...Today you diss the rank and file members and supporters of the Party. Tomorrow you will diss all the people...

In ending my letter of resignation I expressed a hope that my continued commitment to social and economic justice for all would find fertile soil elsewhere.

Sisters and Brothers, I did not then, and still do not now, consider the UWP to be such fertile soil. We can work with it, as all political parties must do for the advancement of our nation and our people. But joining the Party was, then, and, still is, out of the question. So, on May 3rd 2006, exactly four months after I abandoned Labour, I turned down UWP's invitation to join them.

But that was not all. I went on to make it clear that something brand new was required in our country. The exact words were:

“What is needed most of all is a new approach to how we govern the country and how we go about its development. What is needed now is a new political Movement. Not a resurrection of old Parties with their outmoded ideas and ways of doing things.”

And some idea was given as to how this New Movement would be different from existing Parties and those that went before them.

Sisters and Brothers, we have not reached there yet. But, from May 3rd last year to now, that is to say, in eleven months we’ve come a long way.

The first step was to set up a Steering Committee to sit down, discuss, plan and guide the formation of the core of the Movement.

That was more difficult than it appears. And it was difficult for many reasons. First of all, most people have better things to do than to undertake the hard work of building a Political Party from scratch. And this is particularly so where, as in our situation, the electorate falls prey so easily to malicious gossip and outright lies and, where these do not work, to bribes and handouts.

Public servants will not commit themselves to anything that is against the ruling Party where, as is our case, victimization stares them in the face.

Discontented UWPites might know that their Party can’t effectively challenge Government’s incapacity to move the nation forward. But they cling to a lingering hope that the Party will make it at the polls next time.

Further you must remember that Labourites struggled and sacrificed for 20 years to get their Party back in power. Now, even

though disenchanted, they are not quick to jump ship before they have been personally rewarded for sacrifices made over the years.

And Government's practice of assigning persons to spy on Steering Committee meetings and to investigate our membership, with the intention to either bribe or victimize, did not help our cause.

Yet, we persevered. Uncommitted persons came over. And Labourites and Workers too. And a Steering Committee with an Executive took shape.

The next step was to begin to change the understanding of politics given to the electorate by the old political parties.

We believe this could only be done through political education aimed at raising their level of political consciousness. We tried to do so in two ways.

First, we did so by issuing public statements on radio and television about matters of national importance. Such matters included growing crime and lawlessness. The effects of the IMF programme on the living standards of the people. Government outsourcing of jobs. The VAT. The unbearable costs of electricity. Government's intention to give themselves a hefty increase in salaries while the population at large is asked to make huge sacrifices and Government has not seen fit to increase the minimum wage from where it was in 1987. Our Prime Minister's one-man style of leadership.

As to how much these statements have helped to educate our people and point them in the right direction, it is for you gathered here to tell us. But your numbers tell it all.

We also sought to politically educate the people through a weekly one-hour radio programme. The programme is called "The Political Education Hour" and is aired on Kairi F.M every Tuesday night at 7 o'clock. We use the programme to discuss issues of national importance with listeners.

Once again, it is for you to tell us what impact the programme has had in causing you to better understand what is going on in our country and what can be done to make life better for all of us. Needless to say, your presence here in such numbers tells a story.

The third step in our movement from May 3rd last year to today was to lay down the 25 Basic Principles which guide our Party. We ratify them today.

The fourth step was to draft our Constitution, that is to say, the body of rules and regulations which guide our Party. We also ratify our Constitution today.

And, while we were taking the second, third and fourth steps, we were at the same time engaged in building Party branches in some of the constituencies. In fact, we are now doing so in eleven or so of the constituencies. But the word seems to spread ahead of us. For, I see here before me today persons from constituencies we haven't even entered yet to do political work and win the minds of the people. Nothing encourages us more.

Sisters and Brothers, we are presently engaged in developing what we call a Minimum Programme for the development of our country. This Minimum Programme consists of those things which we believe must at least be done in the various sectors of our economy and the society as a whole if all our people are to enjoy a decent standard of living. It is no more than a mere listing of those things, without the details.

From this Minimum Programme we will produce a much more comprehensive plan for National Development. The plan will identify goals, objectives, targets, action-plans and tasks for the country as a whole. And there will be detailed plans for each individual sector, whether energy, agriculture, finance, eco-tourism, small business, health, education, mobilization and so on.

So, sisters and Brothers, we feel confident that you will agree that we have come a long way. P.D.M is here to stay. Some said it was a one-man Party, a two-man show, a collection of disgruntled Labourites that was bound for nowhere. That was eleven months ago. But you, sisters and brothers, you proved them wrong. And today, after digesting the results of their own opinion poll, they go into retreat at Giraudel. More and more they are going on the defensive. They have no answers to the pressing problems confronting our country. And they have no answer whatsoever to the way in which we have been bringing their failures out in public.

Brothers and Sisters. We have come a long way. But much more needs to be done. We have not yet reached the mountain top. But we already have visions of the promised land. Thank you, sisters and brothers. Thanks for your patience.

Long live PDM!

Long Live National Unity!!