

# BREAKING NEWS: Will Ralph T. O'Neal Remain Head Of VIP? Special Meeting To Be Convened

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**From L-R: Opposition Members Hon. Julian Fraser, Hon. Ralph T. O'Neal and Hon. Andrew Fahie**

Hon. O'Neal Dodges Questions

The Virgin Islands Party (VIP) is preparing to elect officers to serve on its executive committee, but the burning question to be answered will be whether Opposition Leader and long standing member, Hon. Ralph T. O'Neal will be returned as party Chairman.

BVI Platinum News understands that party faithfuls have been calling for a meeting to be convened to chart the party's direction after losing the seat of Government to the National Democratic Party (NDP) at the 2011 General Elections.

In a statement released today, March 28, Hon. O'Neal said that in exercising the powers of Chairman under the VIP Constitution, he has written the Secretary of the party as is required, directing to have a Special Meeting of the party on Wednesday, April 23, 2014.

"The purpose of the Special Meeting is to conduct elections of officers of the executive committee as set out in the Constitution," the statement indicated.

The statement comes on the doorsteps of the proposed launch of the People's Empowerment Party (PEP), which is being sold as a strong alternative to the Virgin Islands Party (VIP) and the National Democratic Party (NDP), whom have traded the seat of Government in the last three General Elections.

PEP is being launched this Saturday, March 29 and there is political chatter that at least four VIP members are likely to cross the floor.

The new party has already closed ranks with former VIP member, Lorie Rymer and current Second District Representative, Hon. Alvin Christopher, who won on a VIP ticket at the 2011 Elections.

Former Eighth District Representative and former Deputy Premier, Dancia Penn, who launched her political career with the VIP; and Hon. Vernon Malone, a

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former At-Large Representative on the VIP ticket were also being named among the members of PEP. It remains to be seen if both will show up at the launch.

One political source related to BVI Platinum News that the statement from the VIP at this time may be strategic and might be a move to scare the potential candidates from walking away from the party. It is believed that there is growing discontent within the VIP and members have repeatedly called for the party to discuss the future of leadership.

### **Fahie Or Fraser May Be Next**

First District Representative and Member of the VIP, Hon. Andrew Fahie had disclosed that Hon. O'Neal had given an 18-month timeline from the November 2011 Elections to step down as Opposition Leader.

That timeline has expired, but Hon. Fahie had maintained that the VIP does not have a leadership issue.

"We are the only party with a proven, tried constitution and the constitution works well," Hon. Fahie had stated.

The jostling for leadership of the VIP is in full swing and Third District Representative, Hon. Julian Fraser is ambitious about becoming the next leader and possibly Premier of the Virgin Islands.

"I don't rule it [Party Leader and Premiership] out. I've been in positions, in roles; I have given it my all and exercised all the talents and gifts that I have. I think if the opportunity presents itself I will be ready," Hon. Fraser had told Mr. Shelton Daniel of Radio St. Lucia last August.

Hon. Fraser faced a heavy defeat of a No Confidence Motion he brought against the NDP Government in the House Of Assembly. Hon. O'Neal did not debate the

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No Confidence Motion and was notably absent for the vote. He was also not invited to a subsequent press conference attended by Hon. Fraser and Hon. Fahie.

By not gaining support for the motion from the Opposition Leader, Hon. O'Neal, Hon. Fraser admitted during the interview with Radio St. Lucia that it does in fact speak to the issue of cohesion within the party.

"...But As far as the future of the party is concerned, that does not indicate where we go. I see a bright future for the party and I continue to hold that view," Hon. Fraser stated.

Hon. Fahie has not ruled out accepting the position of party leader, but has pointed out that this will be decided at the Party Congress.



During his meeting, Mr. Fahie said contrary to false information which is being peddled that he is pushing to be the leader of the VIP, the decision will be made by the 76-member congress of the party and not by one person.

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During a telephone interview with BVI Platinum News last year, Hon. O'Neal, who has been elected as 9th District Representative consecutively for over 30 years, seemed hesitant when asked a number of questions.

He did not confirm or deny Mr. Fahie's claims about the 18-month time frame which was made public during a First District meeting at Capoon's Bay field.

"Well I think we will wait and see," Hon. O'Neal told BVI Platinum News.

Governor Boyd McCleary appointed Hon. O'Neal as Opposition Leader on November 14, 2011. The appointment was in accordance with Section 70 of the Virgin Islands Constitution Order, 2007.