

# VIP Public Meeting Sea Cows Bay

Aug 27<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Tonight this is a Sweet, Sweet moment for me.**

My people I stand here before you humbly, as I can recall some 15 years ago standing on these very grounds asking you the people of the Third District to make me your Representative. **And you did just that.**

So tonight I am also happy and pleased to say to you that thanks to your decision I am now the proud Chairman of the Virgin Islands Party, and now this time I am asking you to accept the Party as you have accepted me, and take it to victory in the next general elections. **That I know you can do.**

**It is in your best interest, it is in the territory's best interest.**

The Virgin Islands Party has as its mission the betterment of our people through opportunities for their empowerment, but as simple as that may sound we must first win the next general elections and retake the government which we never should have lost on November 7<sup>th</sup> 2011.

The Virgin Islands Party has a long history that is rich in tradition and solid in achievements. Our founding leader was the first Chief Minister of this territory and he is responsible for placing the BVI on the map as far as development is concern. We would not be boasting of comprehensive Secondary Education were it not for Hamilton Lavitty Stoutt who opened Secondary Education to all students throughout the territory in 1968.

We would not be boasting of a college were it not for Hamilton Lavitty Stoutt who possessed at the time the faith of Job, and the Wisdom of Solomon when he decided to establish the College, now bearing his name HLSCC at Paraquita Bay. The Central Administration Building which was roundly criticized as an unnecessary economic waste was also his doings.

**Hamilton Lavitty Stoutt was a VIP.**

**The VIP built this country, not the NDP.**

The Virgin Islands Party's most recent leader Ralph Tilford O'Neal, who is here tonight, a giant among giants, stands without equals in the halls of Parliament, and on the streets of politics. He is the quintessential statesman and an astute politician.

**Ralph O'Neal was the first Premier of the Virgin Islands.** He is responsible for the Terrence B. Lettsome International Airport (A VIP himself). He is responsible for the Cruise Ship Pier and the Queen Elizabeth Bridge.

As Chief Minister & Premier and in his role as District Representative he is responsible for modern day Virgin Gorda.

**Ralph Tilford O'Neal is a VIP**

**The VIP built this country, not the NDP.**

**In this very District the VIP has its indelible mark that will last forever.**

Our Past District Representative for over 24 years: Oliver Cills was a Member of the Virgin Islands Party. Oliver Cills was responsible for the two alternate roads out of Sea Cows Bay which takes you directly to Road Town and Harrigan in one instance; and in the other, to Chalwell and on to the North Side of the island.

He was also responsible for Ellis Thomas Downs, now home for some of the best horseracing in the Virgin Islands.

It was under Oliver Cills watch that the 114 acre Nibbs Estate was purchased from the Georges by Government in order to be sold at subsidized rates to residents, particularly first time homeowners. Today, over 120 persons and families were awarded lots on the estate.

The Virgin Islands Party Government of the last Administration even went as far as to eliminate customs duty on building materials for first time home owners.

These are the types of initiatives I was speaking of when I opened by saying, **"The Virgin Islands Party has as its mission the betterment of our people through opportunities for their empowerment"**. It is my intention as leader of this territory to work towards expanding opportunities for you the people.

Unlike this current NDP government which subscribes to the trickledown theory by giving tax breaks to merchants who never pass the savings on to you the consumer. The VIP gives it to you direct.

Case in point is under a year into their Administration the NDP government decided to give merchants over \$3 million in customs concession on imported goods arguing that the savings will be passed-on to the consumer. To date not a single consumer has come forward acknowledging receipt of such savings.

**This is what makes the Virgin Islands Party great, this is what sets it apart from all other parties.**

**The VIP built this country and we know it, we just haven't been doing a good enough job reminding you.**

Despite all the successes of our Party and its legacy, there comes a time in everything's existence when change is eminent. The VIP is there now. And that is why we are here tonight encouraging you to join us on this journey of inclusion as we seek to rebuild our Party back up to full strength in readiness for competition in the next General elections.

The Virgin Islands Party still has the best brand out here and we want you to help us to keep improving on it. I have no doubt that under my leadership the Party will challenge the next General Elections with a full slate of the best candidates that are out there, and most importantly, we will be competing to win.

You the people of this territory have every reason to rally behind change, given the current state of malaise our territory is going through.

### **Our economy:**

**Our economy**, despite several cries from me to the Premier to stimulate the economy; persons continue to lose their jobs; companies continue to close; small businesses are on life support as proprietors survive on their savings; hoteliers complaining about reductions in their overnight stays; while restaurateurs are reporting a dwindling in patronage. Apartment rentals are down significantly as many tenants have left the territory, while others are doubling and tripling up on single apartments. This unfortunate occurrence has lead to mortgage foreclosures at a magnitude never seen before.

**Failed  
Economy**

The economic downturn (recession) which started in 2008 during the VIP Administration has never inflicted this level of pain on citizens because of our experience and compassion for human development and their wellbeing.

Under this NDP Government we are witnessing a phenomenon similar to America, where a study shows that during this period of this Great Recession and a slow Economic Recovery, the rich is getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

We are witnessing the permanent disappearance of the Middle Class whose fortunes have been siphoned off to create the super rich, while at the same time the weight of these same Middle Class fall due to closed businesses, and mortgage foreclosure have caused them to push the poor along with themselves into a new class I call the underclass.

What is happening to the Virgin Islands is new and will continue for as long as the NDP is in office, **for they genuinely do not understand what is happening and how to fix it.**

Follow  
Me  
Here

To demonstrate what happened to our people as a result of the failures on the part of our government to intervene. That Middle Class I spoke about lost their fortune when the Rich used their businesses: ***such as a supermarket***, to do the business the Middle Class was operating: ***such as a restaurant***, thus forcing the restaurant out of business. The owner of the restaurant: ***a Middle Class person***, now becomes a worker for someone else, but the difference between him and former workers is that he has heavy debt which pushes him into that newly created Under Class.

That is -PONZI ECONOMICS- the economics of the PYRAMID SCHEME- the Virgin Islands Party is the only party engaged in a real Economic Policy Discussion-

The  
Elderly

### **Retirement and Poverty**

For people living in the Virgin Islands there is a definite correlation between retirement and poverty that not too many people know of, and those of us who knows it prefer to live in denial, for it is an embarrassment.

The problem is not exactly the pension or even the size of the pension, the problem is a lack of proper planning for retirement. Persons moving into retirement allow themselves to be wooed into huge debt such as mortgage refinancing in addition to expected medical expenses on top of the routine living expenses.

With these commitments and a fixed income that is not designed to carry such strain, the least hiccup such as a vacant rental unit could cause a retired person to slip into that Under Class I spoke about earlier. This profile of our human landscape has to be addressed and dealt with by Government.

The problems associated with the retired are not unique to the Virgin Islands, but other societies are making efforts to first acknowledge them and then address them.

A global demographic which shows that technology; greatly improved digital and internet learning; and better healthcare, is allowing people to be productive, and to work for much longer after age 60. And this phenomenon has led to the rising of the retirement age in developed countries which now reflects the new realities in the workplace.

### **We here in the Virgin Islands must follow suit.**

The VIP will extend the retirement age to 65, and after 65, retirement will be mandatory to provide opportunities for younger Virgin Islanders in the service. The VIP will protect jobs in the public service but demand greater efficiencies.

The party will create a true enterprise economy to generate work for all Virgin Islanders and not the top down model we have today that seeks to benefit the 1 % at the top of the economic pyramid. This Government's top down model is consigning a significant percentage of the younger population to the social and economic scrapheap.

## **Our Financial Services**

**Our Financial Services** which is the undisputed cash cow for the Government's Treasury, -being responsible as it is for over 60% of our revenue- has been taking a pounding both in negative publicity and stagnant growth since the middle of last year.

In the period since, we have seen the sector basically stagnated under the weight of negative press primarily from the Guardian News Paper in London, and The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), which takes credit for the assault on what they term as Tax Havens, seemingly singling out the British Virgin Islands.

The French Government has gone to the extent of Blacklisting the British Virgin Islands, something that has never happened in our 30 years history, which ironically was just celebrated this year.

The ICIJ's evidence is compelling and is worth Government's attention. If our Financial Services are under attack, not only does the industry suffer, but our Treasury takes a direct hit. Our Government's attitude towards this development with the Financial Services is exactly the same as with Tourism, which is to do nothing and hope for it to correct itself. **It's the old ostrich syndrome.**

Unfortunately, their strategy which is not working in Tourism, is not working here either, because the French Blacklist is still in force since August 2013, despite this statement by the Premier in November 2013, "The Government has had discussions with France as far as the Blacklisting is concerned and France is now satisfied with the process which we have in place".

That statement left everyone believing that the French had assured the Premier that the Blacklisting was to have been removed.

The ICIJ seems more persistent in changing our business model than we are in fixing what's wrong if anything with the sector.

I believe that anything short of tackling this problem head on, including engaging our adversaries is a nonstarter, and it is past time for the Premier to show leadership in this regard.

The ICIJ boasts having files which came from two offshore firms — Singapore-based Portcullis TrustNet and BVI-based Commonwealth Trust Limited — that help clients create offshore companies, trusts and bank accounts.

They further claim that the files are a part of a cache of 2.5 million leaked files they have so far sifted through with help from more than 50 reporting partners in Europe, North America, Asia and other regions.

According to the same ICIJ, since last April, their stories have triggered official inquiries, high-profile resignations and policy changes around the world.

That is not an organization that has quit in its DNA. As I speak, stories are being written about the BVI, and they aren't pretty.

Just like reporting the story doesn't mean you endorse it, ignoring it doesn't make it go away either. I choose to report it.

### **Our Educational System:**

**Educati  
on**

Our economy is not the only sector exhibiting signs of decay as Education is no different, and that may very well be a result of a failed economic policy. It was the Minister for education himself who said that the territory needs a Junior High School but financial constraints does not permit for it at this time.

You must ask yourself the question, what are the Government's priorities if education doesn't come first.

Deviancy in the system is at critical mass- it has begun to affect standards seriously- the authorities at the Elmore Stoutt High School have lost control of the facility. The High school needs to be broken up and reduced in size drastically with a Junior High established immediately.

Education has become a political football with each minister in charge trying to prove the other was bad. This is not a good thing.

Education requires a low profile minister - a technocrat- who will rebuild by fixing the issues highlighted.

It may even become necessary to consider having the Premier's Office administer direct supervision of education through a minister following directives from the Premier-

### **Moving the Country Forward:**

**Marine  
Techno  
logy**

We must institute public private partnership programs that will see our youth positioned to establish themselves in thriving industries here in the Virgin Islands, such as the marine industry. These partnerships I understand do come at a cost to government, but it is a cost I am more than prepared to pay when considering the benefits.

A VIP Government under a Fraser Premiership will strengthen medium and long term economic growth and ensure good jobs for Virgin Islanders by the introduction of a **National Ocean and Maritime Science Program**.

This will be a systemic effort to introduce a culture of boating, yachting, and marine technology into the Virgin Islands. The objective is to empower young Virgin Islanders to man and manage the boating and yachting industry in every parameter, and increase the level of local employment in an industry that is vital to the national interest, socially, technologically, and economically.

The VIP sees no reason why certain aspects of yacht manufacturing can't be carried out here in the BVI. We can learn a lot from The Boeing Company with its Dreamliner Program how the world's most technologically advanced aircraft could be manufactured in various countries around the globe and gets its final assembly in Seattle Washington.

**District  
Project**

**District Projects:**

It came as a shock to me the answer I got at the last Sitting of The House of Assembly when I asked the Premier and Minister of Finance on behalf of the 1<sup>st</sup> District Representative, "if the major contracts that were signed by his 2003-2007 Administration with Global Water Associates is a contingent liability to the Government of the Virgin Islands"?

And as a part of his answer, the Premier said, "Madam Speaker non-performance by the Government of the Virgin Islands for their contractual obligations under the properly executed Global Water contract **resulted in a breach of contract by the Government of the Virgin Islands** and, hence, the subsequent action by Global Water seeking remedies for these breaches".

In my shock, I rephrased the question by asking if he was saying that non-performance by government represented a breach, and I got an affirmative.

Oh really Mr. Premier and Minister of Finance! Thanks for the unsolicited information. Which brings me home right here in Sea Cows Bay.



**The Sea Cows Bay Harbor Development Project** which has been around since the 1960's and more recently the 1990's and today, has 5 outstanding contracts for the **fabrication of Sheet Piles, and Piles** for the bulkheading of the west side of the Harbor, -that is the area stretching from Holliday Inn at the north end down along the cost past Struggling Man and this Community Center down to the Water Plant at the south end-.

Those contracts have been with the contractors since between Dec. 2010 and Jan. 2011, but were placed on hold by the NDP Administration after taking office in November 2011, as was the case with all other contracts in this District.

My question to the Premier now is, "has non-performance by the Government of the Virgin Islands for their contractual obligations under the properly executed Sea Cows Bay Harbor contracts **resulted in a breach of contract by the Government of the Virgin Islands**"?

Where there is no vision the people perish and on this Sea Cows Bay Harbor Project the current NDP Administration exhibits that truth better than anywhere else. Since during their campaign they have been saying that I was developing a Marina for my brother and that lie has been able to find its way into the public service and on to the streets.

Instead of developing the area in order for the people of Sea Cows Bay and the wider community to attract commerce and create jobs, they are more interested in trying to frame me for foolishness.

So far 7 contracts were prepared and issued by Public Works Department on behalf of the Ministry of Communications & Works and signed by the Premier and Minister of Finance for the fabrication of Sheet Piles and Piles.

Five of the contracts were for the precast fabrication of Sheet Piles which are each 8 feet in width, and each contract consisted of 38 Sheet Piles. So that equates to 8' wide x 38 pieces x 5 contractors = 1520 linear feet of Sheet Piles, which is the amount of sheathing required to bulkhead the west side of the Harbor from Holliday Inn to the Water Plant. **Note well, that the area owned by Hannah Marina is only 200 feet across.**

And imagine, with all that information, they are still contending that the work being carried out is to build a marina for my brother. The other 2 contracts are for the Piles which are 1' x 1' x 15' long each, each contractor had 56 Piles, for a total of 112 Piles. These Piles will be driven into the sea bed at 8 feet on center (that is every 8 feet) to support the Sheet Piles.

This design was carried out by Systems Engineering for the Ministry of Communications & Works.

You would hear them saying that the project has no Planning Approval so the works are illegal. Let me make you the wiser, by saying to you that there is no requirement for Planning Approval of any sought to do fabrication. These works are all Pre-Cast Concrete that could have been done in Trinidad, Puerto Rico, or even Baughers Bay. They just chose to do them on site.

And speaking of work on site, the two properties being used for staging belongs to Hannah Reclamation and Glanville Fraser, and these are the very last areas to be bullheaded by virtue of being the staging area. But yet malicious people are saying that the work being done is to build a marina there, which is all nonsense.

As I said this project was around since the 1960's, but in 1992 Government headed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Labor established a Committee of Civil Servants to ensure that there was order to the development since some 9 developers were involved.

The Government Committee came here to Sea Cows Bay and the people here (the community) requested that the Government Bulkhead the reclamation because it was cost prohibitive for the developers, and the Committee agreed. The agreement did not call for the bulkheading of all properties except persons with the last name Fraser.

In 2002 The Executive Council approved a conceptual Design by the Architectural Firm Smith Arneborg as the Plan for the Harbor, and further authorized that the bulkheading be carried out through a series of petty contracts, indicating where the funding must come from as well.

Those contracts I mentioned earlier were just a result of the Ministry carrying out a mandate given by the Executive Council, (now Cabinet).

**There are other Contracts that are still on hold as well.** There is a contract which was issued to Mr. Connor for the erection of a retaining wall in the vicinity of the residence of Mr. Byron over in Manuel that is among the casualties, despite my repeated call for that contract to be released particularly because of the dangers posed to the property, but no one is listening.

Also another contract issued to Mr. Smith for a retaining wall and road widening at the junction to Porter Gut and Cherry Gut is still on hold. There is also another contract for widening portions of the road to Sage Mountain that was issued to Mr. Gumbs that is also on hold.

I cannot close without mentioning the vexing issue of the sluggish pace at which the CDB Project in Palestina is moving. People in Pleasant Valley have complained to me about the unacceptable inconvenience it is causing having to divert and drive through Hannah's to get in and out of Pleasant Valley.

And likewise, the people of Hannah's are fed up with the increased traffic. I have called on the Ministry of Communications and Works repeatedly but to no avail. I am saying it again; that we need answers and we need them now.