

# REBUILDING DOMINICA

By Wilbert Connor

The above caption indicates that the country is broken. Broken in many aspects and this can be construed as normal in the life cycle of a developing country particularly in this period of world history.

I am putting forward a number of possible and attainable ideas (strategies) that can help rebuild the Isle of Beauty. Policy makers and the populace must have the will, the resilience, courage and fortitude to unselfishly bring things to fruition.

We do this in our homes, for our friends so why can't we do it for our country? Let me make the distinction here that our efforts should be at conceptualizing positive outcomes ONLY. I will be the first progressive critic to understand that resources are scarce everywhere.

Perhaps the only one that's not in short supply is the human resource or human capital as some refer to it. We all view things differently. There is imperfection that exists and some of us fail to admit is part of human nature.

There is also the subjective aspect of our nature. There is also good, better and best and they all have their respective places whenever we sit and discuss ways in which we allocate the scarce resources we have at our disposal.

We have one of most expressive and complete national anthems in the world, and this should serve as a guiding principle and also give us comfort which says in part, "all for each, and each for all...toil with hearts and hands and voices we must prosper sound the call..."

The thoughts or proposals below, while they are for serious contemplation they are practical and attainable.

- Cooperatives should replace village councils. While village councils have their place they are limited in scope economically and legally. A cooperative will purposefully manage the resources of a community and citizens will be encouraged to participate since they will be part owners of existing resources and opportunities which they will subsequently create. Village councils have unfortunately become too dependent on government for sustainability.
- Government should methodically set systems for small businesses so that tax breaks work to the advantage of the small business owner and government alike. The National Development Foundation of Dominica should create a more relevant partnership with the Youth Division. Isolation does not always work in a positive manner. Teamwork and shared resources are the more feasible method of increasing

productivity and creating jobs.

- Please have the ombudsperson in place as set out in our Constitution. Of course, if the individual is impartial his or her presence will make a difference in a true democracy.
- We may have to look at dismantling the IPO Act. For all intents and purposes it has been found wanting. There are good intentions but nothing substantial to shout about, all be it for the good of the country. Politics sometimes overrides commonsense policies which results in waste and poor judgment.
- The tenure of the prime minister should be limited to two terms only. Revise the constitution in that regard. This will allow for greater focus on the job at hand. The chances of corruption will be minimized.
- We must all reverence and worship the Greater Being - GOD. Make this part of our everyday lives.
- Revitalize family picnics, which are different from jams.
- The economic citizenship programme must be discontinued. This has been manufactured and remanufactured to meet certain ends and it's been alleged that the beneficiary is not the Commonwealth of Dominica.
- We must develop an Agricultural School on the island. We are losing human skills as we continue to focus on things away from agriculture. Nature will not forgive us if we continue to disregard her natural wealth and solid potential which has existed for years. Perhaps we may need to borrow the Taiwanese prowess once more.
- Restructure the tax system. We have known for years that because of political expediency the tax system has been broken. The OECS tax reports have been available to the governments for years but for politics the country lags behind in tax fairness and collection.
- Reform the National Security System. It's time that we become proactive and not dismally reactive. The country wails for a transparent legal system that appears to be working. It's time that we give the society at large frank reason to believe that the judicial system works for the good of all and not a select few. Doubt in the legal realm is just too risky to endure.
- The spirit of tenacity should be taught at home, at work and at play. Just as there's the urge for greed there should be the emotional resilience for success. Again, the proper use of scarce resources is critical here. Parents should be taught and must learn themselves to be tenacious and show by example rather than precept that a fighting spirit is good for success.
- In the same breath, there should be a national effort to develop pride, hard work, productivity etc in the workplace, the private sector and the public sector. "Let's build a National toiling hand in hand...let's build a National solid safe and true..." These are words in song that came we sang as school children but are now forgotten. I ask us to revisit who we've always been: a nation proudest *sur l'ater*.
- Local businesses must form consortiums to survive and pool resources together instead of marginalizing each other. I sometimes question the real purpose and functionality of the Dominica Association of Industry and Commerce (DAIC).
- Invest Dominica must encourage foreign investors by incentivizing them and fast-tracking the approval process for setting up and expanding businesses. Also, the authority must seek to create joint partnerships with our sister OECS neighbours and French partners. Producers and manufacturers must determine their competitive

advantage to advance revenue generation and job creation. Duplication of processes in a small region like ours is too costly and counter-productive.

- Sports management cannot be overlooked. Sports facilities are in dire need. Where are our priorities? Are they in billboards and drawings? Football, table tennis, cricket, basketball all need playing facilities right now.
- Although we have been doing well with our musical talents there is need for more effective management of these young persons who want to go further. Our cultural vibrancy has to be nurtured and encouraged here and abroad.
- There's a need to create an on-island functioning office for the Dominica Academy of Arts and Sciences (DAAS) and any other Diaspora groups which supports the Commonwealth of DOMINICA and not any political party.
- The Carib Territory must be converted into an Economic Zone with special attention given to the availability of soft loans, grants, itemized training, distinguished local, regional and international exposure. There are organizations and schools that are willing to sponsor special minority needs.
- The efforts at empowering women must be intensified. All women departments must be immediately revamped to get rid of business as usual. There are women country leaders in Africa, South America, Europe and the Caribbean which should serve as inspiration stimulate and redirect our thinking.
- The education system should not merely be about passing exams but should look at the holistic person. Therefore, responsibility, tolerance, initiative, values, pride and optimism should be taught to build character. A student should be able to reason, discuss and respect the opinion of others, display morale and voluntarily contribute to the growth of humankind wherever his or her skills and competency may lie.

History has taught us that colonial powers have assisted in building and some cases rebuilding countries. The Marshal Plan comes to mind when Western Europe and Japan for instance benefited from the US's economic aid. Some assisted where the *quid pro quo* existed and others for the mere good of mankind. Currently, we know of the efforts of the US in 'rebuilding' Iraq and Afghanistan from an economic and democratic point of view.

I am mindful to note that the foreign powers do exert their influence, which is cultural, social, political and economic on the people they help to support. This is seen all over the world. This is done through direct foreign investment via governments, institutions like the World Bank and the IMF etc where radical policy changes may become unwittingly necessary. That is the reality of the necessary evil. Of course, the situation varies from country to country such as Nigeria where the challenges to national building are primarily capital flight, shortage/flight of skilled labour and corruption which affects overall stability. For The Bahamas the concern is for Bahamians taking advantage of prevailing economic conditions where they share specific advantage as a premier financial centre and a top tourist destination.

I am sure there are many things I left out and you too have your thoughts to share. Let's begin the discussions and begin to ACT right now. Time is not on our side. Think of your children and you children's children.