

TOGETHER WE WILL

*Lennox Linton's Acceptance Speech
UWP Convention, September 1st, 2013.*

Thirty five years ago this year we became an independent nation challenged to do justice to the human development spirit of our ancestors whose contributions to this unique piece of paradise on earth, inspired our march towards an ideal society and an exemplary green economy in Dominica. Thirty five years ago we pledged that through sacrifice, strategic planning, hard work, enlightened governance, and the protection of the dignity of our people we would earn our place as a worthwhile participant in the advancement of global civilization.

For thirty five years, this year, we have sung and recited the words of our National Anthem... Important words about our global positioning strategy that appear to mean less to us as time goes by:

*Isle of beauty, isle of splendour,
Isle to all so sweet and fair,
All must surely gaze in wonder
At thy gifts so rich and rare.
Rivers, valleys, hills and mountains,
All these gifts we do extol.
Healthy land, so like all fountains,
Giving cheer that warms the soul.*

In the past 14 years, an unrelenting criminal enterprise masquerading as government has ravaged our beauty, scoffed at our splendor and severely devalued our gifts for personal

multimillion dollar gain. With a solemn promise of “All Shall Eat”, they have shamelessly practiced “A few Shall Eat All”.

From the clear vision statement in our national anthem, the task was to develop and implement specific policy initiatives that will secure Dominica’s emergence as the Nature Island Capital and Equal Opportunity Standard of the world community; and our competitiveness in the international trade of goods and services.

The clear expectation was sustained socio-economic independence for all the people of Dominica, as we positioned our isle of beauty, our isle of splendor as a leader in food security - agriculture, agro-processing, livestock and fisheries. We have the healthy land, the pastures green, the climate benign and bright to first feed ourselves, then feed our neighbors, then feed the world.

The hope and dream was that our isle to all so sweet and fair would cash in on opportunities for eco-tourism, renewable energy, information technology services, financial services, light manufacturing, wellness, sports, arts, music and entertainment as viable offerings in our repertoire of services to the global community.

We only needed to successfully integrate ourselves into a worthwhile place in the international trade of goods and services by effectively aligning national resources to the national development strategy and discharging our national leadership and management responsibilities with honesty, integrity, purpose and commitment.

The last 14 years have been a dismal failure

- ❑ We have been reeling under the weight of a Corrupt, incompetent regime, hobnobbing with international criminals and using government for the private benefit of ministers instead of for the genuine advancement of people
- ❑ There has been no equal opportunity – Dominicans condemned as 2nd class have been scrunting for jobs given to foreigners on major infrastructure projects
- ❑ The Economy has declined to the worst recession in three decades. The regime blames its atrocious results in implementing green projects, attracting foreign direct investment and starting up the economic growth engine on the global financial crisis. We are still waiting for the explanation why the same global financial crisis did absolutely nothing to slow down the aggressive advance of their own personal wealth creation machines
- ❑ People are bawling murder under the whip of an ever rising cost of living. Many can't find work. But even those who work can't make ends meet from month to month. They have used up their savings. They are losing their possessions... banks, hire purchase and pay day loan companies are reclaiming their houses and cars and household appliances at an increasingly alarming rate. Taxation is unconscionable – VAT on their basic foods, on their healthcare, on their babies... even on the dead they have to bury. The ceaseless rants of miseducated advocates of the regime shouting day in day out over qualifications for public office offer no solutions for unemployment, cost of living casualties, rising poverty and economic decline. While the people catch hell ministers of government continue to do exceptionally well with the milk, cheese and butter from the cow of public money and the growing millions of illicit enrichment

- ❑ Businesses are closing down, victims of a punitive VAT, prohibitive energy bills, burdensome operating costs and declining consumer spending... jobs are disappearing... And government is clueless about the kinds of targeted interventions that could facilitate a turn around a worsening situation
- ❑ We have been forced to grin and bear the social injustice outrage of the century - 27 million dollars of the people's money to build a palace for the president while the champions of a state financed housing revolution thumb their noses at the housing woes of long standing, long suffering Labour Party supporters in Chance, Lagoon, Glanvillia and other pockets of poverty in the country. Our poor and working poor have been imprisoned behind the jail bars of need by a regime emboldened with the belief that keeping Dominicans poor and dependent on handouts is the surest way to win elections and thereby secure opportunities to plunder the public purse
- ❑ Crime is out of control... no law no constitution has been able to constrain a leader who dutifully commandeers the institutions of state to protect those who facilitate fattening his pockets with the proceeds of crime.
- ❑ Freedom of the human spirit is under attack as the fear of evil, vindictive government deepens

This is the report card of the largest and most expensive Cabinet of Ministers in the OECS operating the smallest economy and delivering the worst economic performance results. We paid them to work for the betterment of Dominica; they took our money and worked for the betterment of themselves. They QUALIFIED themselves to lie, cheat and steal. Consequently, we are last in green economy initiatives; last in national income generation; last in agriculture and tourism performance; last in Foreign Direct

Investment inflows; last in foreign exchange earnings; last in job creation; and last in economic growth. But we are first in the abuse of public office for the creation of millionaire ministers. We are also first in the sale of passports and diplomatic immunity to some of the most wanted criminals around the world.

Today, in Castle Bruce, we acknowledge the tremendous work to be done for God and Country in order to reinstate the moral compass of enlightened leadership at the helm of our development efforts. Today we pledge, TOGETHER WE WILL.

And so, on behalf of all those who have stood with me, empathized with me, prayed with me and shared hopes and dreams with me; it is a great honour and privilege to accept the leadership of the United Workers Party. I thank my parents; my brothers and sisters; my wife and her family; my children; my friends and co-workers; my teachers and mentors over the years; the people of Marigot; the patriots of Dominica at home and abroad; and the giants of this great political organization, like the Hon. Edison James, Hon Norris Prevost and Hon Ron green, on whose shoulders I now stand. Together, the different players on my personal development team through time, have prepared me for a time like this; a time of climbing mountains and crossing stormy seas; a time of being more than I can be in the cause of putting Dominica first. I am humbled and grateful for the party's vote of confidence in my ability to build and lead a governance team that will conscientiously nurture and protect the public interest in the advancement of Dominica for all Dominicans.

This was an exciting and at times tense leadership determination exercise, but at the end of the day, the value of honouring the collective will of the people prevailed for the people. This exercise of our democratic privilege to let all ideas, talents and capabilities

contend is indispensable in the process of people-centred policy making in the free world. We are better now as we look ahead to even greater unity of purpose for the common good.

Let us therefore resolve to leave our differences and understandable disappointments behind in the contest that ended with the choice of the majority and prepare for the battle to lift Dominica out of the abyss of gloom and doom into which it was so cruelly dumped by the Dominica Labour Party.

Fortunately, in its first term in government, our 25 year old political organization effectively demonstrated its ability to modernize and grow the Dominican economy and to facilitate the evolution of social services that significantly improve the quality of life. Together, we will do it again. And so, at this time when Dominica cries out to be released from the stranglehold of a regime that has managed to turn the country upside down, inside out and back to front over the last 14 years, we rise on the commitment that the UWP will lead Dominica to the glory days of its full potential.

Together we will do much more than secure enough votes to win the next election. Together we will ensure that ID cards must be used for voting... And together we will ensure that the voter's list is cleaned up to remove the names of all dead people and those who no longer qualify under the law to vote.

Together we will join our brothers and sisters of all political persuasions in a crusade to restore the beauty and radiance of the Dominican soul.

Together we will we rise, not to curse the darkness but to bring the light of revival.

Together we will renew the United Workers Party into a more effectively structured, integrated, visionary, caring, innovative, and agile organization committed to the good governance of Dominica...

Together we will face the future with confidence mindful of the need to continuously improve party organization, systems and procedures to secure relevance; enhance participation; achieve consensus; and define the skills and competencies required for the task at hand.

As representatives of our people, we must be committed, willing and able to stay the course as agents of the change our country urgently needs. We must communicate respectfully with all constituents. We must listen to them, learn from them and be guided by their cares, fears, anxieties and emotions. We must empower ourselves to be effective facilitators of their worthwhile dreams and aspirations. We must rise up and live up to the highest standards of leadership and management excellence in the public interest.

TOGETHER WE WILL ensure that change is a must and not an option because things cannot be allowed to get any worse than they are right now.

Together we will stand for the change that will ensure that NEVER AGAIN will this isle to all so sweet and fair be asked to accept “beggar” days as “better” days.

For our beloved Dominica, we are challenged to pursue an economic development strategy premised on sustainable, innovative utilization of our natural resources to transform the

economy from a state of helpless decline to a level of vibrancy and adequate diversification able to provide for the current and future needs of our people. To that end, we will create the enabling environment through leadership action that carefully connects our vision, values, business fundamentals, legislation and incentives to the economic growth strategy. In so doing, we will facilitate the emergence of a strong private sector that drives new investments and job growth, earns foreign exchange and increases disposable income.

To facilitate more productive engagements with the global economy, we will embark on a comprehensive air and sea access initiative to include the development of an international airport, a Dominica based airline and a high speed ferry service. On the technology front, we will reposition Dominica to achieve technology leadership in the region by engaging the highest speed, wireless broadband available in order to enable new cutting edge business development driven by video calling, streaming, and data transfer.

In the strategic planning for a better Dominica we will prioritize the utilization of the tremendous human and financial resources of our sons and daughters in the diaspora whose anxiety to leverage the value of our gifts so rich and rare for significant international benefit, patiently awaits the arrival of a government committed to putting the national interest ahead of personal interests

Our foreign policy for productive engagement with the outside world in the enlightened self interest of Dominica will be determined by us and not imposed on us

Of paramount importance, in this land of “people strong and healthy, full of Godly reverent fear” is the restoration of faith and confidence in the ability of the institutions, offices and officers of the state to function professionally in the public interest without fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

We will create a ‘Dominica First’ environment of caring, mutual respect, trust and commitment in which nationals at home and abroad, and especially traditionally disadvantaged groups, can participate fully with their unique talents and backgrounds in achieving and sharing the fruits of our success.

We will strengthen democracy in government institutions and civil society organizations while purposefully reducing the size and cost of government.

We are firmly committed to a rules-based social protection and poverty alleviation program that is comprehensive and free of petty, partisan politics. Consequently, we will work to provide complete healthcare and elderly care, housing support and social protection for those in need. To keep our nation safe, we will establish and implement an adequately resourced national strategic plan for sustained reduction of crime and violence.

We wholeheartedly commit to a Human Capital Development Programme designed to build the discipline of lifelong learning and ensure the delivery of quality education strategically aligned to the long term National Development plan. This will mean moving speedily to achieve full literacy of the Dominican population; improved training for employment; and entrepreneurial opportunities for the nation’s youth in the growth engines of the economy.

In the bid to correct our human capital deficiency, we will strengthen youth development organizations and provide proper sporting facilities island wide, capable of helping young Dominicans prepare effectively for international competition.

Dominica, our isle of beauty, our isle of splendor, our isle to all so sweet and fair, can become the best place to live, work and enjoy life in the global community. We can become an exemplary, globally recognized Nature Island democracy of the people, by the people, for the people, standing tall as a beacon for the advancement of civility around the world.

Our call today is for **everyone especially those who have lost confidence, who are fearful of the future, but whose hearts yearn for something better:**

*Come ye forward, sons and daughters
Of this gem beyond compare.
Strive for honor, sons and daughters,
Do the right, be firm, be fair.
Toil with hearts and hands and voices.
We must prosper! Sound the call,
In which ev'ry one rejoices,
"All for Each and Each for All."*

Let us once again believe in our individual ability to make a difference and in our collective ability to let Dominica soar to the sublime heights of human achievement...

It will not be easy... But I know together we will get there because in the words of Julia Ward Howe:

Mine eyes have seen the glory

*Of the coming of the Lord
He is trampling out the vintage
Where the grapes of wrath are stored
He has loosed the fateful lightning
Of his terrible swift word
His truth is marching on*

And with his truth marching on, TOGETHER WE WILL restore the pride and dignity of Dominica as a nation under God committed to truth, righteousness, justice and the constitutional rule of law

Together we will develop and grow a model green economy that puts our people to work for decent wages, gives a fair chance to all and secures our place in the evolution of global affairs

Together we will educate our sons and daughters to become successful global citizens capable of competing and winning in the varied fields of human endeavour

Together we will stamp out the rampant corruption that illicitly enriches ministers of government and their friends with public money siphoned away from securing the greatest good for the greatest number

Together we will eradicate poverty and restore the humanity of the poor and less fortunate whose dignity is trampled under the feet of politicians in disgraceful catch-a-vote advertisements of public assistance financed by the public purse

Together we will defeat the gutter politics of mepuis, hate and prejudice which this regime has embraced as its weapon destruction against those who dare to do the right... and be firm and fair in presenting the case for a better Dominica

Together we will ensure that wrong no longer rules the land, freedom no longer weeps, and justice no longer sleeps

Together, WE THE PEOPLE, whatever our political persuasion, whatever our occupation, whatever our station, will rise up from this long night of pessimism and broken dreams to turn back the worst, to put Dominica first... so that our children can be energized for national engagement once again by the stubbornness of hope and the indomitable expectation of love, joy and wonderful possibilities in a future we will no longer fear.

How long? Not Long!

I leave you this evening with the exciting news that on Sunday September 29th, 2013, we will meet again for the Grand 25th Anniversary Reunion of the United Workers Party at Londonderry where the party was launched in 1988. This rally of all rallies will feature presentations from the new UWP leadership team and political leaders from the Caribbean region. It will be the defining event in the process of political change that has become a must for Dominica. Sunday September 29th, 2013 – the anniversary reunion of the United Workers Party at Londonderry – TOGETHER, WE WILL all be there.

Thank you very much. God Bless the United Workers Party... And God bless the people of the Commonwealth of Dominica.