

The SVG Party.....

St Vincent & the Grenadines election 2020 - an overview by the TSVG

Sadly, the SVG Party (TSVGP) weren't in a position to contest the 2020 election. However, we congratulate the ULP for their historic achievement of 'five in a row' successful campaigns. At the same time, we offer our sincerest commiserations to the NDP and their supporters. Although November 2020 seems long ago, now the dust has settled we thought it appropriate to deliver our deliberations. Therefore, here is our official overview of the 2020 election. Whilst we appreciate, the benefit of hindsight it has not changed our overriding thoughts.

Whatever the reasons (justified or not) the NDP have lost 5 elections in a row which clearly states the electorate have rejected their ideas, policies and the NDP leadership. Whilst the NDP won the popular vote (as did Hilary Clinton in 2016 but not the White House) it must also be noted that the ULP were considered to be in their worst political position for years. This is further demonstrated by the overall reduction of the ULP vote. However, against the odds the ULP still managed to secure an additional seat whilst, the NDP were unable to capitalise on the mounting displeasure surrounding the lack of governance, accountability and transparency of the ULP administration.

Although the overall NDP vote did increase, it was still not a big enough or significant enough shift to secure victory at polls. The NDP's message did not have 'substance' nor did the NDP display a confident winning mentality to the electorate required by any successful opposition party.

For many years the ULP have legitimately been viewed as an oppressive regime that shows little regard or respect for the citizens of the country. They have reduced the people to be dependent, fearful and powerless. They have encouraged an environment where women do not feel safe, and children are unprotected stranded in a broken and almost lawless society. A society where those in authority are allowed to administer justice as they see fit. More often than not with those in authority being the worst perpetrators by abusing their position.

Far too many citizens live in fear, in a society where poverty is rife, social injustice is common, widespread and accepted. A fearful society where those who should know better (including the church) are often happy to maintain an undignified silence and far too keen to turn a blind eye.

The ULP leadership is controlling and consistently misuses their authority. Is this unusual behaviour for countries in the Caribbean? No. Are these practices recognised and generally accepted? Yes.

Unfortunately, worst still is the unhealthy lessons and messages continually being communicated and conveyed to the next generation of leaders and politicians. A message of 'you can get away with anything.' Or an attitude of almost 'anything goes' is such a negative force it places SVG on a cliff edge. An edge we will fall into if the ULP administration continues to govern and manage the country in their cavalier and unchallenged manner.

Both main parties have had years to make an impact and let their actions do the talking but they have been too complacent. The NDP thought they should win the election because of the current administrations well-documented history of broken and unfilled promises. And the ULP didn't realise how tired and exhausted the electorate have grown from their way of governance, lack of a long-term economic strategy, the continued victimization of its citizens and the lack of trust and decency in the ULP administration hence, their overall reduction in votes. So, the losers will always be the electorate whilst ministers and their hangers-on continue to be paid handsomely.

Evaluating the campaigns

The NDP's campaign was much improved but it could have been so much better. Especially, since they've had plenty of practice in coming second and adequate time to make improvements. So, their campaign should really have been 'on point.'

However, they did not have a strong message for the electorate apart from a 3% reduction in VAT and an almost total reliance on the Citizen by Investment program (CBI) to be their saving grace. The CBI program wasn't promoted in a cohesive manner to the electorate and the program wasn't adopted by the electorate. The CBI program was not even popular with the NDP's own candidates. The NDP didn't even realise the CBI program is perceived by many to be an alleged open door for abuse and corruption from both internal and external forces. Yet this was their miracle contribution to secure an election victory.

Therefore, the principle NDP policies were never going to be the catalyst to instil confidence to the electorate (that was essential) for the NDP were to secure an electoral victory. The NDP's message to the electorate was weak and did not create a clear enough path of positive outcomes for individual citizens or, for the country as a whole.

The NDP did not grasp or understand the real concerns of the electorate which demonstrated an overlooked disconnect. Nor did they reach out to the ULP supporters to vote in their favour or, make themselves attractive to the undecided voters, and there wasn't any genuine connect to non-NDP supporters or those living in the diaspora. The NDP were too comfortable thinking they should win because the ULP were in such bad shape and, they could win an election simply by playing to their own supporters with a tag line of "Life will be or get better under the NDP" without offering much substance to those outside the NDP. This further demonstrates their clear lack of vision. Which is ironic because the NDP claim to be the party of vision and visionaries.

The ULP's campaign was simple. Distraction, distraction misinformation and more distraction. So, we had lots of glitz, music artist, dancing, drinking, partying and the predictable ULP party machine. They did this well and served the people what they seemed to want. They produced an inevitable smoke screen to cover and bamboozle the electorate with their lack of achievements, lack of economic plan and buckets full of broken and empty promises. The ULP tanks have been running on empty for a while so, they opted for the same partying attitude that has served them so well so in the past. Although, having the momentum of '5 in a row' helped them massively. The ULP could even afford to sit back and watch the NDP almost self-implode because their attention was focused more on the outcome, Petitions and Appeals of the 2015 election instead of readying themselves for the 2020 election.

The candidates

Trust and confidence in candidates are a big issue and too many candidates (on both sides) are historically and negatively tainted. The integrity of candidates is of the utmost importance and a vital factor especially, for an opposition party if they want to be considered as a real contender. Many of the recognised candidates (again on both sides) have been lazy. Assuming they can just turn up and secure their constituency votes. Both the ULP and NDP have had plenty of time to make an impact to show their constituencies why voting for them is their best option.

Yet, neither party has been able to impact or influence voters with their policies, direction or even charisma. Instead, they follow the traditional routes and simply state the inadequacies of each other believing this is what the electorate wants to hear instead, of rounded policies. Both parties have failed in their duties and whilst this is allowed to continue the electorate will continue to suffer.

Therefore, you cannot blame the uneducated, the poor or the fed-up or frustrated electorate for not voting or for voting in the manner they did. Also, you cannot blame those who felt they needed to be bribed. You cannot blame inconsistencies at the polling stations or discrepancies and irregularities that should have been resolved from previous elections and equally, you cannot blame the democratic process after results are counted. If constitutional changes are required, make these changes years before an election. You definitely cannot cry after the event. The losing side must 'take their licks' and come back stronger. If changes to the electoral processes are required, make the changes for the country and not for 'party' advantage.

The electorate who must also take some responsibility for returning an unreliable administration into power. People power is the only way to move a government and the countries citizens should not wait for the complete breakdown of civil society and eminent civil unrest before making a move to oust non-representative self-indulgent administrations. People power is always predominating force.

So, what next for the parties?

The ULP will undoubtedly continue to govern in the way they have for the past 20 years. Why wouldn't they? It has been a successful route for them to beg and borrow without much opposition, accountability or transparency. However, it is the opinion of the SVGP that whilst the ULP remain in power the country will continue to suffer socially, economically and will continue on a downward protectorate with minimal growth and/or development. Should father be allowed to pass the baton to son - we see no deviation from the current administrations governing practises ensuring a continued lack of transparency and accountability, increased nepotism and a total depart from moral guidance and governance.

The NDP must make a new start. There is still a dark cloud hovering over the party since the Sir James Mitchell era. Sir James did a relatively good job at the time, but that time has now passed and there is still much criticism associated with Sir James and the NDP towards the end of that era.

Dr Friday is not a natural born leader and is perceived by many as mediocre. We hear this from members and supporters alike. Many do not believe in his qualifications and he just seem to be the best the NDP have been able to put forward via their internal processes. He is considered to be more managerial than presidential but the NDP requires strong leadership to get and keep them in line. SVG doesn't need more politicians claiming leadership credentials. SVG need more leadership in its elected politicians.

The reality for the NDP is they cannot continue to repackage the same old faces. They need to get serious with policies that are viable, comprehensible and welcomed by the electorate. The NDP candidates should also be happy to promote the party message without secretly criticising it behind their leaders back consequently, implanting a lack of confidence in the leadership. "One Vincy. One people." It is very evident the NDP are not as much in unity with themselves as they may believe.

The subsequent damage and credibility caused by the NDP losing both the Petitions and Appeal shows a total lack of legal understanding. They almost brought the party to its knees and now, they are left to pay substantial legal costs. Again, the lack of judgement and NDP leadership is evident. The grasping for power by any means necessary shows they are beginning to lose value and credibility as an opposition party which, is littered with eligible legal minds.

The NDP and their supporters must face facts. The party has not been a strong Opposition for many years. They have not represented the country as an adequate Opposition party, and they have not held the ULP administration accountable to any degree.

Moving forward

The SVGP want to see SVG progressing and accelerating at pace. SVG politics requires a nationwide united front to reboot the country. We all need to play a part and become responsible for the country's progress. Therefore, although we have been very critical of the two main parties, the SVGP will happily work (in any capacity) with any party that realises an immediate economic rethink is required in an accountable and transparent way to ensure change in the country's direction. It is time to adopt a national 'country first' attitude.

If neither main party wishes to work with us, then we will become the voice of the people. The party of change. A party of progression, growth and prosperity. A party of truth, accountability and justice. Justice for the people and country that is St Vincent and the Grenadines

God bless St Vincent and the Grenadines.

The SVG Party

"Vote for growth."