

TIME TO REVISIT THE WEST INDIAN COMMISSION!

PEOPLES EMPOWERMENT PARTY

PRESS RELEASE

A new year provides an opportunity - even if only psychologically - for a new beginning! And so, the **Peoples Empowerment Party (PEP)** embraces the year 2012 as an opportunity for the Barbadian and Caribbean people to "take a fresh guard" in relation to both their individual island nation building projects and to their collective multi-territory Caribbean Community project.

During the course of this year we will be urging Caribbean governments and populations to acknowledge that they have gone off-track in their nation building journeys and to rectify the gross deficiencies that have now become so glaringly obvious. We will also be urging upon our **Caribbean Community (CARICOM)** member nations a new effort at revitalising the integration movement, guided by the multiplicity of recommendations contained in the historic Report of the **West Indian Commission**.

The PEP wishes to draw to the attention of the governments and people of our fifteen CARICOM member nations that the year 2012 is the 20th anniversary of the ground breaking Report issued by the **West Indian Commission!**

It was on the 25th of May 1992 that Chairman of the **West Indian Commission**, Sir Shridath Ramphal, and his 14 fellow Commissioners, signed off on the Report entitled "**Time For Action**", after an extensive three year period of consulting with the Caribbean people and working out a comprehensive blueprint for taking the CARICOM countries forward and deepening their unity.

The **West Indian Commission** was a product of the historic CARICOM heads of Government Summit that was held in Grenada in July 1989, and that produced the visionary '**Grand Anse Declaration**', which, amongst other things, decreed the establishment of a CARICOM Single Market And Economy (CSME) and gave birth to a **West Indian Commission** - a convocation of wise Caribbean men and women - to craft a programme for taking our sub-region forward into the 21st century.

To their credit, the members of the **West Indian Commission** took their mandate very seriously, and within the space of three years delivered to the heads of Government a Caribbean people's manifesto for change and action. But, as is so often the case, the CARICOM governments engaged in a minimal implementation of the 500 page report, thereby resulting in a multitude of constructive Caribbean-building proposals lying fallow and un-used for the past 20 years!

It is incumbent on us therefore to use this 20th anniversary year to revisit the ‘Time For Action’ manifesto; to identify those proposals that are still relevant to the challenges that our CARICOM countries face in 2012; and to craft a new developmental initiative based on the native Caribbean wisdom that the Commission’s Report represented.

It is clear to us in the PEP that our CARICOM nations need to confront this era of profound recession with a regional development programme based on the following planks:-

- (1) The development of collectively owned, multi-territory regional industries producing food and basic industrial commodities;
- (2) The establishment of a regional monetary authority focused on ensuring exchange and convertibility of national currencies; developing a common regional currency; and augmenting the stock of development capital;
- (3) The development of a regional transportation network comprising merchant shipping and a regional airline and fast ferry service;
- (4) The development of a regional telecommunications, mass media and film - making network;
- (5) The establishment and promotion of a multi-territory CARICOM tourism project;
- (6) The establishment of a regional science, technology, research and development network, and a regional ‘**Energy Authority**’.
- (7) The downsizing, rationalization and sharing of Foreign Affairs departments and diplomatic missions.

This is the type of developmental initiative that the ideas contained in the West Indian Commission report can help us to flesh out!

Let us therefore use 2012 to pay the greatest tribute that we can to those of the 15 illustrious Caribbean men and women who, since giving birth to the ‘**Time For Action**’ manifesto, have gone on to the ancestral realm - Dame Nita Barrow, Rex Nettleford, Alister McIntyre, William Demas and Allan Kirton - by giving serious and deserved consideration to their proposals and recommendations!

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