

The Daily Herald

ELECTION SPECIAL 2007



Theophilus Priest, sole candidate on the Freedom slate:

“Indigenous St. Maartener has to lead this island”

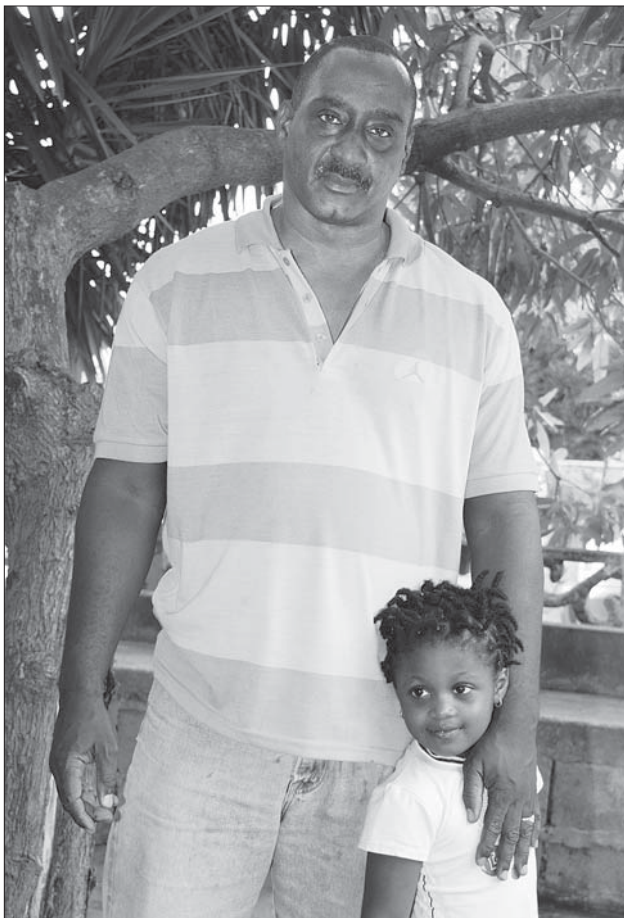
Being a seventh generation St. Maartener from a truly local family on both his mother and father's side, Theophilus Priest, the sole candidate on the Freedom slate of the National Democratic Party (NDP) has a message that he says many of the establishment won't like. It is high time for a true native person to lead the island, and not, as he put it, a bunch of corrupt politicians that betrayed the indigenous people by selling out their heritage for their own greed.

Once a member of the hardcore environmental activist groups in the Netherlands in the '70ies and '80ies and supporting the then Progressive Socialist Party (PSP), the now 52-year-old Priest wants to re-instate the emancipation process that was taken from St. Maarteners, building a nation in which those from other countries join through integration. “No Haiti nation, no Bombay nation, no Santo Domingo nation, but our nation,” he said.

St. Maarteners, said Priest, should be proud to reclaim their heritage, what's theirs. “Others came in to suppress and think they have more rights. They think this is El Dorado, where it is normal to betray, sell out each other. And they call it prosperity. You don't build a country on greed. It is not sustainable,” he said. “All love is lost and everything is built on greed. You get a sick society from that,” said Priest. And the Netherlands should have already stepped in 20 years ago to stop that greed and to prevent St. Maarten from being turned into a “gangster paradise.” Emancipation is a right that, according to the United Nations (UN), every native has a right to and that process was cut short in St. Maarten. In the meantime St. Maarteners have become third class citizens in their own country, forced to take the backseat. Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands has the duty to make sure St. Maarten's indigenous people don't become extinct. “Native people have rights. We have a right to a country where we feel safe.”

Balance

One of Priest's objectives when elected into the Island Council is bringing back the balance to St. Maarten. The island is over-populated and immigrants are being used as voting cattle. Immigration



needs to be regulated. Diversifying the economy is another objective. “St. Maarten has turned into a modern plantation company where a small group has hijacked the tourism product, using immigrants as cheap labour. We as native people don't control it, we are shut out.” Together with immigrant labour, St. Maarten also imported social economic problems from other coun-

tries. “We have also imported damaged people, dysfunctional families.” Already having to deal with their own problems in a country where they have turned into a minority, St. Maarten people have grown very frustrated, said Priest. “They are realising that they got a big six for a nine. They have been misled for years by their political leaders. We are going to be-

come a country. But based on what? For whom? That is why we need deep rooted people to lead us.”

The agreements that St. Maarten signed with the Netherlands in November 2006 and in February 2007 are a new beginning. That is where Priest's idea of a National Unity Government comes in. In his opinion, seeing the importance of ex-

cuting the Final Declaration (‘Slotverklaring’) and Transition Accord, it would be better to cooperate and, in the benefit of St. Maarten, together work towards country status. Predicting that no one party would secure the absolute majority in these elections, with his one seat, NDP would force cooperation. A new constitutional status, however, would not change the social, econom-

ic and spiritual problems, he forewarned. Help and patience from the Netherlands will be needed.

After returning to St. Maarten in 1988 to take care of his mother, Priest decided in 1995-1996 to get into St. Maarten politics forming the St. Maarten Liberation Movement (SLM). He then took up the issue of Marigot Hill Road, a dirt road connecting St. Peters with St. James on the French side which he wanted restored. Besides helping to solve traffic congestion, there was a deeper meaning to realising the restoration of Marigot Hill Road, a project which never got off the ground because government didn't make the funds available. “I tried to make people conscious of their heritage. I started with the term of indigenous St. Maarten people. People were not conscious of their heritage. Now they are waking up, but they don't know which direction to go,” he said.

Betray

Having decided that St. Maarten Liberation Movement was a bit too revolutionary, Priest changed the party name to National Democratic Party after the 1997 elections. He mostly has been the only person on the slate. “My aim is to pull a seat on my own. Only then do you have the strength to build a party from scratch. If you have a financial backer like the big parties, you will always be a pawn,” he said. “I am not a traitor. I will not betray the St. Maarten people, and even though I was born in Aruba and not here, I see it as my duty to protect the people,” said Priest, who is proud of the fact that he is a descendant of One Tete Lokaaya, the female maroon freedom fighter recognised as a national hero who played an important role in the abolishment of slavery here.

Though he has never managed to secure a seat in the Island Council, Priest is convinced he will be successful this time. “This year people are ready to see that they need a real indigenous leader, one that knows the direction,” Priest said he would need the help of the women, for history has proven that they are the ones to restore a country. “I need the help of these strong women who are true to their own nature. Women will have to play a major role to bring back sanity. Together we will bring healing to finalise emancipation.”



William Marlin is resolute: DP needs to go NA: investment in people is needed, not only projects

William Marlin and his National Alliance (NA) team are determined to take over the local administration. The party is campaigning heavily these elections, its main slogan "A new Beginning" featuring on the many billboards and flags along public roads. With catchphrases like "Vote Dem Out" and "April 20 Deliverance Day" NA shows that it is serious about getting rid of the Democratic Party (DP). Having been in the opposition benches in the Island Council since 1999, NA is anxious to get in to tackle "people" issues such as education, public health, social housing and the sewage problems.

DP, in Marlin's opinion, has done many wrongs in the past eight years. It has neglected the people and focused only on infrastructure projects in a haphazard manner. "The DP government is an Executive Council of convenience. It operates on the basis of I'll support you on this and you'll support me on that. There is no coordination from the top and every Commissioner does what he wants," said Marlin. As a result Commissioners fight, he added. "The Commissioner of Public Works spearheading a tourism project and a Commissioner of Tourism dabbles in the portfolio of Public Works through in-

frastructure projects," Marlin mentioned the Festival Village which, in his opinion, should not have been constructed under the Commissioner of Tourism but the Commissioner of Culture. NA functions as a team, Marlin said. "We operate as a team under a leader that is in control, not as a dictator but as a partner who consults with and receives respect and cooperation from his team. To move St. Maarten forward we need a team," he said. He said it has also been apparent that DP leader Commissioner Sarah Wescot-Williams was on her own when it came down to important constitutional events. "The DP Commissioners stayed away, leaving the DP leader to stand out like a lone ranger," said Marlin, noting that NA Island Council members and other candidates would always attend these events.

Sewage

Marlin also brought up the issue of Intaquin and the sewage project. "There was a public clash between Theo Heyliger and Roy Marlin which resulted in Heyliger being punished by removing him from the GEBE board and taking away from him the Energy portfolio. To date not a drop of sewage has been removed from the streets and Intaquin has gone to court filing a suit of several millions against the island government." NA will deal with the

sewage when it gets into government, Marlin assured. "It is high on our agenda." "It is DP, he said, can't claim it is the only party with experience. He explained that SPA when in government had tackled the area of Fort Willem, where every home had been hooked up to the sewage treatment plant on A. Th. Illidge Road, every road paved, cable put underground and streetlights placed. "It is the experience of the DP that today not one drop of sewage water has been removed from our districts." Marlin accused DP of putting projects ahead of people. "DP focused on construction projects where no public bids were held and huge sums of money were paid to contractor friends without real transparency," he said. In sports, Marlin said that while millions have been invested in upgrading facilities, no money came to the young athletes.

Education

The same in education, with millions, most of it Dutch development aid, invested in building and revamping classrooms. No money, however, came to the teachers who have been waiting for a new salary structure for several years. No money to recruit and train teacher aides. The teachers' salary issue has been "dragged on" with "one empty promise after the other." Government

has been "shifting" the blame on everyone while it is their responsibility, said Marlin. "Teachers are being underpaid, overworked, overstressed, having to work without adequate material, while the Commissioner of Education hops from one school to the next to inaugurate classrooms and playgrounds. When we say shame on Sarah, it is because not one new school has been built in this century while the number of school children continues to grow," he said, assuring that education will feature high on NA's agenda.

Traffic congestion

The traffic congestion is another problem that NA wants to do something about. "The serious congestion doesn't seem to bother the DP at all. They seem not to care about visitors being trapped in the gridlock of Simpson Bay," he said. In Marlin's opinion, DP also has no insight in solving the long lines on the Prondill, on Cammiegter Street and in town. The new roundabout at the police station is not the solution to the traffic congestion. "Road users have to endure endless congestion until they reach the roundabout. It is only then that traffic begins to flow and that is only because there are no more businesses," he said. In fact, by putting a parking lot next to the road, government has destroyed

plans for a parallel road, a ring road to alleviate the traffic. He said there was a comprehensive road network plan that "had not been touched in eight years." He said the DP in its "hunger of rushing through" projects would cause serious problems for the future. He mentioned the area that was developed around Princess Juliana International Airport. Despite warnings by an expert, DP in the past gave out property around the airport to its family members and friends, jeopardising plans for the airport expansion and construction of a parallel runway. "Today, millions would have to be paid to those property owners, making it nearly impossible to complete the expansion plans," he said. "We can mention so many problems that DP has failed in just because the focus is not on the people but on Commissioners going after projects," he said.

Marlin said DP had confirmed after losing the 2006 election it would do some soul searching and make an effort to get closer to the people. "They said they had to give government back to the people. Through this campaign we have said that we will not wait for that because it wouldn't happen. We will take government from the DP on April 20." He reminded people to vote for the Marlin "with his head on" and not for the Marlin who lost

half of his head on the campaign posters.

Marlin (56) was born in Curaçao from a St. Maarten mother and Guyana father. He came to St. Maarten in 1967 on vacation with his family. It was then that he decided St. Maarten was home. After completing the Pedagogic Academy in Curaçao he returned to St. Maarten and took up a teaching job at St. Joseph School. He became involved in politics in the early 80's and was the founding secretary of St. Maarten Patriotic Movement (SPM) which was launched in December 1978. SPM became St. Maarten Patriotic Alliance (SPA) in 1990. Marlin was the deputy leader of that party, and Vance James the leader. A few years later, in 1994, SPA got into government and Marlin was part of the Executive Council as Commissioner of Public Works until 1999. National Alliance was established in 2002 with Marlin at its helm. Though in the opposition benches on island level, NA did join the federal coalition in January 2004, and again became part of the Central Government after securing the most votes in St. Maarten in the Parliamentary elections in January 2006. Marlin has been a Member of Parliament for several years; for a short while in 1994 until he became Commissioner, and from 2002 until today.

PPA - Gracita Arrindell:

“Don’t miss this opportunity to make the change”

“Four years ago we asked the public not to throw another four years away, so today we ask them not to miss this opportunity to make the change.” Speaking is People’s Progressive Alliance (PPA) leader and Island Councilwoman Gracita Arrindell, who in an interview with *The Daily Herald* gave her party’s view on the importance of the April 20th Island Council election.

Herald: During this campaign it has been said repeatedly that people with experience should get elected because of the constitutional change process. Can the People’s Progressive Alliance (PPA) provide this experience?

Arrindell: I’m a senior civil servant on leave of absence who had worked in the island government over 18 years. My experience and knowledge working in the public administration are assets. As a new generation of leaders on St. Maarten we, the PPA, have the knowledge and the contacts within the Netherlands, the Dutch Kingdom, regionally and internationally which is also an asset for a leader to conduct the business of our people in a successful manner. Of course we intend to use those contacts in the political world, business world, sports world and in the world of Non Governmental Organizations. In this respect being a female political leader I will do all in my power as an elected official in government to continue to empower women on St. Maarten.

Herald: What else besides experience will the PPA provide to lead St. Maarten into a new status?

Arrindell: In governing a country having only the experience is not enough. Having integrity, transparency and accountability in the decision-making process of government are critical to ensure that decisions are made on behalf of the people and not just for a select few. The manner which you apply the experience is instrumental to the benefit of the people, to the growth and prosperity of all of our people. Only then the experience has a meaning to it.

Herald: Does the PPA agree that rejecting the November 2, 2006 final accord will cost the party votes and eventually maybe the one seat the party has in the Island Council?

Arrindell: Wishful thinking! The people of St. Maarten



Gracita and family.

are beginning to understand the long term ramifications of the agreement. Our experience has been on a one to one basis with the people and that projection does not hold. In spite of the fact that the Democratic Party (DP) that is in charge of the day to day management on St. Maarten did not go out of its way to explain and share this information with the community of St. Maarten the PPA did not paint the truth. We did not paint a rosy picture when we returned from the Netherlands in November of 2006. Contrary to my two colleagues who told the people St. Maarten would achieve a new status per July 1, 2007.

Herald: What a farce! Our people deserve better. True leadership requires telling the people exactly where it stands in this critical constitutional process.

Herald: How will the PPA do things differently when it comes to executing the November 2, 2006 accord?

Arrindell: When re-elected with a mandate from the people we will renegotiate those parts of the accord that takes away our right to self-governance. Our message is that we trust the people of St. Maarten. We trust the future generation of new political leaders which will break with the past of mismanaging our beautiful island socially, physically and economically.

Herald: But, is it possible to

renegotiate the November 2, 2006 accord? The Netherlands said it’s “an accord cast in stone.”

Arrindell: Nothing is cast in stone. While it’s regrettable that the Netherlands still remains as it stands, the agreement is not a written constitution for the country St. Maarten. And it’s not a final agreement, because this can only come at the Round Table Conference. In fact Aruba still has to be included in the final talks.

Herald: How should we look at the November 2, 2006 accord then?

Arrindell: Many other scholars within the Kingdom have referred to the accord as a start agreement. I support that premise. The people of St. Maarten deserve an agreement with more self-determination and more self-governance as we step out of the Antillean constellation, while embarking on this new and exciting process. In fact when the people of the Netherlands voted in a referendum to reject the draft constitution of the European Union (EU), the Netherlands made it abundantly clear to the powers in Europe that while being a member of the EU they insisted that they be allowed a second chance.

Herald: Are you saying that government isn’t fully involving the people in the constitutional change process?

Arrindell: The recent presentation of the plans and reports regarding our constitutional future to the Commissioner of Constitutional Affairs has not been released to the Island Council. Under a PPA led government the media and the people of St. Maarten would receive full disclosure of these documents because it’s about all of us. It’s regrettable that the presentation did not take place in the people’s representatives’ place, which is the Dr. A.C. Wathey Legislative Hall.

Herald: Why did you go shopping while such an important document as the final accord was being negotiated in The Hague last year?

Arrindell: During the meetings in The Hague, I attended all the meetings and expressed my view on the unwisdom and the mistake of signing the November 2, 2006, agreement. During one of my breaks and caucuses, I left the meeting to go to the book store to purchase several books on constitutional law. I also left my cell number with the Island Secretary to call me when the session was about to resume.

While I know it’s rather difficult for some of my colleagues to either believe or understand that getting books and reading is helpful and educational, but those are the facts. I went to a bookstore and purchased books also at the request of members of the delegation

who were out during the same break. I will always go and get books while I am in the Netherlands or elsewhere to better enlighten myself about constitutional issues and other subjects.

Herald: What other issue(s) of importance will have PPA’s foremost attention during the next governing period?

Arrindell: Education is in a crisis, period! While we have chosen to remain within the Dutch Kingdom it’s important to learn the Dutch language. At the same time we are fully aware that the Dutch language has taken a second position in those schools where our students are required to command a high level of the Dutch language. Consequently our students have fallen behind tremendously. In this regard for many reasons, including the fact that we had no adequate number of Dutch teachers, St. Maarten has a large number of school dropouts. According to a recent survey, St. Maarten has over 40 per cent dropout, which is a testament to the declining of our social and educational institutions. The PPA will make education in all aspects its top priority under a PPA led government.

Herald: The PPA isn’t the new kid on the block anymore. How different has the campaign been this time around?

Arrindell: We still are the new kid on the block. We have been around for four years and one term, one other political party has been around for over 50 years and in the other one in 50 and another for over 25 years. The election has been exciting and great. We expect the people to throw out the DP and elect a PPA government on April 20th.

Herald: What about economic development. You believe there has been uncontrolled and unbalanced development on St. Maarten?

Arrindell: Yes. St. Maarten has become a cement jungle of condos and timeshare buildings without regard to the basic infrastructure of adequate roads, traffic congestion, potholes and other pressing issues. It is true that the economic development has brought a lot of palm trees. We still have the same basic road system with this additional development. We keep hearing about this strong economic development and ask aloud: where are the permanent jobs and where is the increase in government revenue? Where are the improvements to the island’s infrastructure? Economic development that simply rewards the select few and their family and friends is not a real economic development strategy. We have set forth our economic development strategy in our new Manifesto 2007.

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Harold Jack fights for independence through SPBIM

"There is no freedom in a bottle"

Harold Jack, leader of the new party St. Martin People's Believers Independence Movement (SPBIM) strongly believes St. Maarten should go for independence. He has his reasons for this: being tied to the "homosexually" Europe is not a good thing. "There is no freedom in a bottle."

St. Maarten should not be affiliated with a country like the Netherlands and also not with Europe for these two entities represent "evil things." Homosexuality, pornography, slack laws that allow the use of drugs and let criminals get away with a slap on the wrist. "We as St. Maarten does want to join in that. It goes against our principles as a Caribbean people." A retired casino controller, 66-year-old Jack, who was born in Aruba, contends that there is no fear of God in Europe. "There is no fear of God in that system. A nation that forgets God perishes. As a believer I am stepping up against an invasion of a different ideology."

Jack calls himself a "strong believer" of the prophecy as stated in the Book Daniel that speaks of a revived Roman



Harold Jack taking pride in his homemade sign.

Empire. Rome ruled Europe and the Middle East in 3 BC. He stressed that he is not against the people of Europe, but merely against its ideology and legal system, which condones things like euthanasia and free drugs. "When a government imposes and sanctions evil, that is not a good thing. We should not be affiliated with that and that is why we should become independent," he said.

Signs

Jack has been campaigning for independence for more than 30 years. The signs that he has posted outside the snack bus on A.J.C. Brouwer Road on Cole Bay Hill are his only campaign material for the elections. The signs carry messages against evil, corruption and also against "colonialism" by the Netherlands. "I don't have to convince anyone that St. Maarten is in trouble.

Everyone, including the politicians, knows that."

Jack convinced Sam Hazel and Carlyle Webb to join him in taking part in the April 20 Island Council elections. The idea to participate in the elections was born a few months ago. Jack, Hazel and Webb know each other from the Bible classes that Jack gives every Wednesday evening and Sunday morning. "I stepped into the arena. As a watchman

I'm sending a warning signal I had to warn the people," said Jack, comparing his message to a hurricane warning. "We have a problem coming our way."

A strong believer in Christian values, ethics, principles, family values, Jack decided to step up to the plate, for "silence is consent." "If you love your land and principles, someone has to say this is not right. We don't want to lose our family values. Our family values have already degenerated too much. There is a lot of crime. St. Maarten is a chaos and has turned its back on God," said Jack, who believes that independence would bring back peace to the island and its inhabitants. Human laws have to change to restore the Godly principles that men have forgotten. Capital punishment is a "must" for Jack and the SPBIM. "Not for the purpose of the man that murdered a fellow human being, but for others that might think about doing the same thing," he said, convinced that without strict laws, every man becomes his own law.

Beauty

St. Maarten can handle independence. "We can take care

of ourselves. More than 100 nationalities make their living here, so don't tell me we can't do it," he said. It is a matter of recognising that the people are the value of a country.

"The people are the country, not government. You have to beautify the people."

Ironically, Jack has lived in the Netherlands for some nine years where he got training in electrical engineering. From Aruba, where he was raised as part of a family of 19 children of St. Vincentian parents, he went to the Netherlands in 1962. He came to St. Maarten in 1971 with his wife, whose parents hail from here. He hosted the first live TV show in the Windward Islands from 1973 to 1975 called "Caribbean Express," a replica of Soul Train with dancing and singing. During the day he did electrical work at and around Concord Hotel, now Sonesta Maho Beach Resort. He has been operating "Bethel" snack on Cole Bay Hill for some 15 years. Until a hurricane struck the snack was a bit bigger. From that strategic spot, he has served thousands of tourists a drink, often accompanied by a funny remark or occasionally a little song about life.

PPA - GRACITA ARRINDELL

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people understand that voting for the PPA is voting for real change and a government the people can trust. They also know that voting for the NA is getting more of the same and not a new generation of leadership. We expect a Carnival surprise and a big victory for the PPA.

Herald: It often happened in the past that new parties that obtained one or two seats in their first election lost their second election, never to return on the political scene again. How real is this possibility for the PPA?

Arrindell: We will win seats during this election for sure. The people understand that the PPA team has leadership, training and the skills to manage this island administration. The people have watched the PPA stand up for their interests. The people believe the PPA is a party it can trust. We also believe that the people understand that our candidates want to go into government to serve and not to get rich or to enrich their family and friends. That is the difference and the people are ready for change. They are tired of both old parties being voted and polluting the election process and system. For the sake of

our children's future this must change!

Herald: This campaign has been more focused on persons instead of issues. What does this say about the level of our politicians?

Arrindell: That may be true of the other political parties. The PPA sent out over 10,000 postcards asking for the people's support because of issues. The PPA also prepared and circulated over 5,000 booklets describing the backgrounds and experiences of each PPA candidate. Finally, the PPA is delivering its Manifesto 2007 of 44 pages to over 4,000 households on St. Maarten. On the other hand, the DP and the NA are in a contest and race to see which party can install the biggest pictures and the largest number of coloured flags. Neither party has yet to issue a written detailed statement of its issues for the people to consider. These 2 old parties want the people to vote for them on the basis of pictures and flags while the PPA is discussing issues and solutions for the people. Our people have a real choice this election.

What is your hope for the future of St. Maarten?

Arrindell: Four years ago we asked the public not to throw away four years. This is a great opportunity to reverse the general disenchantment of the present DP government policy into a future based on hope, prosperity for our people and our visitors. We would like to appeal to those voters who still doubt to be part of the change, because without them it will be more of the same. St. Maarten is a great island and our diversity is our strength. The PPA will be a catalyst for strengthening our people and by extension our island to be one of the greatest places in the world to visit or to raise a family.

Herald: If elected to the Island Council, which party or parties, will the PPA look at to form a government?

Arrindell: The best possible outcome for all parties in this election will be for new voices and a new generation of political leaders to emerge. The PPA strongly appeals to the electorate for majority seats on the floor of the Island Council. Choosing to work with one of the two other political leaders already represented in the island Council will be like choosing between a rock and a hard place.

VOTE PPA

FOR GOVERNMENT YOU CAN TRUST

EDUCATION IS THE KEY

CHRISTOPHER EMMANUEL

VOTE #6

PPA

To my people of St. Maarten my name is Christopher Emmanuel and I am the number 6 candidate on the PPA slate. I am appealing to you the voters of this good country to truly come out and vote in this election. It is time we make a conscientious decision to change the direction that our country is heading. I urge you to consider voting for the PPA; vote for my person Christopher Emmanuel because education is the key and yes it is the most important investment St. Maarten needs to make. I write this letter to you from my heart because I sincerely understand the struggle many of my people face every day. No longer must we accept mediocrity, so I say to my St. Maarten people, let your children know that St. Maarten belongs to them, so they must take charge of their country with a sound education. Let them know, if they don't take it someone will and make decisions for them. It is time we take our rightful place in our country.

DP - Sarah Wescot-Williams:

“My greatest satisfaction will be to witness the signing when St. Maarten becomes country”

The greatest satisfaction for Sarah Wescot-Williams will be to witness the signing of the Kingdom Law giving St. Maarten the status of Country within the Dutch Kingdom. The leader of the Democratic Party (DP) in an exclusive interview with The Daily Herald reflects on the issues that have been defining the campaign leading up to the Island Council election on April 20 considered to be crucial for St. Maarten as the island is preparing for changes in its constitutional status.

Herald: The DP has campaigned with the slogan “Experience Counts.” How important is it to have experienced politicians in government now that St. Maarten is on the verge of constitutional change?

Wescot-Williams: The focus of “experience counts” is also to look at the accomplishments of the DP in earlier years when St. Maarten had many set backs.

Herald: What are the dangers for St. Maarten if less experienced politicians get elected to office at this stage?

Wescot-Williams: You need experience and committed persons in office. This is especially true where St. Maarten's new status is concerned. Achieving our new status by December 15, 2008, is not an easy task. We need people with experience, yes, but in my opinion even more so with the commitment to the cause of achieving the country status. You will need to see the kind of dedication that has been shown since our referendum in 2000. That dedication is the only reason why we are where we are today. If the lack of experience goes hand in hand with the lack of commitment to St. Maarten's new status, then I believe we will have a serious problem as an island country to be.

Herald: DP has been under fire for not doing enough for education. What has government done in the past 8 years for the educational system on the island?

Wescot-Williams: The big mistake opposition parties, especially the National Alliance (NA), is making is that they are using education to criticise government. If that is the way they are seeking mileage, it's a wrong thing and the election will show that. Just like our research has shown that education is a concern for the population of St. Maarten, the



handling of education is rated highly by the population. I applaud the fact that education is a matter of concern for St. Maarten. Imagine if the people did not care about what happened and is happening in education. That to me would be a pity. The issue of for example no classroom being built in the last decade or whatever the opposition is saying. I ask myself where has the opposition been? Because fact is that while they say the Commissioner is cutting ribbons, every time I cut a ribbon is for something that has happened. Between 2004 and now 20 additional classrooms have been built throughout primary education in St. Maarten. Secondary schools too have been expanded with classrooms and I don't speak yet of the improvements that have been made to the classrooms and to our educational system.

Herald: You are saying that the DP government has been complying with the principles of good governance?

Wescot-Williams: When you look at good governance today, St. Maarten can boast of having updated annual accounts better than it has ever been in the past. We are actually up to date with our annual accounts and the discussions in the Island Council are a form of transparency in government. We know of times when the former SPA, now NA, was in government that they didn't even consider it necessary to have a budget for the island territory, let alone annual accounts. In addition to that mainly every area of government has an appeal possibility. People do not have to accept a decision by the Executive Council as final. And St. Maarten too applies the principles of open government allowing people to request government documentation if they can be considered an interested party to a particular issue. The very matter of the application of the LAR is also a way of openness in government. So the opposition, and in this case I'm talking specifically the People's Progressive Alliance (PPA), when they talk about openness and transparency, they limit it to what they think is open gov-

ernment and transparency. The PPA has made a lot of issue about the matter of the ombudsman, knowing full well government has committed itself a long time ago to have an ombudsman. It's part of the total package of the draft constitution recently presented. The only thing is that we are not doing it in the timeframe the PPA wants it done

Herald: The available lots in Belvedere were assigned in one weekend. Has party politics been played with the assignment and was it a rush job before election?

Wescot-Williams: The Commissioner admitted and apologised that in the handling of the matter he was overwhelmed by the response. A process maybe that would have taken several weeks took basically just a few days. The demand for affordable land on St. Maarten is high. With 184 lots of land you cannot give out more than that. Of course everybody who registered still has to go through the screening process. This strengthens government's conviction that we have to continue on the path of seeking affordable land and housing possibilities for the people on St. Maarten because the demand is very high.

Herald: There has been complaint about the overall development on St. Maarten. Does the DP acknowledge the negative consequences

of the development?

Wescot-Williams: In general there will always be some fall-out to development and St. Maarten is no exception as that is concerned. If you compare where we are today to where we were 30 years ago, the development has been tremendous. In our manifesto we use the word balance and consolidation very often. We explain coming at a balance in the following way: Today we believe that we are at the point on St. Maarten where we have more time to evaluate any development as to the cost – not only money wise - and benefit of that development. This is something we as government constantly have to weigh.

Herald: Does the DP feel it hasn't received recognition for what it has done for the island?

Wescot-Williams: Politically there has been a lot of hype about the consequences of the development, because the DP is in government currently and has been consecutively for the past 8 years. The opposition has to find reasons to criticise government and offer an own solution. That is the main thrust of an opposition. Some of the opposition parties point at the development of the island and only highlight the negative and use this as one of the reasons to criticise government. The data collected, however, shows differently.

Herald: This year again we

have seen several shifts in the electorate and in addition shifts in party finances. Why is this?

Wescot-Williams: These shifts are part of our culture. It's one of the forms of a democracy. People change their mind about a political party and their involvement with a party. The same reasons hold basically for financiers of political parties. I think that the issue of financiers has always been supported by different companies and that too changes over time and is part of our democracy and culture.

Herald: If DP does not win the election outright is it logical to expect a DP/NA coalition because they are the two parties supporting the November 2, 2006, final accord on constitutional change?

Wescot-Williams: I don't believe we are going to have to form a coalition because the DP will get at least six seats. But if we have to it will be extremely difficult for the DP to enter into any coalition or alliance with a political party that does not support St. Maarten achieving its country status. That for me will nearly be impossible. It's either that or the political party will have to change its tune, but we are bent on finalising this process of constitutional change. We have come too far to turn back or allow anyone to deter this.

Herald: The campaign has been more focused on persons instead of issues. Why is this?

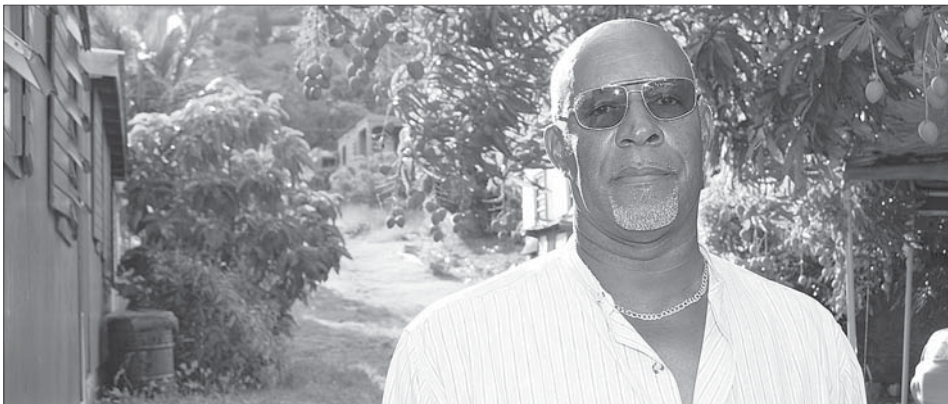
Wescot-Williams: You can always debate if and how parties address issues. It's not a matter of issues versus not dealing with the issues. If you look at the overall way the campaign is being conducted, it has definitely taken on a negative form. Usually elections tend to get hectic on St. Maarten, but this campaign we are seeing a lot more negativism where campaigning is concerned.

Herald: Why the negativism?

This election is extremely important. It's a form of springboard precursor towards country status and what you are seeing is that opposition is leaving no stone unturned to try to get on the bandwagon of constitutional change. Everyone now is focusing on that date December 15, 2008, and everyone is claiming the achievement of bringing us where we are today.

Continued on page 7

Johan van Heyningen of Democratic Labour Party: “We are the only true opposition, the other parties are satellites”



Johan van Heyningen in his meticulously kept yard.

Convinced that the other parties in opposition are merely satellites created by the governing Democratic Party (DP) and which are not interested in true change, Johan van Heyningen started the Democratic Labour Party (DLP) a few months ago.

“Looking at what is taking place, I decided that this government was not for the people and started the DLP. I don't have anything to lose, but my children and those of other people do. If we sit by and continue to accept the plundering, lies and incompetence, we will be guilty of treason to our children,” said Van Heyningen, a 62-year-old retired Census Of-

fice worker who was born in Curaçao from St. Maarten parents. “People want change, but the parties that are clamouring change will not change things. They will only take care of themselves.” National Alliance, van Heyningen said, in fact came about after a few persons, including him, in 1978 got together to start an opposition party. The St. Maarten Patriotic Movement (SPM) was formed, which later became St. Maarten Patriotic Alliance (SPA) and then National Alliance. SPM was led by Vance James, whom, Van Heyningen said, he had proposed as leader. Van Heyningen said he then left the movement because he “refused

to play along” with a “satellite opposition party” created by former DP leader Claude Wathey. The opposition, he said, was created to appease the international media which had suggested that there was dictatorship in St. Maarten since only one party took part in the 1967 elections, the DP. “You ask yourself where the opposition is. In reality there are not five opposition parties but one, the DLP.”

Blacklist

Van Heyningen once ran on the DP slate to “get off the blacklist.” That was in 1975. Always having been inclined politically, Van Heyningen said he had gotten on DP's blacklist for challeng-

ing Wathey during a 1971 strike at St. Maarten Isle Hotel & Casino, now Great Bay Resort & Casino. Van Heyningen was one of the 44 casino workers who went on strike because management refused to give them four days work during the slow period. “We challenged Claude and closed off the tables at mid-night and marched off. Afterwards a few of us were taken back as dealers, but I was unable to get work,” he said, explaining that in 1975 he was asked by his friend Joe Richardson to get on the DP slate. “In 1979 they got rid of Chester York and me. We were too popular and in those days you could never get too popular.” In the meantime, Van Heyningen had started working as controller at the Labour Department. He was transferred to the Census Office in 1989 after writing a report about the bad labour situation of workers at one particular business.

“I was transferred to the Census without even telling me, just because I was executing my job, apparently not to the liking of certain characters in the business community.” As a controller at Census Office, going to houses to verify names and addresses for the purpose of the Civil Registry, Van Heyningen said he also encountered situations which indicate that there is modern day slavery in St. Maarten.

Slavery practices

To date there are still slavery practices in St. Maarten, he said, explaining that he counted the number of Indian

workers in Front Street. “From Jump-up Casino down to Oranje School I counted 518 Indian workers and only 132 Caribbean people. Many of these Indian people are slaves. The DP government knows and sanctions it.” In general, businesses established by outsiders should be started for the sole purpose of creating work for the local people. “If that is not the case, then we don't need them.”

The last function Van Heyningen occupied before retiring in 2004 was passport processing officer. Strangely enough Van Heyningen is criminologist by profession having worked for the US government as part of an anti-crime unit until he came back to St. Maarten in 1970. Winning the 2007 Island Council elections as a new party is possible, said Van Heyningen, mentioning John Compton of St. Lucia whose party took eleven of the twelve seats. “People wanted change there.”

Voters in St. Maarten are being manipulated “in a way that is indescribable,” said Van Heyningen, who assured that his party was not being financed with corporate money. One of the contributing factors is the system, which he called “outdated.” “Because of that we are vulnerable to everything,” he said, adding that many people on the island can't read. This, he said, benefited a party like the DP for “an illiterate mass is a controllable mass.” He also criticised the Dutch legal system that is in place here. He said crim-

inals were getting off with sentences that are too light, because the Dutch legal system is “primitive.”

Independence

This is also one of the reasons why Van Heyningen is a staunch supporter of independence. “We can only properly address this through independence. As long as the Dutch hold the finances in their hands, we will be dependent. We are colonies, but the Dutch have lied that we (the Antilles, ed.) are autonomous.” He doesn't believe in the current process of achieving the status of country within the Dutch Kingdom. “A country within a country doesn't exist.” Independence is achievable, said Van Heyningen, mentioning neighbouring St. Kitts.

Finding suitable candidates for his party to lead St. Maarten to independence was not so easy, said Van Heyningen. “I contacted many persons, but many had skeletons or were afraid. Or they would disappear after being confronted to take the challenge,” he said. The three other candidates on DLP's slate Mitchell van Heyningen, Olivier Arrindell and Eastuasto “Sjoeel” Richardson, volunteered to join DLP. “Someone has to do it. It is easy to criticise from the outside.”

On April 20, Van Heyningen hopes that the people will make the right choice. “Or there will be nothing left to salvage. If things continue this way our children will have to sell what we have left in order to eat.”

DP SARAH WESCOT-WILLIAMS

Herald: What direction should St. Maarten take after country status? Are the Caribbean Small Market Economy and OECS serious options?

As an island we have been for many years hammering on the need to formalise our ties starting in the region. This will entail joining the different regional organisations. There are many ties and much cooperation within the region, for example tourism promotion. There is a lot of that in the region and St. Maarten is part of this. However, as an island we could not have done it on our own and we haven't till now been receiving much support from the Central Government. With country status, when the authority will be ours, the DP

will definitely make use of that possibility.

Herald: do you desire to become the first Prime Minister of country St. Maarten?

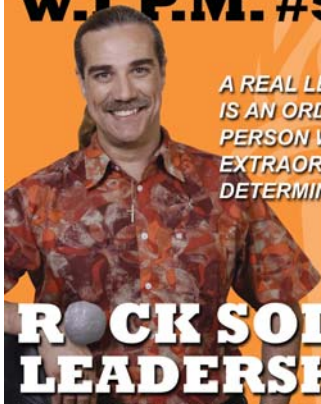
Wescot-Williams: Having worked so hard at this constitutional change my greatest satisfaction would be to be able to witness the signing of the Kingdom Law that will give St. Maarten the name of country St. Maarten. Who achieves what position in that is in my opinion a different story.

Herald: How hard has it been for you to keep focused on the tasks at hand while going through difficult times personally with the passing away of your husband?

Continued from page 6

Wescot-Williams: It's the intensity of the work that has allowed me to remain focused. We were at a critical juncture when for example dealing with matters like the final accord. We needed to make decisions. We needed to study a lot of documentations in a very short period of time. I was able to keep my mind fold with the task at hand. Even now I sometimes sit back and I think that it's barely four months ago, but with the amount of work it seems such a long time that my husband passed away. Being human of course I have my low moments. The time has been too short not to have those low moments. But, thankfully until now I've been able to snap out of them and continue full of vigour.

VOTE FOR CARL BUNCAMPER W.J.P.M. #5



A REAL LEADER
IS AN ORDINARY
PERSON WITH
EXTRAORDINARY
DETERMINATIONS

ROCK SOLID LEADERSHIP BRINGING YOUR VISION INTO FOCUS



A vote for Carl is a vote for Rock Solid Leadership...

- LONG TERM VISION** See yourself and your families doing well, having opportunities, being informed, feeling secure. For this vision to be realized it will take your commitment to select strong reliable leadership. Remember Leadership is action, not position. Act now.....vote for Carl.
- EXCELLENCE** Excellence is not perfection but the willingness and know-how to raise standards. That's what striving for excellence is all about. Leaders like Carl have the ability to anticipate and prevent problems rather than being defeated by them.
- ADVANCE PLANNING** Carl is experienced in advance planning. He is able to focus on outcomes, prioritize, organize timelines and successfully delegate. All of these qualities you will need in a leader to raise the standards and realize your vision.
- DISCIPLINE, DRIVE, DETERMINATION** Carl's achievements on Saba demonstrate his discipline to focus on goals. His energy to plan and follow through and his determination to raise standards enables him to create well organized opportunities for all of us. He is not deterred by complications but sees them as challenges of success.
- ENTHUSIASM** Carl is truly enthusiastic to accomplish his mission of serving his community with willingness, eagerness and optimism.
- RESPONSIBILITY** Each time that we take an action we must realize that we take the responsibility for the results of that action. Representing the people of Saba at this time takes a person like Carl who is wholly committed, capable, willing and ready to accept this responsibility.
- SACRIFICE** Carl's background exemplifies his ability to work on behalf of all people he represents, sacrificing personal interest, time and energy to achieve the goals of all.
- HUMOR** The ability to see humor is the strength of a good leader. To see humor in difficult times is one of Carl's strengths and enables him to bring people and ideas together.
- INFLUENCE** Carl's Leadership excellence lies in his ability to listen to the ideas of others. He does not fear the opinion of others. He understands the concept of team. He is able to influence the outcome by recognition of the greatness within each of us.
- PERSEVERANCE** Perseverance is the ability to stay focused on the goal, to have the organizational knowledge, the discipline and enthusiasm to work through adversity, staying positive and recognizing that through sacrifice and team work one can reach the highest standards of excellence for all. Vote for Carl, see the difference.

True leadership must be for the **benefit** of the followers, not the **enrichment** of the leaders. Robert Townsend

#1 MARLIN, William

#2 RICHARDSON, Frans

#3 RICHARDSON, Hyacinth

#4 PANTOPHLET, George

#5 SAMUEL, Rodolphe

#6 DORAN-YORK, Henrietta

#7 ILLIDGE, Patrick

#8 JACOBS, Vernon

#9 FLANDERS, Patricia

#10 MARSDIN, Alfred

#11 SMART-BERKEL, Joan

#12 DUPERSOY, Kendall

#13 PETERSON, Jason

#14 RICHARDSON, Bienvenido

#15 PETERSON, Terry

#16 ARRINDELL, Gregory

#17 EUSEBIUS, Henry

#18 REED, Perry

#19 FORTUNO, Louis

A National Alliance Government will introduce a... **DEPARTMENT OF FACILITATION FOR IMMIGRANTS**



A National Alliance Government will introduce a Department of Facilitation, responsible for ensuring that documented immigrants citizens and new residents enjoy a hassle-free integration into mainstream Sint Maarten.

The Department of Facilitation will eliminate the stress of language differences and bureaucratic red tape, and generally guide immigrant citizens and residents in easily accessing official services.

To ensure that no child is left out or left behind, the Department of Facilitation will provide assistance for persons having to deal with documentation issues.

***Use the power of your vote to enable
the National Alliance to make life
better for all in 'One Sint Maarten'.***



Results of the 2007 Island Council Elections

DISTRICTS 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 TOTAL

National Alliance (NA)

1. W.V. Marlin
2. F.G. Richardson
3. H.L. Richardson
4. G.C. Pantophlet
5. R.E. Samuel
6. H. Doran-York
7. P.G. Illidge
8. C.V. Jacobs
9. P.A. Flanders
10. A.R. Marsdin
11. J.A. Smart-Berkel
12. K.K. Dupersoy
13. J.E. Peterson
14. B.C. Richardson
15. T.J. Peterson
16. G.J. Arrindell
17. H.A. Eusebius
18. P.F. Reed
19. L.H.L. Fortuno

Democratic Party (DP)

1. S.A. Wescot-Williams
2. R.R. Marlin
3. L.E. Laveist
4. T.E. Heyliger
5. M.J. Buncamper-Molanus
6. E.L. Labega
7. P.L. de Weever
8. V.E.C. Williams
9. G.P.K. Richardson
10. P.O. Hodge-Williams
11. C.J. Richardson
12. L.O. Lake
13. A.D. Rogers
14. A.O. Janga
15. R.L.L. Brown
16. R.C. Arrindell
17. C.N.R. Salomons
18. U. Romeo-Clark
19. H.I. Salomons

St. Maarten People's Believers Independence Movement (SPBIM)

1. H. Jack
2. S.W. Hazel
3. C. Webb

People's Progressive Alliance (PPA)

1. G.R. Arrindell
2. J.E. Leonard
3. M.P. Bass
4. D.R. Hughes
5. R.P.M. Van Deiden
6. C.T. Emmanuel
7. L.A. Brown
8. G.M. Frederick
9. L.A. Richardson
10. R.E. Lynch
11. F.S. Patrick
12. R.E. Hunt
13. L.M.C. Marlin
14. A.E.S. Brown
15. A.H. Maccou-Hodge
16. O.D. Henrietta
17. H.L. Soon
18. M.C.E. Ottley
19. C.A. Lindo

National Democratic Party (NDP)

1. T.F. Priest

Democratic Labour Party (DLP)

1. J.A. van Heyningen
2. M.W. van Heyningen
3. O.E. Arrindell
4. E.S. Richardson

NA

DP

SPBIM

PPA

NDP
DLP

Results of the 2007 Island Council Elections

APRIL 20TH, 2007 PER DISTRICT

	Polling Station	Total voters	NA	DP	SPBIM	PPA	NDP	DLP	Invalid voted	Valid voted	Percentage
1	L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium, Long Wall Road (Phillipsburg)										
2	Sundial School, Ch.E.W. Voges Street No. 12 (Phillipsburg)										
3	Genevieve de Weever School, Hope Estate Road (Hope Estate)										
4	Sister Marie Laurence School, Ellis Drive No. 1 (Middle Region)										
5	Conference and Community Centre, Zorg en Rust (Dutch Quarter)										
6	Milton Peters College, L.B. Scott Road (South Reward)										
7	Rupert I. Maynard Youth Community Centre (St. Peters)										
8	St. Maarten Academy, L.B. Scott Road										
9	Celebration Palace, Bush Roadm (Cul-de-Sac)										
10	Raoul Illidge Sports Complex, Weigellegen Road (Cay Hill)										
11	Charles Leopold Bell School (formerly Leonard Conner School), Under Road (Cay Bay)										
12	Leonard Conner School, Venus Road (Cay Bay)										
13	Simpson Bay Community Centre, Simpson Bay Road No. 62										
14	Belvedere Community Centre, Belvedere Estate Road (Belvedere)										
	Total										
	Percentage										



SLP presents youngest and oldest candidates

SABA—The Saba Labour Party (SLP) has the youngest candidates for the Island Council (Miguel Hassell and Anna Hodge, both just 21) as well as the oldest veteran politician and party founder Ishmael Levenstone at 66. In mid-campaign, Levenstone was rushed to Curaçao with a medical problem. It remains to be seen whether this situation will bring out the sympathy vote or if these health uncertainties will direct voters to look elsewhere.

Number one SLP candidate Akiilah Levenstone answered for her party. Where constitutional change is concerned, the SLP mentioned that its agenda included an effort to advise the community on the progress of the constitutional talks and include citizens' input, which it feels has been lacking until now.

Levenstone said that Saba's major lack was an education agenda that would bring up

island youth. "Education leads to a better life, it is not good enough to just have "OK" standards," she said. She also pointed to the economy, which she felt needed more controls because of rising prices, but stagnant salaries. The SLP will look at price controls.

Although the SLP has not used the topic of law and order as a platform, Levenstone said the SLP would ask for 24-hour coverage at the Police Station since scofflaws take advantage of Police Station closures to get away with their crimes.

The SLP also has not included concerns about traffic and transportation and maintaining a good relationship with the Med School in its documentation. Levenstone said the impact on traffic of a larger student population would need to be addressed.

Levenstone said her party would be more proactive

where communication with the community is concerned, although she also observed that the Saba population is not known for attending mass meetings. Still, she said, Sabans would support the coming changes if these were properly explained. "We can deliver the bad news, if we involve the people properly," she explained.

She saw the deep pockets of the WIPM party as a way to assure votes, and that party promises had been made in exchange for party loyalty. She said her campaigners had noticed that the Saba population is shy about talking to SLP members on the street and were held hostage by old family alliances.

"No one is free but held captive by false promises. We need to upgrade work ethic and moral," she said. The SLP leader is nevertheless sure that her party will come away with one to two seats.



Akiilah Levenstone explains the SLP platform.

Results of the 2007 Island Council Elections

SABA

There are two polling stations:

	District	The Bottom	Windward Side	Total
SLP	SLP (Blue)			
	1. Akiilah Levenstone			
	2. Miguel Hassell			
	3. Anna Hodge			
	4. Ishmael Levenstone			
WIPM	WIPM (Orange)			
	1. Rolando Wilson			
	2. Chris Johnson			
	3. Marva Hassell-Donker			
	4. Bruce Zagers			
	5. Carl Buncamper			
	6. Norman Winfield			
7. Eviton Heytiger				
	Total			



Political posters are everywhere.

WIPM confident to capture 4 to 5 seats

SABA—Only two parties are contesting Saba's five Island Council seats: the Windward Island People's Movement (WIPM) with seven candidates and the Saba Labour Party (SLP) with four.

The two parties have approached the election campaign in traditional ways: both have published multi-page manifestos, which were also shared electronically, both have handed out the traditional orange or blue T-shirts, and both have put up campaign posters with candidates' pictures throughout the island. By mid next week, both will have held public meetings and aired TV spots on local Channel 7. Neither party has an established party headquarters.

The biggest visible difference is that the WIPM obviously has a bigger war chest and candidates in a position to finance their own campaigns: WIPM T-shirts are customized to the candidate, rather than a generic party shirt. Several candidates have created printed brochures of their own. There are more and bigger WIPM posters, the television



WIPM candidate Carl Buncamper works on his posters

spots started weeks ago, and there has already been one public meeting followed by a

celebration.

The WIPM party also boasts

three university graduates on its list: Chris Boston, Bruce Zagers, and Carl Buncamper, and touts "grass roots" candidates Norman Winfield and Eviton Heyliger.

In an interview with *The Daily Herald*, WIPM founder Will Johnson spoke on behalf of the party, since party leader Rolando Wilson was unavailable.

With constitutional changes in the air, but still undefined, none of the candidates articulated many concerns or offered different approaches. WIPM feels that the Dutch would be willing to accommodate the fact that Saba is English speaking, although candidates Marva Donker and Carl Buncamper used language skills in their attribute list.

Johnson said that Saba's strong economy had led to inflation, and raised the question where Sabans fit into the picture with many foreign-owned businesses wanting to employ foreign workers. He added that many locals do get employment through the current construction boom.

"Island expansion also affects island infrastructure," Johnson said, "and one-fifth of the budget goes towards garbage collection, a situation that the current government will address shortly with the help of a Dutch consultant."

The WIPM recognizes that crime has increased on the

island. Johnson said that the increase in drug use has also meant huge medical expenses, as addicted persons are sent off island for rehabilitation.

The WIPM recognizes that the School of Medicine is playing a huge role in the island economy. Johnson said: "The Med School is a huge asset for the island in buildings alone, and its economic contribution is irreplaceable." Johnson takes credit for bringing the university to Saba.

Johnson said that attempts in the past to have village committees or hold town hall meetings had failed to arouse community interest, so government no longer sponsored these, but instead was available to answer queries.

"So far, so good," the WIPM said about campaign conduct thus far. All publications have abstained from negativity regarding the competition. Only one WIPM poster was defaced, and the defacement appeared to address the fact that the WIPM party has the first openly gay campaigner, who is also in a same-sex marriage - Carl Buncamper - although the rude word was not on Buncamper's poster. The party prepared in advance for eventual reactions given the coming closer relationship with the Netherlands and questions about accepting a more liberal Dutch approach to same-sex marriages. Johnson said that this has not been an issue. "Carl is definitely a

plus, not a liability," Johnson assured.

Johnson also explained at length that the rules of engagement have changed since position on the list no longer is part of the formula for awarding seats. This promotes more competition between candidates on the same list, as they scramble for votes. "It is now every man for himself," Johnson said. Johnson discounted island rumours that the infighting has been serious.

The WIPM party sees a sweep of four to five seats, although Johnson said that he was not keen on a one-party council, as historically this proves more difficult than having an opposition.



Will Johnson speaks for WIPM

This issue is a publication of

The Daily Herald

Coordinating Team

Gino Bernardina
gino@thedailyherald.com

Suzanne Koolega
suzanne.koolega@gmail.com

Dimitri Likassas
dimitri@thedailyherald.com

Voting Grids designed by
Mark Martley

The Daily Herald
54-2523/54-2597
54-2093/54-3726
www.thedailyherald.com

DP government performed and delivered, says Woodley

ST. EUSTATIUS—Leader of the Democratic Party (DP) and number one candidate on his party's slate Julian Woodley is no newcomer in politics. He has been an Island Council Member for 24 years. He joined the Island Council on July 1, 1983, and is still a member. He is also a Member of Parliament.

“This Island Council election is about choosing five candidates for the available five seats, of which two members will be

appointed commissioner. I am confident that our party will come out as the winner of the April 20 election.”

“If I am among the three biggest vote getters of my party and we will be forming the new Island Government on July 1, 2007, and I am to be elected as a commissioner, then yes,” said Woodley. “I will accept it.”

On the question why he is always so critical of his “own” DP commissioners during Island Council meetings, he

said: “The reason is simple. We have agreed to good governance, and the council has to operate according to the rules and regulations of the island. Even though you may be accomplishing things without following the right procedures, it is my duty as a member of the Island Council to point out to the Executive Council that they are doing things without following the right procedures as written down by law.” Woodley said he had made it clear on several occasions that he was not against



Leader of the Democratic Party of St. Eustatius Julian Woodley

the DP-led Executive Council. “I just want to see my government handle things in the correct way.”

As to his party's election programme, Woodley said the DP “had been coming to the population during the last weeks with its political rally to let the people know what economic benefits and developments we have in store for the island's future.” Woodley said his party had also explained the constitutional future for the islands.

The DP Statia is sure that when the ballots have been counted during the evening of April 20, 2007, the victory will be for their party.

Woodley said the DP island

government had achieved a lot during its 2003-2007 stint. “The DP will continue to lead our beautiful historic island through the many challenges on our way to constitutional change. The main objective is to obtain a brighter future for the citizens of this island and to offer more opportunities for the development of our young people into meaningful and productive citizens of tomorrow. As an ever-active negotiating partner we have always demanded that any constitutional change must go hand in hand with major progress in social, economic and infrastructural development.”

“A Marshall Plan for the total development of the island and the Social Economic Initiative

were continuously promoted by our representatives until they became a given in all negotiating documents and were echoed by other island delegations. In the end the citizens must benefit from higher levels of welfare and prosperity,” said the DP leader.

An important milestone was achieved at the top conference with the Dutch, Antillean and Island Governments on February 12, 2007, where it was decided that on December 15, 2008 the Netherlands Antilles will cease to exist.

Woodley: “St. Eustatius, Saba, and Bonaire will acquire a status similar to that of a Dutch municipality. St. Maarten and Curaçao will attain the status of country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Also the process of debt relief and investments in economic development was started. Things we already had in our party programme four years ago. At the time I asked the public to read this programme, and to save it to keep record of what we said we would do.”

Woodley summarised the achievements of the current island government. “Despite the limited resources they had at their disposal, they have taken a bold step to improve the health services, as well as the financial assistance to senior citizens. They have also upgraded a large part of the road infrastructure.”

“Government invested in the product Statia and in the environment by enhancement and cleaning, and arranged for various types of additional garbage containers. Civil servants received periodic increases, indexing, and bonuses during the past four years, after these payments had been frozen for many years under previous governments.”

Government had also worked on improving the work environment of the civil servants by investing in the Finance/GGD building and utilizing the Old Finance building to house the Welfare Department, said Woodley.

“The list of accomplishments must include the achievements attained in the area of constitutional affairs. In short, the DP Government was mandated to perform and they delivered. The main objectives were constitutional affairs and responsible finance, sustainable economic growth, infrastructure, public health, education, general welfare and environment, and that will remain the party's focus if it is re-elected,” Woodley concluded.

Results of the 2007 Island Council Elections St. Eustatius

Gertrude Judson
Bicentennial Library
on Fort Oranje Street

District

PNDP

People's National Democratic Party (PNDP)

1. Cyril B. Tearr

STEP

St. Eustatius Empowerment Party (STEP)

1. Franklin Brown

2. Ingrid Whitfield

3. Glen Schmidt

PLP

People's Labour Party (PLP)

1. Clyde van Putten

2. Astrid McKenzie

3. Elvin Henriquez

4. Fred Schmidt

5. Millicent Lijfrock

6. Laurens Duiveman

7. Linda "Jackie" Berkel

8. Eric Demming

Democratic Party (DP)

1. Julian Woodley

2. Roy Hooker

3. Adelka Spanner

4. Reginald Zaandam

5. Paul Spanner

6. Reuben Merkan

7. Samuel Benjamin

8. Ralph Berkel

DP

Total

PNDP: Statia needs vision, knowledge, and experience

ST. EUSTATIUS—This is the second Island Council election in which Cyril B. Tearr, the "single man" in his People's National Democratic Party (PNDP), has had a place on the ballot. Tearr has chosen this route, because he firmly believes that Statia needs strong leadership, persons with vision, knowledge, experience, and understanding. He feels that as a person with long experience in the construction business on Statia, he can provide this leadership. He also thinks that many of the present day leaders have little touch with the challenges the people of the island face in everyday life.

Aborn Statian, Tearr laments that foreigners are brought in to provide expertise on many projects when local skills, knowledge and determination could accomplish the work at lower cost and in a more timely fashion.

He believes that the financial structure should be revised, because everything takes too long. "Large amounts of money are spent," he says, "but



PNDP's "single man"

Cyril B. Tearr little or nothing is seen in the way of results."

On youth, he feels that more activities are needed to stimulate young minds. Young people need opportunities to develop employment and living skills, not more ways to fill idle time.

Environmental issues, Tearr says, have not been presented properly. The public should be notified by government when environmental regulations are to be put in place, not left to hear about it on the street. He feels the garbage dump is a disgrace. "Garbage should be burned daily, not left to attract flies and cause a health

hazard."

In regard to the constitution-structuring, Tearr's major complaint is that the public has not been well informed. "Representatives who attend meetings should bring back information about what they have presented as well as about what was agreed to," he says. "Then the people can make up their own minds."

Tearr has formed the PNDP based on his desire to "get the country moving."

He feels that present leaders are not qualified and thus, impressed by outsiders, have made "some stupid decisions." "They have destroyed some structures and rebuilt from scratch, when what was already there could have been refurbished and re-used. An example is the city pier, which could have been strengthened and expanded, rather than destroyed and rebuilt."

He says he is ambitious for Statia, and can, if elected, make practical, sensible decisions that will benefit the island and its people in the long run.

STEP firmly stands for empowerment of people

ST. EUSTATIUS—STEP, the St. Eustatius Empowerment Party, is a newcomer in Statia's Island Council elections this year, but its candidates are far from new to politics. Party leader Franklin Brown has served for the last four years on the Island Council in the opposition PLP party, and prior to that was a Commissioner for a brief period. Its number two candidate, Ingrid Whitefield, served as Commissioner for the SEA party before splitting with Clyde van Putten over three years ago. The third candidate on the STEP list is Glenn Schmidt.



STEP leader Franklin Brown nance, he says, "Budgetary discipline should be the order of the day, and items should not be budgeted which can't be paid for. It is obvious, for example, that the road tax, to which everyone with a vehicle contributes, is not being spent on roads. Also, privatisation of the harbour and the airport are so far all talk and no action. These projects should be brought to completion as soon as possible."

On education, he feels that the Foundation Based Education (FBE) system has failed in the Netherlands, and that Statia should think twice before continuing to implement it. He also advocates more and better programmes for youth, especially for school dropouts. But he recognizes that there is a lack of jobs for those completing their educations. This leads to a need for small busi-

nesses and light industries, and he promises that in his government, small business efforts will be supported. This includes the establishment of a Statia Airline, on which he feels the present governments, both Island and Federal, have been dragging their feet.

On the environment, Brown deplores the current situation at the Smith's Gut dump, where he worries that an epidemic could occur if a heavy rain washes the garbage there into the sea. He promises to take a serious look at options such as an incinerator and a recycling plant.

A major issue for STEP is the recent ratification of the Transition Accord by Statia's Island Council. Brown was the only Councilman to vote against ratification, and he feels that the people have been "sold out for 30 pieces of silver."

"We will now become part of Holland," he says, "and thus will be subject to all the Dutch laws, including those such as homosexual marriage and drugs which are incompatible with our culture."

He feels these things should have been negotiated and included in the document before it was signed, rather than left to be decided later.

Clyde van Putten declares war on poverty, high cost of living

ST. EUSTATIUS—Progressive Labour Party (PLP) leader Clyde van Putten (44) badly wants to take government back from the Democratic Party of St. Eustatius to start executing his programme which focuses on the small man, those with minimum income, the youth and the elderly. "I am waging a war against the high cost of living."



Clyde van Putten.

Van Putten has been around for a while and is certainly no stranger, having served as a member of the Island Council on and off since 1995. Van Putten's political interest started at a young age. After completing secondary school in Curaçao, he continued his studies at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg Virginia, where he majored in international relations/government. He then went on to University of Gainesville to pursue a degree in journalism. He returned to St. Eustatius in 1984 and served as head of the Government Information Service (GIS) until 1992. In 1991 he became President of St. Eustatius Alliance (SEA).

Van Putten learned the meaning of political punishment when he was transferred to the Department of Agriculture as personnel manager at the slaughterhouse. "I didn't have a desk. I used to have to sit outside and I shifted spaces to avoid the sun. It was a very trying time, but I got a lot of support from my family and other extended relatives," he said.

In 1995 he became Island Council member for SEA. Pulling more than 2800 votes, Van Putten became Member of Parliament in 1998, a position he held until 2002. "I believe I would still have been an MP had it not been for Ingrid Whitefield, who expelled me from the party for criticising her for her policies."

Van Putten went on to form PLP. In 2001 he formed a coalition with SEA that lasted for four months, because after losing his seat in the 2002 Parliamentary elections, SEA broke up because the coalition. SEA went on to work with the DP. PLP contested in the 2003 Island Council elections and won three seats. The DP had three seats and SEA was out. After Franklin Brown left PLP, Van Putten was left with one seat.

"Political detractors say I'm dictatorial, that I can't work with other people. Fact is that I don't except. Medi-

ocrity, only excellence. When I ask people to vote for my party and they give me their trust, I consider it a covenant. The people's business is too serious to take it for granted. For too long Statia and its people have been taken for a ride by the DP. As a result of that we are the furthest behind in social development and we are still in the Flintstones age. People have been deprived of a certain standard of living. That is unacceptable," said Van Putten.

He said the new government has to "hurry" to improve the quality of life. "The gap between those that have and those that have not continues to increase. DP has been only concerned about a certain group in society. People with less income continue to suffer. I want to be able to provide over a government where prosperity is shared, regardless of creed, colour or race," he said, mentioning his party slogan "You deserve better, Prosperity for all."

Van Putten wondered how come St. Eustatius had a problem while others in the rest of the world didn't. He said he has contact with regional leaders and others throughout the Dutch Kingdom. "How come they can work with me, and those in Statia can't?" St. Eustatius is entering a new constitutional phase whereby it will assume direct ties with the Netherlands. That means, said Van Putten, the island needs a strong leader with a strong team that resolves to "get the year best for Statia, nothing less."

Van Putten wants to fight the hardest for the common man, single mothers and others in society that are having a hard time. "I know what it means

to go to sleep with an empty belly. I went to school without shoes. My father had 21 children, of which 18 are still alive. My heart goes out today to those single parents, people with little money. Some are living below the poverty line. Our minimum wage is the lowest in the Dutch Kingdom. I want to fight that. I will declare war on poverty, the high cost of living."

The PLP leader pledged that he would reform Health care and Education. "We need to invest more in our people. Government will have to prioritise. Not enough is being done for our senior citizens and children. The pension is not enough to pay rent, let alone pay for food."

He assured that the PLP government in the first 100 days will realise free medical care for senior citizens, children under 3 years and those persons with chronic illnesses.

Persons earning less than NAF. 1,500 will be exempted from income tax. Local small entrepreneurs will be granted tax exemption. Government will assist local contractors who have a hard time competing with larger outside contractors. There is a great need to prepare programmes, activities for youth. The labour situation needs addressing as well as housing and infrastructure.

Van Putten is proud that three of his eight candidates are women. Astrid McKenzie-Tatum, former Island Secretary is number two and Millicent Lijferick-Marsdin is on 5. Linda Berkes is number 7.

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