

**The Watercress Journal** ©

An Intermittent Journal of the Green Party of Trinidad and Tobago

<http://www.greenpartytt.com/>

Editor: Dr. Everold Hosein (Ph.D)

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\*Why the name “Watercress”: Growing up in California/Trinidad and Tobago, on some Sundays, lunch was curry chicken, rice and dal. Plus watercress. My mother would tell me to go to the market on the Saturday and buy some “greens”. Greens was watercress. So I thought, why not call the Green Party journal the “The Watercress Journal”. – Editor, EH

**A 5-minute read**

*[Media institutions may use this commentary in any form they wish. Editor, Watercress Journal.]*

**What? Anudder Political Party?**

**The Death of 3rd Parties in T&T**

**Can there be hope?**

Editor’s Note: How can a 3rd political party in Trinidad and Tobago (TT) break through the electoral lethargy and apathy which pervades the land? Is there any hope for a 3rd party to revive political discourse in TT so that we can be better engaged in looking at what needs to be done to transform TT into the fantastic country it can be? Or are we doomed to what seems to many as an odd attachment to “racial/tribal” political allegiances and the accompanying resignation to no-progress? When we launched the Green Party of Trinidad and Tobago (GPTT) in October 2019, many friends “praised” the effort but noted its quixotic pursuit. So I reached out to an old friend who has worked for donkey years in the media and communication business in TT for his thoughts and advice. Here is his very reflective response – though a bit despairing and dispiriting, yet honest and realistic. He wishes to remain anonymous.

*Do share within your networks.*ENH

“As to your very noble trajectory…

The history of efforts to launch political parties in Trinidad and Tobago (as I’m sure you’ve already discovered from your ground-testing research) is not very kind.

In fact, it is actually in a way quite kind…in that, it gives lessons in what can be done, not done, what works, and what fails to work.

A walk through the T&T political cemetery provides many headstones from which we can learn a lot:

The DLP, led by the well-reputed scientist Dr Rudranath Capildeo and showcasing a number of stalwarts, e.g. Lionel Seukeran; the Workers & Farmers Party, led by the powerful Stephen Maharaj and featuring a resolute Peter Faquhar; the Labour Party; ONR led by former PNM Attorney General Karl Hudson-Phillips; Democratic Action Congress led by Eric Williams’ protégé A.N.R.Robinson; Tapia led by the redoubtable intellectual Lloyd Best with a mesmerizing mix of thinkers in Bhoe Tewari, Gus Ramrekersingh, Dennis Solomon, Ivan Laughlin, et al; the 1970 Black Power vehicle NJAC; Basdeo Panday’s many resurrections in the United Labour Front, United National Congress, even to the latest Patriotic Front with his daughter; Winston Dookeran’s Congress of the People; finally, the coalition of the NAR–– National Alliance for Reconstruction; followed by the five-party People’s Partnership led by Kamla Persad-Bissessar; and sundry others (including the very short-lived Citizens Alliance launched by former Minister of Finance and Olympic Medallist the personable, vibrant communicator Wendell Mottley).

This history assures of two irrefutable givens: launching and sustaining a political party are individual steep hills to climb; consequently, failure to conquer those, to launch or sustain, is not shaming experience.

Your findings about the politico-social environment in T&T are accurate and sound.

T&T is in several respects a society of light intellectual gravitas, and even lighter interest in wheels that normally move a country forward––i.e., an appropriately designed education system, a nation building economic sector, a psyche comfortable with the requirements of hard work and sacrifice.

Sad to say, there remains greater ease with the Naipaullian phenomenon of ‘Mimic Men’, and very little hunger for the requirements of indigenous development.

An Editorial in today’s GLEANER [a Jamaican daily]  makes a fitting comment about the state of W.I. Cricket, with a perspective on W.I. politics: *“Clearly, the team is more proficient at this fast, furious format of the game – which many people might argue is reflective of the current state of Caribbean society, with its embrace of instant gratification, a receding of considered and thoughtful action and low levels of trust and cooperation, and perhaps, too, the death, or retreat, of ideology. People and politics do not stand much for anything concrete or substantive.”*

Moreover, there appears to be a distinct lack of fervour in T&T for ‘anudder political party’. Political fatigue––after dabbling with independence for 60 years––has set in…and it would take a bolt of Divine lightning to bestir the electorate.

One of the many lessons taught by the recent Tobago THA Elections is that largesse-style spending of money on a campaign is not that lightning as it does not ensure victory!

Preaching as I am to the choir, I know that you would have witnessed and experienced theforegoing “dishearteners” from your own descent into the gayelle. You have described them well. What all of this leads us to is the hydra-headed question: what road can you and should you take?

The Eric Williams playbook (which served him well enough to keep the PNM in power for 25 successive years and then some) can be explored for borrowing. Here are a few extracts/lessons:

- Arrive on the T&T national scene via a point of entry that is a people’s concern; Williams chose Education initially.

- Be the leader who came home from ‘outside’ bringing gifts from his other world experiences, and announcing that he was ‘letting down his bucket’.

- Gather around him a mix of what could pass for the unblemished best of the society.

- Find an enemy with whom he could fight David and Goliath-style––e.g.  the business sector.

- Be academic, aloof and profound in presentation while displaying signs of being ‘local’.

- Place all efforts in the frame of Nationalism and Nation-building––the People’s National Movement.

- Leave people no choice but to think he is a saviour…identifying as he went along, a ‘saviour from what’––rapacious multinationals, greedy businessmen,     divisive racists, anti-Black purveyors, unrepentant colonials, et al.

- Establish an inner - ‘Cabinet’ of non-politicians (Ken Julien, Philip Rochford, Victor Bruce).

- Remain spotlessly free of any hint of personal corruption.

- Find a way to attract financial support without a loss of soul.

- Become the preeminent Communicator of the times––with soundbites and quotable quotes: “Massa day done”, “One from 10 leaves nought”, etc.

Your move to carry forward the GPTT may require elements of the foregoing 11, plus two most critical other factors: M&M––Members and Money.

If both of those are in short supply, you may wish to consider a less traditional manner of entry, moving away from ‘announcing a party and then giving it life’”.

ENH/GPTT Response: All so true. And yet we cannot resign ourselves to the PNM/UNC political stranglehold with its inane back-and-forth and little attention to progressive development.  We will continue the quixotic chase of those windmills. Even with no money. Irrational? Yep.

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