

THE PEOPLE'S DECLARATION OF POLICY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TRINIDAD & TOBAGO (edited version)

THE BLUE BOOK

INTRODUCTION TO PRINCIPLES

During 1981, just prior to NJAC's first entry into electoral politics, the party organized several People's Parliaments throughout the country discussing Principles for a New Society.

This programme was held in a number of different regions in Trinidad and Tobago. These included John John, Laventille, Belmont and Maraval in the North, St. Joseph, Arouca, Arima and Sangre Grande in the East, Felicity, Enterprise and California in Central, Debe, Penal, Point Fortin and Princes Town in South, Rio Claro, Guayaguayare, Biche and Mayaro in the South East and Bon Accord, Moriah, Glamorgan and Scarborough in Tobago.

After brief introductions by NJAC speakers, the microphone would be open to all, regardless of political persuasion, to make their contribution.

This approach to the people on the question of formulating a National Statement of Principles is itself based on one of the fundamental principles of our Party – The People must be involved in decision-making.

What we were discussing with the people was a body of principles which had developed in our close interaction with the people over the years and had formed the basis of the Party's functioning. They were presented to the people who expressed basic agreement, who discussed and elaborated on them bringing direct experiences to bear.

In every area, people expressed the view that People's Parliaments were the kind of institution needed in this society, that people should have the right to speak out, to openly discuss matters that affect their lives and guide the political process. They were clear in their analyses of the present system.

One brother in Pashley Street, Laventille said "It is a system that has been structured for years before we were born. A system that was meant that just a few people were supposed to govern, to rule, to oppress many. As a result of that, those unfortunate ones like myself, have never had an opportunity of saying even a word or two, not even to the persons who are supposed to be representing us politically."

The people expressed what must be and why. To quote from the People's Parliament in Diego Martin "We must take part in politics, because politics directs our lives. Politics tells us what to eat, how to eat, when to eat, where to sleep, under what to sleep and how to sleep. That is politics."

One brother affirmed the way each and everyone should see themselves, "I AM THE GOVERNMENT," he said.

People saw the need for economic participation. One worker in state enterprise TRINTOC (now PETROTRIN), speaking at the parliament in La Brea, severely criticized the management of the Company. Even more importantly, he was able to indicate that if the workers were given a say how much more improvement there could be.

On the whole the theme of the people's power was one that dominated the People's Parliaments. This is what a worker from La Brea had to say, "I find it very important and historic that NJAC could come out on something like this that they call People's Participation. If you have it like this then you must have it function at the level of Government. This is a beautiful thing. This is direct people's participation. This is what the people want."

This discussion of fundamental principles also led to many serious critical analyses of what was happening to human relationships with the growth of materialism in the society. The people expressed much pain at the loss of values, the lack of love enveloping the society, especially with the influx of money without direction. A sister from Belle Vue said: "You know, we have to bring back that togetherness."

One brother in Laventille effectively illustrated the point from the words painted on a wall. In the early seventies the brothers on the block had painted the message, 'Love, Peace and Togetherness.' Today, the words are a cry of pain, "Where has love gone?" This deterioration was clearly seen as part of a System which we have to deal with: "Change this system we are living under. This system that is making material things more important than humanity. Change this system that is destroying the Brotherhood of Man. Restore dignity among the people...."

Many calls were made for national unity. One brother in Felicity said, "They have we the Indians and the Creole (Africans) fighting one another all the years and we getting nothing for it. I say we should join with NJAC in bringing unity."

Another brother in Sangre Grande said, "For us to achieve something positive we have to unite. And if NJAC is the uniting force, I beg my brothers and sisters, whether Indian, Creole, Chinese, Spanish, Dougla whatever, I beg that if we are to achieve something, let us not be individualists. Let us be united."

The question of living by the principles of Truth was another issue which brought many strongly worded contributions. One woman in La Brea saw it as a matter of putting the society on the “correct foundation.”

There was the repeated call for Justice to prevail.

Some speakers were able to put the thrust in a very total perspective, as the one in Sangre Grande said, “Trinidad and Tobago is a colonial society, psychologically, economically, culturally. In some cases spiritually... “Whenever we are controlled by a people, whenever a people do not get the opportunity to express themselves in the way that they feel, whenever your economy is controlled by foreigners, whenever your religion is controlled by foreigners, it means that a people are totally helpless, a people do not have the opportunity to direct their society in the way that they see fit. In other words they do not have the right to control their destiny.

“If a people cannot determine what their destiny should be, then such a people are not really a people. They are merely tools, they are merely puppets, they are merely instruments for the fulfillment of the desires of the colonizers.”

The People’s Parliaments justified our faith in our people, their intelligence, their perception and their desire for a NEW SOCIETY. It also confirmed that our thoughts, which have been evolving with our work among the people, are in harmony with the people.

The People’s Parliaments demonstrated the trust which our people put in us. As one brother in Tunapuna said, “...government must be the people (and) When we look around Trinidad and Tobago, we see that the only people who in a rather organized way, with maximum effort are trying to make such a system for the people a reality, are the National Joint Action Committee.”

We have to justify this faith.

This statement of principles is therefore more than a party document; it is a statement of a people looking forward to a future that they are taking into their own hands.