

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion | Sorry, But It Is True

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Staff **January 12, 2019**



What a treat the beginning of a New Year is. Looking forward for many of us is an opportunity to go beyond the past and imagine, or hope, for a brighter future. Now I am not one who ever dwells on the past, even though I have written a few books on past events. Rather I prefer to see opportunity in what is coming our way. Living here on beautiful St. Croix, in the wonderful Virgin Islands, for almost 40 years now, I have seen many changes. The changes have mostly been in promises made by elected officials and then not kept. What a pity, but it is true.

We have just elected a new government. In other parts of the world, it is not so easy to overthrow an old government. Their governments do not rule at the will of the people but rule for their own elite tight little circles of power, what a shame.

Dear Reader; what do we want from our NEW Government? I have thought about it a great deal in recent months. If you would be so kind, I would like to share these thoughts with you and see how you feel. Oh and please do not take me as negative with some of my thoughts, but only realistic about them.

First and foremost WE CAN NOT AFFORD THE GOVERNMENT WE HAVE because THE GOVERNMENT'S MONEY IS NOT WHAT IT WAS. For the past many decades, the government program has been to BEG, BORROW AND STEAL. By this I mean, Beg the Federal Government, Borrow from the bond market and Steal from department to department. It worked for a long time, but now it no longer does. We have burdened our children and our grand children with a government debt that is three times larger, per capita, than the huge debt Puerto Rico has. What a wonderful inheritance that is. The Government Employees' Retirement System will be broke in a few years because it was decided years ago to spend the tax money hiring friends and supporters rather than providing a solid long term system. We no longer advocate that our children get a 'good' government job which will pay retirement for the rest of their lives. Those days are over! Sorry, but it is true. The money squandered on 'do nothing' jobs has deprived the hard working government employees of the resources needed to do their jobs. We are not saying these people are bad but the jobs they were offered are often costly and non-productive. The 'Education' Department has a budget of 167 MILLION DOLLARS with about 700 classroom teachers, if we pay each teacher \$50,000 per year that is 35million. Where is the other 132 million dollars? Squandered? The government jobs of the past and present have indeed allowed many people to get into the middle class and that was a good thing. For those who invested in the education of their children, smart; for those who only bought new shoes and new cars, not smart. The future for the next generation will not be in government jobs alone but mostly in technology and related private sector careers.

The next generation, or as some would call it, Generation Now, what do they see? The dreams of the parents are often not the dreams of the children. Respect for one's parents does not mean repeating their lives. Sorry, but it is true. Many of the next generation have already left for the states. As a citizen of the USVI no green card is required to go up north for work or a new life. We are the envy of the millions of other people in the Caribbean for this fact. The opportunities of a new and bigger place are very appealing to the young and we should make no effort to stop them from seeking a better life. Not only are the young leaving but many of our retirees are leaving for the states as well. Many, if not most, of the GERS checks are sent to stateside addresses, or the money after being deposited locally is sent to the new stateside homes of the retired. The good and bad of this can be debated, but it is true.

For the last several decades the government has been run for it's own sake not for the benefit of the overall community. The condition of our roads, our hospitals, even the guard rails and paint on our roads to say nothing about the insane pot holes, are outrages. No progressive society would tolerate this. Why do we? Because the money is spent on payroll whose job is for the government workers to vote for the government. The hard working government employees and there are many, should be given 'pink' slips to hand out to the do-nothings; these hard workers know who is working and who is not. Sorry but it is true. As long as the government employees and their families control the vote, the government is theirs. No senator or other elected official can tell the

government workers what to do because the unions and the vote of the government employees will destroy them. It has been a synergistic system MUCH ENJOYED by some. I think those days are over, because the money is all but gone and the new government will have NO choice but to cut. Sorry, but it is true.

These and many other awarenesses do not destroy my love for our Islands but only make me aware of what is needed for a new bright future. I understand that the truth is not the friend of everyone but we MUST face it. Politically facing it and acting on it is best done at the very beginning of a new administration, when the old powers do not control them yet.

If the 'government job' is largely in the past what can we expect? We want people to be happy and successful. Some will continue having careers in government of course but the new opportunities will be in the private sector. Yes, I know many believe the private sector is rough, I have spent my entire life in the private sector and it can be demanding but our next generation are ready for it. Not all but most are ready and let us not hold them back with old ideas of work. The young know more about this new world than we do, let them go for it!

So, our new government and all of us should wish ourselves a truly Happy New Year and a new kind of prosperity.

Submitted on Friday by: Bob White

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