

A wonderful evening to the panel, though I would've preferred to address the panel orally, this Avenue seems to represent my only option at this time.

The Autonomy bill as laid out in the Draft presented for feedback is flawed in its attempt to harness the intent and vision of the people of Tobago.

Its demise was evident in the opening sentences, which laid the language and grounds upon which the bill will be laid.

The TIG (Tobago island government) is redundant if there is not a TIG (Trinidad island government). To develop a Tobago island government, that would be subject to the Government of the republic of Trinidad and Tobago is nothing more than the establishment of a glorified THA. The GOTT is led by a lopsided 41-member parliament, with powers to dissolve any dreams and aspirations of the people of Tobago by majority vote, whether a 3/5 or 3/4 majority, with 2 Tobago seats in the house, which are sometimes without voice due to their absorption into one of the 2 major political parties, Tobago will remain a ward, or a glorified regional corporation.

The struggle for self-governance in Tobago is normally hijacked and kicked around based on the results of General elections every 5 years, political parties have used the gullible voter in Tobago, baiting them with promises in an effort to glean the 2 valuable seats, as a means of gaining that advantage over their political adversary in Trinidad.

Had the THA elections favored the PNM, these discussions presently would be only promissory conversations.

Now that Farley and Watson have made significant inroads into a major party's stronghold, the discussion has resumed in earnest, it's my prayer that they remain true to this task, and remain unchained from alliances with Trinidad parties.

If the UNC captures the next General elections, the PNM then gives the matter urgency.

My greatest disappointment is that the people of Tobago get caught in this trap so frequently, without a clear understanding that they are the greatest asset in this struggle, without understanding that we must take a militant position as a family of Tobago, and not a party member.

The attempt to extend AUTONOMY to the people of Tobago, is a golden opportunity to restructure the constitution in an effort to deal with other outstanding grievances in the constitution.

I'm therefore suggesting 2 governments that comprise 1 country.

A system that's federal in nature, yet tailored towards our reality.

If we do not implement such a system, this constitutional emptiness will remain a vacuum to be filled in the consciousness of all Tobagonians, just the fact that these discussions and the implementation of these changes is processed and executed by a head table of central government leaders speaks volumes to the need to institute a federal system.

Whether this has worked in other jurisdictions is of no consequence, we could set a precedence that others will follow in the future.

Thanks for this opportunity

I am Sonny Craig

Tobago before party.