

AFC statement on Joint Opposition Alliance

Dear Friend and Supporter,

Over the recent weeks, there has been much talk about the AFC's 'spoiler' approach in refusing to rush into the Joint Opposition Alliance, for a particular reference see Mark McGowan's, "Joint Opposition a first step to unseating PPP Greenidge says - AFC needed to strengthen alliance" in the June 12, 2011 edition of the Stabroek News.

It was reported here that the PNCR, GAP, WPA and the NFA, after about a year in discussions, have decided to come together under the umbrella of the Joint Opposition Political Parties (JOPP) to contest the elections.

Carl Greenidge was reported as saying "I am not going to tell you that the alliance cannot succeed without the AFC, but... given the nature of the ideas behind the alliance, it is important that the AFC joins."

The Alliance For Change's National Executive after the expenditure of much thought on the option of becoming subsumed into what it views as largely a coalition of convenience, and not of interest, has decided that it is in the best interest of the party as well as the Guyanese people that it refrains from taking such action.

This column will be dedicated to an explanation of the essential reasoning which has determined this restraint. The first entails a point that the leadership of the AFC has been making repeatedly in recent weeks, i.e. the AFC was incorporated to fill a void of leadership created by the divisive, destructive and racial politics of the PPP and PNC.

The authors of Guyana's abandoned National Development Strategy (remember that document?) certainly had such in mind when they deemed the following as Constraints to Guyana's Development: "The major obstacle to Guyana's development is to be found in the divisive nature of its politics. Ever since the years leading up to the country's independence, the nation's every activity has been dominated by two political parties, the main followers of which are drawn from one or other of the two major racial groups. By and large, Indo - Guyanese support the People's Progressive Party, and African Guyanese the People's National Congress."

"... because of the prevalence of fierce racial political rivalries... there has been little or no meeting of the minds between these powerful political parties on any major political, social and economic issue since Guyana became independent. On the contrary, confrontation of every sort and form has been the norm."

The AFC firmly believes that to join up with any of these failed political behemoths is to be submerged and subsumed into that menagerie of racial and divisive politics and betrays the very philosophical premise behind the formation of the AFC.

It would constitute an abandonment of all the lofty principles that were proclaimed when the seeds of the AFC were sowed. The AFC in its Operations Methodology published in January 2006 stated: "The AFC will not form pre-election political alliances, it will maintain its political independence in the interest of the Guyanese people". Also, "... so as to ensure unity in the nation, when elected, the AFC will form or

participate in a government of national unity and development, including all races and elected parties based on a set of national issues put forward by the AFC on behalf of the people."

The AFC is simply not prepared to effect such an abandonment which would see the erosion of its identity and political capital that it has worked so hard to build. It is the belief of the party that in its Action Plan, there is contained a sufficiently crafted programme for Guyana's development and in its leadership and membership are the personnel present to implement and execute this programme. Thus buoyed, the AFC intends to participate in the upcoming general elections and is confident in the possibility of change.

A second flaw in the public submissions of JOPP is that they fail to present any evidence and data to support their prognosis that this coalition for the 2011 elections is the panacea to unseat the PPP. It is dangerous to give people such an expectation, given the historical failure of the central player - the PNC. It is a fact that since 1997, the PNC has been unable to mobilize more than 40 percent of their core support to register and go to the polls and vote.

The AFC notes that there are a number of significant flaws in the Guyanese governance structure which have their antecedents in the PNC's reign of misrule and management. Such include 1. An authoritarian constitution which includes the scourge of the executive presidency insulated from redress by a whole litany of immunities and 2. The broadcasting monopoly by the State which effects the breach of other fundamental rights. It is very ironical that the PNC now speaks out against these maladies. A clear and present paucity of credibility is palpable.

Also, it should be underscored, that all this commotion to join or not to join JOPP is a significant distraction from the much more salient and required discussion on the parties' economic programme. Ultimately, it is this component of the political parties which will separate the wheat from the straw.

In summation and in conclusion, it is very important that we recollect the sagacity of the AFC's leader Raphael Trotman in an address entitled "from Third Force to First choice" delivered at the Second Delegates' Conference of the AFC in July 2009. We recall his sterling and girding words as a special entreaty to the Guyanese people:

"We all dream of a different Guyana. One in which our children are taught that it is alright to embrace their differences as being their greatest asset and that in togetherness they can maximize their own, and the nation's worth many times over. The AFC offers itself as a party that can make this dream possible. Don't hold us up against the template that was designed fifty years ago... look at us being part of a new matrix that is being constructed not only here in Guyana but also around the world."

Also, whilst the AFC shares the passion of the JOPP to remove from power the PPP because of its endemic corruption and inability to provide real progress in Guyana, the AFC will not fall prey to the very political realities which will allow this status quo to continue.

Yours faithfully,

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