



Manifesto - Year 1999

Overview

TIME FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

The real ascendancy of the UPP can be said to have started with the general elections of 1994 when the party won five (5) of the sixteen (16) seats contested on the mainland and formed a powerful opposition force in the Antigua and Barbuda Parliament. The return of the Antigua Labour Party (ALP) to power then was significant because a change in the leadership of the party occurred for the first time since Independence in 1981. However, it quickly became obvious that this change was both superficial and cosmetic. The corrupt practices, unscrupulous behaviour and widespread abuse of public office continued unabated and have been exacerbated to a level which now threatens to envelop and destroy both our nation and our people. Today, it is painfully obvious that the time is ripe and right for meaningful change. Now, after twenty-two (22) years of this type of governance, it is time to change to leadership you can trust. It is time to trust the UPP, which is ready and prepared to govern.

There can be no meaningful change until the old, worn-out, spent forces are voted out of office and replaced by a new, dynamic team. The UPP, with its brand of youth and experience, offers the nation the opportunity to ring in a new century with dynamism, hope and pride. Our motto, "People First", means exactly that; you, the people, will be genuinely empowered to become masters of your destiny. Unlike the present reality under the ALP regime, a UPP government pledges that Antiguans and Barbudans will be restored to the position of first-class citizens in our country. Meaningful change means that our people will have first choice in employment, business and educational opportunities. Meaningful change necessitates that we pay more than lip service to caring for the environment. We must revolutionise our legislative agenda and policy directives to reflect international environmental standards and be uncompromising in enforcing these laws and regulations. We will introduce a comprehensive land use policy, thereby ensuring that our development policies meet the needs of a rapidly-growing population while making the best possible use of our resources. Meaningful change mandates that we claim our lands and give our nationals the opportunity to invest in our country.

A UPP government will diversify our economy, thereby ending our over-dependency on tourism as our only source of revenue. Agriculture will be re-organised on a sufficiently large scale so that we will not only feed ourselves, but be players in the export market, thereby increasing our overall revenue. Without meaningful change none of this will be possible.

The housing opportunities available to working-class people are in dire need of improvement. A UPP administration will seek to upgrade the standards of housing for the majority of our people by putting our construction people to work. We will discontinue the practice of importing workers at the expense of our local tradesmen. More importantly, we will build solid, durable and affordable houses for our people. Meaningful change will ensure that our revised building codes will be adhered to by every person in the construction field.

A UPP government will ensure that law and order is upheld. Unlike the current practice under the ALP regime, no one will be considered to be above the law. As leaders we take our responsibilities as role models seriously. Our police will execute their duties without fear or favour. Likewise, our civil service will become more productive, efficient and reliable. Meaningful change means that every effort will be made to unite the nation and to

heal the wounds of division that have been allowed to fester for so long under successive ALP administrations.

If we are to emerge as a strong, fit nation, ready to face the challenges of the 21st century, then meaningful change is mandatory! That change can only come about when you, the people, elect a UPP government. We are confident that you will have the courage and the resolve to make that change and be steadfast in your obligation to ensure that we do.

National Goals

Antigua and Barbuda today urgently needs a genuine democratic system of Government. One in which we can truly salute a fair Antigua and Barbuda. One where Government and people observe the rules and regulations of a democratic society. To accomplish this, we must redeem and reform our society from top to bottom.

Rebuilding our nation into one which is strong, vibrant, confident and knowledge-based, requires a concerted effort from every member of our society. If we are to successfully meet the challenges in the globalised market places we must harness the talents of our best and brightest to join forces with us. Stable and prosperous democracies need, among other things, serious public participation to enable them to comfortably take their seats among and alongside respected democratic nations.

The UPP is convinced that we possess the discipline to honestly attend to these challenges which will create a solid foundation for a vibrant and prosperous future. We can rebuild this country to a place of which we can all be proud, but we can only do so by working together. There is strength in unity. The UPP calls on every Antiguan and Barbudan to heed the clarion call, strive together and focus our attention on the following national goals:

To rebuild our country by restoring civic pride in our communities. To instil family values and generally to uplift our people from their downtrodden state:

- ? To create meaningful and gainful employment for all our people;
- ? To restore the confidence of local and international investors in the Antigua and Barbudan Government and economy;
- ? To demand accountability, self respect and discipline from our public servants;
- ? To culturally transform our society into a vibrant, healthy, productive, and efficient one.

Our Pledge

Upon being elected to the trusted position of Government, the Members and the Leader of the UPP, pledge to all the people of Antigua and Barbuda and the world, to restore, uphold and advance Good Governance, for the duration of our tenure in public office. We will work fervently and tirelessly to eradicate corruption within all ranks of government. We will tolerate and practice only the highest level of morality in public affairs at home and abroad. We guarantee the full enjoyment of Human Rights enshrined in our Constitution to each and every citizen, resident and visitor.

We are unshakably committed to four fundamental values – People, Process, Government and Country – which we hold sacred. We are resolved to putting People First in the execution and implementation of national plans. We pledge further to conduct our country's affairs with clarity towards all and malice and persecution towards none. We do so in the spirit of learning from the people and respecting their diverse views.

Finally, we pledge that under God's guidance, Antigua and Barbuda will be known and respected throughout the world as a place where peace reigns, where equality between men and women, between races and faiths, not only grows, but thrives; and where the pursuit of happiness, through the harmony of the individual and the community, will be a model for the Caribbean and indeed, the world.

Code Of Conduct

The UPP will ensure that no UPP Minister or elected UPP member will unfairly benefit either directly or indirectly from a government contract. Consequently, these persons must inform the Cabinet in writing of any existing or proposed involvement in any business venture to which they are a party.

Every UPP Minister and elected member will be required to declare his/her assets and income annually to the Auditor-General. This information will be useful when assessing any conflict-of-interest claim that may arise. It will be kept under seal and released to any member of the general public upon a showing to a legal court, good cause why such information is required.

A National Council will be established. It will be comprised of representatives of the government, the opposition, the trade unions, the church, the business community, women's groups and youth.

The Council will be charged with the responsibility of conducting inquiries into matters such as: conduct unbecoming a government minister or other public servants and unfair practices, and will make recommendations to the leadership of the UPP government as to the sanctions, if any, which it may deem appropriate under the circumstances. While the Council will consider any reports received from the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman and other bodies in arriving at its decision, it will act independently on all matters referred to it.

Any UPP elected representative found to have deliberately deceived the public in a public statement or by his/her conduct, will be suspended from his/her office pending further resolution of the issues. Where that individual is found guilty in a court of law, he/she will be asked to resign immediately, failing which, he/she will be discharged of his/her official parliamentary duties by the government. Any elected representative so dismissed, forfeits the right to contest any election on the UPP ticket

Economic Policy

National Economic Planning -

A Significant New Beginning

The UPP will share no effort in pursuing a rebalance of the ownership and control of Antigua & Barbuda's economy. This will mean a larger share allocation for National Ownership & Control. This will be achieved by collaborating with private enterprise, with genuine public enterprise and by encouraging joint ventures in major projects with foreign investors. The UPP believes that investors and companies should invite local shareholding and participation. In addition, the import trade must be substantially reserved for the local private sector and small businesses.

- ? The UPP recognises that we live in a world that has changed dramatically, with the coming into being of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).
- ? A UPP Government will play a key role in CARICOM, so that Antigua and Barbuda and the Caribbean can adjust to these major changes in the world economic context, brought about by the WTO, NAFTA and FTAA.
- ? The whole question of trade liberalisation and the abolition of colonial preferences means that the economies of the region will be shaken to their foundations. There has to be a regional plan to deal with this on a regional basis. A UPP Government will be in the vanguard of this Caricom thrust and imitative.
- ? The UPP committed to changing the age-old, one-crop or one industry economy that has been, and is the source of our underdevelopment.
- ? The UPP will therefore seek to develop a modern textile industry, with Antigua's superior sea-island cotton forming a base of this textile industry. It is to be noted that agriculture is linked to this industry by this process.
- ? The UPP intends to develop a vibrant export sector, with special emphasis on the production of handicraft, souvenirs, jewellery, modern pottery and ceramics linked to the tourist industry, but seeking a wider export market, in pursuit of export-led growth.
- ? The UPP will seek to develop the deep-water port as a trans-shipment centre, with goods brought in bulk to Antigua for packaging then for outward distribution to neighbouring Caribbean islands.
- ? A UPP Government will seek to guarantee loans to local private investors for new ventures. These new ventures will be funded on the basis of their ability to generate employment and their ability to compete in the free market.
- ? The UPP sees vendors, as playing a key role in the development of an export market for products "Made in Antigua", while bringing in products which cannot ourselves produce.
- ? The UPP's major innovation, besides a National Economic Plan, in which government, the private sector and workers will participate in making and overseeing the national development plan, is an Economic Intelligence Unit.
- ? This Economic Intelligence Unit, will seek to carve out a prime area in CARICOM for Antigua and Barbuda, putting the nation in the vanguard of the regional integration movement.
- ? Apart from that, the Economic Intelligence Unit will seek lucrative trade opportunities for Antigua and Barbuda in the European Common Market, in NAFTA and in the FTAA, and prepare Antigua and Barbuda to withstand and grasp the changes and opportunities that will come to small countries under the WTO. This will be a crucial exercise.
- ? The UPP Government will improve the Government's credit rating with local merchants to move up to industry and participate in the industrialisation of Antigua and Barbuda.
- ? The UPP will embark on a public-building construction-and-maintenance programme to create meaningful work, overcome recession, and at the same time, meet vital social needs. Among such buildings will be a Hall of Justice, a Performing Arts Centre and multi-purpose Community Centres and Community Polyclinics.

New Fiscal Policy - For Sustainable Development

In 1998, Antigua and Barbuda's national debt stood at approximately EC \$1.5 billion. This stupendous level of debt means that our national debt has eclipsed and exceeded our total GDP assessed at EC \$1.32 billion in 1997. It is both alarming and outrageous.

Further, as early as 1991, scheduled debt-service obligations amounted to EC\$ 137.2 million. The Government managed to pay only EC\$ 19.44 million or 14 percent of the scheduled amount.

The situation got worse as the government fell in arrears on its debt payment for as much as EC\$ 622.62 million or fifty-four (54%) percent of GDP! In July of 1998, the Government paid EC\$ 7.2 million to a New York-based Financial Consultancy firm as commissions earned for their part in rescheduling EC\$ 87.4 million in bad debt.

Additionally, Antigua & Barbuda continue to operate with an ever increasing current account deficit, and this spells future disaster if remedial action is not taken soonest. At the end of 1997, the nation's current account deficit stood at a staggering EC\$ 49.9 million increasing at an average rate of fifty-two (52%) per annum over the three-year period 1994 to 1997. This is what the OECS Central Bank 1998 Report stated about our current dilemma. "The continued implementation of Public-sector Investment Programmes, depends on the maintainance of prudent fiscal policies to ensure a current account surplus, and the availability of counterpart financing. Experience has shown that countries that have received external support for their development programmes are the ones with consistent current surpluses". In the absence of this external support from funding agencies that lend on favourable, concessionary terms, the Government has embarked on financing its capital programmes through commercial loans on the open market, exacerbating an already intolerable position.

It follows with clear logic, that the UPP will have to seek the best national and international financial experts to reschedule the national debt.

UPP will guarantee its external creditors, that any rescheduled formula will be strictly adhered to so as to restore Antigua & Barbuda's international credit worthiness.

There is also a crying, urgent need for greater fiscal responsibility. According to the World Bank report of 1991 on Antigua, "The weak fiscal performance and inadequate policy response eroded the public sector's debt-servicing capacity, while a weak tax-collection mechanism also contributed to low public-sector revenues."

The UPP recognises that a stable macroeconomic environment is a necessary requirement for growth and development. We also recognises that it is imperative for the government to generate sufficient surplus to assist in the implementation of the public-sector investment programme (PSIP). We also recognise a major challenge with respect to the need for fiscal adjustment. Currently, government revenue is heavily dependent on taxes from international trade, due to its reliance on indirect taxation measures. Antigua & Barbuda's ratio of revenue from international trade to total revenue is 80 percent. The implication of the FTAA, NAFTA and CARICOM arrangements is that practically all of the trade of the OECS & CARICOM countries will eventually become duty free.

The USA and other FTAA partners account for more than sixty percent (60%) of OECS imports. The European Union, which will be entitled to Most Favoured Nation treatment under the Lome Convention, accounts for another seventeen percent (17%) of imports; and intra-CARICOM trade is another eight (8%) to ten (10%) percent of total trade. This means that only twelve percent (12%) of imports will be subject to duty.

It is quite clear then that the government will have to broaden the economic base, diversify the tax structure and improve the tax administration.

A UPP Administration, being cognisant of the current financial situation, will seek to implement policies that will improve the fiscal performance of the government.

Our objective will be to:

- ? Strengthen the tax collection system;
- ? Raise the productivity of labour in the public service;
- ? Broaden the economic base by increasing the economic contribution from the Agricultural, Fisheries and Manufacturing sectors and by strengthening the sectoral linkages between these industries and tourism;
- ? Reduce the cost of living, which will stimulate the local economy through increased consumer spending;
- ? Identify and eliminate wasteful public sector expenditure;
- ? Privatise certain unprofitable public-sector enterprises;
- ? Adhere to established public-sector procurement policies;
- ? Refrain from public-sector borrowing on commercial terms.

Upon assuming the reigns of government, we will:

- ? Strengthen the tax collection mechanism by the establishment of a single-tier corporate tax regime to replace the current two-tier system. The single-tier rate will be set at twenty-five percent (25%), applicable to both incorporated and unincorporated companies under this system, companies will be required to file an annual tax return. The current system is discriminatory in that incorporated companies are taxed at a higher rate of forty percent (40%), while unincorporated companies are taxed at twenty-five percent (25%). The regulation governing the requirement of companies to file returns is not currently enforced; instead where there are no filings, an assessment is carried out, but the current system of tax assessment is frivolous and loose and provides no incentives for companies to make declarations. The level of tax avoidance is as such that in 1996 the Government collected EC \$21.7 million in corporate tax revenues, ninety percent (90%) of which it earned from the returns of about ten (10) companies;
- ? Reorganise the Inland Revenue Service to pursue the improvement and strengthening of tax administration and collection systems. At the same time, we will review the scope and necessity for a separate Tax Compliance Unit;
- ? Broaden the tax base by diversifying the economy through the development of the Offshore Finance sector, the Agricultural and Fisheries Sectors and the creation of an environment to assist local entrepreneurs to industrialisation of the nation;
- ? Reorganise the Statistics Division to ensure that greater confidence and reliance can be placed on the accumulation, compilation and dissemination of various national statistical information. These statistics will be required to inform our processes as seek to improve the fiscal management of the economy;
- ? Develop clearly articulated guidelines, supported by legislation, for the granting of duty-free and other tax exemptions, to replace the current system of arbitrary grants of concessions;

- ? Reduce the cost of living by reducing the consumption taxes on building materials, foodstuff and fuels. Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that these reductions are passed on to the consumer. Additionally, the fuel surcharge on electricity bills will be eliminated;
- ? Stimulate employment generation and investment in new plants and machinery by providing tax-credit incentives to companies that generate employment above previously established levels. Additionally, allow companies to accelerate the depreciation of new plants at twice the normal rate for the first five years of the life of the investment. Alternately, companies that invest in new machinery and equipment will be allowed to accelerate the depreciation of these assets by twenty-five percent (25%) in addition to the normal rate of depreciation for the first year;
- ? Improve the efficiency at the ports with respect to the processing and clearance of goods in and out of the island. This will be accomplished by simplifying the customs and excise procedures, allowing companies that have the resources to prepare and file electronically produced warrants and other Customs documents

Tourism

UPP'S ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT SITUATION

The tourism sector accounts for the largest portion (approx. 70% of GDP) of Antigua and Barbuda's economy. It is highly-competitive international industry that demands sustained excellence in order to attain continuous growth and development. Within the last ten (10) years, Antigua's tourism thrust and development has become stymied and our product has begun to lose its competitive advantage in the market place. The industry is now characterised by the following:

- ? low annual occupancy (33% in 1994) of staying over guests;
- ? increase in cruise ship passenger arrivals year on year;
- ? a reduction in overall airline seat capacity from the traditional markets;
- ? a general trend towards all-inclusive resorts in hotel property development;
- ? and the gradual severing of economic links with other sectors of the economy.

While it may be argued that the general industry trend is towards cruise-passenger tourism and all-inclusive vacations, it cannot be gainsaid that lack of a cogent Tourism Development Plan has contributed to the continuing state of decline of the industry. The lack of clear government policy and direction is emphasised in the fact that there is little or no official promotion of the industry (in spite of the government having a dedicated revenue stream in hotel guest tax of 2% - to accomplish this) in either the traditional markets or developing markets. This has contributed significantly to the low annual occupancy leading to a further curtailment in the frequency of airline flights and seat availability. Additionally, several hotels have been allowed to both import and distribute on a wholesale basis, foodstuff and other material that could normally be provided by merchants in the commercial sector or by farmers and producers in both the agricultural and manufacturing sectors. This policy has led to the severing of two (2) important sectoral linkages, with its attendant knock-on effect of the flight of foreign exchange and the constriction of market share within these other sectors. Moreover, the notion that this fickle industry is based on the concept of selling a visitor a unique and fulfilling experience to which he might want to return, or to refer others to, seems to be lost on our current tourism planners and managers. This lack of insight is manifested in the current filthy and unsightly environment in which our tourist plant exists, the absence or underdevelopment of sufficient land and water-based tourist activities, and lack of

absence of places of interest for the tourists to patronise with the exception of the beaches and Nelson's Dockyard.

UPP Objectives

Within the first year of assuming Office, a UPP Administration will undertake a comprehensive review of the tourism industry leading to the development, production and execution of a comprehensive Tourism Development Plan. The process will of necessity include consultation with all of the stakeholders in the industry and from all other sectors of the economy that are linked to the trade, including farmers, furniture manufacturers, merchants and commission agents. Our plans will be informed by our policy of seeking to retain and circulate in the local economy, as much of the foreign exchange revenues from tourism as well as our policy of driving economic development through the creation and deepening of other sectoral linkages with the tourism industry. Recognising that there are three (3) distinct market sectors in tourism today viz. cruise ship visitors, all-inclusive visitors and the traditional stay-over holiday maker, and that each has a contribution to make. Our plans for the continued expansion of the industry will seek to manipulate this critical mix in a dynamic process that will allow the economy to derive maximum benefits from each sector. Our plans will also be formed by our policy for greater local participation, ownership and control of the industry.

The following actions are expected to emerge from this plan:

- ? Completing a process of redefining, developing, repackaging and re-branding our total tourism product, to re-establish our presence in the global market place as a destination of choice;
- ? Establishing a Tourism Promotion Corporation, under a Director-General with sub-directors for each market sector;
- ? Implementing an aggressive marketing campaign within our traditional and developing markets to increase stay-over arrivals and increase hotel occupancy;
- ? Positioning Antigua as a regional Home Port for the cruise industry. This will boost air travel to and from Antigua as well as hotel occupancy and other forms of tourism-related commerce;
- ? Creating or developing several major calendar events to expand tourism into an all year instead of a seasonal trade;
- ? Effecting a thorough clean up and beautification of St. John's, the beaches, and other tourist centres on the island;
- ? Expanding our system of national parks and wilderness areas, including the development of a marine park in North Sound/ Mercer's Creek Area;
- ? Refurbishing current hotel properties that are closed;
- ? Providing incentives for more local ownership of hotels and tourism-related businesses;
- ? Ensuring that all current and future hotel properties conform to building code regulations to ensure minimal disruption of the industry after the passage of major storms or hurricanes;
- ? Ensuring that all hotel properties operate in strict adherence to established codes of practice with respect to their custody, management, accounting and reporting of revenues they receive as taxes and service charges on behalf of the government and hotel workers respectively;
- ? Ensuring that all hotel and restaurant properties are in conformity with established codes of operations with respect to sanitation, solid-waste disposal, water and energy efficiency and set-back requirements for all coastal developments;

- ? Including courses in hotel management at the Hotel Training School at certificate, diploma and associate-degree levels;
- ? Implementing Total-Quality Management Programmes (based on ISO 9000 Criteria) in the Hotel Training School;
- ? Implementing a Total-Quality Awards scheme (based on ISO 9000 Criteria) for service across the industry, including the Immigration departments at both air and seaports.

Informatics

The UPP recognises that INFORMATICS is a major economic growth industry. It entails the collection, storage, retrieval, manipulation and dissemination of data and information by means of differential media. The development of this field will create jobs and new investment opportunities and hence is among the top priorities on the UPP's agenda. While we acknowledge the existence of legislation pertaining to this industry such as, the Free Trade Processing Zone Act 1994 and the International Business Act of Antigua and Barbuda, the UPP is committed to reviewing these pieces of legislation so that their application reflects and conforms with the ever increasing changes within the industry.

The UPP recognises that neither legislation, nor specific tax incentives, nor even low telecommunication rates will by themselves create ideal conditions to attract investors to our shores. We understand the intense competition both regionally and internationally for this type of business and appreciate the creativity and innovativeness which must go into marketing and incentive packages if we are to make Antigua and Barbuda be among the top centres in the world. We must keep abreast with modern technology while operating efficiently and productively with minimum costs.

Informatics affords employment and business opportunities which encompass a wide range of activities including the following:

- ? Call centres for both inbound and outbound telemarketing services;
- ? Sports book and Internet Gaming;
- ? Transaction processing such as, electronic-cash and other forms of electronic commerce;
- ? Marketing and after-sales service;
- ? Publishing and key-boarding of offshore data;
- ? Developing, maintaining and selling of software material.

It is estimated that informatics provides employment for over nine thousand (9,000) workers in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is responsible for an annual contribution of US\$200 million with annual growth projections of fifteen percent (15%) and more per year. In spite of these impressive numbers, Antigua and Barbuda has failed to capitalise on its market share in this industry.

Upon assuming office, among the UPP's first order of business will be to have the appropriate Ministry embark on a strategic plan to better educate existing and potential entrepreneurs about the opportunities and rewards in this industry. Further, our government will facilitate and prescribe a blueprint between government and local and international entrepreneurs aimed at further developing the industry in Antigua and Barbuda by proactively canvassing international prospective opportunities. We are aware also that entrepreneurs will be unlikely to invest their funds and resources in any given

market based on any single over-riding condition such as low tariffs, tax incentives or even low wages. Therefore, the overall enabling business environment, which is so important to the Informatics Industry, will be given urgent attention. Our vision for this industry in no way resembles “the factory shell mentality” which presently exists under the ALP regime but rather is grounded on more sophisticated, confidential and technical basis.

A UPP Government, therefore, will:

- ? Initiate, encourage and support the business infrastructure necessary for the informatics industry to thrive and expand;
- ? Cooperate with the private sector to provide specialist and professional technological training for Antiguan and Barbudans at the secondary and tertiary levels.
- ? Work with telecommunications companies here to properly dimension their networks to handle the increased business;
- ? Offer tax incentives to these companies in exchange for their financial commitment to the further development of the industry and training of Antiguan and Barbudans;
- ? Introduce more appropriate legislation and other measures to protect Antigua and Barbuda’s reputation in this industry;
- ? Actively promote Antigua and Barbuda as “The Place of Choice” to conduct this type of business when compared to any other place on earth.

Offshore Business

The offshore Finance Industry is arguably the largest area of economic growth potential for Antigua and Barbuda. Almost every other government in the Caribbean has recognised the substantial increase in revenue which can be derived from a viable offshore sector and has begun to exploit this industry. In spite of our involvement in this industry for well over sixteen (16) years, successive ALP governments have failed to capitalise on the numerous opportunities available in this sector. There is no justifiable reason why Antigua and Barbuda has not taken its rightful place alongside other Caribbean countries such as, the Bahamas, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Turks, and Caicos and now Barbados. These countries have all gained international recognition as being innovative and sophisticated offshore centres. Given this stark reality, the UPP is poised to embark on an aggressive campaign which promotes and markets Antigua and Barbuda as an ideal centre which provides a diversified range of offshore services.

The significance of the opportunities which offshore financing affords cannot be overstated. In Antigua and Barbuda, offshore financing accounts for fewer than one hundred and twenty (120) employment opportunities which are shared between locals and expatriates. The UPP will work towards increasing that figure four-fold within our first eighteen (18) months in office. We will capitalise on Antigua and Barbuda’s ideal geographical location with our exceptional air and sea links to North America and Europe. Our modern telecommunications network, our products and services, our human resource base, with a rapidly developing cadre of exceptionally-trained professional and technical personnel, are all vital to our efforts to reap the benefits of the offshore financial industry.

Extensive advertising of Antigua and Barbuda in offshore publications such as Shore-to-Shore, American Way, and financial newspapers as well as our increased participation in and hosting of offshore conferences will undoubtedly result in an increase in the volume of offshore business. As a result of the dynamism in this sector as envisioned by the UPP, almost every other sector of our economy stands to benefit.

The positive impact which a viable offshore industry will provide includes:

- ? Increased contribution to government revenue through direct licensing fees and other operating expenses;
- ? Growth in the real estate sector through rental of office and residential premises required for expatriates;
- ? Increased telecommunications and other utility services;
- ? Increased business and leisure activities that serve as a booster for the economy with their related incidental benefits; and
- ? Use of semi-skilled to high-skilled labour with concomitant earnings of medium-to-high wage and compensation packages for Antiguan and Barbudans.

A UPP Government will:

- ? Expand the kinds of off-shore services currently undertaken, thereby increasing revenue by attracting more and better Offshore Financial Services;
- ? Overhaul our tarnished international reputation as being a haven for money-laundering and other illegal offshore practices;
- ? Improve our educational system to ensure that Antiguan and Barbudans are more knowledgeable, highly trained, and proficient in computer expertise, in order to respond to the service needs of this highly technologically-dependent industry;
- ? Diversify our range of services being offered to international businesses to include; mutual companies, limited partnerships and international trusts;
- ? Ensure that only legitimate offshore businesses operate from our shores by becoming more vigilant regarding money-laundering and other illegal offshore activities;
- ? Consult with recognised professionals in this area to map out a realistic and effective plan for the development of this sector;
- ? Establish a regulatory body which functions as a “watchdog” for the industry and is vested with powers to investigate and subpoena;
- ? Consult and work closely with the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to show transparency and obtain informed and professional advice;
- ? Make recruitment of new business in the offshore market a priority responsibility for all our foreign missions.

Local Business

Over the years, under the Antigua Labour Party (ALP) government, growth in local business has declined and in some instances our merchants have been forced from the retail market place. Antiguan and Barbudans no longer play a significant role in restaurant business. Within the retail industry, the market has become saturated with numerous goods and commodities, because merchants are selling identical goods and competing for a limited clientele. As a result of this serious lack of diversity, many businesspersons are unable to yield profits or to expand their businesses.

Lack of diversity aside, the reasons for the stagnation in the retail industry are many and varied. ALP's failure and inability to implement a feasible developmental policy for local entrepreneurs and business is primarily responsible for the underdevelopment in this crucial area. More nationals ought to have been allowed to acquire ownership interest in numerous businesses, but availability of financing, law to protect local enterprise and economic affirmative action policies geared toward the advancement of local people, are not in place and have never ranked high on any ALP agenda. Coupled with this lack of foresight, is the government's pervasive and evil system of patronage, which it uses as a double-edged sword. The ALP shamelessly victimizes, stifles and prevents the advancement of those local business persons who oppose them while it openly rewards, assists, encourages, and grants duty-free concession and exclusive licenses to those business persons who toe the party line. This abuse of power denies our people freedom, justice and equal opportunity and contributes to high costs of goods and services.

Further, the government has failed to provide sufficient financial assistance and other incentives to local business to boost their business or for investment in business ventures. Rarely are locals given the opportunity to bid on or to acquire publicly or privately owned business. The acquisitions by either the government or their expatriate friends are glaring examples of this reality.

Whenever any minister has an interest in acquiring a company, existing conflicts are blatantly disregarded. Greed guides their decisions, therefore it is not unusual for them to engage in grossly unfair tactics to acquire new or existing business opportunities from locals who, in order to apply for duty-free concession, must reveal the nature and feasibility of their project to Cabinet. Invariably, these applications are denied and shortly thereafter, the same project or service is introduced to the public and often, these politicians are the principals or silent partners in the companies operating the business. Further, many other partners' business opportunities are soured through the government's selective granting of 'licenses' to their friends and colleagues.

Disrespect, disdain and repeated abuse of our people have become the norm for the ALP in dealing with local business. The UPP believes that politicians are indeed servants of the people and, as such, they must serve the national interest in executing their duties and enhance the quality of life of all citizens. The ALP government has turned this fundamental tenet of politics on its head; they have placed their greatest emphasis on greed and power.

In order to correct this shameful situation, a UPP administration will:

Establish a Small Business Administration in order to conduct feasibility studies, seek out new markets, provide loans and support services for small businesses. The UPP sees small business as the key to developing the national economy;

Acknowledge vendors as a primary source of economic life. We will appoint a public officer to assist vendors in the resolution of their business problems and in improving their working conditions. An example will be the proper organization of the beach vendors with a view to removing areas of conflict between investors and the vendors;

Create special vendors' arcades at strategic points on the island, for example at Fig Tree Drive. The purpose of these arcades will be to link local people to the tourist industry and to have them develop market specialties in particular areas. A UPP Administration will also seek to develop kiosks on major beach fronts to be used by vendors, so that they may develop their businesses more effectively;

- ? Encourage more locals to develop their own businesses by economically empowering them;
- ? Ensure that all businesses are treated fairly and equally under the law;
- ? Establish clear guidelines for the granting of duty free concessions and "exclusive licenses" for certain goods and commodities;
- ? Ensure that local businesses and professionals have the opportunity to bid on government contracts and that they are paid promptly for their goods and services;
- ? Provide assistance to the National Development Foundation;
- ? Legislate for anti-trust, anti-monopoly laws to even the playing field;
- ? Introduce adequate regulations for establishing and monitoring standards in the building industry. Adequate means of training and licensing will be established throughout the country.

Agriculture

As mentioned before Antigua and Barbuda's economic development has long been hampered by its singular reliance on the tourism sector as the main engine of economic growth. The contribution that could be made by the agricultural sector has been continually overlooked by successive ALP administrations. In fact, agriculture's percentage contribution to the GDP has fallen successively every year under the stewardship of the current administration. In general, four broad categories of constraints plague the agricultural sector in Antigua and Barbuda: natural, economic, institutional and structural.

The natural limitations include inadequate rainfall. The economic problems of both peasant and export agriculture involve excessively small and uneconomic units of farmland, high costs of inputs for fertilisers and pesticides, and low prices for commodities. The major institutional constraints include poor marketing infrastructure, poor access to credit and the non-existence of an agricultural development policy and plan. Structural factors include low wages to farm workers and access to a guaranteed supply of irrigation resources.

Upon assuming Office, a UPP administration will implement measures to increase domestic food production, reduce the food import bill, promote a healthier lifestyle and secure the development of greater food security than is currently the case. The Plan will also seek to improve our stewardship of the land, on the basis that we need to use the land more effectively. The Plan will seek to reduce the current food import bill from its current annual average of EC \$200 million by as much twenty-five percent (25%) within the first term of our administration.

In order to achieve the aforesaid objective, amongst others, the UPP will

- ? Produce and execute a detailed National Development Plan (NDP) where lands will be allocated for agriculture, tourism, housing, development, wildlife and protecting our watercourses and important tourist sites etc. this NDP will also include a fisheries and coastal resource management plan as well as land and land tenure policy;
- ? Reorganize the National Agricultural Planning Committee to facilitate greater inter-ministry and institutional coordination and to draft a National Agricultural Plan that will include the following elements:

1. Increases plot sizes to farmers. Registered farmers will be guaranteed long-term leases of substantial plots once production is maintained;
 2. Guarantee irrigation equipment and allocation of water to registered farmers to ensure food supply to the local and tourist market (see Water Policy)
 3. Develop community-grazing areas as a solution to the over-grazing problem;
 4. Reorganise the Antigua and Barbuda Development Bank to include an Agricultural Credit and Savings Department that will provide favourable loans to farmers;
 5. Develop a National Food Plan, to fulfill local and export needs while allocating crop production amongst farmers to prevent gluts;
 6. Develop national crop insurance coverage for farmers;
- ? Reorganise Agricultural Stations at Dunbars, Christian Valley, Bendals, Diamonds and Cades Bay to promote:
1. Agro-industry projects that can be developed nationally;
 2. Use of biological controls, integrated pest management, farming and soil rebuilding techniques;
 3. Propagation and distribution of quality plant stock to farmers and the interested public;
 4. Provision of produce for Government agro-processing and island beautification programmes;
 5. Produce grading and storing facilities;
 6. Pooling and storing farm equipment for area farmers;
- ? Establish an Agricultural Development and Research Unit in conjunction with CARDI, UWI, relevant NGO's and other international institutions to provide:
1. Training and certification in Agronomy;
 2. Information on suitable drought-tolerant crops and regeneration;
 3. Research on developing better farming methods;
 4. Biological and natural controls of plant pests and diseases;
- ? Reorganise the Central Marketing Corporation to purchase and market local farmers' produce. This reorganised agency will include a Supply Unit and a Marketing Intelligence Unit to better address the country's needs.

Fisheries & Ports

As is the case with agriculture, the need for improved food security in the fisheries sector is paramount. Our fish stocks are being severely depleted from poor management of the coastal resources and over-fishing. In addition, adequate facilities for the sale and merchandising of fish are virtually non-existent and so consumers experience a lot of difficulties in being able to purchase fish under acceptable sanitary conditions. The failure of the current administration to pay attention to the development needs of the fishing industry has led to a decline in fish production and increased operational costs leading to severe financial and economic hardship for our local Fishermen.

Upon assuming Office, a UPP administration will establish a Fishing Industry Revitalisation Programme that will seek to develop linkages between the fisheries sector and other productive sectors of the national economy, especially those that are related to the sea and coastal environment. The linkages will be established to ensure that the industry attracts inflows of financial investment from the private sector, and the outflow of

fish products to domestic consumers and the hotel and tourist industry. The linkages will also ensure an integrated management approach for the use of the marine environment and its resources. In addition, the Plan will pay particular attention to the protection of the marine environment in order to ensure the sustainability of the fishing industry. Towards this end, a maritime environment management programme will also be established to co-ordinate the activities of the different user groups of the marine environment and the coastal zone areas. Under our Fishing Industry Revitalisation Programme we intend to make Antigua and Barbuda self sufficient in its seafood demands, while at the same time producing a surplus for export.

A UPP Government will, as a matter of urgency:

- ? Increase Coast Guard patrols in local waters to prevent foreign fishermen from illegally fishing in our waters;
- ? Develop national boat insurance coverage for fishermen;
- ? Create a Fisheries Credit and Savings Department at the Antigua and Barbuda development Bank to finance a Fishing Vessel Improvement Programme and to provide low cost loans and credit facilities to local fishermen;
- ? Develop a Fisherman Training Programme to provide instruction in the use of more-efficient fishing vessels and technical navigational equipment;
- ? Assist fishermen in developing new methods of fishing for new fish and seafood products not currently exploited, e.g. flying fish etc.;
- ? Investigate avenues to minimize or eliminate fish-pot stealing;
- ? Undertake training of local boat builders in the construction of fiberglass and wooden vessels;
- ? Support and develop efforts at coastal rehabilitation, such as construction of artificial reefs, replanting mangroves, managing commercially-valuable stocks such as lobster, conch and sea moss;
- ? Create a standardized seafood packaging plant, so that our seafood can be exported according to international standards;
- ? Institute an infrastructure development plan, which would include the establishment of fisheries centres in Antigua and one in Barbuda. These centres will include modern facilities for fish processing and marketing facilities for fishermen to store their fishing gear and equipment and the mooring and docking of their vessels. These facilities will be established in Parham, Urlings, the Point Wharf and in Codrington and will complement the Fisheries complex now under construction at the West Bus Station.

Ports

Antigua and Barbuda geography and location provides us with unique opportunities and advantages for receiving and re-exporting goods. We intend to develop programmes and efficiencies at the Ports which will make it possible to exploit the re-distribution trade. The Port Authority will be restructured and Antigua and Barbuda made into a major trans-shipment destination for the Eastern Caribbean. This will in turn, create new jobs in packaging and re-packaging and enhance government revenues. We also intend to lower port costs for every person clearing goods here with our new programmes.

A UPP Government is committed to the following:

- ? Privatising the Port Authority and allow Antiguan and Barbudans to become shareholders in that corporation;
- ? Increasing our re-exporting business by improving our port services at the Airport and the Seaports and making them more competitive;

- ? Simplifying clearance of commercial goods to facilitate business;
- ? Expanding warehouse facilities at all ports;
- ? Improving the morale at the customs and immigration offices throughout the country by creating better financial and work-benefit incentives;
- ? Improving revenue collection at these important centres by making the work more efficiently;
- ? Simplifying tourist entry procedures and make tourists feel more welcome at all entry ports;
- ? Ensuring that immigration officials are well versed in our immigration laws so that discretionary decisions are meted out impartially;
- ? Carefully screening all applicants for residency to ensure they do not possess a criminal record. A UPP Government will liaise with regional and international organisations on this.

Immigration & Labour

IMMIGRATION

The vast majority of Antiguan and Barbudans express alarm over our immigration policies and procedures. The general view is that Immigration and Labour are dangerously out of control. Whereas Antiguan and Barbudans are appreciative of the varying factors that cause people to seek residence and employment in countries other than their homelands, they are however perturbed about the huge influx of immigrants who arrive on our shores, unregulated. There is the appearance of a free-for-all or open-house policy to immigration in Antigua and Barbuda at a level which is unheard of in virtually any organised or progressive country in the world. This has led to the current disproportionate ratio of immigrants to nationals. The ALP's ineptitude at managing the problem is evident. A declaration of amnesty was granted to thousands of undocumented immigrants and to those who have been allowed to stay here indefinitely. This was done out of a calculated action by the ALP regime. It was made with the assumption that loyalty among this group would work in their favour as far as electoral politics in concerned.

These immigrants are forced to put up with inadequate housing, low pay and other forms of abuse which no human being should tolerate. A UPP Government will address the matter, giving due respect and human consideration to the immigrants concerned. In all its dealings on this matter however, the interests of Antigua and Antiguan, Barbuda and Barbudans will be paramount.

Another explosive issue involving immigrants which concerns Antiguan and Barbudans is that of alien (people who do not reside in Antigua & Barbuda) land ownership in our country. Many persons are of the view that more stringent requirements ought to be put in place before alien land holding licenses are granted. The Barbados model is one that will be studied by a UPP Government. Presently, the requirements favour those immigrants who are financially secure and are therefore able to acquire land here with little or no difficulty whatsoever. Since land ownership is often outside the reach of many Antiguan and Barbudans, primarily due to the bureaucratic and political games which control the distribution and sale of public lands, it is widely believed that immigrants ought not be given the opportunity to "own" our piece of the rock merely because they have the money to do so. The UPP urges Antiguan and Barbudans to remember that once land is placed in the hands of foreign ownership, it is rarely, if ever, reverts to the indigenous people.

LABOUR

Closely related to our challenges in regulating immigration, are the issues surrounding the employment of numerous undocumented immigrants into our labour force.

Any future development of Antigua and Barbuda depends on a disciplined, well-trained and well-paid productive workforce. These characteristics will undoubtedly provide equal opportunities at all levels throughout the labour force. However, the sensitive issue of “imported labour” and the widespread practice of hiring undocumented immigrants is a matter of grave concern for the majority of Antiguan and Barbudans since factual data reveals an alarmingly disproportionate ratio of foreign to local workers. This is primarily due to a conscious and systematic, ill-conceived policy by the ALP government which blatantly disregards our labour and immigration laws and regulations and encourages others to do likewise.

As stated before, unlike other nations, even those within the region, Antigua and Barbuda has become a free-for-all in terms of labour recruitment. It is widely known that many immigrants arrive here, establish residency without adhering to our immigration procedures and thereafter, embark on a mission to find employment. Quite often, these immigrants are successful in finding employment while suitable, qualified Antiguan and Barbudans who are ready, able and eager to work are denied those very employment opportunities. There is national consensus among our people that some employers favour hiring these immigrants since they can readily disregard the labour laws by paying these workers sub-standard wages, evading their obligations under the medical benefits, social security and education levy schemes, and by exceeding the legally mandated forty (40) hour per week work schedule without paying the required over-time wages.

While the UPP is mindful of the need to recruit foreign workers in certain areas where no suitably-qualified Antiguan or Barbudan can fill the position, we remain steadfast in our pledge to put Antiguan and Barbudans first in every sphere of life in this country. We will not and do not discriminate against immigrants, but we are committed to upholding and adhering to our laws and regulations which govern immigration and labour. Consequently, the Ministry of Labour within the UPP administration envisions working closely with the trade unions, employers and other workers’ organisations and associations in furthering its labour and immigration policies.

To ensure this, a UPP government will:

- ? Promote the establishment of a tripartite body composed of government, employers and employees which will regularly monitor developments in the work force and make recommendations for ongoing improvements. This National Labour Board will also review the social security scheme, pension requirements and other-related matters;
- ? Ensure that laws and regulations governing work permits are vigorously enforced in order to protect the interest and future development and growth of the local work force;
- ? Review all existing labour regulation and regulations to ensure that they reflect modern trends in labour relations;
- ? Establish additional training and apprenticeship programmes for nationals both at home and abroad to ensure that qualified persons are available to fill positions as they are created;
- ? Expand the computerized Work Force Data Unit of the Labour Department which will store and process a wide range of information such as, data on prospective

- employees, availability of jobs, assessment of the impact of inflation, salary scales, skills base assessment and employment and unemployment figures;
- ? Terminate the vile practice of exchanging jobs for political favours since this system compromises workers and invariably fails to match aptitude and qualification with the job requirements. This practice often results in mediocrity, inefficiency, indiscipline and low morale;
 - ? Encourage more collective bargaining in the private and public sectors, thereby guaranteeing better job security for all workers;
 - ? Enact legislation after full consultation with employers, unions and the Opposition to create a Severance Pay Fund. This fund will ensure protection of workers' equity accrued over years in instances of retrenchment, bankruptcy and other dislocations. Likewise, employers will benefit in that they will not be required to disburse large lump sums of money when severance entitlements become due and payable. Further, employers will be given appropriate tax relief resulting from the implementation of this fund.

Barbuda

Since Independence in 1981, there has been absolutely no dialogue between the central government and the Barbuda Council, concerning the future development of Barbuda and Barbudans. Although repeated requests by the Council to engage in pertinent discussions on numerous pressing issues being faced by Barbudans, the ALP regime has ignored them all. Consequently, the rights of the Council as enshrined in law have been grossly undermined, ignored and violated for the last nineteen (19) years. Under the ALP regime the relationship between Antigua and Barbuda has rapidly deteriorated and is feared unsalvageable. The issue of secession is therefore kept alive on account of the disrespectful, unacceptable and unbecoming behaviour, which continually emanates from the central government.

The human and natural resources of Barbuda have been exploited by the ALP regime, not for the benefit of Barbudans or the nation of Antigua & Barbuda as a whole, but for the enrichment of politicians, their cronies and foreign investors. A prime example of such exploitation is the mining of sand in Barbuda.

The Barbuda Local Council in its efforts to execute its functions has been confronted by hurdle after hurdle and has been reduced to a farce by the ALP regime, which is determined to ensure that Barbudans do not have meaningful control of their development. Financial entitlements have been withheld and council members are all but unrecognised by the present administration.

A UPP Administration is committed to establishing mutual trust and respect among Antigua and Barbuda, as well as to retaining the unity of both islands. We are also sincere in our efforts to find a workable approach to collaborate our joint talents and resources for the benefit of all our people.

Among the top priorities on the UPP Agenda in relation to the Barbuda Policy is to convene a Barbuda Conference with all Barbuda parties and the Barbuda Council within one hundred and eighty (180) days of taking office. The purpose of the conference will be to discuss the promised Barbuda Constitutional Review, which has been denied them for the past eighteen (18) years by successive ALP regimes.

The UPP will consider a new governing policy between Antigua and Barbuda, which will give Barbuda greater autonomy in the management, and direction of their development provided this is in accord with the wishes of the majority of the Barbudan people. The establishment of a Barbuda Peoples Assembly could be the outcome of this important consultation.

A UPP government will work towards finding solutions to the following issues:

- ? Political and economic status of Barbuda
- ? Development for and of Barbuda
- ? Land ownership and Land management of Barbuda
- ? Finance - revenue allocation and collection
- ? Customs and Immigration - duty and taxes
- ? Ports of entry for Barbuda - both sea and air
- ? The police and the magistrate court
- ? Labour relations
- ? Transportation, roads, electricity and telecommunications
- ? Health and housing

The United Progressive Party is further committed to ensuring that:

1. The unique appeal of Barbuda is maintained;
2. The system of land tenure is not too hastily discarded. With tourism being one of the obvious areas of economic activity open to Barbuda, special attention must be given to the development of the island's tourist attractions such as:
 - o Sites of sunken wrecks
 - o Bird Sanctuary
 - o Wild life
 - o Natural landscape;
3. The quality of instruction at the pre-school, primary, secondary and vocational levels is upgraded;
4. Regular school exchanges will be encouraged between both islands in order to expose our youth to the history and life styles of their fellow citizens, as well as to enable them to appreciate the natural assets and beauty of our islands

The Environment

The UPP's environmental agenda is fundamentally linked to critical economic sectors such as, agriculture, fisheries and tourism. Hence, any worthwhile environmental policy must focus in our sustainable economic and social development. Our beautiful beaches, bird sanctuaries, natural and marine parks, and mangroves all form part of the environment; hence, local communities have a vital role to play in maintaining a healthy environment, as well as in increasing local enterprise through the beneficial and creative use of our resources.

The ALP regime has for years embarked on a destructive sand mining operation which has severely depleted this natural resource so vital to our tourism product. These politicians

enter you into questionable business ventures with "foreign Investors" and under the guise of economic development, give unbridled permission to their "associates" to relentlessly plunder our beaches. As a result of these operations, the wealth of these politicians has increased substantially while the development of important facilities critical to the environment and important to the tourism industry, as well as the educational and recreational benefits to our people continue to be neglected. This results in the failure of the current administration to protect and preserve our natural and marine parks, botanical gardens and mangroves.

We intend to inculcate sound environmental ethics in our people which will ensure that we appreciate the value of our environment. We will invest in a plan for the sustainable development of Antigua and Barbuda.

A UPP government will:

- ? **Within the first year of coming to office, introduce comprehensive Environmental Protection Legislation;**
- ? **Create a National Park and a first-rate Eco-Tourist Site In the Guiana Island and North Sound Area;**
- ? **Liase with other regional governments to enact legislation to halt the trans-Caribbean shipment of nuclear and other hazardous waste in our waters;**
- ? **Enforce existing penalties for littering, other forms of illegal dumping and noise polluting;**
- ? **Create a series of managed marine and terrestrial parks throughout the country. Our Island will become better known for its beautiful parks and natural environs which will enable us to capitalise on the eco-tourism markets;**
- ? **Target aggressively the stay-over tourist Instead of concentrating excessive efforts on the low-spending day cruise passengers;**
- ? **Create in Barbuda, as a Millennial Project, one of the finest Marine Parks and Seaquariums as a stellar world attraction. Likewise a UPP Government will declare Codrington Lagoon's extensive mangrove forest and seven-mile barrier beach as a RAMSAR site (a wet land) of international attraction and importance;**
- ? **Develop a programme geared at the ecological restoration of Antigua and Barbuda by enhancing our natural, historical and cultural resources which will benefit future generations;**
- ? **Establish working relationships with the various community organisations throughout Antigua and Barbuda to develop and implement sustainable economic plans from our restored natural resources;**
- ? **Ensure that the staff of the Development Control Authority (DCA) are properly trained and possess the tools and equipment to develop an efficient and impartial system for development approval and assessments;**
- ? **Ensure that better communication and linkages exist between Ministries dealing with environmental and natural resources;**
- ? **Implement public environmental awareness programmes in the various villages and communities, as well as through use of the media, to educate and sensitise our people about pressing local, regional and international environmental issues;**
- ? **Ensure that all unoccupied residential and commercial plots of land are kept clean;**
- ? **Intensify efforts to educate the public about recycling and provide fiscal incentives to those who recycle;**
- ? **Improve the public transportation system and build parking facilities in St. John's to alleviate downtown congestion, as well as to improve the quality of our air;**
- ? **Encourage energy conservation and alternative use of renewable energy sources to relieve our over-dependence on imported fossil fuels;**

- ? **Introduce environmental education in the school curriculum to sensitise our youth to global warming and the urgency of protecting our environment**

Civil Service and Public Administration

The engine which powers the wheels of government in any progressive democracy is comprised of a highly-motivated, committed, respected and empowered Civil Service and/or Statutory Bodies. Production is at its optimum when these employees are given clear direction, adequate resources, effective and efficient processes and freedom from unwarranted interference by Politicians. One needs no microscope to see the present situation involving government employees, to realise how distant we are from this deal.

An objective evaluation of the civil service would reveal the following:

- ? **Lack or respect for public servants by the administration, especially the police, teachers and nurses**
- ? **Grave shortage of suitable and adequate facilities**
- ? **Sub-standard working conditions**
- ? **Absence of vital equipment**
- ? **Lack of training and promotion opportunities**
- ? **Suppression of creative ideas**
- ? **Lack of self-worth and self-esteem as a group little or no consultation on important matters by leaders of government.**

Government is the single largest employer in Antigua and Barbuda. The public purse supports approximately the thousand (10,000) workers: three thousand (3000) non-established, four thousand (4000) established, and three thousand (3000) from Statutory Bodies. There is a significant breakdown of order among these workers. Strikes, sit-ins, and sick-outs abound as a result of the appalling conditions referred to above. Consequently, many of these employees are merely biding their time until a better opportunity arises in the private sector or until retirement.

There is gross distrust of many civil servants by the ALP Government simply because decent and upstanding employees are unwilling partakers in the ALP's shenanigans. As a result, more than one thousand (1000) vacant positions within the civil service establishment division remain unfilled with little hope of qualified locals being hired to fill them. In addition, most civil servants are preoccupied with the uncertain future which awaits them after retirement. The UPP views this as intrinsically wrong and pledges to correct the anomalies and address the prevalent injustices within the government. We are confident that the services rendered to the public will improve dramatically after these corrective measures are put in place. Simultaneously, the high standards, efficiency and morale so vital to the civil service, will be restored.

A UPP government will therefore:

- ? Ensure that absolutely no one in the Civil Service (established or non-established) is victimised because of political or other affiliation or on any other grounds whatsoever;
- ? Ensure that persons serving in any decision-making capacity such as Public Service Commission and Police Service Commission are competent, ethical and possess integrity, and are prepared to fearlessly execute their functions in an impartial manner;
- ? Commission a study of the entire civil service with a view to achieving efficiency and productivity through restructuring and management re-engineering, with the ultimate goal being the unification of the civil service;
- ? Professionalise all aspects of the civil service by placing priority on human resource development with a principal focus on training, skills, management and service. Concurrently, the UPP will establish a certification system similar to that used in the teaching profession which will serve as one factor in determining eligibility for promotions, transfers and other appointments.
- ? Re-establish the appropriate functions of the National Tenders Board and staff it with persons who possess the requisite skills to satisfactorily meet the objectives of the Board;
- ? Consider and compare salaries in the private sector in determining salaries for civil servants with a view to increasing said salary levels;
- ? Ensure that retirees receive their gratuities in full upon retirement and guarantee that pensions are paid without delay;
- ? Provide further educational opportunities for career advancement for personnel in the army, police and other sectors who demonstrate serious interest and commitment in improving their skills especially in crucial areas which will enable their departments to function more efficiently and effectively, to better meet the needs of the Nation;
- ? Liaise with the School of Continuing Education at the University of the West Indies and other international universities to provide educational training, leading to the Certificate in Public Administration for eligible middle-management Public Servants;
- ? Provide assurances to Civil Servants that any person who resigns his/her position to participate in national political office on any party ticket, or as an independent candidate, will not lose his/her accrued benefits or any privilege or previous entitlement available prior to resignation. Further, any person who is unsuccessful in an election will, upon re-application, be either re-instated in the position provided it is still vacant or, be offered a position similar in duties to that which was previously held;
- ? Respect and honour court rulings (pay the teachers in whose favour the court ruled).

Public Works and Infrastructural Development

The United Progressive Party believes that the general maintainance of our country has been seriously neglected. We intend to address this problem by immediately instituting a programme of preventative maintainance for all Government buildings and addressing long-standing issues of public health. At the same time, we intend to take an in-depth look at current and future infrastructural development in the country. We will hold town hall meetings to get the citizenry's feedback on where the country as a whole would infrastructural development to go.

A UPP government will:

- ? Invest in preventative maintenance of all Government buildings and not let our public historical buildings fall apart due to lack of maintenance. Buildings must be safe and comfortable for employees;
- ? Rebuild the Old Public Library on High Street and restore pride and respect in the office of Governor General by restoring our highest National symbol – “Government House Property”
- ? Begin an overall re-assessment and reconstruction of our roads so that they can carry heavy loads and drain properly, as they should be lower than the adjacent houses;
- ? Cover the open drains in St. John’s and make the city safe for pedestrians and aesthetically appealing and pleasing to the eye and other senses;
- ? Seek to introduce Proper Sewage facilities for St. John’s with the goal of expanding the sewage service throughout the island, as funds become available;
- ? Review our current and planned Solid-Waste Management to include an emphasis on composting and re-using materials;
- ? Clean up the oil-laden drain west of Yorks village and create safe, scenic View Spots around the island for Antiguan and tourists alike;
- ? Solve the problem associated with the Gray’s Farm gutter as a matter of priority;
- ? Incorporate current buses and drivers into a unified, coordinated, reliable public bus/ transportation system, which will service all major routes around the country day and night;
- ? Implement the Organisation of American States (OAS) project calling for the creation of a pedestrian street area in St. John’s and restore remaining historical buildings, which add to the tourist value of our city;
- ? Engage qualified engineers to examine and address the serious land and beach erosion taking place around the island;
- ? Conduct studies of sources of industrial pollutants and coastal pollutants and develop a pollution control strategy to minimise environmental damage;
- ? Erect guard rails at hazardous areas along the roads around the country.

Public Utilities - New Efficiencies Required

Public Utilities in Antigua and Barbuda comprise of Water, Telephone & Electricity services. There has been much public discontent over exorbitant utility bills and unreliable and inefficient utility services, particularly water and electricity. The current administration has refused to allow the utilities to be administered as a fully functional statutory body, and have treated them as an arm of the Ministry of Public Utilities. This unwillingness has had the effect of limiting the scope for it to obtain the necessary operational and financial efficiencies that could be achieved had it been allowed to operate as a business. Consequently, Antiguan and Barbudans pay the highest rates for electricity in the entire Caricom region. This not only has the effect of being a disincentive to investment in the industrial, manufacturing and service sectors, but it also has the inflationary knock-on effect of increasing the cost of other basic goods and services. Again, due to poor management, the physical state of the Public Utilities infrastructure is in a constant state of disrepair, as proper installation and maintenance standards are not adhere to, leading to excessive rework and cost escalation.

A UPP Government will:

- ? Re-establish the APUA as a fully functional Statutory Corporation, equipping the APUA Board with the necessary Managerial and Operational Autonomy, to enable it to provide adequate, reliable and affordable services to its customer;
- ? Remove the protection that APUA enjoys from prosecution under the Consumer protection act;

- ? Establish a Public Utilities Commission, to regulate, redefine and strengthen objectives and strategies of the APUA Board & Management;
- ? Enact a Water Resource Bill to rationalise water distribution, to protect watersheds and to establish and monitor purification standards;
- ? Protect and rehabilitate key watershed areas around the country;
- ? Improve natural water collection by restoring and repairing Potworks, Collins, Wallings and other major dams in the country;
- ? Implement a programme of Quality Management throughout the entire organisation of APUA leading to ISO 9000 certification;
- ? Institute a joint-productivity working group between APUA & Public Works to co-ordinate toe efforts between these two agencies of the Government;
- ? Open APUA to shareholding by the Nationals of Antigua and Barbuda.

Benefits of the UPP Plan of Action;

- ? Lower cost of service to domestic consumers and Business Customers;
- ? Lower cost of service will have a positive effect on the investment climate;
- ? Minimise the inflationary effect of spiralling utility costs;
- ? Improved management of utilities will lead to more-reliable and efficient service and expansion of public utility networks into new residential areas will significantly reduce the cost of obtaining new service by new homeowners;
- ? Implementation of Quality Management Systems will enable the Utilities to improve cost control and quality management

Telecommunications & Transportation

The telecommunications industry in Antigua and Barbuda is dominated on the local front by the Telephone Division of the Antigua Public Utilities Authority, and on the international front by Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. Both of these entities enjoys a monopoly on the provision of service in their respective spheres. Several other local and foreign entities compete on a range of value-added telecommunication services, including Paging, Mobile Telephony, Two-Way Radios and various other end-user telecommunication equipment. Another entity, Cable Television enjoys a monopoly on the provision of cable television transmission and distribution to homes and businesses.

The current administration entered into agreement with Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. In 1988 to extend its monopoly licence for twenty-five (25) years maturing in 2012. Businesses have complained bitterly that the guarantee of this licence and the continued mismanagement at APUA has forced them to pay too high a cost for telecommunication services.

It is accepted economic principle, that in the age of Information Technology, Telecommunications is considered a necessary component of business growth and development. It is further established that the Business Community continues to see the prices for telecommunication services charged by both APUA telephones and Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. as usurious and limiting to their growth, development and competitiveness.

During the last five (5) years, the emergence of technological advancement challenged the monopoly of Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. with the introduction of call-back operator services that allowed business and residents to bypass Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. and

save as much as 30% on international calls. Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. quickly lobbied the government to outlaw these operations in Antigua even though it is a provider of similar services in both the USA and Europe.

Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd position is that it is paying an unfair rate for the delivery of calls to domestic subscribers over APUA's telephone network and as such is recommending a rate rebalancing study and a revision of its interconnect agreement. It contends that if such an agreement were to materialise that it would be able to pass on greater savings to the consumers.

Meanwhile, regulation of Cable & Wireless's operations in Antigua is clearly undefined and seems to exist at the whims of the Minister of Telecommunications. The current difficulties experience by a mobile telecommunication operator (Airtel Ltd. (is a case in point. Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. seemed to have been allowed to define its own interconnect agreement with Airtel Ltd. the result of which has ensured that its sister Company Cable & Wireless Caribbean Cellular was allowed to maintain extortionate prices for delivery of international calls over Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. network. This position also ensured that Airtel has to pass on its fair costs to the consumer. By contrast the Airtel Position was that instead of it charging a mark-up on the international calls that it be allowed to share in the net revenues with Cable & Wireless.

Regionally, both at Caricom and OECS level, Telecommunications Ministers are moving to harmonise legislation and policy with respect to the way it negotiates with Cable & Wireless. The policies are guided by the principle that telecommunications is in effect a national resource and as such nationals should benefit not only at the level of world-class service but also in the area of the profits to be derived there from.

Upon assuming Office, a UPP Government will conduct an extensive review of the entire telecommunications industry and infrastructure. The review will take into account the policies adapted at Regional and Sub-regional levels. The historical role, played by Cable & Wireless at bringing advancement in technology into the Caribbean as well as its continuing investment in the telecommunication infrastructure will also inform the review. The guiding principle of this review therefore is to reform the industry in a manner that allows for local investment and participation, and the minimisation or elimination of monopolistic tendencies by any player in the industry.

Therefore the UPP will:

- ? Regulate, redefine and strengthen objectives and strategies of the APUA Board & Management and Cable & Wireless;
- ? Open all local value-added service to competition and regulation;
- ? Enable public subscription to equity in the Utilities (including local and international);
- ? Engage Cable & Wireless (W.I.) Ltd. in discussion and negotiation about the revised regulatory and economic framework under which the industry will be managed.

Transportation

The UPP is committed to ensuring safe, efficient and reliable public transportation to the citizens of Antigua and Barbuda. We are also committed to local entrepreneurship and will therefore seek to ensure that local bus and taxi drivers derive the maximum benefits from this sector.

The UPP's plans for the transportation sector include the following:

- ? The establishment of a National Transportation Commission, which will work alongside established transportation associations, to manage and monitor various transportation issues such as: fares, routes, timetables, the ticket system, incentives, rules and guidelines;
- ? An immediate revision of established routes to ensure that even remote villages have regular and reasonably-priced bus service;
- ? A reorganisation and modernisation of the East and West Bus stations to improve traffic circulation, and to provide seating, rain shelters, and sanitary facilities;
- ? The establishment of proper bus stops with seating and shelters in various communities;
- ? Duty-free concessions on replacement parts for local public transportation vehicles;
- ? Reduction of bus owners licenses and fees;
- ? Greater provision of transportation to and from school for our children;
- ? A reduction in the price of petrol;
- ? A sustained Road Maintenance Programme;
- ? Addressing the traffic and parking crisis in the city.

Foreign Policy

Antigua and Barbuda, like other "small states", possesses neither the military might nor the economic clout to enable us to foist our views on, or to manipulate or to influence international politics, issues or view points. In addition we are lacking in natural resources or a strategic position to give us any advantage over any other nation. Hence, if we are to make even the slightest impression on global matters, it is imperative that we develop a highly-skilled human resource base. We must pool our efforts with other small states with the same interests as ours. We must foster and invest in a more-efficient, productive and professional diplomatic service. Thereafter, we must cultivate and develop strong bonds with foreign powers who are not only sympathetic to our goals and disadvantages, but whose political, economic and military convictions are closely aligned with ours.

It is every country's interest, particularly a small state like Antigua and Barbuda's not only to demonstrate that its foreign policy is an extension of its domestic agenda but it must function as if it is. For us, this means an aggressive trade policy, a diverse investment plan for economic development, loans, aid or grants from respected lending institutions and governments, the exchanging and sharing of technology and technical information and a sound and workable plan for infrastructural development. The UPP Administration's foreign policy addresses all of the foregoing.

The increasing emergence of trading blocks in North America and Europe mandates that Antigua and Barbuda's foreign policy agenda be revamped. There is greater urgency now more than ever before, for us to inform economic partnerships with our sister islands within the region to ensure that the technocratic advice we receive is sound and practical in our case. We must ensure that our diplomats are a force to be reckoned with when they negotiate with others at the bargaining tables of the World Trade Organisation or other international bodies. The UPP envisions working closely with other OECS and CARICOM countries to source the best advice while minimising our foreign policy costs. By adopting this approach, the UPP will affect a drastic departure from what Antigua and Barbuda's foreign policy has degenerated into "airy-fairy platitudes" and change to what

we consider to be fulfilling the real and urgent needs of the people of Antigua and Barbuda.

A UPP Government will therefore:

- ? Broaden marketing and investment efforts in our overseas offices and increase our focus on traditional as well as non-traditional strategies to secure a market for our goods and services. We intend to take advantage of regional and international banking and insurance opportunities and those available in the Informatics Industry;
- ? Lobby for more concrete and firm commitment from the United States of America for Caribbean goods and services particularly with Caribbean exports like bananas, and at the same time use signatory status vis-à-vis the Shiprider Agreement as a trump card, before committing ourselves to renewing it;
- ? Embark on a more-aggressive campaign to develop new business opportunities and target niche markets;
- ? Increase our visibility in our London, Washington and Toronto and other overseas offices to strengthen bonds with our nationals residing abroad while seeking to utilise the expertise and assistance which our people are able to offer. We will also create an incentive package aimed at attracting and maintaining returning nationals to participate in our country's development;
- ? Develop a workable plan geared towards the economic, political and social integration of the Caribbean and strengthen CARICOM and Association of Caribbean States.

Social Policy

EDUCATION

The United Progressive Party believes that a sound educational foundation will prepare our young people for the challenges of the new millennium as well as, equip them with the social skills needed for a successful life. Our educational system must be sufficiently supported so that we can produce top graduates who are well-rounded and fit to enter the workforce. Given that the work environment is continually changing and is becoming more technologically dependent, it is vital that our children receive the quality of education which ensures that they possess the proper skills, attitude and aptitude to meet the multiplicity of challenges in the workforce.

In Antigua and Barbuda, many people find that they are excluded from upper-end employment opportunities because they are not "skilled" in a particular field. While some may possess "hands-on" experience, they lack the requisite "certificate" to supplement their practical training, and hence, still find themselves excluded from career opportunities. A significant number of ambitious and self-motivated young people are realising that the unavailability of adequate finances or scholarship opportunities presents a perpetual hurdle to their educational advancement and career options. Therefore, they are yet again unable to take advantage of meaningful employment opportunities. Under the ALP regime, politicians have prioritised enriching themselves rather than investing in our youth. We are of the view that these problems must be addressed immediately.

A fundamental problem within our educational system is the over crowding in our schools. If our classrooms are overcrowded then it naturally follows that our children will

suffer. It is impossible for any teacher to effectively impart knowledge to a classroom of more than twenty-five (25) to thirty (30) students. History and experience have proven that those students who fall behind will rarely, if ever, recover, since the opportunities for individualised attention are lost where teachers are hard pressed to complete the term's syllabus.

Another fundamental problem facing our students, and hence is a bar to their educational development, is the absence of critical support facilities and personnel. Correcting the current situation of inadequately-equipped school and public libraries, science apparatus and equipment, guidance counsellors, and in-school nurses, is crucial to ensuring that our children receive the best educational and social preparation for the real world. In absence of these critical necessities, our graduates will not be able to compete with their peers at regional and international tertiary institutions. Presently, at many regional or international institutions many of our students find that their first assignments often require use of the computer. Yet sadly, our students find themselves in a situation where they have never been exposed to computers much less, completed an assignment on one! It is imperative that we prepare our students for the twenty-first century by exposing them to the tools and equipment which have now become the norm! Computer Science must become part of the curriculum in both our primary and secondary schools with the relevant programmes developed to ensure effectiveness in this area.

There is a host of other problems which plague our educational system. For example, many tools, equipment and apparatus in our schools are in a dilapidated state and desperately in need of repair. In most instances, maintenance is not a priority and, hence when equipment breaks down, it often remains in its state of disrepair for months or even years before it is repaired. Rarely, if ever, does the Ministry of Education ensure that a temporary replacement is found; again, teachers and students are forced to function in an environment where necessary and vital equipment and apparatus are absent.

Another example is the sanitation system in our public schools which desperately requires attention. The toilet facilities in many of our schools remain non-functional thereby forcing teachers and students to 'borrow' these facilities from nearby business places or homes. This state of affairs is disgraceful and intolerable!

However, the biggest problem facing education involves the greatest and most valued asset to that system – our Teachers. Currently, the teaching profession is besieged by high rates of staff turn over, low morale amongst Teachers and a general sense of lack of worth to the communities that they serve. Additionally, while Teachers perform one of the more responsible public functions – that of educating our youth – they are at the same time inadequately compensated or rewarded for their efforts, thereby mitigating their efforts to provide for themselves and their families' material and economic wants. Moreover, the environment in which Teachers are required to work is unsuitable both in terms of creature comforts and facilities.

The UPP remains convinced that these problems and challenges can be solved and eradicated by proper planning and effective and efficient implementation. The clarion call has sounded for us to prepare our students for the advent of a new era. If we are to meet the challenges of the 21st century, we must deliver modern methods of education in contemporary facilities.

We will, as a UPP Government, concentrate on the following:

- ? Creating a more comfortable environment for teachers and students to function within;

- ? **Attracting more of our qualified young people to the profession, thereby increasing the number of classes while simultaneously reducing classroom sizes to between twenty-five (25) and thirty (30);**
- ? **Establishing a Teachers' Service Commission which will recognise the role and responsibility of Teachers as specialised public servants requiring a separate programme of benefits and remuneration commensurate with their worth and value to society;**
- ? **Upgrading and modernising the Teacher Training Facility at an improved Antigua State College. The curriculum will incorporate modern audio-visual and multimedia tools as well as, distant - learning options into the training;**
- ? **Improving Teachers' morale by strengthening their technical knowledge. Concurrently, there will be an increased emphasis on guidance and career counselling for our youth;**
- ? **Establishing an optional after-school homework, sports and cultural activity programme coordinated and administered by our school boards;**
- ? **Providing continuing-education opportunities to our Teachers to ensure a high quality of instruction in our schools;**
- ? **Pursuing a policy which will expose all children to at least secondary education; this would mean an evaluation of the eleven – plus examinations;**
- ? **Providing on-going testing for students with learning disabilities;**
- ? **Modernising facilities and upgrading course requirements at the Antigua State College to that of a Community College offering certificates, diplomas and associated degrees;**
- ? **Developing a National Career Agency (NCA) within the Ministry of Education to orient students toward future career opportunities;**
- ? **Improving Antigua and Barbuda's CXC and Cambridge GCE and A' Level results by twenty percent (20%) within three (3) years;**
- ? **Honouring our financial commitments to the University of the West Indies;**
- ? **Introducing foreign language training at the primary school level.**
- ? **Providing a basic curriculum for all students centred on English, Mathematics, Business, Science, Computer Skills, Vocational Education, Life Skills and ethics, Music and the performing Arts;**
- ? **Introducing National Early Childhood Care and Early Educational Programmes;**
- ? **Increasing the number of national scholarships for the tertiary education available to our graduates, based on our assessed manpower needs;**
- ? **Relocating the National Public Library from its currently cramped quarters and modernising that facilities;**
- ? **Introducing a career and social guidance counselling programme in our schools under the auspices of the NCA;**
- ? **Introducing Regional School Boards comprised of a wide cross section of educators, parents and community leaders to administer schools at the local level;**
- ? **Ensuring greater access to our people for university education; a UPP government will work towards the establishment of a university campus of U.W.I. or an independent university.**

Women & Youths

The UPP is committed to a policy of total inclusion of women - not tokenism, but a programme aimed at giving women their just recognition. We realize that there are significant numbers of educated, astute, enterprising, competent, and experienced women

whose talents and resourcefulness have been untapped and side-stepped. Therefore, the UPP is resolved to fully utilising their talents in our quest to re-build our society where discrimination, violence and oppression, against and of women, is a creature of the past. Likewise, the UPP is committed to a nation where females are given equal educational, technical, vocational and technological opportunities, which have historically been reserved, for males.

A UPP Government will:

- ? Ensure, that on the Boards of all governmental, statutory and other public bodies, women are given an equal chance at filling the available positions. This approach will not be "a quota system" but a measure aimed at addressing and reversing the historical discrimination and exclusion of women at this level;
- ? Establish a Women's Commission, the purpose of which is to identify and assess the obstacles faced by women in participating in government and to propose recommendations aimed at reversing this impediment;
- ? Create programmes, which will develop and train women in aspects of economic self-sufficiency to ensure that their economic participation in our nation's development is meaningful;
- ? Enlist the Women's Development Bureau (formerly the Women's Desk) to research, develop and implement an approach geared towards eradicating gender inequality and discrimination in schools, training centres, community organisations and the workplace;
- ? Educate women and men about the realities and cycle of domestic violence and the devastating psychological effects such behaviour has on the victim, abuser, and especially the children.
- ? Reduce incidences of domestic violence by imposing severe fines and/or custodial sentences on the abuser. These penalties have deterrence as their principal goal;
- ? Establish a cadre of trained social workers who will be attached to our schools, clinics and community centres to investigate and report the incidence of child abuse, the goal being to curb this epidemic which is consuming our nation and devastating our children; Introduce legislation aimed at eradicating sexual harassment in the workplace. Concurrently, mandate that all public and private sector employees, especially those in senior positions, attend "info" sessions, the focus of which will be to educate both men and women as to all aspects of this intolerable conduct. These sessions will "liberate" women from this widespread iniquity, which continues to be perpetuated in all corners of our nation and which too, must become a creature of the past;
- ? Create an independent governmental body, which will collect and disburse child maintenance payments to women in a confidential and dignified manner. Further, where a pattern of delinquency in payments can be demonstrated, we will authorise (by legislation) employers to deduct court-mandated payments from delinquent fathers' salaries/wages. This measure will guarantee that children are adequately and regularly maintained. Simultaneously, it will abate the humiliation and embarrassment many women encounter in their efforts to receive/collect same;
- ? Implement a continuing education programme, which targets young girls who have been forced to terminate their primary or secondary education because of Increased family responsibility or teenage pregnancy. This programme will ensure that these girls receive formal education, technical or vocational training, thereby, equipping them with the skills needed to provide for themselves and their families and to participate in nation building even at a community level;
- ? Assess the impact of social security assistance for low-income women as head of homes.

Youth

Today many of our youths have become lost and disenfranchised. In general, two (2) broad areas are responsible for the state of affairs;

1. denial of opportunities for the youth to effectively participate in the social, political and economic development of their societies and;
2. lack of effective leadership to provide the necessary direction and installation of positive values.

The problems that emanates from this crisis are many and varied. However, the major ones are manifested in high rate of school drop-outs, particularly amongst boys in the upper forms of secondary schools, teenage pregnancy, illicit drug use, semi-literacy, escalating crime involving dangerous weapons and worsening brain drain. In spite of throwing money at the problem, the ruling Administration has failed to come to grips with these challenges and as a consequence, a situation that has already reached alarming proportions is becoming worse by the minute. Young people are leaving school with no hope of finding meaningful employment or being employed at all. Many of our youth already have dependents before they graduate and lack the necessary skills to join the workforce. We have reached a point where children are having children and fail to recognise the role they play as citizens in community and nation building. The UPP intends to engage the youth meaningfully, and with enthusiasm, in the development of themselves and society at one and the same time. This philosophy will guide and inform our plans and initiatives that we shall implement upon assuming the reigns of government. People, the world over, and more so the youth are becoming increasingly concerned about the environment and the violation of planet earth, to the point where it is a matter of the highest concern, whether the earth will be able to sustain life into the 21st century. A UPP Government will therefore place Antigua and Barbuda at the forefront of world youth by giving them the primary role in the maintainance and development of our environment.

Whatever-else may be a contributing factor, experts worldwide agree that the prime reason for drug use among youth is boredom. Currently, our society offers youth very little to engage their time and creative energies (with which they are abundantly endowed), and to relive this boredom, Youth from all classes of society find the dangerous and forbidding world of substance abuse exciting. A cultural thrust to regenerate society is therefore crucial and vital. Without the cultural rebirth of society, the boredom will continue and the social, economic and political health of the nation will be imperiled.

The situation regarding the ever increasing army of unskilled and under-educated youth entering the workforce is compounded by the current Administration's failure to develop effective programmes for remedial, vocational and continuing education. In addition, where the youth have made the best of the opportunities in the education system, the current Administration has refused to adhere to the provisions of the labour code which provides avenues for the training and development of skill to fill any area of expertise in the economy. Instead, the youth are witnessing a steady increase in the numbers of expatriate labour brought into island without the necessary legal provisions of the appointment of an understudy. In addition, the ruling Administration's policy of allowing the massive infusion of skilled and semi-skill nationals from other Caribbean countries, while not having surplus employment to provide them, has ensured that opportunities for gainful employment and upward mobility are denied the youth as well.

A UPP government will create and develop programmes to better educate and instill sound values in our young people. We will not only make adult education more accessible, we

will develop national and community programmes which successfully address this seriously undermined sector. We are committed to involving our youth in the development of our nation. We must invest in our youth – they are the future in whom we place our hope.

In this regard, the UPP is committed to:

- ? Establishing a National Youth Corps which alongside other NGO's develop a plan for the protection of the environment and the regeneration of the cultural thrust of the society;
- ? Establishing two (2) special projects principally to be managed by the youth of Antigua and Barbuda viz:
 1. A Grand National Park, an exceptional land-and-sea eco-tourist site in the Guiana Island and North Sound Areas.
 2. A National Millennium Project, a Garden Park, with areas for kindergarten activity, youth activity and seniors right up to the very old;
- ? Providing more scholarship opportunities at the tertiary level for nationals. Deserving candidates for these scholarships will upon completion, be guaranteed gainful employment with further opportunities for personal development and a chance to contribute to the social, economic and political development of their country;
- ? Seeking to organise rehabilitation programmes for young drug users in the main, and invite youth to participate with experts in the evaluation of these programmes;
- ? Seeking to develop a Savings & Loans Association for Youth, through which, and upon completing training programmes, they may initiate enterprises or receive loans for advanced training within or without the Caribbean, in their chosen pursuits;
- ? Introducing family-life education in the school curriculum and ensure that a strong component of this subject addresses self-esteem issues along with focusing on the multiplicity of responsibilities involved in parenting;
- ? Ensuring that the current school curriculum adequately prepares our youth for the workplace and societal demands;
- ? Establishing programmes which target delinquent youth, in order to better understand the reasons behind truancy, teen pregnancy and teen crime;
- ? Creating a 24-hour confidential youth hotline where young people in need or in crisis can call in to discuss their concerns, problems or challenges, as well as address any embarrassing questions or situations they maybe encountering;
- ? Introducing community programmes which specifically address and educate our youth about the ramifications of teen pregnancy , sexually transmitted disease especially AIDS, drug abuse and crime;
- ? Upgrading the Antigua State College so that our students can easily transfer their credits to regional and international colleges and universities;
- ? Creating a Technical and Vocational Training College;
- ? Providing our young people with skills and training necessary to become independent business people;
- ? Developing a National Youth Council, fully national in character, through which these key programmes outlined above and other self-determined programmes will be executed. Equally important, through the National Youth Council, Antigua & Barbudan Youth will relate to Regional and International Youth organisations. The National Youth Council will be instructed to make its position known on key national questions, and also its own concerns, through discussion and decision, in the public media;

- ? Empower the youths to have a meaningful stake in their country through co-operative ventures and land procurement for economic and personal purposes.

Children and Senior Citizens

Our retired citizens possess a wealth of experience and knowledge. The UPP intends to call upon these individuals to play a part in the development of our nation. What is needed is a system that gives the elderly hope and some purpose in life, instead of shelving them away. Our programmes will link the children and the elderly, to develop in our youth, a sense of involvement from an early age in healthy occupations such as Sports, Art, Music, Community activities and the Church. Our programmes will also help develop in our youth the will-power and character building which come from good parental supervision. The youth will also learn what is expected of them in terms of respect and caring for the elderly.

Many of the senior members of society are employed in the private sector where no pension schemes are in place for these persons when they retire. In Antigua and Barbuda, most people are employed in small businesses that are unable to take advantage of the type of pension plans offered to large businesses. The social security scheme was meant to fill this imbalance. However, as history has shown, many retired persons find themselves unable to collect monthly allowances because of the mismanagement of that scheme. The ALP regime has borrowed or pilfered in excess of one hundred (100) million dollars from social security funds which rightly belong to the people of this nation.

The present government has failed to contribute to the social security fund as required by law although every month it takes the customary deductions from its employees' wages and salaries. Additionally, retired civil servants are denied a pension or encounter extreme hardships in receiving this entitlement. These individuals therefore find themselves in a situation where many have become unwilling pawns in the political game called patronage. Their ability to receive a monthly stipend is directly dependent on their unwavering allegiance to the ALP.

The UPP believes that this type of conduct is patently wrong and disgraceful!

A UPP administration is dedicated to correcting this appalling situation by:

- ? De-politicizing and simplifying the procedures to provide a monthly pension for needy individuals over sixty (60) years of age, who have not contributed to the Social Security;
- ? Developing a programme within the Ministry of Labour to remove the anxiety and fear of retirement with inadequate pensions, minimal savings and a long life ahead of poverty, isolation, dependency and poor health;
- ? Policing small businesses and other private sector employers, to ensure that they contribute to the scheme;
- ? Harnessing the knowledge and energy of our senior citizens to combat the drug scourge raging among young people;
- ? Developing programmes through the Ministry of Labour which encourage senior citizens to become involved with the Youth in the Social Services, Local Government, community clubs and various organisations;
- ? Developing a modern geriatric ward at Holberton Hospital;
- ? Developing accreditation standards for senior care facilities within the country;
- ? Will provide tangible support to the handicapped and the physically impaired in our society through their representative organisations and Community Councils. The idea is to make them useful and active members of society.

The Homeless

While exact causes of homelessness have yet to be identified, the UPP is committed to caring for the homeless and addressing the social problems which result in this grave situation. Whether the origins stem from drug use, mental illness or simply poverty, the UPP feels that we must be our brother's keeper.

We will therefore:

- ? Engage a commission to study and examine the problem of homelessness in Antigua and Barbuda with specific focus on the causes and social effects on our society;
- ? Construct low-income housing complexes in villages and communities to house the homeless;
- ? Provide subventions for agencies that assist in caring for the homeless;
- ? Modernize and upgrade the Fiennes Institute and staff the institution with persons formally trained in health and elderly care;
- ? Develop community shelters for those who have been abandoned and neglected by their families;
- ? Provide on-going mental and psychological counseling for such displaced persons;
- ? Collaborate with Community Councils to ensure that care for the aged and homeless is community based.

Community Councils – The Road to Genuine Empowerment.

Currently, power is centralized, in the hands of a few persons in our society. Those persons are the elected officials and a "selected" number of "party-faithful". In short, government possesses too much power. The government has created a system whereby we are forced to go to parliamentarians for even the most basic entitlements viz electricity posts, pipelines, telephones, roads, sewage disposal facilities and drains. The end result of this system of dependency is the vile and base practices of patronage which the ALP has mastered and abused. Politicians therefore use this power to penalize and victimize those constituents who hold adverse views to that of the ALP. Voters are coerced into supporting the ALP out of fear or gratitude for personal favours granted by politicians rather than for what is in the best interest of the country.

This type of power must be decentralized. The UPP believes that the best way to crush patronage and the ills of such a system is by the introduction of elected Community Councils. Good democratic governance originates from the bottom and percolates upwards. These Councils will liaise with Parliamentary Representatives to prepare annual programmes for constituency development. As an independent nation, it is imperative that we, as individuals, accept greater responsibility to guide our future development.

A UPP Government will:

- ? Enact legislation that re-introduces the concept of elected Community Councils;
- ? Develop constituency works as proposed by the Community Councils;
- ? Ensure impartial representation of all constituents;
- ? Allow Community Councils to execute their programmes;

- ? Charge Community Councils with the responsibility of providing adequate sanitation, health care, building codes, day care, elderly care and social and economic programs in their areas;
- ? Ensure that Community Councils play a key role in creating programmes aimed at reducing crime. Annual detailed reports on the success of these programmes will have to be presented;
- ? Liaise with the National Parks Authority, the Environmental Youth Corps and other NGO's to ensure that recreational facilities and beaches are well maintained;
- ? Liaise with School Boards to ensure that there are systems in place to link schools with community and community with schools;
- ? Multi-purpose Centres will be established throughout the country, designed, built and equipped to serve as Emergency Shelters/Centres in addition to accommodating social, cultural and other community activities.

Land & Housing

The housing situation in Antigua has reached crisis proportions. Affordable housing with adequate services, infrastructure and facilities are rare. A Land Use Policy is critically important as the choice agricultural lands are being given away for residential use and wetland areas are developed without regard for environmental consequences. A UPP government is committed to ending this outrage.

We will therefore:

- ? Eliminate ghettos in urban and rural areas. To this end, we will implement a housing programme in each Parish, aimed at providing where feasible, a total of three hundred (300) houses per year in the six (6) parishes;
- ? Reorganise the Housing Authority so that it has to liaise with the Community Councils in providing housing on a most-need basis to the applicants;
- ? Develop and implement a Housing Scheme in accordance with our Land Use Policy for middle-income earners, especially public servants, established and non-established, and pensioners. The key to our Housing Programme is the creation of a consortium comprised of government, banks, contractors, and insurance companies which will form a Housing Trust to provide funding to facilitate construction on a systematic basis;
- ? Establish a Rent Board which will regulate and arbitrate rental rates and issues;
- ? Ensure that existing and new housing subdivisions are developed with drainage, roads, electricity, telephone and water services;
- ? Facilitate the establishment of Building Societies in which young people plan for their future homes;
- ? Encourage banks and insurance companies to further develop mortgage financing;
- ? Promote community self-help programmes whereby communities assist with home repairs and maintenance through a planned approach by community councils;

Strengthen the National Organisation of Disaster Service and provide it with the material support to effectively discharge its functions in times of disasters and national emergencies. Relief in times of disaster must be totally depoliticised

Rastafarianism

The UPP is committed to working closely with the Rastafarian movement in Antigua and Barbuda. We will give them the utmost deserving respect and cooperation. In examining the complexity and diversity of our multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-religious developing society, it is clear that the Rastafarian Movement in Antigua and Barbuda comprises a significant segment of our society and wields great attraction, influence and controversy. Because of the stereotypical views held by a large segment of our society about Rastas, an increasing number of young people are treated like social outcasts on account of their beliefs. These individuals are turning to the movement in order to seek acceptance within that community. The tenets of the movement coupled with lack of appreciation for an understanding of the issues surrounding Rastafarianism often leads to conflict between the state and members of the movement and their followers have and continue to encounter 'run-ins' with the law and are being incarcerated at an alarmingly high rate as a result of practices associated with their religious observances.

The Antigua and Barbuda Constitution upholds religious freedom as a fundamental right. The Rastafarian's position is that Rastafarianism is an African religion founded on the tenets of Christian teachings and the Bible. Hence, it ought to take its rightful place in our society alongside other religions with due respect being accorded to their ceremonies and sacramental rites.

An ongoing debate continues between the wider society and the movement concerning the "status" of ganja or cannabis sativa as the sacred herb of the movement and the Rastafarians "entitlement" to use it in religious rites and for medicinal purposes. We will encourage the continuation of this debate with a view towards decriminalization.

The UPP respects the fervent spiritual beliefs which Rastafari espouse towards nature. This harmonious relationship is evidenced by the concentrated efforts, time and energy which Rastafaris devote to agriculture and animal husbandry. We will work with the movement to assist them in overcoming the challenges which they will encounter in their agricultural pursuits by evaluating their needs alongside our comprehensive agricultural policy which is particularly geared towards farmers and livestock owners.

In keeping with our commitment to the Rastafarian Community, A UPP Government will:

- ? Assist in building learning centres for conferences, workshops, cultural activities and recreation;
- ? Provide land for agricultural purposes with the requisite government assistance and concessions;
- ? Maintain communication between agricultural extension officers and farmers within the movement.

Law & Order

Violence, crime and related criminal activity have reached crisis proportions in Antigua and Barbuda. The ALP regime's failure to combat this epidemic is evident from the drastic and steady increase in crime over the last four years. The repeated occurrences of aggravated assaults, rape, drug use, incest, murder, burglary, domestic violence and robbery as well as the proliferation of possession of unlicensed firearms have become commonplace in a once peaceful and orderly society, every day, the newspaper tell the

sordid tale of the rapid deterioration of the fabric of our society. The UPP will pursue and implement a zero-crime-tolerance policy. We intend to be relentless in our efforts to reduce crime, improve our judicial system and empower our police.

THE POLICE

The Police are not to be blamed for the increase in crime in our country. The UPP recognises, appreciates and applauds the outstanding work undertaken by them in combating crime. Yet we sympathise with their position. For well over twenty-four (24) years, our police men and women have been forced to function in an environment which mandates that they fight crime without the proper tools, equipment and machinery to effectively execute their duties. It is undisputed that criminals possess and operate with far more sophisticated weapons than the police currently possess. A situation now exists where the police find themselves playing “catch-up” with these criminals since they lack modern crime fighting and prevention methods and tools.

The UPP remains committed to eradicating the plague of drug trafficking and domestic violence, as well as the proliferation in the numbers of persons who possess unlicensed firearm. We believe that once social conditions are improved, economic opportunities made available and family values restored, crime will be significantly reduced.

We will:

- ? Provide adequate insurance coverage to Officers for injury in the line of duty;
- ? Generally improve the physical working environment in which our Officers currently function;
- ? Completely computerise our Police Force to establish better linkages between Department and Stations, thereby significantly increasing efficiency;
- ? Upgrade the conditions and terms of service and remuneration packages of our Police;
- ? Establish new promotion requirements and disciplinary guidelines for our Officers;
- ? Increase community policing by placing more Officers on foot patrol so that our citizens feel more secure in their homes;
- ? Establish a committee to investigate the feasibility of constructing additional police stations in villages and communities;
- ? Establish a Crime Prevention Task Force charged with the responsibility of determining and assessing the root causes for the increase in crime;
- ? Provide ongoing training opportunities for our officers at regional and international Police Training Centres in areas such as forensic technology;
- ? Provide better training and contemporary weapon o our Officers in their efforts to combat crime and apprehend criminals;
- ? Establish a computerized system linking police departments, courts and immigration;
- ? Provide the police force with an adequate telecommunication network with mobile two-way functionality to assist in crime prevention;
- ? Develop a scholarship programme for police officers to get university degrees in law, criminology etc.

THE JUDICIARY

The environment in and conditions under which our Judges, Magistrates, Police, Lawyers and court personnel operate are desperately in need of renovation. The UPP is of the view that if our Courts are to be viewed as the pinnacles of justice and as such places to be respected and revered, and if these officers of the law are to execute their duties and functions efficiently and effectively, then the environment in which they operate must be suitable both in terms of infrastructure and modern technology, to meet the challenges of the millennium. We are committed to improving and upgrading the facilities in which our court personnel function.

The UPP is committed to:

- ? Computerising our entire judicial system in order to deliver better services to the public and to ease the backlog of cases which clog the system and give the perceived perception of inefficiency;
- ? Ensuring that every courtroom is staffed with a fully-trained stenographer to replace the archaic system which currently exists;
- ? Providing computer training for court clerks to assist judges, magistrates, the police and practitioners and court staff;
- ? Enact legislation to allow for alternatives to incarceration viz non-custodial punishments such as community-based work
- ? Implementing a scheme to compensate victims of violent crimes.

THE PENAL SYSTEM

The current penal system is another law-related area in desperate need to reform. There is a perception of an imbalance in the types of punishment meted out to convicted offenders and, hence many people have lost faith and confidence in our judicial system. For example, an individual convicted of larceny is incarcerated for months at a time irrespective of the quality or value of the goods stolen whereas, an individual convicted of a domestic violence related offence is merely fined or at worse, reprimanded. Invariably, many young persons, especially men, find themselves serving time for minor offences and have their reputations tarnished and future opportunities hampered. We are of the view that our laws must be amended to create new non-custodial sentencing options viz community service as a form of punishment.

Further, the high incidence of repeat offenders bespeaks the inability of the system to fulfill its rehabilitative function. In Antigua and Barbuda, we incarcerate our convicts, we do not rehabilitate them. The UPP is of the view that in any progressive democratic society, one of the principal functions of the law is to rehabilitate those whose behaviour fails to conform to society's mores, thereby making their transition back into mainstream society, relatively smooth.

Any effective rehabilitation exercise must have a wide variety of in-prison skills and vocational training programmes to enable release prisoners to function in the society. These individuals will be able to use their acquired skills to become more self-sufficient and productive members of society.

We will therefore:

- ? Subject to legal obligation, terminate forth with the services of the Amalgamated Security Services (ASS) and restore the management of the prison to local authority;

- ? Enact legislation to reform the penal system and include probation options;
- ? Establish an independent Advisory Board to manage and administer the prison;
- ? Install a modern security system to increase security at the prison;
- ? Intensify training for our Prison officers and provide continuous training at regional and international institutions for them;
- ? Renovate the prison so that it is in keeping with International Human Rights standards;
- ? Enact new guidelines for promotion and discipline of Prison Officers;
- ? Conduct adult-education programmes in the prison;
- ? Re-introduce prison farms;
- ? Introduce an anti-drug education programme in the prison;
- ? Embark on a vocational and skill-training programme within the prison and enlist the assistance of the private sector to provide funding for these programmes;
- ? Establish a programme with public and private-sector employers in which prisoners who have nearly completed their prison sentences or who are on probation will be employed part-time in order to provide the discipline and training required when they are reintegrated into the society;
- ? Equip our police with modern and sophisticated equipment to enable them to better fight crime and apprehend criminals;
- ? Construct a Prison/Correctional Institution at a new site to be determined.

Constitutional Reform

A Constitutional Review will be a priority for a UPP Government. One area that will be addressed is the restriction imposed by the Constitution on Ministers of Religion from being appointed to the Senate. This restriction is unnecessary and counter-productive in this modern era. The UPP will also look at the composition and appointment of Senators with the view of reforming the existing system and to make the Senate a more meaningful institution.

The UPP will see to the establishment of an Electoral and Boundaries Commission to independently oversee, control and conduct elections and establish boundaries in Antigua and Barbuda. A stoppage will be put to the existing system where the government of the day literally controls and dictates the entire electoral process. The UPP is committed to that change.

Another aspect of review must be focused on Parliament. Parliament has been reduced to a farce and rubber stamp in many instances under the present regime. We do not have a parliamentary democracy in Antigua and Barbuda. What we seem to have is a Parliamentary Dictatorship, where the governing party is able to use and misuse the standing orders to marginalise the Opposition and to bring the whole Parliamentary System into disrepute. Reform is absolutely necessary in this area and the UPP is committed to implement said reform.

Therefore, after wide consultations with the people of Antigua and Barbuda, their views and concerns on these and other matters will be acted upon by the UPP Government.

The UPP will also:

- ? Revamp the existing standing orders and rules of Parliament to make them more democratic and in keeping with the multi-party approach to governance;
- ? Insist that the House of Representatives convenes regular sittings of the House at least twice per month.

The Media

UPP's Assessment of Current Situation

One of the fundamental features of any democratic society is its adherence to the principle that freedom of speech is an inalienable right that each member of society should enjoy. A generally accepted mechanism for guaranteeing free speech is the presence of an independent mass media including the print and electronic media. An independent media also plays the role of an external check and balance to the operations of elected government representatives by its ability to illuminate the actions of these individuals and giving voice to other interest groups to counter potentially authoritarian tendencies. In this respect an independent and impartial media plays an important role in the effective functioning of a democratic society.

In Antigua & Barbuda, the ruling party has maintained a virtual monopoly over the electronic media for the past twenty-two (22) years. It has maintained its monopoly primarily to enable it to silence dissenting voices and to spread its own propaganda, and to ensure its hegemony over political thought, to the extent that Antiguan and Barbudans are denied the opportunity of hearing opposing points of view in the comforts of their own homes. The result of this policy has led to serious mismanagement and underdevelopment of the publicly-owned media, and perpetuated a virtual decline in standards of media broadcasting in Antigua as a whole. Due to poor administration these institutions (private and public) have been dependent on various forms of government subsidy including waiver of payments to the APUA for utility services. Another negative effect of the government's policy is that it has restricted the opportunities of other enterprises from entering and participating in a potentially lucrative market. Moreover, the control over the electronic media has resulted in unnecessary and unwarranted censorship in music, drama and other forms of artistic expression, which could eventually stifle and suppress their growth possibilities.

UPP Objectives

Within the first year of assuming Office, the UPP Administration will undertake a comprehensive review of the mass media with a view towards deregulating the electronic media, thereby allowing other entities to participate in the industry. Moreover, to ensure a healthy and ethical environment in which the media will operate we will see to the establishment of a Media Commission made up of members from the press, the clergy, the private sector, the artists, the trade unions and youth organisations. The primary role of the commission will be to establish and supervise the operating guidelines and code of conduct for the industry. Such an administration we believe will lead to impartial and unbiased reporting and treatment of important events. To further the concept of transparency in government, we will also seek to establish the ABBS media service as a statutory corporation with its own Board of Management, equipping same with the necessary managerial and operational autonomy, to enable it to provide professional and uplifting programming in line with what is required of a developing nation.

Separately, the Government Information Service (GIS) will be required to develop its own capability to develop and disseminate information and education to the public on the various government programmes and initiatives.

We will:

- ? Deregulate the electronic media to allow other private enterprises to set up and operate other Television and/or Radio Stations;
- ? Establish a media commission to establish and supervise the operating guidelines and code of conduct for the industry;
- ? Foster through the establishment of the media commission, the concept of free, fair and responsible exchanges of information and ideas;

Establish the Antigua and Barbuda Broadcasting Service as a Public Corporation with a board of management equipped with the relevant managerial and operational autonomy.

Health

Antiguans and Barbudans are primarily concerned with quality of health care provided by the Holberton Hospital. Another major concern for our citizens, including nurses and medical practitioners, is the administration of the institution.

The quality of care rendered at Holberton Hospital is cause for concern since the institution has in recent times, been faced with scandal and crisis after crisis. Many are of the view that mediocrity is the norm and professionalism an ideal of the past. Consequently, many Antiguans and Barbudans find themselves refusing medical care at home, choosing instead to seek medical attention in other regional institutions and the USA. This “forced choice” raises questions about the affordability of health care in these institutions and medical centres, since these costs are not covered under our Medical Benefits Scheme.

Throughout our Communities, there is a consensus that if we are serious as a nation about meeting the challenges of the millennium, then the services offered and rendered at Community Health Centres must be modernised and upgraded. Moreover, these clinics must operate on a 24-hour basis with on-call physicians to relieve the congestion borne by the staff at the hospital, as well as to prevent patients in need of immediate care from having to drive for miles to get attention.

The government has ignored and neglected the requests, suggestions and advice from Administration of the Holberton Hospital. It is quite common and indeed the norm, that the hospital is without supplies, medicine and equipment and is unable to render quality and satisfactory services to patients. More serious, is the frequent breakdown of equipment at the institution through lack of, or poor servicing, of this equipment. For example, it is quite common that patients requiring X-rays to assist doctors in diagnosing their illnesses are unable to receive that service because the institution has no X-ray film. The same is true for patients requiring EKG's. That is, the machine used to administer this test is often without the paper on which the results are recorded.

The UPP believes that access to quality health care is a basic and fundamental right.

A UPP administration will:

- ? Improve the level of services offered at the hospital by improving the management structure, processes and skills;
- ? Use the recently enacted “Antigua and Barbuda Hospitals Board Act 1998” to full effect and create a Medical Board which deals with general complaints and investigate allegations of negligence;
- ? Ensure that all medical practitioners possess basic English skills and are able to communicate effectively with patients;
- ? Ensure that all medical practitioners possess medical degrees from recognised universities;
- ? Establish proper professional medical guidelines for all persons at the institution;
- ? Ensure that the hospital is equipped with the most modern equipment and professionally-trained staff to operate them;
- ? Improve and overhaul the maintenance department and ensure that equipment is regularly serviced and maintained;
- ? Improve the efficiency of the service at the casualty department;
- ? Ensure that the support staff at the casualty department receive on-going training and courses in emergency-room care;
- ? Maintain a cadre of professionally-trained emergency medical technicians who will provide efficient and reliable ambulance service;
- ? Ensure that the support staff viz. nurses, technicians, pharmacologists receive on-going instruction in human relations so that they will be perceived as caring, efficient and dependable at all times;
- ? Improve the out-patient services department by encouraging more reliance on community health centres;
- ? Ensure that all practicing physicians are able to access and treat their patients at the hospital. Guidelines will be established to ensure that the transition occurs with minimal conflict;
- ? Review salaries of all medical personnel and support staff;
- ? Introduce a system of voluntary service whereby retired nurses will continue to provide health care on an out-patient basis in the community health centres and in the maternity and paediatric wards;
- ? Actively promote the idea of a Leeward Island Medical Pool whose skills will be available to citizens of the region in order to provide the very best medical care to our citizens as well as those of neighbouring islands. This will broaden the Specialist skill available;
- ? Establish four (4) adequately staffed polyclinics situated in strategically important areas in the country. This will ensure that adequate out-patient care is available to residents, thereby relieving the need to go to the main hospital. These clinics will provide preventive, primary and where necessary specialist care, and will operate on a 24 hour basis;
- ? Develop a national programme for the rehabilitation of drug addicts, alcohol abusers and their families;
- ? Work towards the establishment of a National Health Insurance Scheme during our first term of office guaranteeing full health care and services to all the people;
- ? Place great emphasis on environmental hygiene, as well as on a new Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Unit, charged with the responsibility of national health education;
- ? Develop with corresponding links in each community, a National Epidemiological Control Unit to monitor and control transmissible diseases;
- ? Develop a highly-competent authority charged with the responsibility for collection analysis and annual presentation of Health Statistics;
- ? Set up a special Accident Unit at the General Hospital and introduce Breathalysers to reduce and minimise drunk-driving, a virtual plague in this country;

- ? Enhance the level of Psychiatric services at both the Mental Hospital and in the Communities;
- ? Establish dental care and related health services strategically placed in the communities.

Health-for-all and All-for Health will be the watchwords of society under a UPP Government.

Culture & The Arts

Culture

The UPP pledges to restore meaning to our cultural identity in Antigua and Barbuda. Nineteen years after Independence we are still struggling to define our cultural identity. Unfortunately, many people in Antigua and Barbuda recognise neither our national symbol nor name of our past or present heroes. We are continually bombarded with foreign icons and symbols, ways of life and heroes especially those from the USA which are revered and admired. This fact naturally begs the question of how have these foreign cultural symbols contributed to the enrichment of the lives of Antiguan and Barbudans

To combat this cultural penetration, A UPP administration will therefore:

- ? **Aim to host CARIFESTA in Antigua and Barbuda and set about creating the infrastructure to do so. Preparatory to this, and as a medium-term goal, we will seek to host a rich variety of Caribbean cultural activities from across the entire region. The quality of life of Antiguan and Barbudans will be uplifted and their national and regional identity honed and deepened by this new cultural thrust;**
- ? **Encourage the formation of an Arts and Cultural Institute to assist artists, promote and stage well-organised national and international shows, and to develop training programmes in a variety of cultural activities;**
- ? **Provide scholarships to talented young people committed to careers in the Arts for training in visual, plastic and performing arts. Host workshops for those artists at home, instructed by regionally recognised instructors;**
- ? **Introduce music, dance, photography, film, ceramics, etc. in the school curriculum;**
- ? **Establish a committee to scout for talented individuals and provide exposure and development to them. We will also seek extended assistance through our diplomatic relations to provide opportunities for research and development of the creative abilities of talented individuals;**
- ? **Liase with the business community to establish a fund which will assist in the promotion of performance;**
- ? **Establish a Performing Arts Centre and a National Convention Centre to be used by national groups and associations;**
- ? **Institute a National Arts, Crafts and Exhibition Council, which will organise choral competitions in each community with emphasis on drama, talent shows, craft shows, painting and sculpture. The ultimate goal is the staging of a National Cultural Festival;**
- ? **Re-organise Carnival. Carnival will be put on a community basis, with communities participating in every sphere and at every level of the festival. The UPP will actually assist communities to present troupes and groups and floats. By second year, we expect to have a special street parade of community floats;**

- ? **Revive the steelband art form, by training composers, arrangers, pan markers and tuners, while the steelband will be fully incorporated into the musical programme of schools. In all this, the UPP will work closely with the National Steelband and Pan Players Association to achieve the above and other self-determined objectives;**
- ? **Establish a National Cultural Foundation to Develop, co-ordinate, manage and execute all national events.**

The Arts

Artists are concerned that their works are often pirated without them receiving just compensation. This piracy has resulted in a decrease in productivity and professionalism within the arts. Here in Antigua and Barbuda there are virtually no fora available or adequate venues for artistic performances, productions and exhibitions. There is a shortage of opportunity for training and education in virtually all artistic disciplines. Artists are not encouraged to display their creative talents. This is perhaps most evident with the local broadcast media. The UPP recognizes that freedom of expression means, at a minimum, the ability to express one's views through various media. It also realises that by stifling the creative expression of our artists, we hamper our national development.

The government and the Bird family have kept a tight control over broadcast media for the past twenty-five (25) years. Together they have refused to allow other Antiguan and Barbudan entrepreneurial groups to establish their own media stations, which has resulted in irreparable harm to artists to realise their full potential in their respective artistic industries.

A UPP Government will therefore:

- ? **Introduce comprehensive copyright legislation with severe penalties aimed at deterring piracy, ensuring that writers and producers are fairly and justly compensated for their works;**
- ? **Encourage integration of the arts at a regional level so that our artists can pool their resources and engage in artistic productions such as motion picture production, music, dance, etc.;**
- ? **Promote the establishment of private radio and television houses and encourage use for the development of professionalism in the performing arts;**
- ? **Actively encourage the development of a performing arts society to encourage professionalism in the performing arts;**
- ? **Commence a series of cultural workshops whereby well-established and internationally renowned artists and teachers will be contracted to teach their skills to locals;**
- ? **Establish annual competitions and festivals to promote singing, storytelling, dance, drama and a wide range of artistic expressions;**
- ? **Establish an Art Gallery which will exhibit and feature a permanent collection of works by local artists;**
- ? **Restore the annual horticultural show and encourage the rehabilitation of the horticultural society;**
- ? **Restore the Botanical Gardens.**

Sports

The UPP regards sports as one of the best means to inculcate life's true values in a valueless age. Values such as dedication, commitment, fair-play, mutual trust and respect, the pursuit of happiness and above all, co-operation with others, are characteristics which we believe every person in our society ought to possess and emulate.

Antigua and Barbuda is fortunate that many of our citizens are athletically talented individuals. Yet, the ALP government has failed to ensure that many of these persons receive professional exposure. Fortunately for these athletes, financial assistance from the private sector coupled with their own perseverance has allowed many of them to gain international acclaim. Dr. Vivian Richards, Andy Roberts, Maurice Hope, Brian Matthews, Richie Richardson, Heather Samuel, and Curtley Ambrose have through their respective sports, demonstrated their exceptional talents and have made Antigua and Barbuda known throughout the world. By comparison, the annual Antigua Sailing Week is the only other sporting regatta which has provided publicity for Antigua and Barbuda in the sporting world. The UPP pledges through an increased emphasis on sports, as well as the professional development of our athletes, to keep our country known and respected in the sporting world.

The UPP recognises the endeavours and accomplishments of the staff at the sports department in organising and implementing their sports programme. However, their efforts have, and are being seriously undermined by the unavailability of facilities and resources, but mostly, by the ALP' blatant lack of support for their programmes. The ALP has always treated sports as a political football which they exploit at election time by building or renovating sports complexes, notably basketball, in the various communities in order to improve their Party's image thereby hoping to muster support from the electorate.

The UPP pledge to place significant emphasis on sports and the professional development of our athletes. With the continued support of the private sector; we will invest in the manpower, resources and facilities to implement our blueprint for the future development of sports. We regard sports as another avenue for citizens to promote a healthy lifestyle. We will encourage all persons, particularly the youth and women, to become involved in sports programmes. Most importantly, we perceive the development of sports on national, regional and international levels as a positive and viable alternative to the dangerous drug culture which has infiltrated our nation and is crippling families and communities.

Upon assuming office the UPP will:

- ? Develop a sports programme which will meet the needs of our nation;
- ? Establish a national sport plan which focuses on creating a National Sports and Recreational Department, a National Sports, Physical and Recreational Council, a National Sports Development Center and Community Sports Committees. A central Sports Secretariat will facilitate the smooth running of all sporting association and institutions;
- ? Re-introduce inter-schools competitions;
- ? Ensure that all recognise major national sports have their own headquarters and are fully equipped with modern playing fields. This will help in the development of our Sports Tourism mix and will be a collaborative effort with the private sector;
- ? Ensure that no sports person will be hindered fro representing the Nation. Legislation will be passed if need be, to guarantee sports persons that they will not be hindered nor lose other opportunities in representing the Nation in their particular sport. It is full time that our sports persons are given the time and the

- facilities for them to carry the banner of Antigua/Barbuda with pride, devotion and dignity;
- ? Re-establish cricket as a priority sport and build proper pitches which will be used by schools, villages and communities;
 - ? Reduce costs of sporting equipment by lowering duties etc.;
 - ? Guarantee that women's sports and indoor sports have greater priority;
 - ? Seek to make night games, especially in football and cricket a feature of our national life;
 - ? Establish the National Sports Foundation which will inter alia organise and manage a National Lottery whose profits will go primarily towards sports and other cultural activities;
 - ? Ensure first-rate physical education instruction in our primary and secondary schools;
 - ? Complete a modern athletic track, a modern indoor sports complex with an Olympic-size swimming pool for training professional athletes;
 - ? Construct at least two first-class cricket grounds and one Football ground, equipped with players pavilions;
 - ? Develop a biennial national Olympiad based on community clubs, which play Olympic sports, as the crowning height of national sports achievement;
 - ? Host annual international sports camps to encourage sporting achievement in our people;
 - ? Develop a branch of our student counselling programme to deal specifically with sporting careers. These counsellors will provide the technical resources to steer our youngsters in the correct career path;
 - ? Encourage the Private Sector through incentives to invest in internationally-recognised sporting and cultural facilities to attract international users.

Conclusion

In commending this plan, the UPP makes bold to say that it does not contend that its candidates are gods or angles nor that its plan is perfect. In any case, this plan was developed out of numerous consultations with a wide representative sample of stakeholders within the country. We don not promise "pie in the sky". We are men and women, human through and through – and to err is human. What we do contend is that, when elected the foregoing is the blue print to put in place a system, a code of the event of human error, that there is a system of correction which is swift and just.

On that foundation of morality in public affairs, we intend to change politics in Antigua and Barbuda. For we will prove to the world, but more so the Caribbean, and in particular, Antigua and Barbuda that governance is a noble calling which must be nobly and honourably executed.

Now is the time for all good men and women to come to the aid of our country.

Vote UPP !!

We are ready to govern with **"Leadership you know you can trust"**

