

The Economy and Our Island

October 12th 2008

The “great depression of the 21st century” has started. A worldwide financial crash the like of which has never happened before, it has wide reaching and devastating consequences which will only become apparent in the next couple of years. Our Island and her people will be greatly affected because we do not have a buoyant diverse income. Our income was tourism in the 70’s and 80’s and slowly it changed to international business. Now with a financial disaster our international business has been weakened. The international business because of natural and unnatural events that cost them through claims and through the stock market sending their worth plummeting.

Bermuda was in good financial standing or so we are continually told, yet we did not prepare and hoard out talent for a rainy day.

We have allowed the a large number of our workforce to become the labourers, Bermuda has not invested in her people. This has become evident in the recent spat of murders, gang violence and drug related crime.

Frequently I have said our workforce must be ready and able to maintain and engineer our Island, they are not, and in the months to come it is predicted that major building projects which employ the majority of the construction workforce, truck drivers, building site workers and associated workers will find their sites closing, or the next job not starting, the investors have pulled out. The world economy is in shambles, which has trickled down to our tiny Island home, we can no longer borrow, and the investors have lost their worth. The money has dried up.

How will this affect us? If the Bermudians cannot work, if the qualified guest workers are still employed, it will this create the kinds of problems that have been predicted for the past ten years? If it was a case of the Bermudians being qualified and the guest workers less qualified then the sequence of events would ensure Bermudians kept the majority of their jobs.

We have to maintain our homeland. We need not only junior technicians, but senior technicians and practical engineers to ensure we can survive in this area without outside help. We need to run our own hotel technical divisions, the motor vehicle mechanics and bodywork divisions, the technical departments of the air-conditioning and plumbing divisions, the technical facilities management for our office buildings, the internet and computer companies and the technical side of our cabling companies, the technical side of our security companies and so it goes on. We have failed in a bid to train Bermudians to run our Island independently, although we are aware we may always require some outside help in our workforce.

Having taught in the college, both public high schools, I have done my homework. I have assessed the aptitude of our students and they are capable, very capable, but untrained in the things that interest them, in the skills that we as an Island need to become independent of the majority of guest workers in the technical field.

So to recap we will have Bermudian workers unemployed, we still need the skilled technician guest workers and we do not have programme in place after 36years to train our own technicians. I have that programme ready to go, I have the training and qualifications to make it work, and all we require is somewhere to make it happen. Somewhere that cannot be closed down on a political whim. We must have a building “in-trust” for future generations of Bermudians to ensure technical education never again gets closed down.

If we do not learn from the mistakes of the past it will hurt us, and this depression will hurt us, if you cannot work and feed your family. Houses will

be re-possessed. It is too late to save it this time around so let's all ensure it does not happen again, let us start NOW!!!

Please read the proposal on the website; please back the idea of training our own technicians so they can become the managers and owners of our companies and ensure we fill all the technical spots in the hotels. When the new ones are built we need to be ready to take all those positions from Chief Engineer down, then if we have to employ labour, as we most surely will, let's make sure they are not the skilled workers managing Bermudians. Let's make sure the senior positions are *trained and qualified* Bermudians, trained in Bermuda. The only technical expertise required would be, the technical teachers from one of the top educational countries in the world but, only until Bermudians are experienced and qualified enough to take those positions. After all Bermudians have a stake in the economy of the Island they also have to have the pride to show the nay-sayers that we can do it.

Let us not kid ourselves, this will all take time, the time should have been when our economy was blossoming, but politicians allowed companies to import their expertise instead of putting the training and education in place to ensure Bermudians were qualified for the jobs and we were prepared for economic bad times. If we start now, we will be ready to fill the positions in the hotels when they are built, we will be ready for Bermudians to work their way up in companies to management positions. We will be ready to import international business and promise them an educated qualified technical workforce. We do not only need to concentrate on the technical; business, and other expertise will be required so that Bermuda is ready.

Bermuda Needs to be Ready

Colin Palmer

