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Norton signals new form of protest

May 15, 2024 News



Leader of the Opposition, Aubrey Norton

– accused PPP/C of paying citizens to stay quiet

Kaieteur News – Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton is of the view that street protests against an oil-flushed People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) administration is now a thing of the past, and that the coalition, A Partnership for National Unity Alliance for Change (APNU+AFC), now has to find alternative means of achieving their collective objectives.

This, since the People's Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C), now rich with oil money—the first for any Guyanese administration—has successfully managed to decimate not only the public service and the unions, but also buying out people to stay quiet. The damning concessions were made by the Opposition Leader during a recent broadcast of Politics 101 discussion, with Worker Peoples' Alliance's (WPA) David Hinds. According to Norton, the PPP/C has managed to use the newfound oil resources to essentially buy out the poor and middle class. With this in mind, he cited as example that persons who were paid \$40,000 monthly could not take part in any political activities for the opposition. What this redounded to according to Norton is that "people who would normally come out and protest would say to we will support you" but not publicly.

Adamant the PPP has impoverished his party's support base, the Opposition Leader said, this was compounded by the ruling administration's embrace of use of fear and domination to "control political activity." He qualified this position by pointing to the "accentuated politicization" of the Guyana Police Force to the point where they are in fact filing, according to Norton, trumped up charges. "What the PPP has done basically is to change the environment in which people operate and that in itself demands that you have a different strategy."

To this end, he disclosed that following an analysis of the situation at hand, the party has opted against it since and is instead focused on regaining political power.

According to Norton, the PPP/C with its hands on the country's purse strings has also managed to exercise so much control that even contractors that were linked to the PNC/R have backed away, so

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Blunt of the day

50% or nothing

APNU's call for the Government to halt approval of new oil projects until Guyana receives its full 50 per cent profit share must be supported by all Guyanese.

For years, Guyanese have been told that the nation's oil deal is delivering unprecedented benefits. Yet questions persist over how much of the wealth actually reaches the people and whether Guyana is receiving every dollar to which it is entitled.

The latest revelation that ExxonMobil has recovered its investment and operating costs only strengthens the argument for greater transparency.

If the contractor has recovered its costs, Guyana should now be receiving the full 50 per cent profit share stipulated under the Production Sharing Agreement.

Government cannot continue approving project after project while Guyanese are left guessing about the true value of their patrimony.

Oil is finite. The country must therefore demand every dollar due before handing over more of its resources.

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Reminding that unlike the past where the PNC/R could easily rally support for street protests by members of the public service and unions, the Opposition Leader, was of the firm view this does not obtain today. He adumbrated further by reminding that one of the significant changes that the government did was to put most public servants on contracts. This, he said, led to a situation where, “you were easily fired; (since) you are not a public servant.” According to Norton, this has also inherently led to the decimation of many of the trade unions that are no longer vibrant.

Doubling down on the new position he reminded that “...with all the protest we had in 1997; we still ended up at the bargaining table.”

Protests, he said are no longer leading to regime changes, even while insisting “...we will protest but the form of protest has to change; the kind of protests that we are accustomed to, whether we like it or not, the government has done everything to cripple it.”

According to Norton, this has now led the party to seek out new forms of protest in order to achieve the party’s objective without exposing its support base to the “viciousness of the PPP/C.” According to the opposition leader, many persons have told the party’s leadership flat out, while they are supportive of the APNU+AFC; “...many of them have said their livelihoods were virtually compromised if they didn’t go that route—joining up with the PPP/C publicly.

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