

UWI STUDENTS AGAIN LET DOWN BY DLP

The Democratic Labour Party Government has reneged on its promise made to Barbadians attending the University of the West Indies that it will from this coming school year guarantee loans granted by the Student Revolving Loan Fund when the imposition of payment of tuition fees comes into effect.

Minister Ronald Jones in his contribution to the debate of last year's Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals on 15th August told Parliament, Barbadians and indeed the whole world that the Government would guarantee student revolving loan funds taken out by students who could not afford to pay the twenty per cent cost of their University of the West Indies education out of their own pockets. Yet, he has recently announced a policy for these loans that does not in any way remove the previous requirements of two sureties or collateral security, such as cash, land, property, government paper, shares or mutual funds for a loan of \$50,000.00 or less or of two securities to secure the first \$50,000.00 and collateral security to secure the remainder if the loan amount is greater than \$50,000.00.

Only loans of less than \$12,000.00 can be secured without any sureties and no government guarantee is involved in this case either.

The BLP however supports Minister Jones' call for borrowers to pay the agreed contractual instalments on these loans in a timely manner and for defaulters to clear all arrears which they owe as a matter of priority.

Secondly, we have heard nothing further of the proposal announced during his 2013 budgetary presentation by Minister Sinckler of the establishment, together with local finance houses, of a National Registration Education Savings Plan with appropriate tax allowance provisions for savers which would have assisted in the future tertiary education of our citizens.

This whole episode marks yet another in a string of breach of promises made by the DLP to the people who elected them in order to improve the quality of their lives and that of their families. The severity of the Government's breach of trust on this issue is magnified by the fact that it directly undermines the educational and human capital advancement of our young people, which has previously been one of the major planks of social engineering for our national development during the first sixty odd years of cabinet responsibility.

This political administration has clearly lost touch with the reality of every day survival of the majority of our citizens, as is tangibly demonstrated by Minister Jones' recent statement that if he had his way all those present Barbadian UWI students who drop out of the institution would have to repay to Government the tuition fees which have been already spent on their university education.

We can only wonder when and where this "political recklessness" will end, what with the imposition recently of the onerous Consolidation Tax and the draconian Municipal Solid Waste Tax as well as the hint by various cabinet ministers of the legislation of more taxes during the course of this year.

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N.B. I as usual declare that I am one of the external counsel of the Student Revolving Loan Fund.

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