

Legislature of the Virgin Islands

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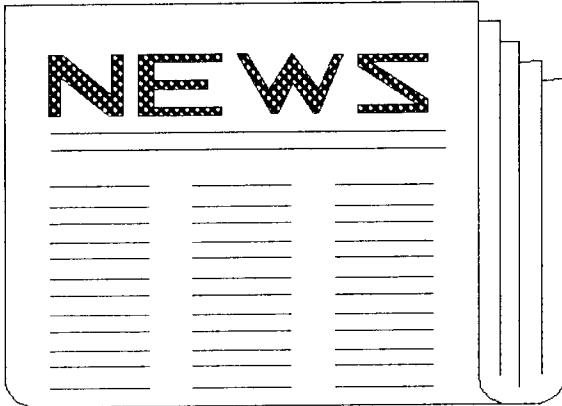
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PRESS RELEASE

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REDFIELD SAYS SENATE MAJORITY SHORT-CHANGES ST. CROIX

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REPUBLICAN SENATOR HOLLAND L. REDFIELD, IN A STATEMENT ANALYZING THE MAKEUP OF THE PROPOSED SENATE MAJORITY FOR THE 20TH LEGISLATURE, SAID THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LEGISLATURE WOULD SHORT-CHANGE ST. CROIX INTERESTS IF NOT REVISED.

REDFIELD SAID IN HIS ANALYSIS THE ORGANIZATION OF THE "ST. THOMAS LEGISLATURE," ITS MEMBERSHIP BREAKDOWN OF STANDING COMMITTEES AND OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE "CLEARLY SENDS A MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE OF ST. CROIX. AND THAT MESSAGE IS THAT YOU'VE BEEN SOLD DOWN THE RIVER."

"MY OBSERVATIONS AS A FIVE-TERM SENATOR ARE THREEFOLD: 1) THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, THROUGH THE NEWLY-ELECTED SENATORS, HAS CLEARLY PLACED PARTISAN CONCERNS OVER TERRITORY-WIDE CONCERNS. I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL PAY A HEAVY PRICE FOR THIS IN THE 1994 ELECTIONS; 2) THE 5 ST. THOMAS DEMOCRATS, WITH THE HELP OF 2 CRUCIAN DEMOCRATS, HAVE JOINED WITH THE AT-LARGE SENATOR AND TWO OTHER SENATORS TO FORM A 10-MEMBER MAJORITY. THAT LEAVES 5 ST. CROIX SENATORS TO WORK OUTSIDE THE MAJORITY FOR THE BELEAGUERED DISTRICT OF ST. CROIX;

AND 3) IF THAT'S NOT BAD ENOUGH, UPON REVIEWING THE PROPOSED OFFICERS OF THE LEGISLATURE (PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, LEGISLATIVE SECRETARY, MAJORITY LEADER, SECRETARY FOR INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS, AND WHITE HOUSE LIAISON), WE SEE THAT 5 ST. THOMIANS AGAINST 1 CRUCIAN SENATOR, MARY ANN PICKARD AS VICE PRESIDENT.

"TO ME, IT'S MERE TOKENISM, AS THE VICE PRESIDENT IS REALLY CEREMONIAL IN NATURE, AND HAS ONLY ON OCCASION MERELY ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES FOR THE LEGISLATIVE OFFICES ON ST. CROIX."

ADDING INSULT TO INJURY, REDFIELD SAID OF THE 10 STANDING COMMITTEES, SIX ARE IN THE FULL CONTROL OF THE ST. THOMAS COALITION. AND TWO MAJOR COMMITTEES -- THE POWERFUL RULES COMMITTEE, BEFORE WHICH ALL LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS MUST PASS, AND THE FINANCE COMMITTEE -- WHICH JOINTLY CONTROL MUCH OF THE LEGISLATIVE BUSINESS AND THE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES BETWEEN DISTRICTS IN THE TERRITORY, ARE IN THE HANDS OF THE ST. THOMAS COALITION, WITH NO HINT OF BALANCE, REDFIELD SAID.

REDFIELD ALSO CITED THE LEGISLATIVE IMBALANCE IN FOUR OTHER COMMITTEES WHICH ARE TILTED HEAVILY TOWARD ST. THOMAS: HOUSING, PARKS AND RECREATION; HEALTH; PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (WHICH HAS A GLARING 5 TO 2 IMBALANCE), AND THE PANEL ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AGRICULTURE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION.

"IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT THE COMMITTEES WHICH THE NEW MAJORITY HAS SELECTED TO DOMINATE ARE KEY COMMITTEES VITAL TO THE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS OF ST. CROIX. ST. CROIX SHOULD HAVE MORE INPUT." REDFIELD SAID. "EVEN A CURSORY LOOK AT OUR ECONOMY, AS WELL AS THE LACK OF GROWTH WITHIN ST. CROIX'S TOURIST ECONOMY TO KNOW THIS. AND THE LAPSE OF THREE YEARS OF NO CONSTRUCTION STARTING ON OUR HOSPITAL SHOULD HAVE SENSITIZED ST. THOMAS MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE THAT ST. CROIX HAS A REAL PROBLEM WHICH NEEDS TO BE ADDRESSED. OUR HOUSING SITUATION, A LINGERING RESULT OF HURRICANE HUGO, IS FAR WORSE THAN IN ST. THOMAS. YET AGAIN, THAT COMMITTEE IS CONTROLLED FROM ST. THOMAS," THE SENATOR SAID.

REDFIELD SAID HIS ANALYSIS IS NOT MERELY FIGHTING FOR THE SAKE OF FIGHTING. "FOR THOSE WHO FEEL THAT THIS MESSAGE IS ONLY A CONTINUATION OF BICKERING AND FIGHTING WHICH MARKED THE PREVIOUS LEGISLATURE, I SAY WE MUST ALL UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORMATION OF A LEGISLATURE, IF UNBALANCED, WILL HANDICAP THE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF ST. CROIX. IF WE LIVED IN A PERFECT WORLD, AND POLITICS WAS FAIR, AND EVERYBODY CONSIDERED THE NEEDS OF EVERYBODY ELSE IN THIS PROCESS, I WOULD NOT HAVE TO RESORT TO FIGHTING FOR THESE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY, AND THE EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES. BUT AS LONG AS I AM ELECTED BY YOU, I WILL NOT ROLL OVER AND PLAY DEAD ON AN ISSUE OF SUCH VITAL IMPORTANCE."

REDFIELD, SUMMARIZING HIS CONCLUSIONS, ADDRESSED THE ISSUED OF PARTY AFFILIATION. "IN THE 16TH LEGISLATURE FOR EXAMPLE, I JOINED WITH NOW LT. GOV. DEREK HODGE AND RUBY M. ROUSS, BOTH DEMOCRATS, TO FORM THE MAJORITY IN THAT BODY. I CLEARLY HAD THE SAME PRESSURES ON ME FROM MY PARTY AS FRESHMAN SENATORS MARY ANN PICKARD AND GERARD LUZ JAMES II DO NOW. BUT I AS A FRESHMAN SENATOR, UNDERSTOOD THEN AS NOW THAT MY DISTRICT HAD TO COME FIRST."

REDFIELD SAID HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS REFLECTION AND RECONSIDERATION ON PART OF THE 2 NEW CRUCIAN SENATORS REGARDING THEIR ALLIANCE WITH THE "ST. THOMAS LEGISLATURE." "IF THIS IS FUTILE, THEN I WILL STILL WORK DILIGENTLY WITH WHAT RESOURCES I HAVE TO CREATE PARITY BETWEEN ST. THOMAS AND ST. CROIX, AS WELL AS TO COOPERATE WITH MY COLLEAGUES IN THE BEST INTERESTS TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF ALL VIRGIN ISLANDERS IN THIS TERRITORY."