

Toco consultation left a lot to be desired.

Published in the Daily Express, Wednesday 7 August 2019.

Chronic neglect, contemptuous disregard, insensitivity and arrogance, are the hallmarks that have characterized the treatment that is frequently meted out to the people of the Matelot to Matura area, by officials of many government departments and agencies. This has been an unpleasant reality, throughout the successive political administrations of at least, the last three decades.

It means therefore, that none of the political parties that have been in government, can absolve itself of responsibility for the hardships and inadequacies, that are permanent features of daily existence in this region. This negative approach to governance which is their shared legacy, is the reason why so many residents now feel marginalized, disrespected and hopeless.

On Thursday, July 25th this year, a meeting was held at the Toco Regional Complex. It was called to discuss with the residents and other stakeholders, the issues regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment, for the proposed Valencia to Toco Roadway. This was officially billed as a public consultation but in reality, it was not. Firstly, the event was not advertised as widely and in as timely a manner, as it should have been.

Secondly, while the persons at the head table, cannot be faulted in any way, for the manner in which the proceedings were conducted - the work that is to be done on the Valencia to Toco Roadway, is certain to cost hundreds of millions or possibly billions of dollars. One would have thought, that a meeting to discuss a project of this magnitude, would have been headed by persons who have the authority to answer pertinent questions, to alleviate fears and to give assurances to members of the public.

Instead, a private consultancy firm was hired to perform the duties, that should rightly have been conducted by officials of the government and the relevant state agencies. One of the major sore points of this latest consultation, was the manner in which certain information was presented. The low definition and contrarily oriented map that was displayed, certainly succeeded in confusing attendees, more than it edified us.

Notwithstanding what has occurred in the past, it is not too late to begin treating the people of the Matelot to Matura area, with the level of consideration and respect that we deserve. With reference to both the Toco Port Facility and the Valencia to Toco Roadway projects - further consultations are scheduled to be conducted later this month.

It is hoped that officials such as our Parliamentary Representative, the Councilor for the area, the Permanent Secretaries in the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of National Security - along with the relevant ministerial technocrats and partnering consultants, will make it a priority to attend.

Judging from the manner in which these so-called consultations have been conducted, since the year 2000, it appears as if it is the intention of those in authority, to fulfill only the barest minimum of their statutory obligations; so that it can't be said afterward, that there was no consultation. It would certainly be appreciated, if in the future, the public were to be notified of all such consultations, at least seven days in advance, through newspaper and other advertisements.

Samuel Thornhill.

nd?

Write to us at The Editor, Daily Express, 95-97 Independence Square, Port of Spain, Trinidad. Please e-mail letters to the editor for publication to: express@trinidadexpress.com. Readers are reminded their letters will not be published without the writer's name and address.

ime

Toco consultation left a lot to be desired

orderers are get-
under. By failing
rers, we send a
lies a lessened
ae of the lives
ution brings
ure to the
and ensures
not be able to
reating more

iel and heires
for which
applied,
he worst
e—and that
Any lesser
undermine
ces on pro-

CHRONIC neglect, contemptuous disregard, insensitivity and arrogance are the hallmarks that have characterised the treatment that is frequently meted out to the people of the Matelot-to-Matura area by officials of many government departments and agencies. This has been an unpleasant reality, throughout the successive political administrations of at least, the last three decades.

It means, therefore, none of the political parties that have been in government can absolve themselves of responsibility for the hardships and inadequacies that are permanent features of daily existence in this region. This negative approach to governance, which is their shared legacy, is the reason why so many residents now feel marginalised, disrespected and hopeless.

On Thursday, July 25, a meeting was held at the Toco Regional Complex to discuss with the residents and other stakeholders the issues regarding the Environmental Impact Assessment for the proposed Valencia-to-Toco Roadway. This was officially billed as a public consultation but, in reality, it was not.

Firstly, the event was not advertised as widely and in as timely a manner, as it should have been.

Secondly, while the persons at the head table cannot be faulted in any way for the manner in which the proceedings were conducted, the work that is to be done on the Valencia to Toco Roadway is certain to cost hundreds of millions, or possibly billions of dollars.

One would have thought a meeting to discuss a project of this magnitude would have been headed by persons who have the authority to answer pertinent questions, to alleviate fears and to give assurances to members of the public.

Instead, a private consultancy firm was hired to perform the duties that should rightly have been conducted by officials of the Government and the relevant State agencies.

One of the major sore points of this latest consultation was the manner in which certain information was presented. The low definition and contrarily oriented map that was displayed certainly succeeded in confusing attendees more than it edified us.

Notwithstanding what has occurred in the past, it is not too late to begin treating the people of the Matelot-to-Matura area with the level of consideration and respect that we deserve.

With reference to both the Toco Port Facility and the Valencia-to-Toco Roadway projects, further consultations are scheduled to be conducted later this month.

It is hoped officials such as our parliamentary representative, the councillor for the area, the permanent secretaries in the Ministry of Works and Transport, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of National Security, along with the relevant ministerial technocrats and partnering consultants will make it a priority to attend.

Judging from the manner in which these so-called consultations have been conducted, since the year 2000, it appears as if it is the intention of those in authority to fulfil only the barest minimum of their statutory obligations—so that it can't be said afterward there was no consultation.

It would certainly be appreciated if, in the future, the public were to be notified of all such consultations at least seven days in advance through newspaper and other advertisements.

Samuel Thornhill

via e-mail

ands

orship.
see certain
suffering,
angers are
ut their
certain
hey feel
control
at the

f the
anges in
ite tele-
n private
ell spell
e cultural

KE
ING
STORE

**Bringing Home
More
Of The Best
Brands**

