

This time it is harder than usual to choose among the various current topics. Is it the picture on Facebook about the first shovel in the ground for the airport boulevard? Everyone except the two government commissioners looks like they are not enjoying themselves. Except for Island Council member Spanner, no other Island Council member is in it. Should I explain this as a silent protest by the remaining Island Council members?

Or the October 7, 2022 article in Dossier Koninkrijksrelaties about the unavailability of money for breakfast for children in the Caribbean Netherlands? If there is poverty anywhere in the country of the Netherlands you have to be on the western side of the Atlantic, but breakfast for school children. No, not thought about it...

Or perhaps the debate on Wednesday, October 5, in the Lower House about the care function in the Caribbean Netherlands. Yes, there must first be another review of whether in the Caribbean Netherlands this or that is as it should be. Always the call for further investigation. Never is anything clear or unequivocal. Meanwhile, people just die (literally!) because of this "outstanding" care function (at least on St. Eustatius). It is fortunately not even denied, but how it could have come this far remains shrouded in mists for now, and of course the path to the future is paved with good intentions.

About the debate itself, I note that the MPs use their 3-minute speaking time (in a debate for which four hours are allotted!) very efficiently and effectively after which the Secretary of State retires with a staff of six (!) people for half an hour and then takes ample time to pronounce fine resolutions in understated sentences. Effort commitments at best, no concrete commitments anywhere. Nor are there any concrete plans. About the medical evacuation and the permission for actual deployment included therein, there is a typical Hague discussion with a lot of theory and a practice that relates poorly to it. Good intentions on the part of Statia run up against intimidation by and on behalf of the St. Maarten specialists, who seem to be supported in this by high-ranking officials of MinVWS in The Hague, who are either extremely gullible - because they only listen to the government commissioner - or are West Indian blind and deaf to the practice in the hospitals (well, that fits in with the culture: that's how you effectively cover up abuses). Remember the three monkeys: see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil. It seems to be the sine qua non for making a career in this ministry. At least in the exchange of thoughts on practice, the MPs seem to be better informed than the official and political top of this ministry.

And then there is a procedural meeting of the Kingdom Relations Committee on Wednesday, October 5. Here sadly few members are present. Even the MPs seem resigned to the thought "oh well, it's only the Caribbean Netherlands." Only Ms. Wuite is angry about the failure of the Minister of Poverty Policy - Ms. Carola Schouten - to deliver documents on time. Ms. Wuite rightly states that the ministries are eager to punish a shortcoming or a late delivery on the part of the islands, but if the own Dutch government leaves gaps, then that has to be accepted. To be ashamed...

All this makes it quite a difficult choice of a topic for this column. The connecting thread between all these events is carelessness with which the European Netherlands treats the Caribbean Netherlands (and St. Eustatius in particular).

Then one more happy fact to conclude. Two commissioners (aldermen) have been appointed on St. Eustatius by the Island Council. We are another step closer to becoming a full-fledged democracy. Incidentally, and this really is my last comment on this, this too did not go entirely without a struggle. Deliberately - or at least so it seems - the administrative and political top of MinBZK and their puppet - the government commissioner - put pressure on the Island Council to forcibly approve a few regulations even though they were delivered far too late. An angry motion about this was drafted and passed with four out of five votes and it looks like this motion is going to have a backlash because Parliamentary questions have also been asked about this to the State Secretary of Kingdom Relations. Perhaps more on this next time.