

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Commission,

We are another month further and February 19th there will be another procedural meeting. Since my letter of last month, the veil of the then rumour has been lifted: the team of government commissioners is indeed being replaced by a new couple. How this will develop should make the future clear. I can hope for a more serious provision of information to and a more serious consultation with the Statian population. To illustrate the current information provision: even the changing of the guard (of the government commissioners, in other words) will come over the Statian population like a diktat. No prior notification to the Advisory Committee, nor any involvement of anyone on this side of the ocean (at least, not publicly known) in drawing up a job profile. Anyway, we'll see what's coming our way (*how Statian this resigned comment sounds...*).

In the meantime it appears that a building project near Knippenga Estate and the Botanical Garden has been taken up with some vigour. A large part of the local flora has been removed and with large equipment a reasonably large plot has been made ready for construction. Construction has also got off to a flying start. Now it's not about the good or bad of this development, but about the non-transparency of it all. Permits are nowhere to be seen; stronger, the argument goes that permits are not public anyway. It seems unreal and undesirable to me. In that case, why permits? If they can't be seen or if they can't be objected to anyway? Surely the population should be informed about what is going to happen on the island and not find out at a point of no return? And all this, of course, without any known plan with, among other things, consequences in the longer term (for example, are there consequences for employment on another level than just cleaning and serving?).

The same, at least the aspect about permits, applies to the construction of wells. I am not very proficient on this subject, but it seems that in the volcanic soil under the Quill "water veins" run in which fresh (and warm) water flows to the sea. The idea now is that when you "open" such a vein and let it work as a well on "your" terrain, you can have fresh (and warm) water at your disposal cheaply (for nothing). I have no idea if a proliferation of "wells" is being made in the meantime, but the mere fact that permits do not seem to be necessary for this, or at least are not made public, seems worrying to me. After all, without the 'natural' counter-pressure of these fresh water veins, salty seawater can increasingly penetrate the soil unhindered, resulting in salinification of the groundwater. In the contacts I have (had) with the (ongoing) government commissioner it has become clear to me that anything that has no direct relation with the "clearing of historical, administrative and administrative debris" is beyond the government's (commissioner's) interference or interest. In short, the practice of digging wells seems to continue and no one who cares about it. In this context, I would like to point out that applications for or the granting of permits are not transparent locally. Also the minutes of the Executive Council do not give a definite answer on this matter.

Last year - on February 5, 2019 - a schedule of activities was received (at the level of "in quarter x, y will happen"). From the offer letter accompanying this planning I deduce that this did not happen as a

matter of course, but because your committee apparently asked for it. Whether that will happen again this year I don't know: I haven't seen anything yet.

In my letter of last month (January 18, 2020) I mentioned some topics that - as far as I am concerned - should be on an agenda anyway:

- the future of the island with, among other things, "updated manners" (resulting from the report "The Kingdom against the light" from April 2019);
- the financial infrastructure: although a letter from the Minister of Finance has recently been received, I have not yet been able to detect many concrete developments in it;
- the opening up of the island via air connections based on PSOs (as recommended in the report "Connectivity Caribbean part of the Kingdom", dated 30 July 2018, made public in March 2019, after which nothing more has been heard of it);
- the ins and outs of the ZVK in the context of good health care may still require some attention, according to my observations of December 7, 2019, sent to the VWS Committee, but these observations do not seem to have made much impact; to make things less crackling regularly in The Hague, but yes ... St. Eustatius...
- five years after the introduction of CXC education, the connection of English-language secondary education to higher vocational education in the (European) Netherlands has not yet been laid down in any legislation or regulations. There is now some movement: a motion on this subject has recently been passed in the Lower House of Parliament and a draft CXC Decision is in Internet consultation. We are closely following this development.

Of course, this is not an exhaustive and comprehensive overview of priorities, but simply an enumeration, drawn up by the undersigned and not broadly coordinated (*although all of them have been discussed in the House of Representatives before!*). In the context of prioritization, the Statian will undoubtedly want to be called 'the roads'. I am inclined to take some distance from this, but at the same time I note that when - despite my personal opinion - there appears to be broad support for this priority, it is of course embarrassingly little that has been achieved so far.

In the meantime, we have said goodbye to the incumbent team of government commissioners and are taking note of the new team. You may expect me to follow developments critically and to report to you on a regular basis.

Kind regards,

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