

Dear Chairman and members of the Commission on Kingdom Relations,

On the website 'kingdom.nu' I see several reactions to the results of the elections on St. Eustatius. Some analyses I share, others I recognize but are not directly mine; one stands out: that of Mr. Van Raak.

On the site mentioned Mr. Van Raak is quoted and I quote: "*After the intervention of the Netherlands because of corruption and mismanagement an attempt was made with many people and means to rebuild the island and gain the trust of the population. The results of these elections show that this has failed, a majority of the population longs for a return to the old political situation*".

The idea of "a lot of people and resources" I will not immediately deny, but "to rebuild the island and win the trust of the people" is absolutely untrue!

With "to build" you can think of the restoration of the rock under Fort Oranje, or repairing and painting walls around the cemeteries or placing street signs and house numbers. Of course, the first project in particular has nothing at all to do with the restoration of democracy. Winning the trust of the population is not done by initiating some infrastructural activities here and there.

When it comes to gaining the trust of the population, this is of course first and foremost done through good communication, on the basis of equality. That communication has never, I repeat, never taken place!

The story on 'kingdom.nu' rounds off with: "*According to the MP, the majority of people on the island have chosen politicians who do not want the island to be part of the Netherlands and who strive for independence*".

Precisely this remark is, in my experience, *so Dutch*: don't talk to the people but have an opinion about it, and only on the basis of the election results. Of course the answer could be: "but that's also why I'm asking for a referendum"; wouldn't it be much wiser to enter into consultation with the Statian people now (at last)? For example with the new Island Council, or - in my opinion better - in a townhall setting where all islanders are welcome ¹.

My interpretation of what has happened now has already been made clear in my letter of yesterday evening, and in short it comes down to the fact that the intervention, which has now lasted two and a half years, has by no means been aimed at bringing the European Dutch and the Statian worlds closer together. In spite of all the efforts of people and resources.

Although I have not investigated the matter myself, of course, I *absolutely do not* endorse Mr. Van Raak's conclusion that St. Eustatius would want to continue independently. What they do want is more say and above all recognition. As far as my observation goes, the European Netherlands has never

¹ It should be borne in mind that after centuries of not being taken seriously, the Statian will not suddenly turn out to be a worthy interlocutor. After all, the process of communicating will also have to be learned!

seen St. Eustatius as a serious discussion partner in the past six to seven years. In terms of size this may be understandable, but given the circumstances *that the European Netherlands itself has created*, a more empathic attitude may be appropriate, more appropriate, or even: commanded!

Referring to the Daily Herald of 23 October 2020 (page 13), I see statements by Mrs. Leerdam that clearly focus on an intention to shape the future of Statia - 'a better Statia for us all' - in joint consultation with fellow-Statians, stakeholders *and the Netherlands*.

Let that now be her helping hand for a good consultation with the Netherlands, shouldn't she at least expect to pick up the gauntlet on the other side of the ocean to actually sit down at the table? And I do not mean at the table with Mr. Van Rij, here somewhere on Statia, no: just receive her in The Hague to talk about mutual points of view and expectations.

For the record: I have not spoken to her and so I do not know exactly what expectations she (and her PLP) cherishes but I am convinced that for shaping *the future and better Statia for all of us* no 'independence' (within or outside the Kingdom) is needed at all, but just a good and realizable plan with the necessary means. It is - again - my absolute conviction that within the context of the 'public entity' with a flexible structure of agreements about what can or must be done on a national (Dutch) and local (Statian) level, the wishes of the PLP (or more generally: those of Statia) can be fulfilled within broader frameworks concerning 'what', 'how', 'by whom', 'when' and 'by which means'. In another context one could perhaps speak of a 'management agreement'.

Wouldn't it be a good idea to sit down with her, or with both group leaders (i.e. from PLP and from DP), on your invitation (or that of the government, of course) at a table in The Hague with officials from The Hague to see if there are openings on the basis of the Statian input? Instead of officials from The Hague who will determine what is good for Statia without a Statian contribution!

Do you think it is possible that a turnaround in The Hague's behaviour, as proposed here, is achievable? It seems to me that the European Netherlands will have to show its good will. And of course you may expect that the Statian group leader(s) will be on ice: prepare a good plan, that's how I would formulate the expectation (but that's up to you, or the government ;-).

In my opinion it is all a lot more constructive than "put it all on Marktplaats.nl" or words of similar purport. Also the appeal of Mr. Van Raak I would like to see taken back in order to give the above mentioned proposal a chance.

May I ask you to lead it there that the above mentioned constructive path can be followed? Thank you in advance for that!

Kind regards,

J.H.T. (Jan) Meijer MSc MBA,
Bellevue Road 4, Upper Round Hill, St. Eustatius, Dutch Caribbean.