

Dear Chairman and members of the Commission on Kingdom Relations,

Today, Friday the 30th of October 2020, I received the message that State Secretary Knops will visit St. Eustatius on Tuesday the 3rd of November and will leave the next day. Different thoughts are shooting through my head.

Of course it is nice that from the government side interest is shown for our island and on the occasion of the installation of the new Island Council the State Secretary get acquainted with the (old) composition of this renewed Island Council. Furthermore, I understand that a kind of farewell tour is being held (after all, the cabinet period is coming to an end); I also consider it possible that the 'real' farewell will result in another such visit in the near future.

At the same time, of course, the timing is highly unfortunate and extremely unwise (I get the word 'primeval stupid' but badly erased from my mind...). The government commissioner takes every opportunity to emphasize that on this small, vulnerable island - understandably - we have to be very careful with the interpersonal relations and, just like on New Zealand, we have to keep the borders as close as possible and quarantine everyone who enters for two weeks first. And then there will just be visitors coming in that without quarantine will visit the island and talk to people. The visit may be important from a political or publicity point of view, essential in the sense of 'a matter of life and death', of course it is not!

The previous outbreak was also the result of non-essential workers being let in. So, I may conclude, if donkeys in general don't bump into the same stone, goats on this island are only a secondary problem.

And if Mr. Knops were to come alone now, but it is of course very likely that he would take a consequence of about five to ten people with which the risk of contagion would increase proportionally. So let the word 'credibility' (of the government commissioner) not be used too often, because referring to it will of course only result in a scornful smile.

I can't help but conclude that an outward appearance demonstration is being held here so that responsible officials can say (especially to each other) "look what we've managed to do". And, but now I am repeating myself, it is, of course, mainly about infrastructural (and perhaps administrative) projects. There has been no real improvement in democracy, initiated by effective communication with the population. Against that background, the recent outcome of the election is not so unexpected. Anyway, I think I have written enough about that in the meantime.

It will all be too short a day, and - I repeat - too 'important' from a political and publicity point of view, but it seems to me that when the King has to return from a vacation address, this visit should also be considered misplaced. *The House of Representatives should do something about this, I would think.*

To sum up: interest from the government side is of course welcome, but - free to the advertising of Cup a Soup - 'not right now'!

Kind regards,

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