

The Hague, October 31, 2022.

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee on Kingdom Relations of the TK and EK,

This time not a current or social issue, but a recently published book. It is the book "Ongemak" by Gert Oostindie and Wouter Veenendaal (ISBN 978 90 446 4926 0). For anyone with an interest in the field of kingdom relations ("six Caribbean islands and the Netherlands") I think it is a 'must read'.

It placed all that I have experienced in recent years (on St. Eustatius) in a broader, more comprehensive framework. More history, more context, more angles, in short: highly enriching! Needless to say, I recommend everyone to read this book. Apart from how things have come to be, the reasoned and, above all, pragmatic view of a possible future is particularly interesting.

For example, on page 271 alternatives are mentioned to give substance to a more direct democracy in which the voice of the individual resident can also be (better) heard. In my words, inspired by said passage, the role of the townhall meeting could not only have an informative character but could be given a serious place in island plan and policy development.

And if I may quote a piece of text literally from page 272: *"As bodies such as the Council of State, the Ombudsman and the Human Rights Board have indicated, it is indefensible and unacceptable that different provisions and rights continue to apply on the BES islands than in the European Netherlands"*. This passage is from the heart. It is indeed blatantly unjust that the government (*solely on the basis of unwillingness; if it is not unwillingness, what is it?*) insists on the dichotomy between first- and second-class Dutch citizens.

Under the heading "how hard can it be" it concludes that it could be very hard. I read here the necessity of stepping over one's own shadow. Page 276 names it as follows: *"It also requires a willingness on all sides to take a fresh look at administrative structures, to think about which practical solutions work, which don't"*. Listening and empathizing with each other's experiences and priorities are more important qualities than merely analyzing what the best solution is (moreover: the best solution according to *whom...*).

It will be a matter of give and take for all parties. The paternalism of the European Netherlands must be off the table, but even on the part of the Caribbean Dutch islands, stepping over one's own shadow will take some effort.

Kind regards,

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cc: *National Ombudsman*