

The Hague, November 13, 2022.

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

At the last minute - namely, aimed at the debate on November 15 next - a single side note (with an old message, the repetition of which is apparently necessary on a regular basis). By the way, as I write this bill I briefly grab the meeting's agenda, but I don't get it: clicking a little deeper on any (random) meeting produces an error message.

The recent increase in benefits in the Caribbean Netherlands seems to be a camouflage measure "*look what a generous gesture we are making?!"*. As far as I am concerned, it is part of a pattern: in order to do something special for the Caribbean Netherlands every time, the measure to see the Caribbean Netherlands as part of the country "the Netherlands" is advanced (or simply: avoided).

And if I were the only one who kept coming back to this point regularly, I could live with it. After all, I'm just someone who writes letters. But also institutions such as the Ombudsman Netherlands, the Council of State and the Human Rights Board as well as the book "Ongemak" (Gert Oostindie and Wouter Veenendaal) repeatedly mention this sample of "discomfort". A quote from said book: "*But again and again it is striking how little the government is willing to change course towards the islands, even when it comes to safeguarding the rule of law*" (p. 239).

And when there is a movement - as now again with the benefits - it is always from a special position (after all, it concerns the second-class Dutchman). Now the Island Governor is given the same authority as the mayor in the European Netherlands, then again abuse in the family is made punishable, as has been the case for years in the European Netherlands, and still a discussion is being held about the social minimum in the Caribbean Netherlands while for the country of the Netherlands a social minimum has already been in place for a long time with all the accompanying laws, rules and benefits.

Instead of repeatedly regulating a "thingy", structural laws and regulations that apply in the European Netherlands should also apply in the Caribbean Netherlands. It should be remembered that the concepts of European and Caribbean Netherlands did not exist before 10-10-10. As of that date, the three BES islands were pressed to the Dutch breast, but "not really...". The choice to opt for laws and regulations of the country Netherlands Antilles is, in my opinion, historically and fundamentally flawed. The straight (royal) way is of course to declare the laws and regulations that already applied in the country of the Netherlands also applicable to the Caribbean Netherlands, which was added in 2010 (whether or not adjusted, when deemed necessary *in mutual consultation with the Island Councils* involved). But somehow we just keep going down the same path.

Incidentally, I note that the status of "public body" allows for special legislation and regulations tailored to the islands. It seems to me that in this way justice can rightly be done to the tropical climate, the English language, the insular and small-scale character, etc. But I believe that taking these special circumstances into account should primarily benefit the island population and should not be pulled out of the closet too casually. For example, moves are now being made to make it possible for Caribbean Dutch students to already apply for the BSN on the island; this is being made possible through an amendment to the BRP Decree and an amendment to the BSN Decree. On one side I applaud the fact that this student is finally being heard, on the other side I think "*another 'special sandwich'*".

Instead of making additional exceptions for specific 'things' in the Caribbean Netherlands, why not cut down on all these exceptions and push these people to the breast as it was intended October 10, 2010. In other words, consider them Dutch nationals like all other Dutch nationals.

For the record: by now the distrust from the Caribbean Netherlands in the European Netherlands (or more specifically: The Hague) has become so great that I would like to comment on the above paragraph. Of course I prefer to see the generous gesture whereby all Dutch prosperity also benefits this group of Dutch citizens (whereby of course they also participate in the payment of taxes, which make this prosperity possible), but an 'all-embracing' plan could also be neatly explained and explained to the respective Island Councils. This would do justice to the principle of consulting WITH the Caribbean Dutchman (respectfully and not paternalistically) instead of ABOUT the Caribbean Dutchman.

Then back to next Tuesday's debate: my commitment - as a logical continuation of the vision outlined above - would be to scrap the discussion about the detested benchmark and instead adopt the social minimum as it applies throughout (?) the Netherlands, with all its consequences (in terms of minimum wage and benefits, for example).

Sincerely,

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cc: *National Ombudsman*