

Dear Chairman and members of the Kingdom Relations Commission,

Admittedly, if I'm the average representative of the Statian population, I doubt it. At the same time, in all my writing activities it is mainly my intention to write down "our" feelings on their behalf.

All this - I am of course referring to the administrative intervention of February 2018 - has started with a so-called neglect by the incumbent government of the Statian island and its inhabitants.

Of course I don't want to make it more difficult than it is, and perhaps I am a bit more articulate than many a Statian (even if I could be blamed for a too European Dutch perspective) but I am inclined to say that we have come down from the rain into the drip.

So far, I can't make it any nicer here either, there is almost no talk with the people but especially about the people. In my opinion we were - apparently, according to the legal title - neglected, and now we are still alone, we are once again aware of that.

In the period before the intervention there was an island council once a week (which, I won't deny, was dominated by the people with the 'biggest mouth') but in any case there were public meetings. I visited them regularly.

And now? We know nothing. Twice a week, Mr. Van Rij and/or Mrs. Francis hold a radio chat mostly about corona. In terms of consultation, almost nothing takes place at all. I've already called the Social Advisory Board a figment of shame for consultation. Things are mentioned (by Mr. Van Rij and/or Mrs. Francis) and hardly any questions can be asked; if it threatens to become too difficult then the current agenda item is simply ended. If necessary, things are promised for a next meeting, which is synonymous with "we don't talk about it anymore".

In a way I recognise the atmosphere as it was in your plenary debate on 3 June: has there really been a change of course or course? I'm not very good at terminology, perhaps a motion is more non-binding than an amendment. Be that as it may, from the Secretary of State's point of view I see the past debate as a "compulsory number from which no blood flows". In other words, "we'll go ahead". And go on with what? At least not with public consultation.

I understand that (former) politicians are also being talked to, but informally I also understood from that that Mr. Van Rij is a master of broad-speaking and concealing language without really saying anything. In itself very skilful perhaps, but I still think that as an island population we don't get anything out of it.

Very soon the island government shoots in the cramp I think they recognize as "as long as they can't blame me or blame me for the responsibility". Of course it's Stuco's fault, it's Stuco's fault the maintenance in the past wasn't done properly, it's Stuco's fault the residents didn't request a drinking water connection themselves, or anywhere else, but it's not my fault as the island governor (Van Rij/Francis) or my fault as the one pulling the strings (Knops).

We already had a hospital that is actually not well equipped to deal with a pandemic, soon the doctor and the nurse who belong to the hospitainer will probably also leave the island and from that moment on the hospital is suddenly responsible for even more equipment than before. The 'Karel Doorman' is also on a farewell tour and soon the Dutch government will say "toedelodokie Stataanse bevolking, go and find out on your Sint Alcatraz island". Saint Alcatraz is of course a reference to the American prison from where escaping appeared to be almost impossible; the reference refers on the one hand to the current ban on air traffic but on the other hand also to the ridiculously high fares to get out of a "bus ride" further on.

It could just be that you think, well, it's not that bad after all. Well, then I wonder if you'd like to listen. To the roaring message from the Secretary of State or to - for example - me. It's up to you.

Of course it doesn't have the same broad impact as the rationed water, but for schoolchildren and their parents (I'm now referring to secondary education), the Dutch government has not yet succeeded, after almost six years (!), in drawing up a conclusive package of regulations that show the value of the CXC-CSEC diploma that will soon be obtained in terms of "what can I do with this now if I want to take a higher professional education study in the European Netherlands". Of course these are only a few of them, but in my opinion it is downright insulting how the Dutch government (not) provides these students and their parents with an answer. And of course it doesn't help that the formal communication goes through the RCN on Bonaire. There is no CXC education in English on Bonaire, so they are worried about what, they seem to think, 900 km away. In this discussion I have not yet seen a sensible contribution from Bonaire.

Another small piece of school. For months, if not years, there has been talk of new construction of the Gwendoline van Puttenschool but - I don't know any details - it always seems impossible to make a choice for the location of the new school. Somehow land has to be transferred between the European Netherlands and the Public Entity St. Eustatius. Rijks Vastgoed Dienst also seems to play a role in this. Anyway, apparently there is always a reason to postpone the decision that is necessary to make a real start with the new building project for us.

You may read between the lines that sometimes it is hard for me to write to you with any optimism. I believe that for once there is no domain about which I can report an enthusiastic sounding

development <sup>1</sup>. And the worst thing is, in fact, not a development that goes downhill. Nothing really happens, despite all the nice reports from the Secretary of State. And if anything has happened at all, it is a development in which the Static has had no part. Take the establishment of a Court of Audit: a meeting with some members of the Rotterdam Court of Audit there. Has anyone thought of including a Static in this development? Not that I know or have heard...

This time I won't dirty up too many words on the air connections (just as abstract from the ban on air traffic because of corona). There are simply no developments to be expected after reading the report 'Connectivity Caribbean part of the Kingdom'. And that report, too, dates from two years ago.

I would have liked to have sent a more positive sounding story, but I just can't do it. There is no material available with which I could make a nice story.

In spite of everything, I wish you much wisdom,  
yours sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> I am mainly talking about developments in local democracy in which support should be found for the course and pace to be chosen, as well as a common vision of the future. There are projects in the infrastructural domain in which progress is being made. The road project is getting off to a good start now that local contractors are going ahead without interference from the European Netherlands. Also the "packing" of the cliff under the fort Oranje to stop the erosion progress seems to have been completed (a French contractor was contracted for this). And progress is being made in the 'airport' project.