

Open Letter to Professor Compton Bourne

Dear Sir:

Due Process and Other Immigration Issues

I had the opportunity to read excerpts of your interview with the Stabroek News, a Guyanese newspaper, that were carried in the Saturday, 27th June 2009 edition of that newspaper under the title, 'Bourne Decries Wee-Hour Raids'. Excerpts of that interview have also been published in the Barbados Nation Newspaper of Monday, 29th June 2009 under the title, 'Bourne: Let Due Process Prevail'.

In the excerpts carried in both newspapers, you indicated that, "Due process should be observed in the way that the authorities implement the new immigration policy which targets CARICOM nationals only."

My first question is, "Do you have any data to indicate that due process was not observed?" If your statement is to stand on its own two feet, then the presence of data indicating that due process was not observed is particularly relevant in light of another statement attributed to you in the excerpts of the interview. That statement was, "I have never seen any statistics that tells one authoritatively how many Guyanese and CARICOM immigrants are in Barbados illegally."

My interpretation of your second statement is that if data should be published before the Government of Barbados implements its managed migration policy, then, similarly, you should provide data to indicate that due process was not observed in the actions taken by the Barbados authorities to help arrest the problem of illegal immigration in the island.

With regard to the way that some individuals have been apprehended and deported, the following statements have been attributed to you elsewhere in the excerpts of the interview, "I think that it should be handled with much more sensitivity than it seems to have been handled with so far in Barbados. There are way too many stories in the media about the rounding-up of people and I think that is not the proper way to do it." "There should be a proper way to handle it. Rounding up people like prisoners in the dead of night is not the way to do it."

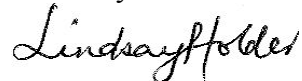
If, as you imply, that there is, without supporting data, some truth to the many stories in the media about the rounding-up of people, then we in Barbados can also conclude that there is some truth to the many stories that we hear that Guyana is an ethnically polarized society in which Afro-Guyanese feel excluded from having a full voice and stake in the national polity and equal enjoyment of rights in many fields of life, including employment and economic participation. We can also conclude that it is that state of affairs in Guyana that has contributed immensely to the outflow of Guyanese nationals to other countries.

Also, if the Barbadian authorities have not been handling the matter in the proper way, could you indicate what are the accepted international best practices for detaining and repatriating illegal immigrants.

Lastly, excerpts of the interview indicated that you said that Barbados, by these actions, could hurt its relationship with the rest of the Caribbean and its image in the international community. I would therefore be most grateful if you could indicate how the actions taken by a sovereign Government to address the problem of illegal immigration within its borders can hurt its image regionally and internationally. To date, I am not aware of any public statements made by governments of extra-regional countries on the way Barbados has addressed the problem of illegal immigration in the island. Within the region, the most vociferous comments have come from Guyana, the country that has demonstrated the inability to arrest the malaise permeating the core of its society.

Thank you.

Sincerely



Lindsay Holder
28th June 2009

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