

October 4, 2010

The Editor,  
The New Today,  
St. Georges,  
**GRENADA**

Dear Sir,

My attention has been drawn to your weekend edition of New Today dated October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010. Therein you devoted considerable attention to me following my participation in a TV programme carried on Grenada Broadcasting Network (GBN). In that programme, I analyzed the Prime Minister's address to the nation in which he proposed a number of stimulus measures. I expressed a mixture of disagreement and concern, about the timing and effectiveness of the many measures proposed.

Clearly, this did not sit well with many on the government side and with certain members of the government itself. What followed in your newspaper is a classic distraction technique in which the messenger was viciously attacked and not the message.

In consequence, a dispute to which I was an innocent party some nearly nine (9) years ago was resurrected and captioned in a front page headline "**Financial Cloud Over Two Salaries paid to Patrick Antoine**".

The facts are that in 1999, seven (7) years after attaining my doctorate in Economics from the University of Florida, I was employed by the Inter-American Institute for Co-operation in Agriculture (IICA) as the Head of Multinational Programmes, Policy and Trade.

After serving in that job for seven and a half (7 ½) years, I was invited by the Regional Negotiation Machinery (RNM), an arm of the CARICOM Secretariat, to serve as a consultant to the RNM in the area of International Trade and Agricultural Policy Negotiations.

For this service, I was paid a consideration of USD\$2,500.00 a month. This was, in addition to my contractual salary package with IICA of over USD\$100,000.00 a year.

Owing to my qualifications and expertise, on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the RNM wrote the Director General of IICA requesting that I be seconded for a term of three (3) years to lead International Agricultural Negotiations and conduct analyses on behalf of the Region in the context of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations.

The Director General of IICA acceded to this request, even before the Cooperation Agreement was signed, and I began working with the RNM Agricultural Office in Trinidad in June 2000 and formally established the Office in early 2001 in the capacity of Head of RNM – ATNU. I was paid a salary of just over USD\$100,000.00 a year. This was in addition to the \$2,500.00 which was changed into a research and travel grant. The USD\$100,000.00 was to be paid from IICA and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) as a contribution to the RNM, which continued to pay me USD\$2,500.00/month.

In effect, I received two (2) sets of money from the outset. One was for my customary duties and the other was as a consultant later, changed to a travel and research grant.

By letter dated August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Trinidad & Tobago (T&T) wrote to the Chief Technical Advisor of the RNM to the effect that the RNM-ATNU was formally established in T&T with me as the Head and Lead negotiator.

I was issued an identification card bearing the number CRNM:01 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in T&T. This notation established me as Head of the Office, a member of an international organization and eligible for the same privileges and immunity as a diplomat of similar rank.

I functioned in that capacity until my appointment as Lead Advisor of the RNM at the Twelfth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of the Heads of Government in February 2001 in Barbados.

At this point it is important to establish the following:

- i. By letter dated March 2001, the Director General of IICA was again written to by the RNM's Chief Negotiator, requesting that the organization allow me to be appointed as Lead Technical Advisor as the decision of the CARICOM Heads - "...will extend Dr. Antoine's competence in the area of Trade Policy to other areas of negotiations, without reducing his emphasis in agriculture".

- ii. Accordingly, effective March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001, I assumed the additional responsibilities as Lead Technical Advisor of the RNM and was stationed in Barbados.

From that date, I was employed both as Lead Technical Advisor in Barbados and as Head of the Agricultural Trade Unit in T&T. These two appointments were the subject of separate contractual arrangements. The additional responsibilities attaching to the Lead Technical Advisor post paid me USD\$4,600.00 per month as salary and USD\$2,000 for housing. At that time, my total salary package was USD\$11,600.00 and USD\$2,000.00 in housing allowance.

These arrangements worked well until March 2002, when my salary was questioned by Mr. Bernal who came into the RNM as its Head and was concerned that I was earning more money relative to the Head of the Organisation.

This matter was then taken up by some of the Heads of Government, stimulated by a report prepared by Mr. Bernal containing allegations about me concerning which I was never advised. In consequence, I never had the opportunity to rebut those allegations. Even though I was a senior member of the RNM staff, subject to the CARICOM Secretariat Staff Rules and covered by the Protocol on Privileges and Immunities of the Community, I was denied the right to have this matter referred to the dispute resolution mechanism in CARICOM. The Staff Rules and Regulations were ignored. The Joint Disciplinary and Complaints Committee was never convened. I was never given the right to be heard, or to have someone from the staff association represent me, or to have the benefit of legal counsel, prior to the Report by Dr. Barnett. Indeed, the Secretary General, who has ultimate authority to discipline staff members, was never presented with a complaint by the RNM, nor did he have the opportunity to lead the process.

I state for the record that it was not the Community's finest hour.

Subsequently, and on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002, Prime Minister, Keith Mitchell wrote the Heads of Government and requested that "an independent Caribbean professional be given the opportunity to meet with the parties and resolve the matter in a spirit of fair play". The Heads of Government subsequently agreed to Dr. Mitchell's proposal at the CARICOM Summit held in Spain. Dr. Carla Barnett, then the Deputy Secretary General of CARICOM was asked to conduct an investigation of the matter and submit a report.

This she did by studying all the relevant documentation, meeting with all the parties concerned, examining all the allegations made against me and subjecting the documentation to the analysis of the Legal Division of the CARICOM Secretariat. In a twenty three page report dated July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2002, Dr. Barnett found as follows:

- a. In relation to the allegation of Dr. Antoine receiving two (2) salaries, the report concluded, see page [4], and the RNM agreed that I was correctly paid as Lead Technical Advisor of RNM at a salary of USD\$6,600.00 a month;
- b. That the RNM intended to pay Dr. Antoine [*me*] the salary of USD\$7,000.00 per month for undertaking the duties of Agricultural Trade Specialist and that such was sanctioned by both the CDB and IICA (the funding agencies);
- c. That the arrangements between the RNM and Dr. Antoine in respect of the position of Lead Technical Advisor and the arrangements in respect of the Agricultural Trade Negotiation Unit (ATNU) were guided by two (2) separate agreements between the RNM and Dr. Antoine.

The further allegation made against me that I had allocated pension and insurance benefits to myself were summarily dismissed by Dr. Barnett who found that the RNM/IICA Co-operation Agreement was not clearly worded and “that this contributed to some confusion over where the responsibility lay for deducting and paying statutory contributions and benefits on behalf of Dr. Antoine. [See paragraph 25 of the report].

The allegation of my receiving additional salary was a non-issue, as Dr. Barnett found that my salary of USD\$6,600.00 as paid by the RNM to me was the subject of an explicit contract. There was never disagreement of this position. [See paragraph 11 page 4 of Dr. Barnett’s report].

Notwithstanding Dr. Barnett’s report which vindicated my position, there was some two (2) years after the report, correspondence passing between the then Prime Minister of Jamaica and Ms. Billie Miller, the Foreign Minister of Barbados, which seemed to reopen the allegations in part, if not in whole.

At that stage, my legal counsel indicated to the CARICOM Secretary General, that I was **only** prepared to be bound by the Barnett report and accepted its recommendations for closure of the matter.

Then and subsequently, I continued to enjoy the confidence of the CARICOM Secretariat and of many Heads of Government throughout the Caribbean. As evidence of this, I have led and conducted several studies in the context of the European Partnership Agreement (EPA) and other trade policy issues on behalf of member states and the Organization of East Caribbean States (OECS) and CARICOM Secretariats.

I wish to make it clear beyond doubt that contrary to what is alleged by Ms. Billie Miller in one paragraph of her letter and contradicted in another, there was never any concession on my part in relation to any of the allegations. Insofar as Ms. Billie claimed to have been acting pursuant to a mandate, it is significant that she does not say who gave her that mandate. I'm correctly advised by my legal team that such a mandate could not have come from the Heads of Government, or from any individual Prime Minister, for neither has any authority to investigate a senior member of the CARICOM Secretariat. Only the CARICOM Secretary General can initiate any such investigation. Clearly, Ms. Miller was misadvised or was acting on a frolic of her own.

I have been advised that even as I write, strenuous efforts are being made by Government agents to trump-up more propaganda, this time regarding transparent payments made by IICA to the Government of Grenada to support my tour-of- duty at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

To assist in this futile pursuit, I advise as follows:

- i. I was seconded by IICA to the Government of Grenada in 2002 for two (2) years in the first instance. An amount of USD\$20,000.00 was secured from IICA to support my work with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was to be used as pension and/or as a travel and research grant.
- ii. The Government of Grenada undertook to pay my pension contribution and the sum of USD\$20,000.00 was later used as a research and travel grant. All payments to me were supported by Cabinet decisions executed by the relevant Permanent Secretaries. At no point did I pay myself, as some seem to think.

There is no mystery in any of this. There is no need for propaganda. It is as simple as related.

I thought it necessary to write at length and expose for all to see the baselessness of the allegations made against me and likely to be made. The so-called dispute as resurrected by your newspaper, the “New Today” was the creation of others. At all times I conducted myself with honour and I have nothing to hide, or of which to be ashamed. In this entire episode, my rights were violated and both my counsel and the Barnett Report advised me against taking legal action against the Community. The warmth of the embrace given me by CARICOM Heads and the CARICOM Secretariat thereafter strengthened my view that that was the correct judgment.

Insofar as your article was intended to inhibit me, I promise you most faithfully, Mr. Editor, that I shall continue to speak without fear or hesitation on all public issues in Grenada on which my informed analysis is sought.

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

**Dr. Patrick Antoine**