

POLITICAL PARTY AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING IN DOMINICA¹

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I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

A) POPULATION AND NUMBER OF VOTERS

The Commonwealth of Dominica is twenty-nine (29) miles long, and sixteen (16) miles wide with an area of 289 square miles and a population of less than 75,000 persons of which approximately ten thousand form a community of Indigenous Caribs living in the designated Carib Territory of some 3,000 acres of land in the north east of the island. Caribs may however live wherever they chose and mix freely with the remainder of the population which is of mixed African ancestry.

In the most recent General Election, held January 31, 2000, a total of 36,264 persons or 60.17% of the total of 60,266 registered electors voted. This represented a drop in voter participation from the 1995 general elections in which 37,563 persons or 65.18% of the 57,632 registered electors voted. The 1990 general elections registered 50,557 electors of which 33,693 or 66.64% voted.²

The first general elections under Universal Adult Suffrage were held October 31, 1951. There were eight (8) constituencies; and thirty-one (31) independent candidates contested the elections. Every person of age 21 years was qualified to register and vote, regardless of income and level of literacy, and seventy-five percent (75%) or 17,680 of the 23,288 registered persons voted. The number of constituencies was increased from eight to eleven (11) in 1959 and to twenty-one (21) in 1973. In 1971 the voting age was lowered to eighteen (18) years.

B) NUMBER OF MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES AND CLEAVAGE

There were still no formal political parties contesting the 1954 and 1957 Elections (the second under the 1951 Constitution and third elections under Universal Adult Suffrage), only loose associations formed merely for the purpose of Elections and which disbanded shortly thereafter. The first formal party was launched in 1955 but did not solidify its organisation outside of Parliament until the fourth general election of 1961, when five parties contested. Only the Dominica Labour Party (6 seats) and the Dominica United Peoples Party (4 seats) captured the votes. These two parties also dominated the next General Election (10 – 1) of 7th January 1966: the fifth contested under adult suffrage and the second under the 1959 constitution.

The October 1970 election was the sixth under suffrage and the first under that Associated Statehood with Great Britain Constitution of 1967. The next General Election

¹ The opinions expressed in this document do not reflect the official position of the Organization of American States.

² Commonwealth of Dominica Report on the House of Assembly General Elections 1990, 1995, 2000

took place March 1975³. Successive elections were in 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995 and 2000 under the Constitution Order of 1978. General Elections are constitutionally due January 2005 in Dominica.

There are no significant ideological or ethnic cleavages among the existing parties of which there are currently four - the Dominica Labour Party, the Dominica Freedom Party, the United Workers Party and the Dominica Progressive Force. Since 1961 the political landscape has been dominated by two parties; others have been short lived. Three parties contested the 1970 elections in which the Dominica Freedom Party gained two seats and became the Opposition. The third party got one seat and the ruling party eight seats.

In the post-colonial politics of 1970 - 1990 the main parties could only be loosely described as class differentiated because both had upper class leadership. The Dominica Labour Party was closely associated with the Dominica Trade Union in its early years and has always had more grass roots appeal than the Freedom Party which is closely aligned to the propertied upper class and influential segment of the private sector. However, as with the DLP, persons from all classes are members of the Freedom Party.

The 1990 – 2000 period is marked by lack of a dominant party. Freedom Party has lost much ground to the Dominica United Workers Party which is of more humble origins and attractive to the educated elite. This party become the official Opposition in 1990, formed the government in 1995 but did not endure itself to Dominicans as evidenced by their refusal to grant it a consecutive term in office. The Dominica Labour Party gained a very narrow edge over the DUWP in 2000. The DLP's loss of two party leaders within a single office term⁴ has increased the vulnerability of this party and brought to the fore the youngest Prime Minister in the region. The Dominica Progressive Force projects a radical persona that does not resonate with the electorate. It gained 74 votes in the 1990 elections and is not taken seriously as a party.

None of the parties espouse a clear national economic, political and social ideology through which Dominica as a nation state will propel the well-being of its citizens and mediate the exigencies of global reconfigurations. None of the parties appear seized of a role larger than competing with each other for efficient management of state apparatus.

C) STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Dominica become an independent nation 3rd Nov. 1978 and took on the name Commonwealth of Dominica as a sovereign democratic republic within the British Commonwealth. Dominica is a parliamentary democracy based on the Westminster model. The outcomes of General Elections are determined by first past the post in which the winner takes all. The Parliament is made up of the President and the House of Assembly. The President is the Head of State, ceremonially symbolizing the collective power of the people of Dominica, and is therefore elected by the House of Assembly to hold office for five a term of five years. The President is appointed by the Prime Minister, following

³ House of Assembly of Dominica Procedure and Working Methods, Marie Davis Pierre, Clerk of the House, 1975

⁴ Prime Minister Rosie Douglas died suddenly nine months into his term; Prime Minister Pierre Charles died January 6, 2004. Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit is 34 years of age.

consultation with the Leader of the Opposition; and exercises executive authority on the advice of the Cabinet, or a Minister acting under the general authority of the Cabinet.

The Parliament is unicameral and comprises, the President being male, of **25 men and 7 women**. The House of Assembly is made up of the Speaker, twenty-one (21) elected representatives (one for each constituency) and nine (9) appointed senators. The government is made up of 13 elected representatives and five appointed senators. The elected representatives hold the positions of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries. Senators may be appointed to Cabinet but this restricted to a maximum of three. The Opposition consists of 9 elected members and 4 appointed senators.

Dominica has had a system of Local Government since 1896 which currently consists of 38 Village Councils, 2 Town Councils, one Urban Council, and the Carib Council. The Roseau, and Portsmouth Town Councils each have a three year term of office and comprise eight members elected by residents of these towns and five members appointed by the Minister of Local Government. The Urban and Village Councils also serve a three-year term but have five members elected by residents and three appointed by the Minister. The Carib Council has a five-year term, is composed of seven elected members including the Carib Chief for whom separate elections are held.

A woman is currently serving in the Carib Council for the first time in one hundred years. Each Village and Town Council has at least two women Councilors based on the current government's policy of appointing two women where none have been elected. Two Councils have five women, eight Councils have four, and the others three or two women. A woman is the Chairperson of some Councils.

II. NATURE OF FINANCING

A) THE POLITICAL PARTIES

Four political parties sought a leadership mandate in the General Elections of 1990 while three parties and two Independents contested in 1995; the same three parties and one Independent sought power in 2000. The Dominica Progressive Force (then Party) did not contest the last two elections but seems to be regrouping for contest in 2005.

The Labour Party of Dominica, inaugurated in 1955, governed the country from 1961 to 1979. It led the former Crown Colony to the status of an Associated State with Great Britain in 1967 and full Political Independence in 1978. The party has survived the vagaries of executive ambitions, internal splits, and leadership errors; languishing in political Opposition for twenty years before being returned to power in the 2000 general election with a narrow one-seat majority over the 1995 government. This delicate balance of power forced the Labour Party into a Coalition Government with its historical arch-rival, the Freedom Party, in order to strengthen its hand over the Dominica United Workers Party.⁵

⁵ Election results 2000: DLP – 10, DFP – 2, DUWP – 9 of which 1 female subsequently crossed over to DLP. 1 male withdrew from DFP

Formed in 1968 and holding sway in the Roseau Town Council (Local Government), the Dominica Freedom Party was to wait out its time in Opposition from 1970 until the Labour Party blundered into disrepute and made possible the inevitable election of a “bourgeois” party by the urban and rural working class in 1980. Invested with the widespread expectation that a cadre of professionals from the propertied class would bring respectability and progress to Dominica after the fiasco of the previous regime, the Freedom Party served three consecutive terms – its popularity ebbing with successive elections. It was voted out in 1995 and only secured two seats in the January 2000 General Elections. As part of the coalition government it was allowed to appoint two senators. Its position further weakened in the government when one of its elected members withdrew his support and now sits in the House as an Independent Opposition Parliamentarian.

The Dominica United Workers Party emerged as the alternative that ousted the Freedom Party from office in 1995, but was edged out of a second term in 2000 despite mounting, what is considered, the most lavish election campaign ever seen in Dominica. Much of its largesse, “culture of giving everything free”, is thought to have resulted from a free hand with LPOs (Local Purchase Orders – the government’s credit note) over which the DUWP would have had full control during the campaign period. The private sector was flooded with LPOs for the purchase of building materials, furniture and appliances that were ostensibly meant for various departments of government but this destination was suspect given the timing, nature and volume of purchases.

The Labour Party made much of “corruption” during that campaign but the matter ceased to occupy public attention with the conclusion of general elections as Dominicans focused on the plans and promises of the Labour Party to revive an ailing economy. Shocked at the abrupt passing of the new prime minister nine months into office, they are sympathetic to the challenges that the government faces regarding the economy but angered by the prospect of another dose of the IMP prescription. The nature, extent and sources of financing of political parties and political campaigns appear to have been a flitting concern – limited to campaign periods.

Professional parties with salaried staff responsible for continuous programmes of voter education, membership recruitment, constituency mobilization, monitoring electoral lists, and media activities designed to keep the party in the public eye between campaigns do not exist in Dominica. Each party has a modest office and functions on the volunteer services of its executive and supporters.

Regulation of political parties and campaign financing is not currently applicable to the Commonwealth of Dominica. Beyond a limited concern about the leftist connections of the party leader who came into office in the year 2000, and recognition that private sector support of political campaigns imply preferential contracts, concessions, and other special benefits, sources of campaign financing have not been sufficiently an issue to merit the attention of legislators, political parties and the media.

No legislation currently exists to limit campaign expenses, require disclosure of sources of funds, promote equitable visibility among candidates, increase the candidacy of women, or provide for the collection of data for policy interventions. Respondents rejected

the idea of public funds contributing to the viability of parties or campaigns on the basis of state poverty and the propensity for such a system to lead to corruption⁶.

Corruption is a perennial topic for sensationalizing political campaigns but not an allegation spurring any serious investigation. Illegal money is not suspected to be a source of campaign financing and the notion of legislation to monitor a party's finances failed to capture much interest.

B) EFFECTS OF THE FINANCING SYSTEM

Government intervention to ensure financial sustainability of parties has never been considered in Dominica perhaps due to the historical origins and support bases of the two parties that, until the late eighties, dominated the political landscape. Such laws as exist pertain to the powers and duties of the Elections Office in effecting free and fair elections. The Constitution of Dominica places responsibility for practiced elections on the Electoral Commission, as the overall supervisory body, and on the Chief Elections Officer for the day to day management of the all matters related to elections. The Constitution also established a Constituency Boundaries Commission which reviews constituency boundaries in accordance with rules laid down by the Constitution.

The principal Election Legislations are the House of Assembly (Elections) Act Chapter 2:01 and the Registration of Electors Act, Chapter 2:03 of the Revised Laws of Dominica (1990 Edition). The latter deals specifically with the registration of electors to vote at an Election. The Laws of Dominica Chap.2:01 House of Assembly (Elections) Part 75, authorizes that "all expenses properly incurred by, and all remuneration and traveling allowances payable to election officers shall be defrayed out of general revenue." Expenditure for elections given in the official report of Chief Elections Officer is specific to the Electoral Office. Beyond this assurance the law retreats from any interference with candidate, party or campaign expenses leaving the field wide open for all to compete as their purses allow, with no form of financial assistance from the state.

In June of 2003 the Integrity in Public Life Act (No. 6 of 2003), passed in the House of Assembly on 30th April, 2003, was gazetted. The Act has bearing on the conduct of all civil servants, persons appointed to serve on Statutory Boards and Commissions, Cabinet Officials, Parliamentarians and other Public Officials. The Integrity in Public Life Act makes provisions for the monitoring of assets of all high level officials. Parts I and II of the First Schedule of the Act lists the offices in respect of persons in Public Life. A total of 22 categories of persons are listed in the Act. In addition to the Ministers of Government and Parliamentarians, the act identifies offices such as Advisors to Government Ministers, the Superintendent of Prisons, Chairpersons of Public Institutions, Chief technical Officers, General Managers of Public Institutions, Gazetted Police Officers, the Parliamentary Commissioner, Permanent Secretaries, and the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

These officers are required to declare their assets annually and to explain certain levels of gifts given or received to the Integrity Commission. Section 14(1) of the Act provides for the disclosure of assets, incomes and liabilities of "every person in public life". Section 14(1) of the act also includes provisions for the declaration of assets of spouses and

⁶ Dr. Pat Emmanuel, Caricom Perspective– January-June 1992

children “acquired through or traceable to” the income of the public official. There are no differences in the disclosure provisions between Ministers, either elected or appointed, and high level officials.

Such disclosure as is required by the recent Act is not for public scrutiny but a private matter to be ventilated only in the courts, should a complaint be lodged against anyone for failing to comply fully with the requirements of the Act. The Act provides for the establishment of an Integrity Commission to oversee its implementation however it should be noted that the Integrity in Public Life Act has only recently been passed, and none of its provisions, including the setting up of the Integrity Commission itself, have been acted upon. Institutions, and even the regulations for putting this Act into effect are still pending.

Dominica is in the throes of an acute economic crisis and is under formal arrangements with the International Monetary Fund to undertake structural adjustment measures, with a heavy emphasis on reductions in Government expenditure. Among the more austere of the measures undertaken have been reductions in the salaries of public servants. Given the tight economic situation in Dominica, the public officials interviewed were unable to give a clear indication of the time when the provisions of the act were expected to be acted upon.⁷

In addressing the matter of corruption on which the Labour Party campaigned in 2000, the government has steered clear off the financing of political parties and campaigns and confined itself to the integrity of persons in public office. The government has avoided regulating corporations and individuals outside its employ or service in respect of their financial and property status. Political parties are therefore still free to seek and manage their finances as they are able and there are no regulations or limitations governing their sources of funds.

The issues with which this research is preoccupied failed to excite party officials, media personnel and members of Parliament interviewed. Equity and fairness are felt to obtain in the fact that all candidates are fully apprised of the risks and costs implied in offering themselves for public office. Election results are seen to be a function of a party’s performance in office, more so than of campaign efforts, since Dominicans vote for parties rather than individuals and usually allow a party at least two terms in office to prove itself. There is a general view that no party is at a disadvantage on the basis of financing since extravagance in a campaign titillates voters but does not necessarily entice their confidence.

The system as it stands – in which no ceiling exists on the amount of funds that may be consumed by an election, and no public funds are contributed to party upkeep – insulates the population from excessive opportunism; that is, parties are not formed due to ease of access to public monies, state guarantees of resources or any other privileges that impinge on the public purse. In other words, each party bears its full opportunity cost instead of sponging off tax-payers. General and By- Elections have always been called when constitutionally due and the phenomena of early or spot general elections have not ruffled political order in the country, so surprises are few. Plans for financing the next campaign

⁷ Interview with Hon.. Henry Dyer, Attorney General of Dominica

therefore begin as soon as election results are officially declared – parties being confident of their sources of funds and in-kind assistance from their supporters.

Escalating costs associated with the new media dimension of campaigns provoked a former candidate's observation that money is easily spent during an election campaign then for two years thereafter a government is struggling to stabilize the economy. One party official argued that setting limits on party financing and electoral campaigning could open up the possibility of external agents buying out an election. "A wealthy source could simply hijack a party" he said.

Speculation about 'hijack' could quite possibly be associated with resource limitations for maintaining party vigour between elections. Money is just not available for stimulating party activities such as membership drives, members' education, branch organization, and leadership training. Financing of campaigns have become challenging in light of the poor performance of the economy since the early 1990s and the new media intensive style. The highly competitive political stance taken by the party formerly in power, and rumors that a wealthy individual has been providing the salaries of public servants in another Caribbean territory where the government is also in financial difficulty are perhaps factor influencing the this viewpoint from a party that has known better days.

A government official assessed that in a small polity like Dominica regulations for distribution of resources, and prohibitions and limits on financing would present a burden on the state due to its lack of resources to donate to candidates, or, to ensure compliance and enforcement of laws. The state would be creating a minefield of abuses that would make a mockery of the policy.

A private sector contributor to campaign financing did not find disclosure laws desirable. He was sure that they would effectively reduce private sector donations – donors being accustomed to a culture of privacy, but would probably not affect the in kind assistance of the British Labour Party and the International Democrats Union to which local parties are affiliated. These □racted□ons provide flyers, streamers, publish manifestoes and other printed matter to support the campaign of their affiliates. Their contribution are made visible by the logos alongside that of the party they assist. Dominicans resident abroad are members of these □racted□ons and are often the lobby and conduit for these kinds of assistance.

C) THREATS TO THE FINANCING SYSTEM

The cost of electoral activities has increased for the state, for political parties, and for candidates with each successive election. However nationals overseas and international affiliate bodies are a ready source of both cash and other forms of support to all parties. Party informants and donors also attested that the private sector tends to support all parties, apportioning larger donations to the party assessed as most likely to win. Although the business community may have favoured a particular party with its financial resources in the past, the obvious declining popularity of this party would have advised against the usual financial contributions. Financial constraints prevented the party from fielding a full slate of

candidates⁸ in the 2000 elections. In any case contributions to parties are always made with the expectation of obtaining special business concessions such as contracts, subsidies, and tax waivers.

The Labour Party has its base among the masses, and party branches contribute in kind and cash from fund-raising activities undertaken at the constituency level. Candidates depend as much on their own resourcefulness as on the central party fund financed through loans. The Freedom Party has its origins in the middle class and had little difficulty financing its campaigns until 2000 when it was unable to command a modicum of confidence. The United Workers Party straddles all classes and appeared the most endowed in the last election.

Media sources hold that the quantum of campaign expenditure bears little resemblance to party results at the polls. The governing party may be thought to have an advantage in having access to and control of state resources, yet parties have been voted out of office. An example was cited in the DUWP, which had won when the party appeared to spend the same amount as other parties and lost when its campaign spending surpassed the others. In that instance the party faced the accusation of abuse of Local Purchase Orders for campaign purposes; a charge from which it is still hoping to clear its image. However the suggestion that campaign financing for any party might be derived from illegal activities such as asset laundering, corruption, or drug trafficking had no currency with persons on the street, electoral and party officials, or media personnel.

D) QUANTIFICATION OF FINANCING

The culture of privacy, reinforced by the absence of requirements for public disclosure, predispose political parties to guard their financing information against the eventuality of it being made available to other parties. This precaution goes as far as not reporting to party branches given the possibility of changes in party membership. Party officials and known contributors in the private sector were suspicious of the attempt to quantify the cost of an election and sought to keep that information private. The media was equally cautious about divulging information as to what a particular party had spent on advertising. Without access to records for comparing sources and destination of resources it is not possible to accurately and conclusively determine exact costs of campaigns beyond the average figures that respondents were willing to offer.

The ratio of candidate expenditure to party expenditure is not direct. The Party's contribution to each candidate varies and depends on the collective party assessment of what is required in each constituency. Additionally candidates are expected to raise as much funds as they can from various sources. Therefore the aggregate total expenditure for all candidates exceeds the party total. Seventy per cent (70%) of one candidate's campaign funds came from a party in 1990; 50% came from the party in 1995; and 30% came from the party in 2000. In another party the ratio of party contribution to a candidate's total budget was similar: 70% in 1990, 50% in 1995, and 50% in 2000.

The above suggests that as candidates become more experienced they are expected to raise more funds while newer candidates receive more assistance from the party.

⁸ The Freedom Party fielded only 12 candidates in 2000

Table I Estimated Costs of Political Financing DOMINICA

Year	Units	United Workers Party	United Workers Party	Dominica Labour Party	Dominica Labour Party	Freedom Party	Free Dom Party
		US\$	EC\$	US\$	EC\$	US\$	EC\$
1990	Candidate	18,726.59	50,000	37,453.18	100,000	74,906.37	200,000
	Party	561,797.75	1,500,000	224,719.10	600,000	337,531.84	1,000,000
1995	Candidate	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000
	Party	561,797.75	1,500,000	337,531.84	1,000,000	337,531.84	1,000,000
2000	Candidate	37,453.18	100,000	37,453.18	100,000	18,726.59	50,000
	party	1,123,595.50	3,000,000	561,797.75	1,500,000	224,719.10	600,000

Compiled by Cecilia Babb from estimated costs shared by informants. The researcher did not have access to party documentation.

The Dominica Labour Party, the oldest party, has a culture of candidates raising most of their campaign funds while the Party takes a loan from any commercial bank to cover basic party budget lines. Article 22 of the DLP Constitution enables its National Council to “borrow from any source on such security and such terms of repayment as it deems fit,” but does not specify the purposes for which such borrowing may be made. The campaign loan is usually guaranteed more on the personal standing of the party leader than the Council and is repaid from proceeds of diverse fund-raising efforts by the party up to the time of the next election. While loans appear to be the main source of financing the DLP’s central party campaign budget, it seems that it is the candidates in the other parties who take this risk. The Constitution and Rules of the DUWP also authorizes its General Council (Article 18: (7) to “borrow such funds as it deems necessary for the operations of the Party on such repayment terms and security available to it.” By comparison the Constitution of the DFP allows the Executive Committee the power of “raising and expenditure of funds,” subject to various veto powers of the Party Council and guidelines of the Delegates Conference or the Convention.

The cost of Elections reported by the Chief Elections Officer is spread over three to four years and covers payments to Election Officers, making of additional ballot boxes, transportation, ink, stationery, furniture, advertisements, printing of forms, rentals of duplicator/copier, fans, batteries, lamps, sponges, traveling and subsistence. It explains that this expenditure is spread over three to four years.

Elections Expenditure reported for Elections Office

Years	EC\$	US\$
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1990	257,069.09	96,280.56
1995	376,065.66	140,848.56
2000	605,423.00	226,750.19

Source: Election reports 1990, 1995, 2000; Conversion rate: US\$1 =EC\$ 2.67

Financing in kind, especially the voluntary work of women, is estimated to equal that of cash donations/expenditures. All party officials and candidates attest to women being the backbone, hands and feet of their campaign and electoral successes. If women's contributions in the areas of voter contact (door to door canvassing, rallies, motorcades, conventions), fund-raising, production and dissemination of campaign materials, media advertising, and election day activities were all quantified they would amount to a substantial sum. However, no such values were divulged. The exact numbers of women making these contributions per party could not be ascertained. While party membership figures were not available for comparison popular opinion within parties and among candidates is that women comprise the bulk of membership and the majority of these women are very involved in the campaign activities. Male leaders attest that is women who really win them the elections.

Table II Greater costs on the campaign year 2000 in DOMINICA

Items	Freedom	Freedom	Labour	Labour	United Workers	United Workers
	US\$	EC\$	US\$	EC\$	US\$	EC\$
Transportation	74,906.37	200,000	187,265.91	500,000	187,265.91	500,000
Media Ads	45,318.35	121,000	116,479.40	311,000	149,812.73	400,000
Rallies	33,707.87	90,000	74,906.37	200,000	149,812.73	400,000
Vote buying (gifts)	Not disclosed	Not disclosed	Not disclosed	Not disclosed	Not disclosed	Not disclosed
Staff salaries	Least cost/not quantified	Least cost/not quantified	Least cost/not quantified	Least cost/not quantified	Least cost/not quantified	Least cost/not quantified
Totals	153,932.58	411,000	378,651.69	1,011,000	486,891.39	1,300,000

Compiled by Cecilia Babb from estimated costs shared by informants. The researcher did not have access to party documentation.

Notes

Campaigns 1990, 1995, 2000: transportation was named by all parties as the highest and increasing cost. Second was media advertising (tv. Radio, newspaper, special party publications). The costs of rallies include, T-Shirts, banners, posters, music, balloons and other paraphernalia. Supporters usually provide their own food. Party supporters/donors occasionally make direct contributions of T-Shirts or pay for ads directly to the company

rather than tendering cash to the party. Such donations are included in the quotes above and in the overall costs in table I.

Trade unions do not now seem to have the important role in political parties that they did in the past. This might be explained in terms of the demise of charismatic leaders who built their bases in trade unions, the financial weakening and loss of prestige by trade unions in the era of globalization, and the increasing appeal of the media as the choice of mass voter contact.

E) IMPORTANCE OF THE ISSUE IN THE COUNTRY

Parallel registration and unofficial activities seem not to be practiced in Dominica. Parties are known to conduct their business in compliance with established procedure and are not wont to disturb the staff of the Electoral Commission with anything other than the masses of logistical details that are the normal run of each General Election and By-Election. The issue of financing has not been given priority on the agenda of the electorate, central government, local government, political parties, or the media.

Dominica's undifferentiated economy has a small local private sector engaged primarily in commercial activities. Erosion of the agricultural and commercial bases of the economy on which the few families that previously controlled the political landscape derived their wealth has meant a corresponding decline in the concessionary benefits of campaign financing as stress in the economy is reflected in poverty of the state. This small group of traditional donors would perhaps have a vested interest in regulation of party and campaign financing in the context of a vibrant and expanding economy; but the weakening of the economy is accompanied by a loosening of the hold of the old light skinned upper class families on the balance of political power.

Political management of the island is gradually passing into the hands of a small, educated elite in the population; professionals who are the products of adult suffrage, the first decades of development and the banana boom, rather than planter class families. As the cost of financing political parties and campaigns becomes more challenging the issue of regulating party and campaign financing might become evident.

III. ACCESS TO THE MEDIA

A) NO LAWS EXIST ON ACCESS TO THE MEDIA

Dominica's two television and four radio stations, as well as the three weekly newspapers are all privately owned. One of the radio stations is devoted to gospel music; another is a statutory corporation. There are no laws, policies or regulations that limit or control media access by political candidates or parties. All parties have an equal chance of their activities being reported as news items. Free "talk shows" provide additional non-partisan opportunities for exposure.

The tendency of one radio station to support whichever party is in Opposition – giving preferential airtime and regular slots is tolerated as the right of a privately owned entity to make its corporate choices. Each government makes more use of the national radio

station – a statutory corporation - than other media. One might suspect that government can more readily negotiate credit than other parties. The shareholders of a certain newspaper are stalwarts of a particular party; but in the absence of any laws regulating media access and use it is all free and fair.

Largely, media access, like other aspects of campaigning, is regulated by the market where the ability to pay, attract sponsors, and negotiate discounts determine the amount of newspaper space, air or viewing time a party or candidate will acquire. Analysis of party advertising appearing in newspapers in the run-up and during the election month of January 2000 revealed party/newspaper alignments. Since rates across the three newspapers show no wide disparity, use patterns are indicative either of a party's assessment of value for money in terms of readership, or historical allegiances.

The opportunity for similar analysis of electronic cassettes and videotapes did not present however the information from sales managers and accounting departments of radio and television stations suggested a similar use pattern. Radio and television rates were also in tandem and use of particular entities bore the same correlations either with value for money, or party preferences.

Probing into party access to the Government Information Services (GIS) revealed that while there are no laws granting the ruling party greater control and easier access, exposure of the Opposition on GIS is rare and its requests for use of GIS are not treated impartially despite the institutional policy guidelines providing for equal access by all Parliamentarians. As a case in point members of the Opposition do not even get to record Independence or Christmas messages on GIS.

GIS prepares its own programmes but for lack of its own station these have to be aired on privately owned media. In recent times television is the preferred medium but that is available at market prices. The state gains advantage of more media exposure only insofar as it pays or acquires credit. An observer from the media offered the opinion that the longest serving government had made extensive use of the GIS yet there was no evidence that this had given it any advantage at the polls. It was suggested that the large majority of viewers of voting age chose entertainment packages over programmes promoting a government's performance. Government propaganda seems not to offer advantages; the Opposition does not lose anything by lack of access to GIS.

B) FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, FREEDOM TO DO BUSINESS

Media houses usually ensure use of neutral language, and, for their own protection, screen the content of party advertisements to expunge any libelous material. In that context the concern is for corporate profits in both the short and long term. Freedom of expression is upheld by good taste and discretion: vulgarity and misinformation will bring a media entity into disrepute. The liberties taken on the campaign platform are not permitted on the television, radio, or in the press. An article submitted to a newspaper will be printed to the extent that the editor judges the topic to be of current public value, and subject to the availability of space.

The possibility of conflict, inequity, or bias by public, private or civic organisations donating print space, air or viewing time does not arise since there are no such institutions. There are no regulated programmes or time slots. Each party is free to exercise its better judgment and preference. Likewise each media establishment may accept or reject business at its discretion.

C) EFFECTIVENESS OF NON-LEGAL MECHANISMS FOR ACCESS TO THE MEDIA

There are no formal agreements among actors to conduct clean campaigns. The Christian Council usually issues a Code of Conduct by which it hopes candidates and parties will be guided but this has had little effect on the Caribbean style of campaigning which focuses on personalities rather than issues. Name calling at public meetings and rallies continues to be an issue of public concern.

The media upholds its own standards of corporate excellence in a competitive market thereby reducing to a minimum the possibility of carrying items that may offend public morals or good taste. The tendency of one radio station to favour **any** party in Opposition has the value, de facto, of advertising a different point of view for the entire period between General Elections. The media carries, as news items, the findings of polls and surveys that have been conducted by political parties or external agents. Polls are not common practice in Dominica and party polls are considered dubious and unscientific.

Electoral debate that brings the leaders of all three parties to the same platform is a very recent feature of political campaigning in Dominica; so much so that none of the interview respondents could remember exactly who brought them together in 2000 or the quality of the debate. One has to assume that the moderator of the debate would have set guidelines for its conduct and had some expertise and commitment to keeping the discussion focused on issues.

Newspaper articles and radio or television programmes are pre-recorded for the express purpose of editing out any undesirable messages and statements. Even when a party or candidate prepares its own material these are subjected to the guidelines of the media house, although these are business transactions in which the client is paying for the service. Access to quality advertising is equitable in that all ads are locally produced therefore the same technology and competences are available to all parties and candidate provided they have the ability to pay.

D) QUANTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF SPENDING IN THE MEDIA

The government does not make any financial or in-kind contributions to media advertising for candidates or parties. Intensity of the media campaign is determined by party and candidate budgets, and occasional donations by party supporters.

When all media is taken as a whole the amounts spent by each party for the year 2000 campaign ranged from US\$**45,318.35** to US\$**116,479.40** to US\$**149,812.73** (Table II, page 10). These figures included all forms of printed matter as well as newspaper, radio and

television. Parties seem not to have spent any money on surveys, polls, or debates in the past General or By-Election. Talk shows afford them some free media opportunities between campaigns.

Rates are fairly comparable across all media as may be seen from table III below. On average, electromagnetic costs range from US\$5.62 per second to US\$224.72 and US\$299.63 per hour. Coverage of rallies will normally be at US\$374.53 to US\$561.80 per hour depending on the distance from the capital (where most media houses are located). A one inch strip on a newspaper's front-page bearing the party slogan can cost US\$54.30, while a full colour inside page ad is US\$299.63. A double page spread in full colour costs US\$561.80. Costs for radio, television, and press are fairly comparable. No internet costs could be obtained.

Electoral campaigning in Dominica still relies on the traditional release of party manifestoes; widespread distribution of T-Shirts and stickers bearing party slogans, and picture posters of candidates; door-to-door contact by candidates; and mass events such as rallies, motorcades, and public meetings. It was in 1990 that the Freedom Party first mounted a media intensive campaign that departed from the usual double spread picture ad of the full slate of candidates in each newspaper. The DUWP appears to have planned a similar strategy and the Labour Party felt compelled to compete in the media where rates are calculated according to the number of people they are estimated to reach.

Table III Comparative media rates

Media	Pro-gramme s	US\$ costs	TV News slots	US\$ Costs	Other coverage	US\$ costs	Community Bulletin	US\$ costs	
RADIO	½ hour	112.3	Morning	28.08	FULL DAY	784.52	30 Words	5.62	
	1 hour	6	News			1123.6	31 – 60	9.36	
		187.2	7	112.3		0	61 – 90	13.1	
		224.7	Local news	6			91 – 120	1	
		299.6	2			1872.6	121 –150	16.8	
		374.5	3	Before News		37.45		5	37.4
		524.3	4	10.00p m News		37.45			5
		599.2	5						
RADIO	Other slots	US\$ costs					What's On	US\$ costs	
	5 Mins						45 words	9.36	
	10 Min	28.08					46-70	18.7	
	15 min	46.82						3	
		65.54							
	60 sec.	14.23							

	45 sec	9.36						
	30 sec	8.24						
	15 sec	5.99						
Another radio station	15 Sec.	16.85						
		22.47						
	30 Sec.	22.47						
<i>A TV's radio channel</i>	5 mins				<i>TV</i>	7.49		
	10 mins	56.18			<i>graphic channel</i>	9.36		
	15 mins	112.3			<i>Full day</i>	11.24		
		6				13.11		
		168.5			<i>Crawls at nights</i>	11.24		
	4							
TV Stations	1 hour	224.7	Local news	56.18	<i>30 sec Ads in Talk shows</i>	41.20		
		2		–		48.69		
				74.91		56.18		
		272.1			<i>in Soaps</i>	28.09		
		7				20.60		
						14.98		

For additional information see brochures of rates for SAT TV and MARPIN TV enclosed in courier package

E) CONTROL CAPACITY OF THE AUTHORITIES

None of the concerns detailed in relation to control capacity may be elaborated here as there is no legislation to be enforced. Party or candidate access to the media is not part of the responsibilities of the Electoral Commission. No ad hoc group has been created to supervise the use of electromagnetic space. Issues of capacity, independence and neutrality do not arise in this context.

F) DISCLOSURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Disclosure of campaign financing and levels of expenditure is not expected in Dominica because it seems never to have been an issue; no motivating factors incite curiosity or appear to propel an investigation. Hence debate for or against disclosure has never been initiated as part of an election campaign previous to 2000, and it did not extend beyond the campaign period. The Electoral Commission is not charged with this function and the Integrity in Public Office Act does not treat with these issues. There are no laws, policies, regulations concerning these matters neither are they of public concern. Since no public funds are involved in the financing of political parties or their campaigns, neither government nor the public have prioritized disclosure or accountability in that regard.

Party constitution and rules address fund-raising and dues from members but do not treat financing of campaigns or disclosure of campaign funding neither in their main sections nor in the amendments that have been made over time. The media does not see any

necessity for disclosure largely because there have not been any scandals, stories or suspicions that anything underhand may be taking place to cause concern. Civil society organisations have not put this on their agendas and ordinary citizens are more concerned to have issue driven campaigns than they are to know who spent what with whose money. It is known that campaigns are financed by personal assets, donations from private firms, families of incumbents, loans and a range of contacts overseas.

Thus the status of regulatory policies and other information mechanisms; auditing and monitoring of financial reports; time for disclosure, and public access do not currently apply. Effective application or enforcement of political financing systems in Dominica is apparently an item for the future. It may be that in the course of implementing the Integrity in Public Office Act some of the concerns of this research will become important. In the meantime the quantity and quality of existing laws, nature, capacity and operation of regulatory agencies, structure and applicability of enforcement mechanisms and penalty systems, culture of compliance with and control of public monies will have to await further advancement in Dominica's political experience.

IV. OTHER REFERENCES FOR ANALYSIS

A) NO ONGOING REFORMS OR INITIATIVES

The one feature of political campaigning in Dominica that has been deplored again and again is the age-old practice of candidates deriding each other at public meetings. Citizens have called for a more issues based campaign and some people claim to have stopped attending political meetings because they are not impressed with the conduct of those offering themselves for leadership. No interest groups have made a serious drive for such a reform apart from the Dominica Christian Council which promoted an Election Code 1990.

The Code appealed for ethical and moral conduct by personnel of the media, citizens eligible to vote, and the clergy and detailed a number of commitments for each of these stakeholders. Principally, however the Code exhorted political parties, politicians and party supporters to agree to:

- Address issues and avoid character assassination and/or mud-slinging
- Avoid half-truths and misrepresentations which confuse and mislead
- Avoid language or behaviour that is intolerant of others on account of colour, sex or creed
- Uphold the laws of the country regulating the conduct of the elections
- Vigourously resist the temptation to use bribery or the threat of victimization in any form or fashion in order to gain votes or intimidate the electorate
- Discourage all persons from using walls and buildings for offensive inscriptions and graffiti
- Remember that those elected to office as Parliamentarians are called to be faithful stewards and that accountability in office should be their prime commitment.

B) ISSUES ON THE GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

The government has treated possible misuse public funds by passing the 2003 Integrity in Public Office Act.

C) GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Women have considerably lower participation in political leadership than males but nationally this is treated more as a matter of personal choice than of systemic or structural barriers. Both the public and male politicians share that view. The attitude derives mainly from a view that the island has a good record of female leadership at the highest level. Within seven years of the island's attainment of Universal Adult Suffrage a Dominican woman served as a government minister in the West Indies Federation government. A woman was a minister in the government which led the island in 1967 to Associated Statehood with Britain; and the longest serving prime minister since Independence was a woman. Five women have served as town mayors and the current Commissioner of Local Government is a woman.

The salient point is that women are not constrained by formal barriers; but this should not be interpreted as gender balance in Dominica's political decision making. Women form slightly more than 50% of the population, 50% of single household heads, 51% of persons living in poverty, and 55% of women have no formal income. Women's disproportionate presence in Parliament is a democratic deficit that can be corrected by improvements in our political culture.

The main impediment to female candidacy appear to be the adversarial and deceitful nature of politics in which character assassination is the norm, and campaign promises seem not intended to be kept. The culture of contention, controversy, and corruption is one which many women find too dirty to participate in at the highest level. Many women are actively discouraged by their families, relatives and friends from offering themselves as candidates for this very reason. Most women within parties share this view and discourage other women from offering themselves as candidates; however they do support the few women who risk the political platform.

This support however does not actually compensate for lack of campaign financing because it is really their time that female party members contribute. Campaign materials, media advertisements, and the pressure to do as much as the opposing candidates and parties conduce to make money absolutely necessary for campaigning. The giving of alcoholic drinks, paying of people's bills, provision of furniture and appliances, and other inducements usually dispensed to attract votes also absorb a lot of money. It is an aspect of campaigning with which potential women candidates are uncomfortable. Not only are women reluctant to raise money for these purposes but they also want to be voted on the basis of their competencies rather than gifts.

Financing systems do have an adverse effect on gender equity because women are very reluctant to approach the private sector for financial support. Within the framework of

gender relations in the Caribbean women are very conscious of the sexual undertones that taint the act of asking any man who is not a relative for money⁹; thus women shun fund-raising by direct requests to business owners. Women also detest the ‘kickback’ phenomenon and avoid seeking office if they are not assured of financing that is independent of implied commitments to pay donors back through the award of tenders¹⁰. Women therefore tend to prefer constituency and branch level public events fund-raising, personal loans, and family contributions to finance their campaigns but these forms are not devoid of their own risks.

No quotas or financial provisions have been established to ensure an increase in the number of women contesting elections. A former woman minister suggested, during interview, that campaign financing being a barrier to women’s participation in political leadership then female candidates should perhaps prioritize women in the private sector as a source of funding. Easier access to campaign money would not necessarily lead to higher levels of female candidacy because the core problem is with the political culture. Discussions with women suggest that campaigning based on issues would be a bigger attraction for women.

Electoral regulations offer women an equal chance to participate in politics and as noted earlier women have had vital roles in Dominica’s local and central governance structure. Similarly a woman has had a major role in the formation of each of the existing political parties. As a result each party treats women as viable candidates even if they make no special effort to persuade them to take up public office. In principle, they have as much access to party financing as do male candidates.

Both successful and unsuccessful female candidates attest that their parties treated them in a similar fashion to male candidates in their bid to secure a seat. That is to say they were not discriminated against on the basis of sex or gender in relation to selection or access to financial resources. None of the women who were unsuccessful at the polls felt it to be a consequence of lack of funding from their parties. Allocations to candidates are determined by the party’s assessment of its support base in a particular constituency. The amount of money allocated per constituency from party’s central campaign funds depends on what the executive estimates is required to persuade voters, or retain the ones already committed.

Anecdotal evidence does suggest that more women are interested in candidacy than have offered themselves due to the failure of political parties to firmly desist from making disparaging remarks about opponents on the political platform. Male candidates and party members generally view this simply as the rough and tumble feature of Caribbean politics, but women are reluctant to expose themselves to aspersions on their character especially as these allegations are usually made up on the spur of the moment to ridicule opponents and undermine their confidence. Political meetings are often sources of entertainment. Women are definitely deterred from pursuing Parliamentary positions by the payback attached to fundraising, and the adversarial style of politics.

⁹ In Caribbean culture, a man who is very irritated at his adult female relative asking him for financial assistance will retort, “where do you sleep?” A younger female relative will be cautioned more gently to refrain from asking.

¹⁰ Already referred to on pages 4, and 8

Gender receives very little attention in the media as an issue during campaign periods and there are no specific laws or proposals involving quotas or training and support mechanisms. However female candidates did express a high interest in being properly trained both to conduct successful issues based campaigns, and, to be effective policy makers. They would exert themselves to find the funds if the culture of politics would change for the better.

The Government of Dominica is a signatory to the 1995 Beijing Programme of Action which commits to increasing the participation of women in political decision-making. It is also bound by the subsequent decision to ensure a minimum quota of 30% women in Parliaments. Political parties have not made any obvious efforts to guarantee this percentage among their candidates and have left its attainment women who are largely unaware of these international agreements.

D) ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Advocacy for more women in political decision making, and training for women to enhance their confidence and chances as political candidates is the initiative of the women's section of civil society, but to date no real initiatives regarding their financing have been taken. In Dominica's context where the economy has been in decline for more than a decade it is very difficult for women's organisations to prioritize financing for women candidates over assisting poor women with daily survival. Wider civil society has not taken up issues of financing of political parties or their campaigns. There is no nongovernmental participation in control or defense of resources, and there are no programmes to educate the public and raise its awareness on this issue.

E) STATUS OF THE DEBATE AND EXISTING LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

Local studies have not been undertaken on the issue of campaign financing in the country, neither has it not received significant press coverage. This research exercise has shown that the subject is not of great interest to politicians, the general public or any social players at this point in time. All three parties are however challenged to finance programmes designed to invigorate the parties and keep them vibrant between elections.

F) LESSONS LEARNED

Political campaigning in Dominica is still evolving and has not reached the stage of being entirely centered on issues of national development. As citizens' demand for this gathers momentum matters of financing may come to the fore. It may also become an issue in the context of the liberalized Caribbean Single Market and Economy when more financial actors may impact on Dominica's legislative framework. In the meantime it is inadvisable to press this issue from outside since it did not feature in the constitutional review done in 1999. In Dominica's case economic viability presently transcend all other concerns and financing of political parties and campaigns will have to await its moment in time.

Persons Interviewed

Senator Josephine Dublin-Prince	Labour Party
Senator Doreen Paul	United Workers Party, former Minister
Cecil Joseph	Mayor of Roseau
Gerard Cools Latigue	President, Labour Party
Ron Green	United Workers Party, former Minister
Mrs Alix Boyd Knights	Speaker of the House of Assembly
Mrs. Phillips	Clerk of the House of Assembly
Hon. Henry Dyer	Attorney General
Johnson Boston	General Secretary, Freedom Party
Ms Royette Greenaway	Government Information Service
Morris Cyrille	Tropical Star newspaper
Charles James	The Sun Newspaper
Ms Nazarene Gordon	Marpin Television
Mart Peltier	Kairi FM Radio
Trevor Burton	Private Sector
Two persons did not keep the appointment for interview.	

Documents Enclosed in Courier Package

- 1 2003 Integrity in Public Office Act 6
- 2 Constitution and Rules The United Workers Party
- 3 Laws of Dominica Page 46 Chap.2:01 House of Assembly (Elections)
- 4 Government Information Service Mission Statement
- 5 Rates Brochures: MARPIN telecoms & Broadcasting Company Ltd
SAT Telecommunications Ltd.