

13th Sept. 2016

The Editor
Cayman Compass,
George Town, Grand Cayman.

Dear Editor

A CASE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR CAYMANIANS

I write this short contribution as a reflection of the Letter to the Editor of last Friday 9th September by Mr. Michael Allen, your Editorial of Monday 12th, and also against within the context of the positive development reported by Mr. Allen in today's Compass on his previous detailed and apparent gloomy account of Cayman's Human Capital state of readiness, or lack thereof.

In reflecting on this series of editorial commentary, and I am confident that our media (including our active Social Media) is also rich with discourse on the matter, I went to my bookshelf and withdrew a Book that I read about and 16 years ago, which I bought while on a trip with my wife in South East Asia (including Singapore); this excellent Book entitled "**Lee Kuan Yew, the Man and his Ideas**" (ISBN 981 201 049 8) is recommended reading for political and community leaders or anyone else who is interested in effective "nation building". Readers may recall that Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, who passed away in recent years, was the "Founding Father" and first Prime Minister of Singapore, who lead that small remote Island-nation to political and economic Independence over 60 years ago, and helped Singapore to become one of the most successful, orderly, and economically vibrant nations on God's earth.

In referring to the Book and seeking insights for a time such as this, during which our small remote emerging Island-nation is facing challenges and opportunities with nation building, I went to the Chapter entitled "**What's wrong with the Singapore worker**" (page 351...), and reread it. In that Chapter I found a number of instructive thoughts, and below I Excerpt of few which I find both relevant, and prophetic, to Cayman's current circumstances. These are seen below:

".....And they are a different generation. Expectations have gone up. Unconsciously, we have entered into a free-spending consumer society of the West. Parents spoil their children. There are better clothes, better food, better housing. All the time their expectation goes up and up, believing that it is always going to be up the escalator."

"...And it means training, skills. It means that if you want to do your children good, make sure that they don't lose the work ethic. Whether the Confucion work ethic, whether it is the Hindu work ethic, Whether it is the Muslim work ethic, whether it is the Protestant work ethic, if you don't work, you are not going to make the grade and no amount of wizardry on the part of the EDB or the Ministry of Finance is going to pull this one off."

“...But requires that constant drive and that willingness to learn, to achieve, and to be proud of what you are doing; not just minimum of effort, maximum of rewards. That attitude will never take us into the industrial society”.

Does the foregoing sound familiar to where we are in the Cayman Islands in 2016? Are the behaviours articulated in Mr. Allen’s Letter of last Friday simply an exception, something written for ulterior motives, or is it a cry for help to address the attitudes and work ethic of an eroding social and economic fabric of our beloved Islands and its people?

I become discouraged when I hear political leaders suggest that an increase in a nation’s economic growth or its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) will suddenly solve our employment problems, in the long term. I am one who has always advocated for the rights and preferential opportunity for our Caymanian worker, but at the same time I have also sought to urge our workers to be responsible and live up to their side of the bargain and be productive. I often have told job-seekers, in my various capacities over the past two decades, “you may want a Job, but realize that with that Job...also comes WORK.

So, rather than rely on the “wizardry” of “a Rising Tide will lift all boats”, I prefer to rely on a holistic, comprehensive, and deliberate strategy. I have often called for the introduction of a proper Human Capital Development framework and infrastructure for the Cayman Islands, even before the concept of a Human Resources Authority was proposed in Vision 2008 10-year Strategic Plan in 2008. Because I do not have any confidence in “trickle- down economics”, I again call for the urgent formulation of a comprehensive Human Capital Development strategy for these Islands , coupled with and informed by a “Human Capital and Labour Summit” to be held during 2016, as we prepare to embrace the challenges and opportunities of the economically rebounding Cayman Islands.

I end this contribution with a famous quote from Mr. Yew: ***“The whole ground can be against me, but if I know it is right, I’ll do it. That’s the business of a leader”.***

Sincerely,

Mario E. Ebanks