

Our Readers Write

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This is an open platform for all points of view, on any topic which concerns our readers. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Caymanian Compass.

Public consultation

On 28 October, ExCo Member Norman Bodden presented a proposal to the House for a new Constitution for the Cayman Islands. This proposal was accepted by the House following a vote of ten in favour to five opposing.

Many Caymanians were astonished to hear that there was no debate whatsoever on this bill, in spite of the fact that our Constitution is the single most important document which we possess.

However, many of those who have followed the development of the Constitutional Proposal have expressed all along that the process has been less than democratic.

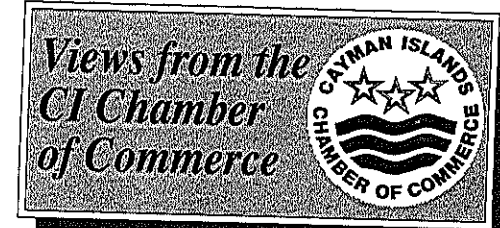
The developments, as the Chamber understands them, are as follows:

1) The Legislative Assembly requested that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office provide a Commission to review our Constitution.

2) The appointed Commissioners met with many organisations and individuals, ostensibly to find out what changes Caymanians wanted in their Constitution. However, many of those meetings turned into an explanation by commissioners of the system of government which they favoured.

3) Government published the report of the Commissioners, the main thrust of which was to provide politicians in general and ExCo in particular with increased power. These recommendations were fundamentally in opposition to the wishes of those who made representations.

4) The Select Committee of the House met with many organisations and individuals, again, ostensibly to find out what Caymanians wanted in their Constitution. The Chamber has read all of those representations by the public, and has found that, with few exceptions, the public recommended more checks and balances in Government and were opposed



to an increase in the power of its politicians.

Incredibly, the Select Committee rejected all of these requirements of the people and even advised some who made presentations that Government was elected to govern and must be left alone to do so.

5) Mr. Gordon Baker, of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office met with the Chamber and advised us that he expected the Constitutional Proposal to be subjected to public debate; that no proposal would be accepted which did not have the support of the Caymanian people.

The Chamber then called for a Constitutional Forum, in which Mr. Norman Bodden, as Chairman of the Select Committee, and Mr. Truman Bodden would present differing views on the proposal in an open, public debate.

6) Mr. Norman advised the Chamber on the day prior to the forum that he would be unable to attend. As a result, the Chamber cancelled the forum, although Mr. Norman had anticipated the forum would go on without him. The Chamber considered his presence essential to ensure a balanced programme.

Since then, the Chamber made every effort to secure a date which would be agreeable for Mr. Norman. Finally, the date of 24 October was set, as the House was to meet on the 28th to debate and decide on the proposal.

Mr. Norman then advised the Chamber that he would be unwilling to appear before the public in this open forum.

7) The Chamber went ahead with the forum out of respect for Mr.

Truman, who had consistently displayed his willingness to attend and to take part in the democratic process.

However, Mr. Norman, a principle supporter of the Proposal, was not present to answer to the public, and the Forum was understandably poorly attended.

8) On 28 October, the Constitutional Proposal, which has received almost unanimous opposition from the people of Cayman who made representations, passed the House, with the support of only seven elected members: ExCo Members Norman Bodden, Benson Ebanks, Ezzard Miller, Linford Pierson, and Messrs. Roy Bodden, Gilbert McLean and Mabry Kirkconnell.

Seven men out of a total population of 27,000.

This is not democracy. Since the passage of this bill, the Chamber has received many calls from individuals who expressed amazement at the passing of this bill, and fear that our elected members no longer believe that their job is to REPRESENT the wishes of the people, but rather to rule over them.

The Chamber believes that you, the public have an inalienable right to decide what your MLA's will pass into law. Government has a responsibility to not only consult with, but to respond to the wishes of the people.

The Chamber does not believe that Government's present course of action is what you the people really want in order to represent your wishes. The Chamber needs to hear from each of you.

Don't leave it for someone else to decide for you. Call the Chamber today at 98090.

Cayman Islands Chamber of Commerce

GUIDE TO LETTER WRITERS

The Caymanian Compass welcomes signed letters to the editor, of reasonable length and dealing with current topics.