

HANSON EXPECTED TO TAKE OVER...

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campaign accounts. The sentence also ensures he cannot be a Senatorial candidate in 2014.

Indications are that the 17-member majority Triple R party is united behind the choice of Aline Hanson for Wednesday's vote. Guillaume Arnell, the other most likely candidate for President, is reportedly planning to run in the 2014 Senator election as his 12 months ineligibility from last year's legislative election (won by Daniel Gibbs) will have run its course.

The Collectivité has the dubious distinction of having gone through six presidents in six years, since 2007. The ineligibility of Louis-Constant Fleming, the first President, in 2008 set off a run of interim presidents. Marthe Ogroundélé-Tessi stepped in as President for 30 days after Fleming resigned until the installation of Frantz Gumbs. His election was deemed invalid, however, so it had to be repeated.

Meanwhile, Daniel Gibbs stood in as president until the election was held again at which time Frantz Gumbs was returned into power for the second time.

Alain Richardson was elected the sixth president in 2011.

Asked for his reaction to Richardson's ineligibility, Independent Councillor Jules Charville said he did not usually comment on decisions imposed by the higher courts.

"I do regret that St. Martin has to, once again, live a change of presidency," he said. "I hope that the new governance starts to work quickly. We just voted on the 2013 budget, now we're already in mid-April. There is barely 8 months left for its execution.

"You asked me to respond to the decision of the board of state. I did it willingly but I will not let the opportunity pass by without acknowledging the work done by Alain Richardson and assure him of my sincere sympathy. It is never pleasant to be elected by the people and dismissed from your office by law."

Charville said if Aline Hanson is the chosen one to be president he would have no problem voting for her. Aline Hanson served in the Opposition party during the Frantz Gumbs administration and prior

to that was active in Mayor Albert Fleming's administration.

"Based on her political experience, she is competent. She's also been an educator for many years and the principal of a school. She's a strong person and someone who will stand up to the State."

As the architect behind the eventual forming of the Triple R group, Charville had persuaded Hanson to come back into politics in 2007 when she felt she was finished with politics.

"Now today she is a candidate for President. How could I not support her? I consider her to be a good manager. I believe she will be positive for the growth of the country."

If the opportunity presented itself Charville said he would be willing to lead the country.

"I have to be realistic. I'm independent and without a group. But if called upon I would be ready," he said.

Daniel Gibbs could only be elected President if the majority party had a complete change of heart, an unlikely scenario. Besides it's unlikely he could take on the role as President and an MP seeing as he resigned from the Executive Council due to his Parliamentary commitments.

Charville said he is in favour of forming a coalition government and would present his vision to Hanson if she is elected.

"We could all join forces, even if it's only for a short time. I've been asking the Council, the former president, and Opposition Leader Daniel Gibbs, to forget politics for two years and everybody get together, brain storm, to come up with ideas of how to get this country out of the hole it is in. It should be considered."



Representatives of SHTA and the St. Martin Grassroots People Movement.

SHTA discuss common grounds with Grassroots People Movement

PHILIPSBURG--The St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA) met with a delegation of the St. Martin Grassroots People Movement on April 2 to discuss "common grounds."

The delegation was led by founder and president of the Grassroots Movement Leopold James and included board member of the grassroots organization Albert "Jesse" Adams, and independent concerned citizen and observer Freddy Richardson.

James explained that the term Grassroots St. Martin People Movement is the colloquial name indicating both the St. Martin Nation Building Movement (SNBF) and its (French-) counterpart, the Association L'Esprit de Concorde.

In his opening remarks, James clarified the metaphor "Bush tea" representing the St. Martin Cultural heritage and its very embodiment - the native, indigenous St. Martin people. "These are the very people, whose culture of hospitality was why the island

got the brand name, the Friendly Island, which in return attracted hundreds of thousands of people and allowed for many businesses to flourish" James explained. He noted that, there have been numerous indications, that finally, there is a recognition on various levels, that there can be no sustainable development on the island without "bush tea" - meaningful input and participation from the indigenous people of St. Martin.

SHTA said on Sunday that while both entities might have different starting-points based on their specific interests, they have many common concerns about issues the country is currently facing. The parties agreed to establish a structural setting for consultation, based on focusing on these common concerns and the betterment thereof.

Concerns were shared about transparency and electoral reform, the way in which decisions are being made by Government, the lack of stakeholder involvement in the vari-

ous decisions and some of these decisions not being in the best interest of the people, the economy and the island as a whole. We all have a stake in St. Martin so we should all work towards a harmonious society, it is a process that may not always be easy, but it concerns the future of everybody. We have no right to saddle the next generation with the problems that we are reluctant to deal with.

James thanked and commended the SHTA, in particular its president Emil Lee for having the courage to invite his group in order to find common grounds and for creating the right conditions, conducive for developing a structural consultation format intended to bring parties together to that end.

SHTA said it is dedicated to bringing quality to all aspects of life in St. Maarten by promoting sustainable economic development for its members in cooperation with the social partners and the creation of a fair marketplace.

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