



LIBERIA MEDIA FOR DEMOCRATIC INITIATIVES

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Dialoging for Peace, Democracy & Development in Liberia

ZEE---MAANEH-----ZEE—MAANEH (PEACE AND ENJOYMENT)

LMDI Event...LMDI CONCLUDES TWO DEBATES ON THE QUEST OF AUTONOMY AND THE CREATION OF A NEW COUNTY BY LOWER BONG AS THE TWO SIDES IN THE AUTONOMY QUEST, TRADE ACCUSATIONS OF MISTRUST...ONE POINTS TO CHRONIC LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE FOCUS WHILE THE OTHER CITES GREEDY QUEST BY POLITICIANS WANTING POWER, BUT THE BOTH SIDES PLEDGE TO STAY PEACEFUL IN THEIR ARGUMENTS...THE DIALOGUE/DUCOR DEBATES-ZEE-MAANNEH---ZEE-MAANNEH (PEACE & ENJOYMENT)...PLEASE VISIT AND VIEW OUR NEW WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE AT www.lmdilib.org AND www.facebook.com/lmdilib.org. PLEASE FOLLOW AND KNOW ALL ABOUT US AND LIBERIA AND ALL THAT WE DO TO SUSTAIN LIBERIA'S POST CONFLICT DEMOCRACY.

MONROVIA LIBERIA, FRIDAY MAY 4, 2018...The two sides in the in the quest for autonomy or the creation of a new county for LOWER BONG have traded accusations of mistrust and mismanagement of resources to the disadvantage of progress in their county by the political leaders, but with the LOWER BONG autonomy quest team maintaining their breakaway from the main land Bong County as their solution and the ONE BONG team pushing their continual union, but with more support to LOWER BONG as their suggested solution.

At two debate sessions of the LMDI sustained debate style flagship platform “DUCOR DEBATE in sequence at Salala in LOWER BONG on April 27 and Gbarnga in UPPER BONG on May 2, the two sides debated propounding the arguments as sequentially outlined below:

1...SALALA LOWER BONG COUNTY DEBATE

- a) **LOWER BONG AUTONOMY TEAM...**At Salala led by SELINA POLSON MAPPY, the immediate past superintendent of BONG County, they presented that their quest for autonomy is for the lack of the equitable distribution of the county's share of national development funds and other resources. They argued there is unequal distribution of the county's wealth because of the under representation of the LOWER BONG region in the regular county planning and development sittings that decide the agenda of progress for BONG County. Buttressed by compatriots, DAVID NORKOI, FODAY E. K. FAHBULLEH and JOHN SALLEY, the LOWER BONG AUTNONOMY told their fellow BONG people or BONGESE as they are called, that they are not intending to divide divide Bong County along ethnic, cultural and tribal lines as in their words, BONG is largely a uni-tribal region, made mainly of KPELLEH speaking people and that KPELLEH speaking people are inseparable, but that they are simply after the creation of a county for the sole purpose of attracting administrative focus. They claimed

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that administrative focus has lagged behind for the LOWER BONG region and now is the time to get it with what they called the necessary autonomy for progress for the LOWER BONG people. “We want to go our own way not because we hate our fellow KPELLEH people but I want our brothers and sisters from the UPPER portion of the county to understand that the land space of our area is too large and our people are just too many for the equitable distribution of the small pie that the central government gives us for BONG, so please let us have our own county so that we can get our own resources from the government to improve our region”. SELINA MAPPY told her audience of more than three hundred people in conclusion. The Salala gather with an audience of 215 people experienced frank exchange of views between the audiences and the debaters or panelists.

- b) **UPPER BONG (ONE BONG CAMPAIGN) TEAM...** Led by Wesleyan Clergyman Peter FahnKollie propounded their stern objection to the LOWER BONG AUTONOMY quest terming it's a clear intent to divide the largely KPELLEH speaking people of Bong County in flagrant disregard to the hopes and aspirations of the forefathers of the KPELLEH speaking people in general and Bong in particular. Assisted by compatriots MOSES T. KERKULAH and ANDREW MULBAH dubbed the LOWER BONG autonomy quest as an attempt on the geo-political division of Bong County and by extension the general division of the KPELLEH against the aspiration of the founding fathers of Bong County and the KPELLEH people of Liberia. The ONE BONG team at Salala argued that the self determination and county creation quest by the LOWER BONG is not timely for all reasons including the fact the government of president GEORGE MANNEH WEAH and BONG'S daughter JEWEL HOWRAD TAYLOR have just taken over with the professed aim to reconcile Liberia. FAHN KOLLIE and team disagreed with the contention of the LOWERR BONG team that autonomy for LOWER BONG will accrue economic benefits of region, laying the blames of lack development in BONG county squarely at the feet of gross corruption of past and current leaders of the county. The ONE BONG team said development monies end up in the pockets of politicians of Bong rather than the physical infrastructural development of the county, proposing that there are alternatives for progress in BONG rather than an autonomy for any part of the county. They said BONG'S unity and huge population has accrued huge influence and relevance for the county, naming the selection of JEWE HOWARD TAYLOR by the CDC coalition and heir eventual win as a greater dividend that BONG should be proud of rather than seeking to divide the county. “We should be celebrating ourselves with our vice coming from BONG and we can use our biggest natural asset the Bong Ranges or Mines with our sister as Vice President to work and impact the lives of our majority poor people throughout the county and not just LOWER BONG. I believe for the sake of reconciliation, we must stay together, we will divide families, communities and weaken our numerical strength and political heavy weight now enjoyed by us”. PETER FAHN KOLLIE and team concluded at Salala. The Salala DUCOR DEBATES session saw an exchange of frank views between what appears to be an autonomy quest driven audience , the location being of the LOWER BONG region.

2...GBARNGA UPPER BONG COUNTY DEBATE

- a) **LOWER BONG AUTONOMY TEAM...**At Gbarnga, the LOWER BONG AUTINOMY push team drastically shifted around. This time proponent SELINA POLSON was in the hall but as an audience member. FOLEY E. K. FAHNBULLEH her third buttress person at Salala became the lead on their pro-autonomy team at Gbarnga. FAHNBULLEH buttressed by MENEKELEEN WILLIAM DOLO JR., SOULEMANEE GIDDINGS, KUSEE L. ARMSTRONG and DAVID E. NORKOI maintained that their fight for autonomy is largely premised on the lack of administrative focus on the LOWER BONG region. He began with claims that the Liberian constitution per provisions of article 3 and 34 back their action. They alleged that the Liberian Central Government has not been able to put in place mechanisms that their part of the county can be focused for the provision of basic social services for the improvement of the lives of the people. They claimed that districts in LOWER BONG are grossly underdeveloped so much that they are cut off from the rest of Bong County in particular and Liberia in general. FAHNBULLEH and team argued that their LOWER BONG region has got resources that contribute to Liberia's general development through budgetary inputs from the resources but are yet ignored by the Bong County administration and the Liberian government.

The LOWER BONG AUTNONOMY team presented that just about all of LOWER BONG has no tertiary education facility and that bridges are non-existent within the Bong Mines area to link the people to the rest of the county and country, though the company and community give more to the national budget than most parts of Bong County. "Our situation is so peculiar so that we have got more than one hundred thousand people living in LOWER BONG with just a single medical Doctor, so ours is not to divide the KPELLEH but to gain the necessary administrative focus for our welfare. KPELLEH people are spread across all counties of Liberia in large numbers, but yet inseparable and so we cannot even imagine separating them because we are simply incapable of doing that". FAHNBULLEH said.

They contended that there are counties in Liberia with far lower number of people but getting the same amounts provided by central government for development while LOWER BONG has more than one hundred thousand people and with a large land space comparative enough to have county status.

FHANBULEH and team concluded with an argument that LOWER BONG has more people than all counties in South East and as such should be allowed to establish itself into a county.

- b) **ONE BONG CAMPAIGN TEAM...**They also had a drastic reordering of their team from the Salala gathering. In fact the ONE BONG or UPPER team changed their entire

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group of leaders. Led by BILL McGILL JONES, the ONE BONG team rebuffed the claims of the LOWER BONG autonomy team about gross lack of administrative focus leading to marginalization and underdevelopment. Helped by JAMES DORBOR SAO, KUSEE L. ARMSTRONG, C. TARWO WONOFAR and RANDALL WEEKS, JONES said arguments by the autonomy team that Bong County's managers or leaders in the past and now could not and cannot manage the county because the county is big in size and population is not true but that to the contrary, BONG's size and population have played to its success in the National Geo-politics of Liberia.

JONES presented that autonomy will not do the magic for either the new county if created nor the main land BONG if it stays united. He said that the game change is rather unity of purpose amongst BONG 'S leaders for the equitable distribution of BONG'S resources now and going forward.

Statistically, the ONE BONG team presented in reaction to claims by the autonomy team the creation of counties in other regions have proved development for the people in the areas. They argued that the created counties of River Gee, River Cess, Gbarpolu and Margibi have shown no statistical data that their conditions are better after establishment, but that the counties mentioned remain in their state of underdevelopment long after their creation.

JONES and team further presented that the autonomy push by LOWER BONG is a part of the long time general political development theory of power greedy politicians who for power greed push for new counties only for their selfish motives rather than pushing for fairness in the equitable distribution of resources in their counties.

They argued that LOWER BONG has had near fair distribution of BONG'S resources per the statistics in their hand, pointing to schools in every district in the LOWER BONG region. There was constant rejection to this claim by the autonomy team throughout the Gbarnga session of DUCOR DEBATES.

The ONE BONG team concluded that Bong has not lost administrative focus over LOWER BONG but that the autonomy push is merely for a greedy search for political power by greedy political leaders.

The Gbarnga session of DUCOR DEBATES on LOWER BONG'S quest for autonomy and the creation of a new county was graced by 679 people frankly exchanging views on the both sides.

DUCOR DEBATES is one of three media and community outreach blended People To People flagship platforms of the Liberia Media for Democratic Initiatives (LMDI). Along with the other two, THE DIALOGUE and TOMORROW'S PEOPLE, they sit weekly at locations in cities towns and villages across Liberia, dialoging and debating all issues of concern to Liberians especially the marginalized.

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As ever, deliberations from all LMDI programs are produced into media contents for weekly broadcast on a partner network of 45 National and Rural Community Electronic Media Outlets (Radio and TV Stations) across Liberia.

You may also follow us at our new website at www.lmdilib.org and also visit our face book page at Liberia Media for Democratic initiatives-LMDI. You can send comments to info@lmdi.org and john@lmdi.org.

Signed



John O. Kollie

DIRECTOR

