

PLATFORM MEETING St. JOSEPH / BAMBOO #2

SETTLEMENT.

Mr. Dookeran :

UNITY IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

I thank you all here in Bamboo Settlement, you are all now in my constituent and you shall take me to victory. We are very privileged to join in the constituency of St. Joseph and to have this meeting here tonight; this is not the first time. Sometime ago on the early parts of our journey we came right here; and it's the inspiration of the people of Bamboo Settlement, that has led us today to climb to the tallest political height today in Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you the people of Bamboo

Settlement for all the encouragement, words of advice and support. What I do know is that regardless of what the winds are blowing, regardless of what our opponents are trying to do and say, you here in Bamboo Settlement, know what is correct for Trinidad and Tobago and we shall not be swayed. You have heard our members on this platform, I am sure that you will all agree, that we here in the Congress of the people, are ready to take on the maximum responsibility of governance of this country. Within the last week, we have seen what is happening with Mr. Manning and his party. Within the last two days, three ministers are gone; my friends, five others are in the pavilion. Two have said that they cannot bat because they are sick. My friends 8 are down two more to go, before we take over the responsibility to form the government of

Trinidad and Tobago. But we are not doing this by guess; we are doing this because we are offering to this nation of ours a different prescription for the future. We are offering to our people, whether they belong to Charlottes ville, or to Cedros or to Chaguaramas or to here in Bamboo Settlement. We are offering to all the people a common future, a common vision and a common purpose for this little country of ours. We are not going to discriminate against any part of this country, we have no secret agenda; our only responsibility as we offer ourselves to the people of our country, is to serve all the people of our country equally and in progress for a better future. And you have had a second move, the first move was in the 1970's; many of you are too young to remember that, but at that time, oil prices soared and the country was flowing in

money. Remember the Prime Minister of Singapore, said what a shame that the money is going through Trinidad like a dose of salts. Some of you may remember that; and I thought we would have learnt from that. The country went into collapse and the responsibility was that of a new government to put us back on the right track. You know the history, I do not intend to use the time I have here to go through that with you. But I've only raised it because when I heard Sharon talking about one of the little Ministers, speaking about his loss of his opportunity for a higher education; I am only sorry that I did not give him the opportunity for a real education. Because my friends it was a time in which where we had to take this country and bring it unto a platform. And the prosperity that we began to enjoy in the 1990's were the direct result of the

construction of the economy in the 1990's that are ours today to feel a sense of support and relief. I only make that point so that that little minister will start his first lesson in Economics. But for the last decade we have been going through a second boom where oil prices are no longer \$9 but are not \$60-\$70. And the government is boasting about how well they have managed the society. They have been telling the people that they have high vote rates and they have a lot of savings and they have a lot of money to spend, and they measure their performance by how much they spend. But my friends I got hold of a report today, which is a report dealing with the issue of the poverty reduction program in Trinidad and Tobago. It is not the report that I have been speaking about on the platform, but it is another report that was done by the European

Commission. The date of this is the 23rd of May 2006. And the Prime Minister gets up in Parliament and says that one of his successes of his economic strategy is that he has reduced poverty to 16.3% You know in Parliament I said that he claimed the reduction was to 17%, and he got up and said no it was 16%. I couldn't help but smile because I saw another one of my students getting up to try and correct the teacher. But when I read this report and I only brought it here to show you, that this is a substantial document. What does it say? It says that the poverty level in Trinidad and Tobago stands at 24% and when you consider the young population, it stands at 28.9%. And goes on to say 11% of the population live below the minimum level of the dietary energy consumption in the society. In other words, 11% of our people cannot

survive with this low nutritional diet; in other words
` 11% is one in every 10 persons in oil rich Trinidad
and Tobago. And then it goes on to say the sense
of hopelessness and inequity are constant factors
that have been highlighted in the numerous
assessments undertaken in the last 5-8 years in the
country. This is the evidence; and you would
remember that we have been calling on the
government to account; and one of the things we
have been asking for an account on is the issue of
the program dealing with poverty. I have always
said that they are applying solutions to the
symptoms; what we shall do is to apply solutions to
the substance. That is to say the real forces that
generate poverty in Trinidad and Tobago. And that
is why we have done another document, because
every time we get another one and I get a sense of

vexation and I feel that when I read what has happened to our country and why 11% of our people are on starvation levels and 28% or 29% of our young population are treated as poor in oil rich Trinidad and Tobago. I almost feel that the time has come not only for us to be vexed, but also to be irritated but to stand up and march throughout this country and demand that this is not the kind of country that we want. Then I say let us convert our sense of vexation into a positive thing. And that is why we have prepared a full program which is called the Social Draft Policy March 13th 2007, The Congress of the People program; with a multitude of recommendations as to how we shall tackle this very vexing problem in our land. I am pleased to tell you that the person who led this committee to produce this report is no other than Dr. Sharon Gopaul Mc

Nicol. I want you here to pledge, that you shall give us the opportunity when the elections come, to give her the opportunity, and in the name of all those who have lost in this society a new fresh, innovative program to deal with the issue of poverty. Tonight I do not have the time to go into that because we have had many conversations on it already, and it did not come about just like that because we have been having conversations with many groups in society. You remember when I started having these conversations; I was humiliated by some saying that this was an act of intellectual emasculation. My friends, that and many other humiliations I took because I knew that I was right and I knew that at the people would come with me when the time was right and that is why I stayed. I met a friend from Tobago yesterday and she told me in all honesty she

could not understand in the early days of my journey, why did I take all that humiliation? But now when she hears the voice of Tobago joining the voice of Trinidad she can understand now why I had to do what I did. I want to assure you here that it is not because I was weak, which they believe; it was not because I did not have the courage, which they tried to claim; it is not because I was not brave enough as they had hoped. My friends, it was because of you I knew if I did not get rid of those who had been managing the politics of this country, I could not do my duty to the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

I was very happy when our Deputy Political Leader introduced to you our concept of a new governance system for local government. We have had discussions with many groups and we have now

arrived at a position where we shall introduce not only a system of local government as it is now done but a system of community governance, and there are three basic pillars to this community governance. We shall ensure that there is participation at the community level so that the children of the future will be your responsibility in managing the schools. There will be Health Centers, where you will ensure that they provide a high level of care. That in every aspect of education, health and security, transportation and otherwise the people will be involved; it is a revolutionary step. But it is a step we have to take; we are not talking about reforming local government we are talking about introducing a system of community government in Trinidad and Tobago. And that community governance will introduce direct

accountability of the people to the people; not arms length relationships with the little leaders in their ministries in Port of Spain. In other words they shall not be your bosses anymore but you shall be their bosses in the system of community governance.

And we shall respect community rights and we shall order them so that those who have been affected by dislocation, whether it be in Bagatelle or Waller field or in Malick or anywhere else in Trinidad and

Tobago, we will have community rights that must be respected. Chatham is simply being denied

community rights in imposing the Aluminum Smelter Plant. The Ryder Scott Report dealt with that. So

my friends, this that I am talking to you about, was the result of intense conversation among a number

of organizations, one of which however, I want to

take the opportunity to pay a special word of tribute

and acknowledgment. They have been the architect of the new system of community governance which we can now make a part of our future plans for change. This organization is the Trinidad and Tobago citizens Agenda. I pay tribute to them and in particular I pay tribute to that stalwart and patriot of Trinidad and Tobago Sheila Solomon for her lifelong work in this regard. And I have the hope that we would be able to empower that group that has been fighting for so long and have been trying to change the democracy in which we live without any hope. I hope that now that we are about to take on the responsibility of government that those who have worked so long to design the new system of community governance shall see it implemented in the Congress of the People government sooner than later. Thank you Mrs. Solomon and your group for

the work that you have done and I hope that we shall be able to work together to be able to introduce a radical change. I was in China not too long ago and I was invited to what they call a village. The village had 100,000 people; and then they took me to what they called the community center in that village, and as I walked in on the first floor, I saw a lot of aged persons, most of them looking as if they were over 70 years of age. They looked like they were enjoying themselves with whatever they were doing on those computers. And then I went up to the second floor where children learning remedial Chinese and English; and when I asked my host about this, he said that. There was a sense of pride in the village, a sense of hope. The PNM set up community centers here, they have all kinds of controls over them and up to today I cannot use the

one in Spring village and they wouldn't give me permission as a member of Parliament. They say it belongs to a community group, there is no community group in action, but they say it belongs to that group that does not exist; and I cannot get the keys to hold a meeting in the Community center. My friends, that is the kind of nonsense that is taking place in our country and it is being protected by the money of Patrick Manning. I was told that we have lost our patrimony because all the money belongs now to Patrick; it is Patrick's money instead of patrimony. And the time has come when we must stand up as a people and say that we do not want to have this excessive waste of money that is not developing the people and they are using that for the purposes of holding their own party meetings and not allowing democracy to work. My friends I

want to ask you here in Bamboo, if you want to create a new society in which we can have progress, in which we can have people caring for one another, in which we can have all the thing required for a new civilization; the first thing we must do in the next two to three months is to remove Patrick Manning and put a new government in place. You have listened to what has happened, when the whole matter pertaining to Mr. Monteil was exposed so glaringly for the country. When as Chairman of four entities he was involved in all sorts of irregular transactions and the result has been him taking the people's money from one state enterprise to put it into another private company, CLICO Investment Bank of which he was chairman and using that funds to buy the shares of \$110M in the Home Mortgage Bank of which he was also Chairman and putting all

of that into his private enterprise owned by him and his wife. My friends it must not go unnoticed that he is the Treasurer of the People's National Movement. Had it not been for Mr Ganga Singh of the Congress of the People, which would not have come to the light of the population of Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean? I salute him for his bravery and his courage and his sense of duty to the public. The Prime Minister tried to cover it up and when he could not cover it up, under the pressure in Parliament, he got up and said that he was taking further action; I would not go into details tonight because of time. When he was told that he was not correct, he got up the next day and said 'I am sorry that I lied'. In Parliament my friends trying to cover up what was a glaring act of conflict of interest and the abuse of public trust of transactions gained for the private

enrichment of people who have been close to him and his advisors. What is at stake now is the purpose of politics; do you acquire political power and use it for the private enrichment? Is that the purpose of political power? Are we going to use it for the accumulation of private wealth? There are many other allegations, but we don't have enough information so we shall not speak of it yet. One essential point is that Mr. Manning today, is the protector of those who accumulated political wealth but used it for the purposes of private reasons. I want to tell you that this quiet fellow who stands before you on this stage, and they say I am too quiet to be a leader. I want to tell you that I shall do away with the cartel of the PNM; and when I do that I shall put back confidence where it is supposed to be. Politics and political power must be used for the

people's interests and the people's interest only.

And that's the difference between what we call 'getting the politics right' and we want to bring back politics to what is; we do not want to acquire political power to use it for private wealth, and I only spoke about one but there are many that are emerging and every time that you look at the newspaper you see more and more accusations. But I am not going to talk about them , I want to tell you I only need one piece of evidence that the purpose of Mr. Manning and his cartel holding on to power is not to serve the people's interests but to acquire personal wealth. I call them the winners, after all the \$200B spent in this country over the last six months; the beneficiaries are not the people because you know that because 11% of our people are classified as poor; they go to the Health Centers and could not

get an ordinary service. Our education system, which is not changing, no wonder there is that minister in charge of it. So my friends, I want to make this point that the PNM will come, and they give out to them so that they will vote for them. It is no magic about how they run this country. That is why when we went into Laventille, we got the heartiest welcome than any party other than the PNM that has ever done that, in Chinapoo Village, last two weeks ago. And when they went last night to launch their campaign as the Prime Minister says, they had to scramble to get a descent audience to listen to them. The same thing happened to the UNC Alliance when they launched their party in Felicity. What that signifies is that the time for us to take up the politics is now upon us and the time for us to break what has divided us is now. And those

political leaders Mr. Manning and Mr. Panday, who want to trap us into the politics that divides us, must now be told in no uncertain terms, that this nation has moved ahead of them and we are going to unite this country as it has never been united before. So somebody asked me the question, are you fighting this election alone as the Congress of the People? We are not fighting this election alone, but we are fighting this election with the people of Trinidad and Tobago. Those are our companions; those are the people who shall work with us to bring the change. And we must understand this and I want to assure you that we shall, as we move on in this path be able to win more and more of the confidence of the people. They are trapped, they are trapped by the politics of today, they are trapped by those who cause divisions , they are trapped by the mentality of

the colonial thinking that has never served the unity of the people but used the divisions of the people to protect their hold on their political careers. That is the real issue, and they use that, not for the purpose of bringing about a united country or a united people, or a progressive country, or having a country where there is equal opportunity and equity for all but to use the politics to establish the 'kabals'. On both sides you have to face up it's either you want a political democracy that is controlled by the 'kabal' or you want a political democracy that is controlled by the 'cartel' or you want a political democracy which is controlled by the people of this land throughout the country. That is the issue. I want to tell you on this question of unity that we are solidly supported a one to one fight against the PNM; there shall not be any three way race; there shall be a two way race.

And we shall make that happen because you shall walk with your feet; you shall walk with your fingers, you the people are now challenged to make this a two way race, where there is only one party that can take over the government and that is the Congress of the People. You see, the society has been battered for too long by politicians, that's why young people, they don't want to hear, because they have been so battered. You know the experience of 2000, of the betrayal of the people when the opposition that had been in opposition , walked out on the government at the first opportunity they got. I want you to know that when we go into government, we shall be united for your children and your future. I want you to understand why you must build unity on solid pillars and nothing else because, that is where they have failed, and the very politicians are coming

to you today for another chance. The first we must ask the politicians when they come to you is what do you stand for? If you have betrayed us in the past, isn't it likely that that is what you will continue to do? If you broke up the government in 2000 and worked with the PNM, are you deserving of a chance? My friends, if you were in a government of many parties and you walked out on the first provocation, and in politics you are provoked everyday. If you don't understand that Politics is about overcoming provocations, and I face it everyday. If there is anybody in this country who has been provoked and humiliated only because I want to serve, it is me here today and I understand that provocations will come from those who do not want to change. So I am asking you the people of this land to come let us abandon that type of

politics; let us not be betrayed anymore; we have been battered and betrayed and we remain today a broken beast. This nation is broken and is about to be broken into many pieces and what is happening with the PNM is part of the symptoms of a broken nation. It is now gone into the political past; things fall apart, the poet. And don't think this issue is about Rahael and other political parties, some of them create new names and go to the press and say that they have a party and when you ask them for the supporters, they point out one or two. In other words they are making a mockery of political parties. They form themselves into something they call Alliance, but there is no common goal. The only party today that cannot be broken is the Congress of the People of Trinidad and Tobago. And I can say that with confidence, without even discussing it with

my colleagues, because we are bound together by the nobility of the politics of the future. For those who have betrayed us and those who have broken us must go into the dustbin of political history and you shall have your chance to do that. It is not quite so easy to do this because we have learnt not to have confidence in ourselves.; we lack the confidence to take us forward and the leaders have taken advantage of that. We cannot blame them, they have been conditioned by the political sociologists of this country to continue this. That is why they are consumed by name calling. My friends they are the two B teams of this country and the only A team of the country is the Congress of the People. And I shall introduce an Institute of Remedial Politics for any one of them who wish to join after the election. So my friends, we are ready, we are ready to take on

the confidence of our people, whether we have grandparents who came from Africa, or from India or from China or the Middle East or Europe. We must see ourselves as a confident people ready to make the change in Trinidad and Tobago. For every problem there is a solution. So we now have a direction. So my friends I have tried my best within the time that Inshan has allowed us and I wish to thank him. I must also thank you all. So as I leave you here tonight, in Bamboo #2, my constituent in St. Augustine, the challenge has been set; we must be able to seal off the victory in this area so I can go and fight in Laventille and I can go and fight in Scarborough and I can go and fight in Mayaro because I don't intend to have the victory for us alone, I want this victory to be for all the people of Trinidad and Tobago. And let us take the first step in

that victory when we start the campaign action on Sunday September 9th, one year after you gave us the permission to proceed. The action starts then and if my friends we can survive what we have survived we shall celebrate. But our biggest celebration shall be when we become the next government of Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you.

Prepared by

Debbie Ali

Communications Dept

Phone 755-2354